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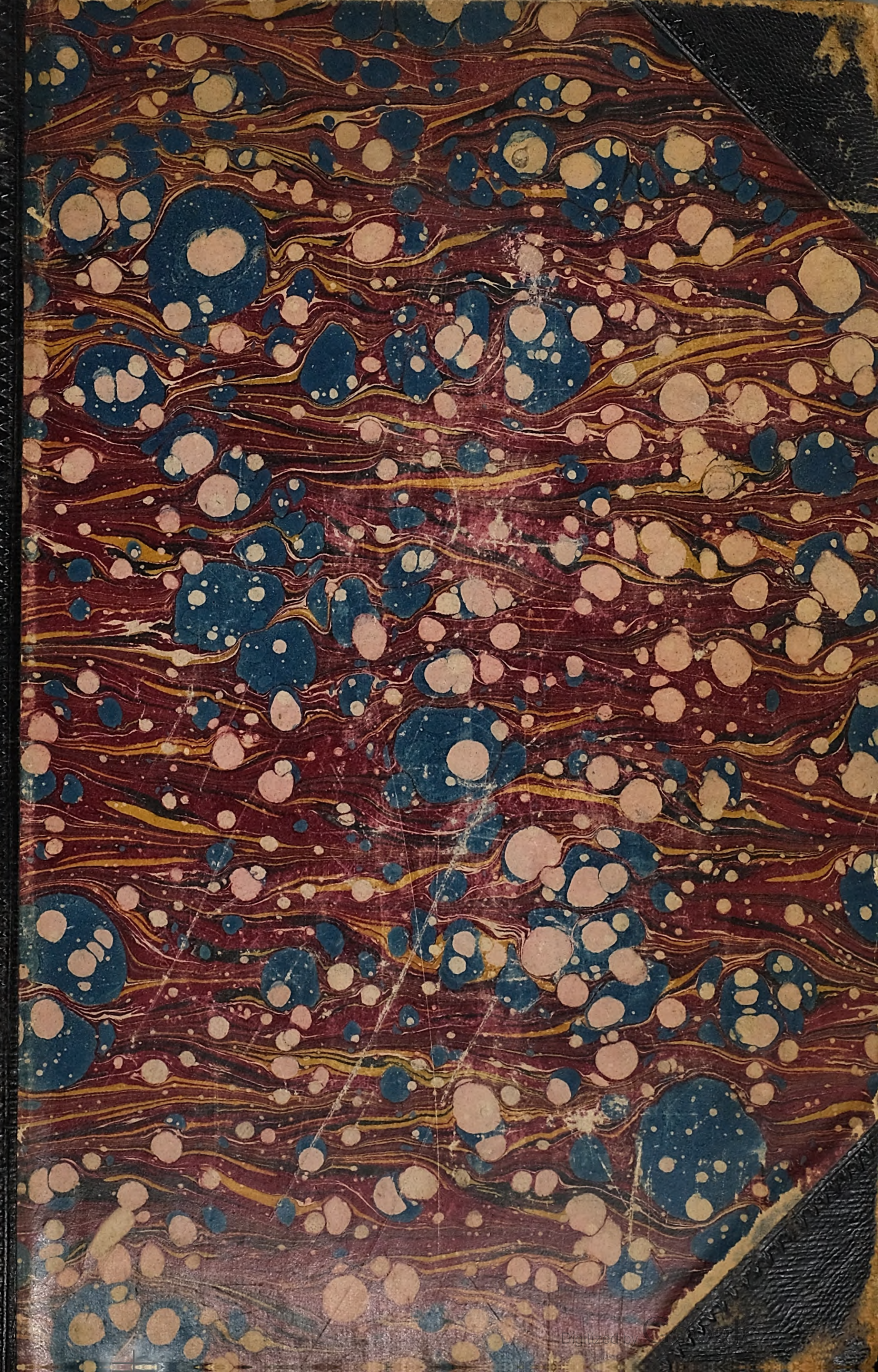

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 287.—Vol. X. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 30, 1894. [Price One Penny.

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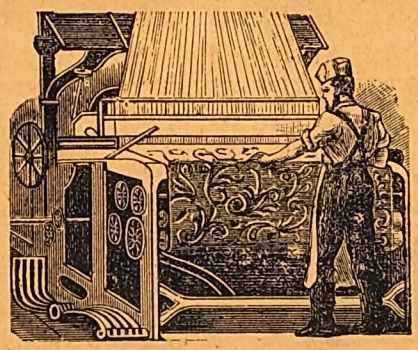

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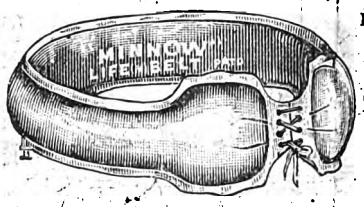

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 287.—Vol. X. *FOR THE WEEK ENDING JUNE 30, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

A PORTRAIT.

IT is a theory of mine that one cannot paint a good portrait from mere sittings of the subject before one. The nature as well as the features of the model, must require study. One should know something of the soul as well as of the superficies. And so, as I was to paint the portrait of Mrs. Adriance, a woman of rare charm, I felt the necessity of some careful observation. Her guest for the purpose, I had, of course, the better opportunity of making it; and the hospitality, being a matter of business, hardly invested me with the sacred character of guest, or invested her with any of the shielding that should ordinarily surround one's hostess.

Mrs. Adriance was a woman of luxurious beauty, and of a toilet that was its fit setting. If I say that her husband was her slave, I have no word left to describe the condition of her servants; but in her house, which was superb, she reigned an unlimited despot, and her word, her wish, was law. She had many whims, each of which she followed till she worked it out and there was no shred of it left: now it was charity, now it was religion, now it was fashion, now it was literature, now it was art. Whatever whim she pursued borrowed for the time some of the beauty of the beautiful creature who pursued it, and seemed as admirable as she was—at least in the eyes of Mr. Adriance. In my own eyes—well, beginning as her abject servant, I had spent but a few days under her roof when I found myself thinking that, if I painted Mrs. Adriance as I saw her, the picture would be unpleasant enough to exceed the domain of art.

Nothing opens the eyes sometimes like a good prejudice. If I had not become aware of Mrs. Adriance's opposition to the marriage of her husband's niece for no other reason than that the girl was agreeable to herself, a pleasant piece of furniture in the house, and she did not choose to make a break in the way of life which she enjoyed, I might not have seen her so clearly myself. No one played Chopin as this sensitive Irene did; no one read verses with the same delicate inflections and musical voice; no one sympathised with her in all her freaks and caprices as this young girl did; no one had such taste to criticise and suggest concerning a ribbon or a ruffle, and let Irene's fingers twinkle for a moment in the lace or among the puffs and bows, and no French milliner could have done better.

It was plainly impossible for Mrs. Adriance to spare Irene. Who would see the point of the last social gossip with her? With whom should she exchange the swift glance? With whom should she talk over her friends and enemies? Life would be coming to an end soon enough, anyway; let things be as they were till sickness and age and death touch them with necessary transforming hand; why go out of the way and bring about unpleasant changes. No; let Irene stay where she was well off and made others so.

"And why did Irene wish to marry, anyway?" she would continue. "It would only be a temporary delight, and after that, weariness."

Doubtless very much in love now, in a year the enchantment would be gone and the bridal satin would be only sackcloth and ashes. No, it was as much for Irene's sake as for that of any one else that Mrs. Adriance opposed the whole affair.

And then the man was poor. It was true that was a trouble which Mrs. Adriance could remedy if she would, out of her abundant wealth; but if Irene chose to throw herself away, not a farthing would Mrs. Adriance contribute toward her doing so; she, at any rate, would not make herself responsible for helping on the sacrifice. Besides—see how selfish it was of Irene!

How singularly selfish to wish to leave this home where she was so acceptable, so agreeable, actually so necessary, where an aunt valued her as few women did their husband's relatives, where her uncle found her of such use, where she filled all the chinks and corners, where nothing could replace her or make up for her loss—how very selfish of her to wish to go off with a young man who must needs absorb her entirely to himself! She couldn't really believe such selfishness was possible to Irene, and therefore she couldn't really believe that Irene positively wished to marry the young man. And if she didn't wish it, what was the use of talking any more about it? It was not a matter of genuine love, but a mere phase of sentimentality. And as for the rest, how could Irene expect to be happy with a man of such a nature as Gervais's?

She had really put it to Irene. What manner of man was it who was willing to take her from her home of luxury, surrounded by the beauty of a palace, waited on by liveried servants, fed on all but nectar and ambrosia, to live in narrow lodgings, to wait on herself and him too, to dine on the joint warmed over—if there was even a joint at all! He must be a person both without calculation and without heart—without calculation certainly to foresee the want and work and worry to which he should bring her—without heart, to be willing to accept such sacrifice from her. What happiness could she expect in life in so selfish a creature as that? Or, on the other hand, if he had calculation—if he thought that, by securing Irene, he was also putting himself in the way of securing a portion of her uncle's money—well, then, he was warned in time. Nothing under such circumstances would be given to Irene; the whole fortune would be applied to Charities; and this was irrevocable, and he might as well understand it now as any time! He did understand it, perfectly.

"You can't think all that your aunt has said," he asked Irene eagerly one evening, "can make any difference?"

"Oh, no," she sighed, "oh, no, none—none in—our—love."

"In what then?" he demanded, his splendid grey eyes glittering like a young eagle's. "Does happiness depend on velvet carpets and gilt chairs and Dresden china figures? Upon a course of games or sweetmeats, or the right wines? Upon Paris hats and dresses?"

"Oh, no, no," sighed Irene again. "Why do you speak so?"

"I am sorry to speak so abruptly, my darling," he said, coming to her side. "But if your happiness lies in none of these things, then our life together can be blest enough. My salary will provide a home, and its simplicity——"

"Would be dear to me!" cried Irene. "Oh, it's not that. It's none

No one played Chopin as this sensitive Irene did.

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of these things! But she has been so good to me, always so sweet and kind and anxious for my happiness, as everyone sees, and she needs me so—and I cannot find it in my heart to pain her——"

"But you can pain me!" he cried, starting to his feet hurriedly. "It amounts to this then, that you love her more than me!"

"Oh, no, no," cried Irene again, breaking down in sobs. "That is impossible! And I can't see—I don't feel—I don't know what to do!"

She, too, it was plain, shared the general worship and absorption. "She has cast her eyes upon you!" exclaimed Gervais. "The basilisk!" And so things drifted on, apparently much as before. But there are always currents underneath the tide.

My eminence as a portrait painter—not to put too fine a point on it—allowed me to work unquestioned, and at my own time. And as Mrs. Adriance knew my ideas concerning the necessity of studying the character of my sitter, she revealed herself on one occasion after this semi-confidential fashion. Thus I did not feel called upon to show her my sketches for her picture, nor the outlines of Irene that I made furtively, finding it not easy to obtain the precise transparency of tint beside which the sea-shell's pink was opaque, my pencil fascinated, too, with the exquisite droop of eye and lip where all melancholy seemed to linger.

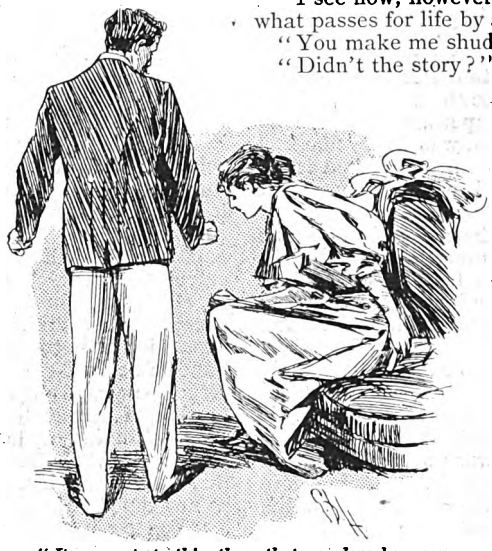
But while I was still pursuing my studies, Mrs. Adriance was evolving new opportunities for them.

"It is really out of the question," she said, "to allow things to go on in this way any longer, Irene. There is no state much worse than a prolonged engagement. One can attend to no duties properly, with all one's interest elsewhere. It keeps one in a condition of bristling electricity.

"You are absorbed and abstracted in Gervais now, and I feel it. We all feel it. One must bring the matter to an end, either by marriage or by dismissal. And in this case, Irene, I am sure your good sense will direct you as to the proper course."

"Oh!" cried Irene, all the pink flush mounting and deepening and then dying away in deadly pallor. "You can't mean——"

"Yes, assuredly," said Mrs. Adriance, calmly opening and shutting her great fan of crimson ostrich feathers. "I mean that your wisest way is to tell Gervais to cease to see you or care for you."



"It amounts to this, then, that you love her more than me!"

"As if—as if he could!" cried Irene, in a burst of passion, which was like a revelation.

"My dear! Such vehemence! I could not believe you capable of the shocking taste of it. Surely it is best that Gervais should make the effort. You, who are usually so self-forgetful—it surprises me that you should fail to see this injury you are doing Gervais by the continuance of the hopeless affair. He is simply wasting his youth and all his young manhood, and the happiness he might secure elsewhere by marrying a young woman in his own station of life."

"His own station?" cried Irene, trembling like an aspen leaf. "Is that not the same as ours?"

"Oblige me, Irene, by not repeating my words. It strikes me there is a difference between your uncle's position with his rank and influence and social weight—to say nothing of myself—and that of a penniless clerk on a salary! It might strike another so. There is a difference. If Gervais married a person accustomed to no more than he could give, he would have a chance for happiness, a reason for saving his salary, a home that would interest him and occupy him, and prevent his rushing to dissipation." One could see that every word went through Irene like a stab. "Don't make me any reply, my dear. But when you go to your room, think of it calmly, judiciously, with an eye to Gervais's best good, as I have, and I am sure you can come but to one decision. I would not see him again. I would return his letters, his trifling gifts, and put an end to the whole vexatious business at once."

As the king said, so was it done.

I was toying with my pencils a day or two afterward, when Mrs. Adriance came up, and rang presently for Irene, who brought her a book containing some fanciful arabesque designs which Mrs. Adriance wished me to see. The book was "The Thousand Nights and One Night."

Mrs. Adriance threw herself back in the depths of the wicker chair, unwinding the scarf and lace she had on her head. "Now I am your sitter, sir," she said. "And, Irene, read me something, anything, so that I shall not go to sleep. I want some vivacity in the picture!" And Irene, opening the book at random, and with a faltering voice, began reading the tale of the young prince whose beautiful wife leaves him at night, and whom he discovers to be a vampire at her horrid feast.

"What did you understand a vampire to be, before this reading?" I asked at its conclusion.

"A bat of some sort," said Mrs. Adriance hesitatingly.

"I never quite knew. I associate the idea with that of the ghoul who devours the dead."

"But it is revolting!"

"I see now, however, that it is one of the dead who obtains what passes for life by absorbing the life of the living."

"You make me shudder!" cried Mrs. Adriance.

"Didn't the story?" I replied.

"Too unreal, after all."

"It all resolves itself into the question of what it is to live and what it is to be dead. To live—is to be sentient of all other life, to feel the emotions and sensations of all other beings, to be aware through every pore and every pulse of the life of others——"

"How few live!" said Irene, looking up with her sad eyes.

"That is very pretty poetry," said Mrs. Adriance. "But poetry—and about the dead!"

"We will have no dealings with the dead," I said, "but the vampire—the ghoul—we meet her any day." And I went on with my painting.

That night, after Mrs. Adriance had gone out, radiant in her claret velvets and diamonds, Irene came softly down the stairs, her face white as the little ivory chest she carried, the shrine, no doubt, that held her love letters and her keepsakes. It was Gervais who waited for her in the alcove off the drawing-room where the lights were low. I went out for a stroll in the frosty air myself. Perhaps I did not stay long enough; for, letting myself in again in the course of the hour, I heard a broken cry, I saw a passionate embrace, and Gervais dashed headlong by me, and Irene fell fainting—to the floor if I had not caught her in season.

It was a tear-sodden face that Irene brought to the table next morning, and by her aunt she was pronounced to have a decided attack of influenza. But at dinner she could not be present at all, and for several days thereafter she failed to appear. "It is quite the best so," said Mrs. Adriance. "Once over an affair of this sort, the nerve is dead and done with. And then it is for the child's lasting good. Yet it is incomprehensible—and with such taste as hers in everything else—that yellow hair of his always looked so crude—for my own part I could never endure this Gervais very near me. And he was ineffably wearisome."

I suspended my work for some weeks at this time in order that Mrs. Adriance might accompany her husband on a journey, and I did not return to the house during that time—being occupied, I may as well say, with the care of Gervais, who was wild with grief and rage and longing and despair; his face ghastly, his health shattered, his reason unsettled, and his heart

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Bowing myself out quickly.

broken. "It is of no use," he cried. "There is nothing for me to do about it. She gave herself the *coup de grace*. She said it had been an idle fancy; she said she had never loved me; she said she wished for her freedom. She has cared nothing for me, she has trifled with me, she has played upon me, and she has driven me mad!"

I did the best I could in the way of comfort—it was nothing. If one had gone to the house and kidnapped Irene and brought her to him and laid her in his arms, it would have been nothing. She had herself put out the light. And otherwise Irene would not have come. She had understood that she was sacrificing herself, and she had sacrificed both herself and Gervais.

When I next went to the Adriances' mansion, Mrs. Adriance, lying back among the cushions of her purple velvet chair, superb in gold-coloured gauzes and great scarlet poppies, seemed to me the most magnificent thing in flesh and blood that I had ever seen. How rich was the carmine on the olive of her cheek, how sumptuous the crimson lips, how like fire in midnight, beams the lustre of those black-fringed eyes!

She laughed, a flashing laugh, of white teeth, and cried, "Now we are all right again! For you see we have Irene back!" How sweet in another's ears, how womanly, how lovingly self-forgetful might that have sounded! But in mine—I looked in a bewildered wonder at Irene on the lounge, in a clinging white gown, her hair fallen, the deathly pallor of her face enhanced by the wide violet circles about her eyes. She smiled faintly and sweetly, and murmured in a voice—not Irene's voice—but one like the sound of a leaf singing in the wind, "Yes, you see I am here—what is left of me."

"And are you still reading the story of the vampire and the maiden she devours?" I cried in my amazement.

I went, after a while, to my studio—the room which consisted of the upper floor of the house. I looked at my sketches and my canvases. I sketched a new one. I began to paint in earnest the next day, and I painted as if possessed with a sacred fury. I was up at daybreak, and I revised my work by candlelight. I ate almost nothing, saw nobody, hardly knew I lived or breathed. At the end of the week I went down to the room where Mr. and Mrs. Adriance chanced to be sitting—she with that tinge on her cheek like the scarlet on the side of a pear, and Irene, lying on the lounge, still and white as if in a trance—and I bade them to the view.

There on the canvas, with all the power of my pencil, the force of my will, the strength of my colour, had I pictured the radiant creature, supple, of abounding curve, of tints rich as the autumn leaf; but through the diaphane of her drapery those long and sinuous limbs were scarcely human, and that radiance—was it the phosphorescence of the dead or the life of the living? She hung as if suspended one moment of a swift flight, and beneath was a dream of dim moonlighted graves, and in her arms, as if snatched from one of them, or about to be cast into it—who could say?—was the lifeless form of a shrouded girl, blue-white and corpse-white, with the glazed gaze of the dead indeed. And her face was Irene's.

"It is the old story of the sacrifice of which we have read and spoken," I said, as they bent toward it in questioning wonder. "I never thought to see it made reality, as I have done in this house. You can hang it or not, as you please," I said, bowing myself out quickly, "but it is your portrait, Mrs. Adriance."

THE MAN MY SISTER MARRIED.

SUMMARY—Chapters I. to III.

The story is told by Violet (Letty) Lombard, who, at the opening, is living at Galveston, U.S.A. with her grandfather, Enos Lombard, Liz the coloured servant, Justina her old nurse, and her Aunt Marg, who has been the recipient of mysterious letters, post-marked New Orleans, necessitating a fortnight's absence from home. John Scott, who married Katherine, Violet's step-sister, a very beautiful girl, pays for Violet's board and lodging, and has just decided that she is to go to a convent in New Orleans. On the strength of information gained from the torn pieces of one of Aunt Marg's letters, and curious to solve their mystery, Violet so arranges that she goes to New Orleans a day earlier, and that she stops at the Hotel Gilbert. Through a crack in the wall, she sees what happens in the next room to hers. John Scott, Captain Dana—an old friend from Galveston—Aunt Marg, and others are sitting in judgment upon a Mexican, Antonio, who has, it transpires, assisted in the seizure of Scott's wife, and of Dana's wife and daughter, and whose terrible crime has been brought to light by Yara, a spy. Antonio is compelled to end his life by taking poison, with his dying words laying the blame upon one Xarras.

CHAPTER IV.

WHEN morning dawned, cold and grey, I came to myself, half-stupefied by fear and sleep that was not rest; I struggled to my feet. I went to the mirror in miserable dread. I looked to see if my hair had not grown white. I had not changed, thank heaven, but I was so ghastly, so hollow-eyed and wan.

I rubbed my face with a coarse towel, poured water on my head, and then arranged the room, carefully put my dress in order, and, last of all, I climbed on the table once more. I dared not go down that dark hall unless I knew that terrible thing had not moved.

The faint light stealing in the tattered curtain revealed the ghastly figure, the drooping head, on the lean, outstretched arms; the wine dried on the bare floor, looking like blood. The room was orderly, there was no trace of his executioners, and he was silent for all eternity. I pushed the table into its place and softly unlocked the door. The hall was dark and foul-smelling, and the doors all stood open; down the stairs with that awful feeling of a ghostly follower creeping after; another flight where I heard in the hall the breathing of sleepers, but no sound of wakefulness; then the spiral staircase, and, thank God! the free air, the blessed air, never so dear before.

I asked a civil-spoken man the direction to the St. C——, and he went a little bit with me to show the way. What a peaceful place that great grey building seemed to me as I passed the pillared portico. How different from that dreadful place where I had been.

"Oh," I cried, "how wretched to be poor, to be shut out from security and comfort!" And then, with a shudder of disgust, I remembered I owed all I had ever known of luxury and the joys of the rich to that man I knew to be a murderer. The very money in my purse was his. My pity was for the man entrapped. Had I not heard men say a Mexican's life was nothing, that they were not men nor equals? Could I ever touch that hand of John Scott's, the hand that could crush a bone like glass? And Aunt Marg; what was she with her saintly air, her lectures to me? An accomplice with villains. I was so sick of them, no convent could be so hard to me as to see any of them again.

At the ladies' entrance to the hotel a very old man was sweeping the steps. I told him I had come by an early train, and, without questions, he took my bag and led me to a great room furnished and carpeted with cherry red, where large, gilt-framed mirrors lined the wall, reflecting at every turn a white-faced, scared-looking girl. He went to see if Miss Collier was there, and then a boy came to show me to her room.

I knocked, and she opened the door. She had not been to bed at all, and looked terribly ill and worn.

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Was I dreaming, or did she come to me and kiss my hand?

"Letty!" she cried in horror.

"Yes," I said wearily. "I made a mistake in the telegram. I got here last night, and stopped near the depot, at a little place the conductor told me about. I got up early and came here. I thought you would be at the St. C——."

I lied, and I used to think after this that my whole life was a tissue of lies. It made me think of a sentence in my rhetoric, where one had to tell twenty additional lies to maintain one, but I could not tell the truth. Thank Heaven, she never questioned me.

"My dear child," she cried, and kissed my cheek, and I almost shuddered when she touched me.

"I am very tired," I sobbed. "I was so afraid last night, that I daresay I behave oddly."

"You never cared for my affection, dear, I think. But now take off your gown and lie on my bed; there, now you will rest. Shall I bathe your head with eau de cologne?"

"No, no," I almost shrieked. I would not have her touch me. She sat down by the window with a book, but I saw she was not reading. I half closed my eyes and saw her steal such wistful looks towards me, and, watching her thus, I finally fell asleep.

Was I dreaming, or did she come to me and kiss my hand, leaving it wet with her tears? Was that her crying? "Oh, my innocent girl, my dearest, that I dare not love! Would that my life had no sin; grant that yours may be without shadow. My Violet, and I was young and good like you, in my old home in San Antonio, and Mary was with me, and my father lived. Oh, the violets, the cool, green garden, the little purple cups, dew-filled and odorous, and I, like you, fair and innocent, gathered them in the early morning; and now I am so old, so wicked, so woefully weary of it all."

I listened indifferently; I thought her half mad. What did it all mean? I, a maid of the nineteenth century, had witnessed a scene of the Inquisition, and here was a woman I thought utterly frozen and clear-brained going on like a tragedy actress. I moved uneasily as though waking, and she quickly resumed her usual calm manner—the hypocrite.

"It is nine o'clock," she said, "and here is your breakfast; I have eaten mine."

Not a mouthful had she swallowed; but I ate heartily, for the past night seemed far off, now that I was safe, and I even found I had still some interest in adorning myself. I looked rather pale and hollow-eyed, though.

"You must look your prettiest," said Aunt Marg, arranging my draperies, "for Mr. Scott is waiting downstairs to meet you. He has never seen you, and I want you to make a good impression."

"I don't care what he thinks," I muttered; "I know the first word he will say is, that I am not like Katherine; his mother and his aunt sing that old tune always to me."

"He has been your best friend all your ungrateful life," said Aunt Marg coldly, her hateful self again; "and James Gregory, whom you copy in your conversation, to your great discredit, also owes the very bread he eats to Mr. Scott, the man he condemns."

"I never asked John Scott's charity," I muttered, and with the air of a martyr followed her to the parlour. Here a tall man was waiting for us, and, in the big room, he seemed to harmonise with the surroundings. I am five feet six inches tall myself, but he made me feel very small. At first I could not describe him, but it is easy now that I know him.

An olive skin, much bronzed, heavy black eyebrows and lashes, a thick moustache, and closely cropped black hair; a rather big nose and chin, and odd grey eyes that are brown sometimes or again all pupil, and have a sort of steely gleam to them. He is not handsome, but there is such power in his face that he attracts; and then, when he speaks or smiles, he seems to light up and to be so kind he makes one like him even after the Hotel Gilbert affair. But at that first meeting I thought of his cruel hands, and hated him.

"Here is Letty," said Aunt Marg, and he came to me and took my hand. I wondered if he would grip it out of shape; but he held it very gently, looking into my eyes. The moment he touched me I shuddered, and drew my hand away. It was a curious physical repulsion that I could not help. Oh, the steely look that he gave me under his thick lashes!

"So you do not like me, Letty Lombard?" he said in that pleasant voice, with a ring of laughter in it.

"I do not know you," I said haughtily.

"But Jim gave you some sort of an impression, I know, that I was a generally detestable creature of the slave-driver class?" He smiled, showing white teeth that had a cruel look to me.

"If he did, I would not tell you. I don't go back on my friends."

"You see," put in Aunt Marg, "she needs convent discipline. She has never been restricted in any way."

"I hope you will like the school," he said kindly.

"My likes are not consulted. I am sent for like a bale of cotton. I am provided for against my will; a genteel pauper," I went on hotly, all my hate surging up. "I never asked to be born, nor to have perfect relatives or angelic providers. I am ordinary, and liable to err, and I eat bread that chokes me. I go to school gladly, for I can by that earn the money to repay you, Mr John Scott, and then the everlasting nagging about my gratitude will have to be stopped."

Poor Aunt Marg coloured up, looking piteously at me, but he silenced her with that pleasant smile, and, looking vastly amused, listened to me.

"You think I cannot?" I cried. "Oh, I have been taught and dutified into a machine; but sometimes I break loose! I will show you." I ran to the big piano, and threw it open, and before Aunt Marg could prevent me, I broke into a merry little Spanish song my nurse Justina taught me. I can sing well, and I know it. "There!" I cried, as I crashed down the final chord on the keys, "I can pay you in golden notes from my throat some day, as you shall see."

He walked toward me, his eyes quite dark now and shining with tears. For a moment he could not speak.

"My wife used to sing that," he faltered, "your voice is so sweet, and it brought back the long, long years. I never could see you before; but I was foolish in that, you are not like her."

"Did I not tell you he would say that, Aunt Marg?" I cried; "everyone says that. I am sick of 'Katherine,' always 'Katherine!' I don't want to be like her. I would rather be as ugly as a tree stump, and I hate anyone who says her very name to me." Then I flung myself out of the room, and I imagined how those two would gloat over it and cackle, "Oh, she needs convent discipline!"

I expected a scolding, but never a word did Aunt Marg say

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during the two days she stayed with me. She helped me to get my clothes, and saw me safe to the school, but I do not think I even kissed her good-bye. Mr. John Scott I did not see again.

Oh, those happy convent days, when I could learn all I wanted to, where all was peace and poetry, and marvellous purity of words and deeds and thoughts! There was such music in the dim, dark church, where one could dream of coming years and all that golden future which a young girl pictures. Why is it, I wonder, that the smell of incense to-day brings it all back, and those serene, black-shrouded faces with expressions of holy calm as if they had found the quiet waters, and we only the brawling stream? Is it only a veneer, not a real look, I wonder?

The girls loved me there. They thought I was so clever and pretty, that I felt how cruelly unjust Aunt Marg and grandfather had been to me to let me grow up thinking I was really only ordinary, when I was quite out of the commonplace. I used to be very naughty, and broke every rule, but some mysterious power helped me, and I kept in the good graces of everyone. The girls said I made them love me by some magnetic power.

So a year passed, and I saw no one from home until in the summer holidays Sister Patricia came to me with an open letter in her hand and a look of perplexity on her innocent face.

"Your grandfather, Violet, has written a note introducing a young friend to us, James Gregory, the son of a neighbour. He says this young man will be in the city a few days, and as his mother is with him, he wishes us to allow you to go out with them. He seems such a well-behaved young man, too," beamed that gentle soul, "that I shall be very glad to trust you with him. You need a little change and pleasure. I infer from your grandpapa's letter that he regards the young man almost as a son."

I gasped, and then grew a guilty red. My grandfather regard Jim as a son, when he never allowed him at our house, spoke of him with rage and profanity, and once took a stick to him and drove him away! My Aunt Marg hates Jim too, and I used to fancy the feud began further back than our time.

"Y-e-s," I stammered.

"His mother is at the hotel, but he is in the parlour," she said. "Go in as you are. You always look neat." She patted my shoulder kindly, and I went into the room. A solemn visaged sister was talking to Jim, and had she not been there I should have burst into a yell of laughter.

Sister Patricia came to me with an open letter.

Jim is not handsome. He has red hair, bushy and wiry, light eyes, and is very tall and thin, and so freckled that he looks mildewed. He dresses in loud attire with horsy neckties, and if anyone took him for a jockey or a gambler he would be wonderfully pleased. But to-day he had on a black suit, a white tie, and a pair of large black cotton gloves. He had soaped his hair down, wore a seedy tall hat, and carried a cheap and bulging cotton umbrella. He had a crape band on his hat also, and talked with a snuffle.

"Yes, madam," he was saying to the sister; "you can't be too particular;" and to this day I know he cannot tell what he was wanting to be so particular about.

"Ah, Violet," he said in most solemn tones, and I dutifully shook that cotton glove.

He had soaped his hair down.

"Is anybody dead?" I asked timidly, and he gave me such an awful look I knew I had made a mistake. "You look so sad," I faltered.

"I have studied so hard," he sighed; "dear Uncle Scott sent me to New York to school, and mother and I came back this way to see you, and how"—and he threw an unctuous fervour into the words—"how you have improved. Grandpa is nicely. (Grandfather would have choked with rage at that.) He and Aunt Marg sent their love to you and such thanks to your teachers." And he went on in that strain for ten minutes. If I had not got away to put on other clothes I should have laughed right out and spoiled it all.

I donned my pretty cream-coloured silk and lace gown, with a hat and parasol to match, and various ornaments borrowed from admiring friends, and then I joined him in the hall; for he had got permission to have me spend the day with his mother. Outside the convent gates he took a good look all round, then solemnly danced a double shuffle.

"How did you like the make-up, eh?" he laughed, "and grandpa's letter I wrote. I mayn't be pretty, but I'm smart. You nearly spoiled it all by asking who's dead. Where's your sense?"

"You were awfully good thinking of me in gaol here," I said gratefully.

"Scott doesn't get ahead of me," Jim said coolly; "he's home all the time now; got a new carriage and horses; put me to school, too. He's a hateful brute, but he's got his match in J. G. My brother Dean is coming home from France. He'll show him what a gentleman is; Scott's been so long lording it over Mexicans, he doesn't know how to treat a white man."

"If they find out about the forged letter?" I suggested.

Jim turned and gripped my arm. "Have you got stuck up and goody? Tell me the worst. If you have, back you go to gaol."

"No, no," I cried in bitter earnest; "but I am cowed, that's all. I do want something good to eat, and a theatre, and slang, and fun like we used to."

"No saying, 'Oh, that isn't right'; or, 'I won't go there, it isn't nice, Jamsey'; or, 'Sister wouldn't like that.'"

"If you took me out to just quarrel, I'll go home," I said crossly.

He gave me a long look. "We'll have the fun. You are all right and jolly. What a stunner you've got to be. By Jove, Letty, you are pretty, honestly pretty!"

Somehow, that was the best compliment I ever had in my life.

"I am proud to be with you," he went on, "and mother isn't here. I'm travelling for pleasure. You walk up and down here, while I get out of this morgue outfit, and if I catch you flirting, back to the pen you go."

When he was gone, I turned quickly, and went to a newspaper office. I had not seen a newspaper for a year. They were not allowed in the convent. I got the file of back numbers from a polite young man, and turned to the past September.

. . . . . .

"Yesterday, an unknown man was found dead in a room at the Hotel Gilbert. He had evidently committed suicide by poison, for a glass lay beside him, part of the contents spilled on the floor. He had died alone, and without outcry, for there were men across the hall—a party of labouring men, drunk and noisy. There was no scrap of paper on the unfortunate man to identify him. Evidently he was a Mexican, a

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stranger in the city. The coroner deemed an inquest unnecessary, and the body will be buried to-day. A woman's fine handkerchief, scented with violet, and marked with 'S' or 'L,' perhaps a 'J,' was found near his door, but, as the adjoining room had not been tenanted, this will not serve as a clue, but only add to the mystery of the Mexican's death, and afford a theme for a romance."

. . . . . .

If these words were not all there was in the paper, they were enough for me. That was my handkerchief. I thought of it at the police-station, with revolvers, and blood-stained knives, and the trumpery left by murdered men, those pitiful relics of starved lives. Yet my heart leaped because the man was not known, and no mention was made of my going there. Evidently the landlord had forgotten me in the excitement of the tragedy. Someone touched me as I walked along the street, and I almost screamed.

"You are getting awfully haughty," laughed Jim. "You had better drop your airs with those that know you."

"It's the bad food at school," I giggled hysterically.

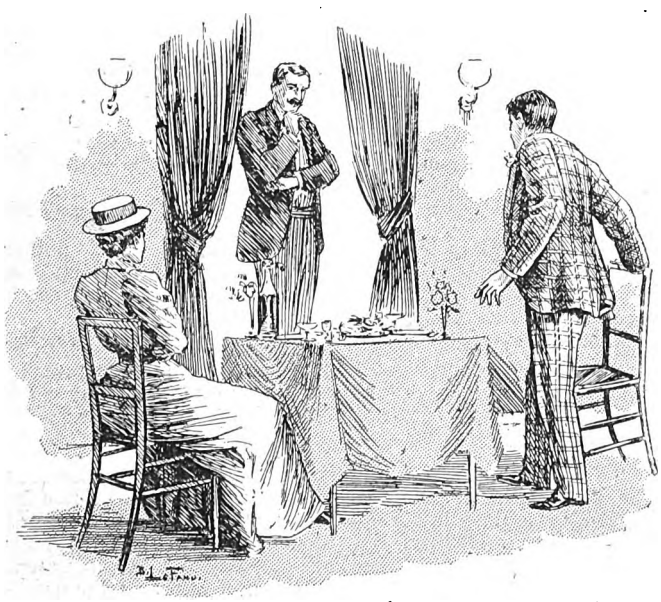
"We'll eat, then," said Jim, dragging me off to a restaurant.

CHAPTER V.

AFTER a meal, where we took almost everything on the bill of fare, Jim, with many airs, engaged a victoria—a dejected sorrel horse with a limp, and a red-faced and aged driver, who looked on us with much benevolence. We jolted over the rough cobble stone pavement until I was hoarse from trying to talk above the rumble, and every bone in my body ached.

Then, in a dark and guilty way, we went to a fair, where we saw nothing but a fat woman, a fuzzy-haired girl, and a melancholy happy family of monkey, cats, and dogs; but that made me feel very free and daring all the same. Then to a matinée at the theatre. What dreams of going on the stage I had afterwards, when I, Letty Lombard, would be a great actress and make people cry. I have performed so many strange parts in my girlish dreams, but no such sad drama as my life actually held.

What a golden day that was, for we were young and merry! I had lived for a year among such sombre folk, and even now, after all my history, I clutch all the joy I can, as I do when I may roam in the garden and pick flowers at will—I want my arms full. Jim was so good that day, too, and he did not murder a man nor live in a dark mystery. "What does it matter," I used to say, "if I take a sinful joy in vain pleasures to-day, by-and-bye I will be as old as Justina and as wrinkled,



There, standing at the door, was John Scott.

and then I can repent and stay there, for I shall not be tempted."

"How pretty you are," said Jim as we came out of the theatre; "your eyes are so dark and blue, and your cheeks are pink. By Jove, I wish some of the fellows could see you."

I squeezed his arm a little, with a happy giggle, for any girl knows, when a young man wishes the fellows could see her, she must be looking very well indeed. Even Jim at that moment did not seem so freckled, and I could have been bound his hair was a beautiful auburn.

"Let's eat again," he said, "before you go back to prison."

We went to a café where there was a pleasant little room off the big one, and here we ordered a delicious meal. Jim put on an air of surfeit, as if he were a finished gourmand with the expensive education of an epicure.

"Devilled crabs," he said. "H'm, they may be passable, but you get the best only in New York and at C——'s, in Washington." He patronised the waiter so severely that when the man went to the kitchen I had to say:

"You will let the poor man live, won't you, Jim?"

"Why is it," remarked Jim sadly, "that women get vinegary, get edgery. You need more of our society, miss, us men."

"We don't get it in convents," I laughed. "Oh, Jim, that won't do," I cried, as he ordered a wine card; "it looks so fast."

"One pint of champagne," he said indignantly, "the idea! Why, I know girls in New York that drink a pint at every meal."

Alas! how I envied those girls, and resolved to be as nearly like them as possible.

"To think," said Jim, leaning back in his chair, "that you and I hate John Scott, and yet here we are living well on his money, wearing good clothes, and otherwise enjoying ourselves at his expense."

"That isn't very good taste, that speech," I put in.

"You may as well admit it, Miss Vinegar."

"All right," I said, lifting my glass, "let's drink to him, to the health of Mr. John Scott."

We clicked our glasses. "To the health of——" repeated Jim; then he jumped to his feet, looking very red and confused. "Great Scott!" he ejaculated, and not till afterwards did I think how funny that was. There, standing at the door, looking at us with that hateful smile, was the man himself, John Scott. I did not rise, not I. I sat there cool and defiant. "Listeners seldom hear any good of themselves, Mr. Scott," I said icily.

"But I did," he said pleasantly; "were you not drinking my health?"

I saw him glance at the table where that guilty pint bottle, flanked by devilled crabs and charlotte russe, stood in shameless effrontery. "May I not join you?"

"Of course," I answered rudely; "your money pays for it." Jim only stood there, looking crushed.

"So I heard Jim say," continued Mr. Scott; "I came like Banquo's ghost, but don't let me spoil your banquet."

"We had done," I said, finishing my champagne. "I get so little palatable food at the convent, Mr. Gregory was kind enough to rescue me from absolute want by a meal I could eat."

"And yet you look," said Scott, with those hateful eyes, smiling, "actually and vulgarly fat."

I made no reply but a haughty stare; Jim gulped down a few mouthfuls. "Shall I order more wine?" asked Mr. Scott pleasantly.

We looked at each other in ghastly indecision. What was he going to do? "Let's make a night of it," he went on, in an airy way; "let me see—a drive about the city, the fair, the theatre—what is there for this evening?"

"I think you are a fiend, Mr. John Scott," I cried bitterly.

"And yet I am a mild and well-mannered person," he smiled, "quite acceptable at banquets in spite of my cloven foot. But joking aside, Jim, it was not right to take her to the fair, nor to this place. I don't mind the theatre, nor did I tell the nuns of the forged letter, but you must try no more artifices of the kind.

"Remember a girl's reputation is as delicate as a camelia, one touch and the fair white leaves are blackened for ever.

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This place and the wine were very wrong. I pardon you because you knew no better. I am sorry to spoil your fun; I don't like the character you force me to play; but I cannot help it. Say good-bye to Letty now. I shall see that you have no chance to meet her until she is out of school."

"I don't see why you should constitute yourself her guardian," Jim muttered.

"Well, I am, nevertheless; truly, you angry children, I am sorry for you—and mean you well, though you hate me so bitterly."

He might have looked to a stranger fairly handsome, might Mr. Scott then, with that pleading look in his eyes, the half-pathetic smile on his lips.

I went to Jim to say good-bye. "We had a happy day, that he can't take away," I whispered.

"We'll outwit him yet," said Jim, almost hopefully. "Look out for letters from Aunt Martha," and with those mysterious words he departed. I slowly put on my gloves, Mr. Scott watching me all the time.

We walked along in silence. It was a balmy starlit night, odorous with flowers, and soft and warm. How happy I should have been with Jim; and what an ending to our day!

A crowd of drunken men passing us pushed me rudely, and John Scott, with a little gesture of authority, took my arm.

"Oh," I cried in my fright and anger, "don't put your dreadful hand on me." He started as if he had been stung, let me go, and we walked in silence to the convent gates; there he stopped and looked me steadily into my face.

"You are an enigma. I cannot fathom you, Violet. I am sorry you hate me. I should have liked to be your friend. Good-bye." He left me then, and I did not see him nor anyone from home for another long year.

During this time I received curious and ill-spelt letters from my Aunt Martha, and these seemed to me so seriously dull they were given to me unread by the nuns. "Dearest Violet," one ran, just before I returned home, "James Gregory's brother Dean is home from Paris. He is a very fine man, and the house is quite gay. The funeral urn (his name for John Scott) is still there in its place, awakening sad memories of the past. I look forward to your coming home. I have arranged a series of intellectual, entertaining and moral festivities to amuse you," &c. I used to think those letters the very acme of wit and humour.

"Promise me you will not see him again."

At last my schooldays were over, and on the very morning I was to go home a sour-faced and yellow-skinned woman came, introduced herself as Miss Wilson, of Galveston, and showed credentials to the effect that she was sent by Mr. Scott to escort me home, as my aunt, Miss Collier, was too ill to come. I hated Mr. Scott for a long, dreary year when I was carefully watched, and this elderly and uncomfortable person increased my dislike.

In the train I certainly looked very nice, in a new grey dress, with a bunch of red roses in my belt; and I saw a handsome and well-clothed gentleman looking at me. He finally stared so intently that I coloured and turned my face away. The dragon was reading a book of essays with one eye on me. "You had better sit here," she snapped.

"Why?" I asked innocently, opening my eyes wide. I knew she would not ride backward. Then that impudent stranger actually came to our place and lifted his hat.

"I beg your pardon," he said, addressing Miss Wilson, "but I know your face so well. Is that not Mrs. Scott's sister, Miss Violet?"

"Yes," said Miss Wilson, in refrigeratory tones, "and you, sir?"

"Dean Gregory, and I know you are the Miss Wilson my mother esteems so highly" (I saw him read her name on her book), "the teacher of philosophy at the Ladies' Home Culture Club."

How she bridled and perked up! She knew Mrs. Gregory; such culture, such a mind; and after a gush of information and polysyllables, she thought of and introduced me. I saw Colonel Gregory was of medium size, well-formed, with dark skin and black eyes. His hair and moustache were carefully trimmed, his clothing fashionable, but he wore more diamonds than a gentleman should, I thought. He had a handsomer face than his cousin, John Scott, but not such a thoroughbred air, and that remark savours of Jim; but I can only explain that John Scott was such a perfect gentleman you never noted anything about him.

But what a jolly companion Gregory was—so full of anecdote and so good humoured! He found better seats for us, and told us about the landscape; and when Miss Wilson had dropped into a doze, taught me a new game of cards that seemed simple enough until he explained that it was a wicked gambling game, called faro. Then I regret to say it had a deadly fascination for me.

"A good start for a little convent maid," he laughed.

I made some little joke about Pharaoh, and then hung my head.

"There is a strain of wildness in the Lombard blood," he said musingly; "not the old New England stock, but the new blood introduced when your grandfather married a Mexican woman. How those old Puritans must turn in their graves at Katherine, and now at you!"

Do you know, somehow, he had drawn out of me all my history save that night at the Hotel Gilbert.

"You see," he went on, "your grandfather must have been a bit livelier than the rest, to have run away. Then he married a Mexican woman who died early, otherwise he would have been killed off long ago. Your father was wild and unsettled, but in Katherine and you I see the old strain plainly."

"John Scott thinks her an angel," I said.

"You seem to care what John Scott thinks," he said lightly. "No woman is an angel; no, not one."

At Galveston, where the Scott carriage was sent for Miss Wilson and me, he squeezed my hand, and said he must see me again; that he could not forget me. My vanity was tickled, and I said some silly things, and then we were driven off.

After supper, when grandfather was busy with his roses, I sat in the porch with Aunt Marg, and somehow told her of my meeting with Dean Gregory. With a cry of horror, she turned to me and clutched my hand.

"Violet," she said, with a strange earnestness, "if you have any liking for me, any gratitude to your grandfather for your home, any goodness in you, you will avoid that man. Promise me on your honour you will not see him again, nor speak to him."

"Much as I hate mysteries, I will do as you say," I answered; "but he seemed very kind."

She looked at me pitifully. "I wish that you could give me your confidence, dear, now you are a woman. If we could only understand each other. Try to think of me as one who wishes your best interests. You have read many books, Violet, but in any book you may ever read, there is no pictured figure as black, as utterly without conscience or heart, as that man you met to-day, Colonel Dean Gregory."

(To be continued next week.)

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THE POWDER MINE.

AT five o'clock in the evening of the 21st of March, 1814, the English camp before the walls of Rocq was in a state of high excitement.

The town, a stronghold of Napoleon, lay on the French coast, not far above the mouth of the Gironde. It was protected on two sides by the nature of the ground, and at the rear was open to the sea. In front stood a massive bastion, which for fourteen days had bade defiance to the artillery of the English; but the sappers had been working day and night, and at last the tunnel of their mine had reached the bastion, and had broken unexpectedly into a cellar underneath it.

This cellar, belonging to a house which stood against the wall inside the town, was entered from the house above by a flight of spiral steps; so that the miners found themselves, to their dismay, open to discovery at any moment by the inmates of the house. They were compelled to trust to speed and silence to accomplish their design without disturbance, and so far all was well.

A store of bags of powder had been conveyed into the cellar, and everything was now in readiness for the explosion, which was to blow the wall into the air and leave a breach for the storming party to rush into the town.

Inside the mine—that is, inside the cellar of which we have been speaking—half a dozen men had just put the final touches to the preparations. The feeble gleam of a dark lantern, which scarcely served to show their faces in the gloom, glimmered on a ring of bags which occupied the middle of the floor, on the black and shining grains of gunpowder which filled them to the brim, and on the snake-like loops of fuse which linked them to each other.

This fuse, at one point, ran along the floor and ended in a piece of slow-match, near the spot at which the opening of the tunnel gaped blackly in the wall, like a gigantic rat's hole.

This match, lighted by the man selected for the duty, and the last to leave the mine, would smoulder for about four minutes. Then the terrific firework would explode.

One by one, five of the sappers passed into the tunnel and disappeared. The sixth, keeping the dark lantern with him, was left to wait until the passage should be clear before he touched the match and hastened after his companions.

The soldier in question was a young officer of seven-and-twenty—Lieutenant Hilary Vane. He wore the uniform of his regiment—short scarlet coat, blue trousers, and peaked cap—and was armed with sword and pistols. Though not exceptionally tall or broad in figure, he was noted among his companions for his feats of strength, as well as for his coolness and resource in danger—traits of character apparent in his plain, strong features, and in his steel-blue, fiery eyes.

A physiognomist might, perhaps, have detected in his features a sign of his chief failing, which was too great a readiness to act on impulse, without giving his calmer judgment time to speak.

On being left alone he leaned his back against the wall and waited. A minute passed—two minutes. Then he stooped, his ear to the mouth of the tunnel and listened intently. Presently from the other end came the faint report of a pistol shot; it was the signal that the passage was clear.

He turned to the spot where the fuse rested, and with his finger on the fastening of the lantern, was on the point of drawing back the slide in order to ignite the match which he held ready in his hand, when another sound struck his ears—a sound which froze the current of his blood.

Some one was coming down the cellar stairs!

The stair, as already mentioned, formed a spiral, so that only five or six of the lowest steps were visible. The lieutenant, with his finger on the slide and his eyes fixed upon the steps, remained perfectly motionless, waiting for the intruder to appear in sight.

One thought only occupied his mind. If he were discovered he would do his duty; he would fling the lighted match into the nearest bag, and blow himself and the intruder into the air together.

Even as the thought passed through his mind, he saw the twinkle of a candle, as its bearer turned the corner of the steps and came suddenly to view. The lieutenant caught his breath, The new-comer was a girl.

She came slowly down the steps, holding the candle low to see where she was treading, her face ringed round with darkness, shining out in its full light. She was young—perhaps seventeen—and as lovely as a picture. Every detail of her figure the lieutenant saw, or rather felt, burnt in a single instant indelibly upon his brain, as he stood, like a man petrified, with his eyes upon her.

A terrible dilemma was before him. True, his duty was as plain as ever; but he could not—he could not—send this beautiful young creature to a sudden and a dreadful doom. There was only one alternative—she must escape with him. He held himself in readiness and waited, silent as a figure cut in stone.

From the ease of her demeanour as she came down the stair it was clear that she had no suspicion of what had happened in the vault. At the bottom of the steps she stopped, and, with the candle raised above her head, was about to cross the cellar to a bin which stood against the further wall, when her eyes alighted on the bags of powder in the middle of the floor.

For a moment she stood still, gazing at them. Then she raised her eyes, and they fell upon the form of Hilary Vane, standing motionless before her in the gloom.

With a stifled shriek she turned towards the steps, up which in another moment she would have vanished, when Hilary, darting past her, placed himself between her and the exit. She shrank back, staring at the sudden apparition with large eyes wide with terror. He laid his finger on his lip.

"Not a sound, or all is lost," he said rapidly and eagerly in French, "This cellar is a mine, and we are going to blow it up. But fear nothing; you are safe." He pointed with his finger to the tunnel. "Escape instantly; that way; quick, quick! your life depends upon it."

She cast a swift glance at the tunnel; but, to his surprise, she did not stir.

"Quick!" he repeated, quivering with impatience, "there is not a moment to be lost. Quick! Quick!"

So far from obeying him, however, the girl, with a sudden rush of a wild creature, endeavoured to dart past him up the steps. With a movement as rapid as her own he barred the passage.

"Listen!" he said, speaking with a sort of fierce impetuosity. "I wish to save you, but by giving an alarm you risk not only my life, but the lives of my companions, who will return to ascertain what has gone wrong, and will be taken prisoners. Before that happens, I shall throw this light into the powder there, and end us both together. Come, be reasonable. Will you go?"

"No," she said; "no, no."

"But why?" he asked, astonished.

The girl wrung her hands in agony. "I cannot," she cried wildly; "my lover is lying wounded in the house above us. If he dies, I will die with him. I have only left him for a moment—the doctor sent me down to fetch a flask of brandy. Oh, sir," she cried, flinging herself suddenly at Hilary's feet, "spare him, spare him, for the love of heaven!"

Hilary paused, in trouble and perplexity.

"It is impossible," he said; "I cannot save him if I would. I can save you only. If I do not fire the mine, my companions will return and fire it.

"But by that time the cellar will be guarded by our soldiers, and your comrades will be seized as they come in.

"Yes, as I said, they will be seized. No, I cannot—I will not—betray my own companions. I would rather, as I told you before, throw this match into the powder. And you—you must not, you shall not—sacrifice your life without avail. No; you must come with me."

He advanced a step towards her, resolved to bear her through the tunnel and to save her in his own despite, touching the fuse, as they departed. But as he moved the girl stepped back a pace and raised the candle in her hand above a bag of powder.

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"Stop!" she cried. "I refuse, I tell you, to be saved alone. You have taught me what to do. If you try to take me, I will drop the candle."

Hilary drew back, petrified. The refusal of the girl doomed them both to death; yet even at that moment he experienced a relief that the act which sent her to destruction, had been taken from his hands.

But there was no method of escape; to delay—to parley—would be to risk the lives of his companions, who might return at any instant to see what was the cause of the delay. Drawing himself erect, he crossed his arms upon his chest, and, with his eyes still fixed upon the girl, said quietly:

"So be it. Drop the candle."

The girl stood motionless a moment, with her hands outstretched. A tremor shook her frame from head to foot. Then she shut her eyes, unclasped her fingers, and let the candle fall.

Had she kept her eyes unclosed, the candle would have fallen, as she intended, on the powder. As it was, it struck the margin of the bag and thence rebounded to the floor, where it was instantly extinguished, leaving the cellar in pitchy darkness.

Hilary drew back the slide of his dark lantern. By its gleam the two looked at each other. Both their faces were as white as ashes.

"Fortune is against you," said Hilary, after a silence. "You are the bravest girl I ever heard of, but you are fated to be saved, do what you will."

"Then fate must save my lover also," she replied.

"Come with me," he repeated urgently. "To refuse is madness. Quick, or it will be too late; my comrades will be coming back to see what is the matter——" He stopped abruptly, struck by an idea.

"Unless," he continued, speaking rapidly, as if reflecting—"unless I stop them. Yes—yes; it might be done. And yet! Well, yes, it will be a breach of duty, and if I were caught I should be shot for it, and, what is more, I should deserve my fate. But I must do it." He turned quickly to the girl. "Will you obey me?" he said earnestly.

She looked at him intently.

"Do you mean to save me only?"

"No. I shall try to save you both."

"Yes," she said. "I will obey."

"Then stand here, without moving till I return to you."

Drawing a clasp knife from his pocket, he approached the nearest bag, and with two swift cuts, divided the fuse which linked it to the bags on either side. Then, cutting off a piece of the slow match, and sticking it erect into the powder, he lifted up the bag with his left hand, and with the lantern in his right, he disappeared into the entrance of the tunnel.

For some seconds the girl could hear his movements growing fainter as he receded, until he seemed to be about a hundred feet along the shaft, when all sound ceased entirely for perhaps ten seconds; then he was heard hastily returning. When he emerged into the cellar he still held the candle, but the bag was gone.

"It is alight," he gasped, seizing the girl's wrist and drawing her rapidly towards the cellar steps, up which he hastened until the winding of the spiral shut them from the vault below. Then he stopped and listened eagerly.

For some seconds—perhaps half a second—all was silent. Then all at once there came the sound of an explosion; a blast of air rushed fiercely up the cellar steps; a thick smoke filled the vault. Then all was still.

"Wait," he said; "I shall return directly," and he disappeared into the cellar. Almost instantly he was by her side again.

"All is well," he said; "the explosion, as I hoped, has caused the sandy soil which roofs the tunnel to fall in. The passage is blocked, and no one can now enter. Now," he continued, "how long will it take you to remove your lover from the house?"

The girl considered. "Five minutes," she said.

"I will give you six. The doctor you will, of course, take with you. Is there anyone else in the house?"

"No."

"Anyone in the street outside?"

"Yes. The street is crowded with soldiers."

"They must take their chance. Now go. But if you give an alarm, and if I hear a step approaching, I shall fire the powder. If you follow my directions you and your lover will be saved."

The girl caught his hand in hers and pressed it to her lips.

"Heaven will reward and bless you," she said fervently. "You will never repent what you have done to-night."

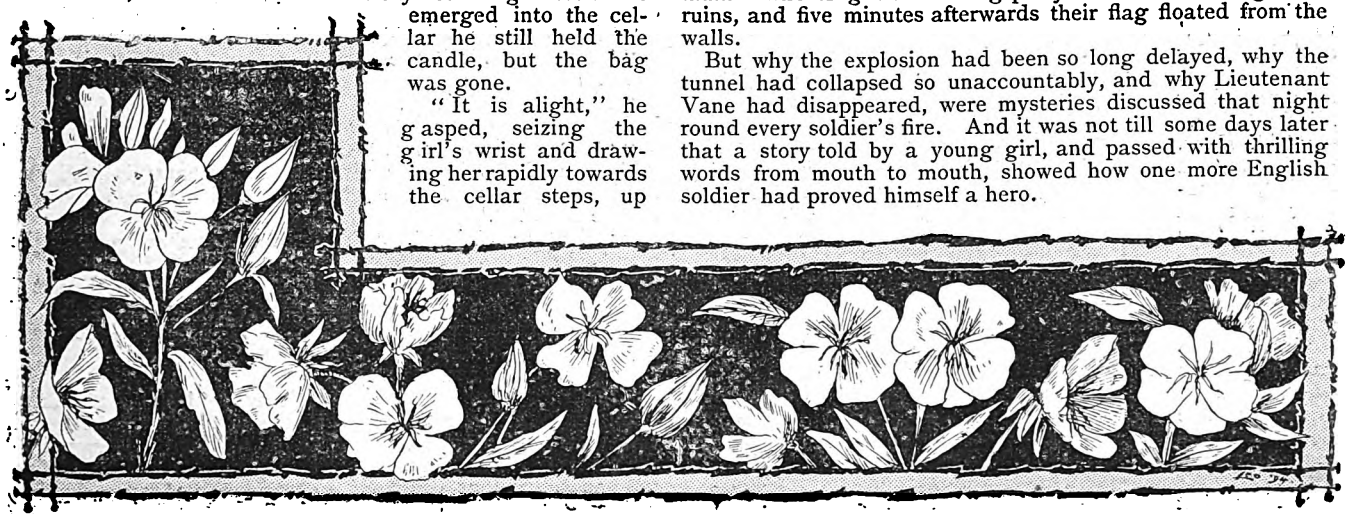
Hilary Vane looked after her as she turned away and darted up the steps, and he laughed a little bitterly. She took it for granted that he would save himself, and, at the worst, be taken prisoner. But he knew that nothing now remained for him but his duty—and to die in doing it. If, when he fired the fuse, he should dash up the cellar steps and escape into the street, the secret of the mine would be endangered. No; he had given the girl time to save her life and her lover's, but only at the sacrifice of his own.

He drew out his watch, placed it in the light, and stood motionless, with his eyes fastened on the dial, the match ready in his hand, and his ears stretched for any sound of steps upon the cellar stairs. But none came; and the girl had kept her part of the agreement. The hand crept forward on the dial. One minute passed—two—three—four—five.

A faint sound reached his ear from the tunnel of the mine; his comrades had returned as far as the spot of the explosion, and were striking at the *débris* with their picks. He almost smiled again as he thought of their bewilderment. Then he looked at the dial-plate; the hand touched the figure for which he had been waiting. He raised his hand which held the lighted match, and, setting his teeth hard, lowered the flame above the bag until it touched the powder.

The roar and crash of the explosion shook earth and sky for ten miles round, as the huge buildings leapt into the air in fragments, like a spadeful of gravel tossed up by a strong man. The English storming-party rushed in through the ruins, and five minutes afterwards their flag floated from the walls.

But why the explosion had been so long delayed, why the tunnel had collapsed so unaccountably, and why Lieutenant Vane had disappeared, were mysteries discussed that night round every soldier's fire. And it was not till some days later that a story told by a young girl, and passed with thrilling words from mouth to mouth, showed how one more English soldier had proved himself a hero.



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SILVER JOHN.

WE were all in Painter's rooms in the Temple. It was a hot night, and the Major had been sitting by the window, and had not opened his mouth once except for a drink. Then we pulled a chair into the middle of the room and dragged him into it. "Tell us how it was you left America, sir," said Painter, holding out a cigar box. The Major chose a weed deliberately, and this is the story he told:

"The town of Starbuck had sprung up immediately after the construction of the Mockton and Ashville Railway. It had become a country seat even before a plough, drawn by a yoke of steers, had done marking out the principal streets, and the first office building, made of unplaned pine woods, bore over the narrow entrance the following information: 'Geo. W. Babroid, Attorney-at-Law.'

"The blacksmith's shop, the nucleus round which the country town usually springs, had not been built when I wrote that sign with blacking and a paint brush.

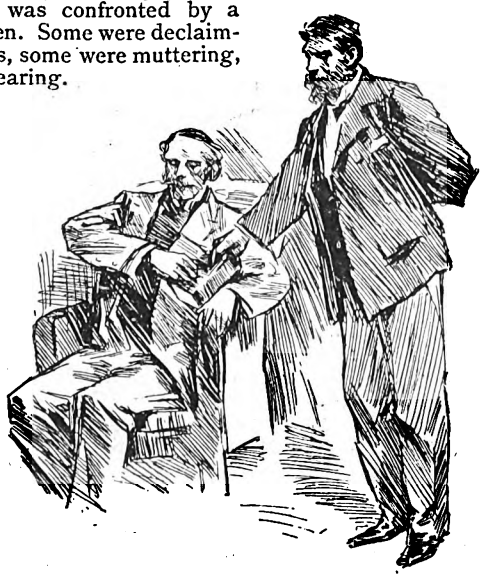
"A stranger, in commenting, in a good-natured way, upon the seeming haste in setting up a lawyer's office, said: 'I always thought that the lawyer was a sort of unavoidable evil of the old settlements; and never before had cause to suppose that he was a necessity to an embryo community.'

"'That's all well enough,' a lank fellow, leaning against a tree, answered, 'but mebby you don't know these here fellows like we do. We know mighty well that there's goin' to be a good deal of cuttin' an' shootin' here before many houses are put up, and as we air a law-abidin' set of folk, we'll want the lawyer to git us out of scrapes.'

"Well, one house went up after another, or, if you will, one house went up before another, until Starbuck had the appearance of quite a village. The blacksmith got down to his work, the justice of the peace stacked up his worthless books, and I pleaded the cause of the miscreant. I grew with my surroundings, and soon held a mortgage on a pretty fair crop of potatoes, grown by the man that had dug the town well, and who had, at an idle and dull time, stabbed the fellow that had stood on the top and received the buckets of clay.

"A courthouse was built, and other lawyers came and reared their edifices, and the scent of much necessary litigation was sniffed in the air, but no attorney, however aspiring he might be, tried to place himself upon a litigious par with your humble servant.

"One day, while the town was fitfully dozing under the glare of a mercilessly hot sun, a great commotion arose in the street. I sprang up from my pine table and hastened to the door. Here I was confronted by a party of noisy men. Some were declaiming in loud tones, some were muttering, and all were swearing.



"Tell us how it was you left America, sir."

"'We want to come in,' said the leader of the gang, addressing himself to me.

"'All right, gentlemen,' I replied, stepping back and bowing; 'you are all welcome—that is, as many as can get in.'

"The men eagerly pushed their way through the door, and the room was soon filled.

"'Now, what can I do for you?' I asked, when with difficulty I had found room enough in which to turn about and address the crowd. 'But before you proceed to explain, let me tell you most emphatically that I cannot consent to become a candidate for office.'

"Here I stopped and anxiously scanned the faces about me, and Dick Munday hastily declared that no one was thinking about asking me to run for office.

"John Cowerton."

"'We have come on a more serious business,' Munday continued. 'A feller comes to town this mornin' an' claims that he has a deed to this here lan', an' that we'll have to be driv off after we have built up our homes, an' we don't intend to do it, that's all. We don't intend to shed nobody's blood, but we don't want to give up our rights without some sort of a fight; so we thought that as you air interested along with the rest of us, an' knowin' that you air the best lawyer anywhar about, we would come to you an' ask you to put the thing in the court for us, an' see that it goes through all right.'

"'Gentlemen,' I responded, making as much of a bow as the limited space about me would admit, 'I thank you for the confidence you repose in me, and I assure you that it shall not be misplaced.

"'I thought that our titles to this land were perfect, and I believe now that they are. At least we shall see. Rest assured that I will do everything in my power to protect your homes. By the way, who is the party that sets up the claim?'

"'He is a swelled and fancy-lookin' feller from some city,' Munday answered.

"'All right; let him or his attorney confer with me. I will show him what it is to attempt such wholesale robbery.'

"That night a great indignation meeting was held. It was known that I had undertaken the fight of protecting the rights of the people, and a sort of song, not unlike a campaign hymn, was sung in praise of the champion.

"The next day, while I was sitting in my office, feeling thankful that I was soon to become the leading man of that part of the country, a portly, well-dressed individual entered the apartment.

"'Is this Major Babroid?' the visitor asked.

"'You have hit it the very first shot,' I answered. 'Sit down.'

"The visitor sat down, and taking out a bunch of papers, looked over the documents for a few moments, and then said:

"'I was not in this part of the country when your town was laid out, or I should have given warning that this land was not in the market. I have a deed here which I don't imagine can be disputed.'

"'Oh!' I exclaimed. 'You are the man that has brought about all this trouble—eh?'

"'I hope that I have not brought about any trouble, but I am assuredly the man that will bring about a decision of justice. I have often heard of you. You came here from Dabbs country, I believe?'

"'Yes, sir,' I assented.

"'I thought so,' my visitor continued. 'I say that I have often heard of you, and I must confess that from what I heard I was hardly prepared to find you so reckless with regard to the rights of others. I was told that you were a man of fine judgment, and that you stood a chance of one day occupying a place on the supreme bench of the State

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"'But I see that I have been wrongly informed, for, instead of finding you a man of judgment, I discover that you have taken a case that you cannot hope to win—a case in which justice will oppose you. What is your house and lot worth?'

"'Oh,' I began, slowly scratching my head, 'I should think that if we get another railway—and another one is talked of—my property here ought to be worth £300.'

"'Cost you £50, I suppose.'

"'Well, y—yes.'

"'Now, I'll tell you what I'll do. I could get any lawyer in the States; but the fact is, I want you—want a man who is identified with the place, so, if you will take up my case, I will agree to give you £300 for your property, and in addition a handsome sum when the case is won. What do you say?'

"'What is your name?' I managed to ask.

"'John Cowerton,' my visitor answered. 'Some people call me Silver John, but that's no matter. What do you say to my offer?'

"'Come back to-night.'

"'Very well,' said Silver John, 'but in the meantime please do not mention the fact that I have called on you.'

"There was no danger of my mentioning it. I went out, after the wealthy man was gone, and strode along the street. After all, why should I stand by the people of the town? What had they done for me? Did not I have to buy land, the same as the rest of them? By defending the town's people, I could at best save only my home; but by gaining the case for Silver John, I could sell my home for a good figure, or retain it, just as I liked, and, besides, secure a large sum in cash. I was a lawyer, and was looking for clients. And I had found one.

"Silver John was in time that night, and all the arrangements for the suit were made.

"'Now,' said the client, rising, 'I shall have to go, but I will see you again soon. Good-night.'

"You can imagine I did not sleep that night for dreaming of money and high places. I could tell the people that my regard for justice had driven me to the extremity of opposing them, and I felt that when they had thought over the situation they might not hold me in a loving grasp, but that they would not choke me in revenge. I had gone to bed, but was still musing, when I heard a great tumult in the street.

"'I wonder what that means?' I said, getting up, hastily putting on my clothes, and going to the door. Looking out I saw a dark, moving mass.

"'Come out of thar,' a voice shouted

"'That you, boys?'

"'Yes. Come out here.'

"'What do you want?' I asked in tones that trembled, for a half-suspected fear had seized me.

"'Want you.'

"The mass came nearer, and by the light shining through the doorway I recognised some of my neighbours.

"'Hello, boys, what can I do for you?'

"'We don't want you to do nothin' fur us. We want to do somethin' fur you. We ain't got time to explain much. You have sold yourself to th' inimy, and we air going to hang you.'

"'Great heavens, boys——'

"'Grab him. Hush yo' yollerin', ur we'll gag you.'

"They took me down by the spring branch where an oak leaned over the stream.

"'String him up here!'

"'Hold on!' demanded a big man, with a slouch hat drawn over his face. 'I am an officer of the law and want this feller—want to take him back to Tennessee. Let me have him,' I say.'

"The men fell back, and the big man, taking hold of the rope that had been tied about my neck, led me away. We crossed the clearing, passed through a skirt of woods, and then walked on, neither of us speaking.

"'What are you going to take me to Tennessee for?' I asked, breaking the long silence.

"'Hush!'

"On we went, and the darkness deepened, more and more, as if black curtains had been drawn to shield from sight the birth of a new day.

"'Sit down here,' said the big man, pushing me towards a log. Then I sat down, and the big man stood with his back to me. An owl scrambled into his hole, a dawn-bird twittered; it was daylight.

"The big man turned toward me as he said:

"'You don't know me?'

"'No, I don't believe I do.'

"'Dan Moore!'

"That made me start.

"'If you are Dan Moore, why did you wish to save my life? I drove you out of a Colorado town.'

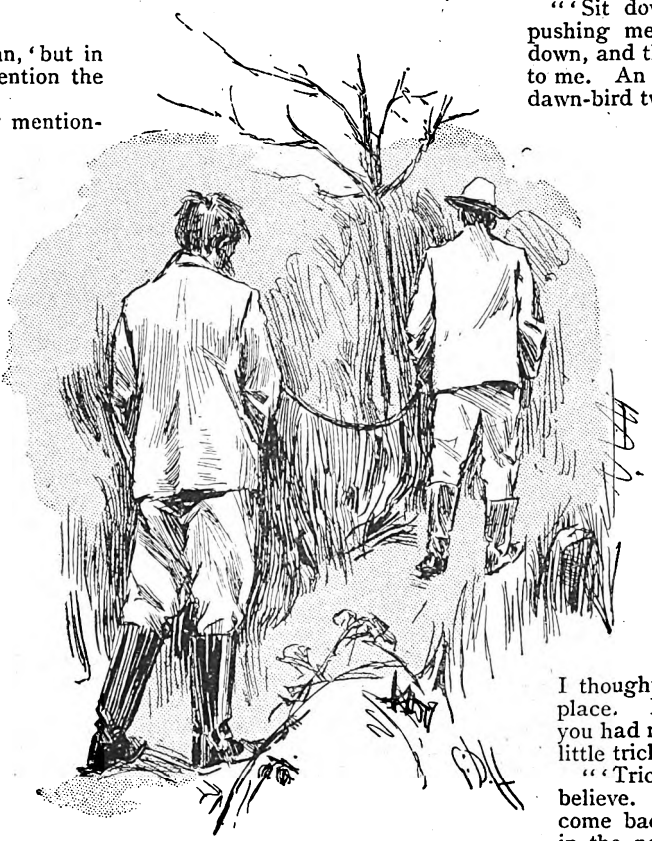
"'Yes, and I have driven you out of Starbuck. I am also Silver John, unwhiskered. I have never had any title to that land, and I merely started the report to stir up public feeling. I knew that I could get you to take up the case, and I also knew that those fellows would hang you, but I felt sorry for you at the last moment.

"'I saw that you would become the leading lawyer of the community, and as I am somewhat of a lawyer myself, I thought that I would like to take your place. But I couldn't run you out as you had run me, so I had to resort to a little trickery.

"'Trickery is permissible in law, I believe. Now, you may go; but if you come back to Starbuck, or even settle in the neighbourhood, I will make those fellows hang you. I have already made a settlement with the man who claimed their land,' he added, with a chuckle.

"'I hope you will have a pleasant journey. The weather is pleasanter than it was when I left a town at the muzzle of your pistol, listening to the howling of a hundred ruffians. You quite understand, I hope, that it will be safer for you to give this place a wide berth in the future. Don't let me detain you. Good-bye.'"

The major had finished. Painter thanked him solemnly and refilled his glass. But we never believed a word he said after that.



We passed through a skirt of the woods.

To prevent unnecessary labour, and consequent disappointment, to any readers of this paper, who in the past have forwarded original stories for insertion, we would take this opportunity of saying that our arrangements for the provision of matter for "Short Stories" are complete for some time to come.

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A MIDNIGHT ALARM.

DID I know Mrs. Westcott of the Manor? I should think I did. I was there from the time she was married until the establishment was broken up. And before that we had known each other as girls, though our positions, of course, were very different.

She was just twenty-one when she was married, and I was about a year older, and as I happened just then to be at home she was as pleased as possible to have me. It was reckoned that she had made a good match, as Mr. Richard Westcott was supposed to be very well-to-do. At any rate, he always rode fine horses, spent his money freely, and after the marriage would have the housekeeping go on in the most expensive style.

For the first two years I acted as Mrs. Westcott's maid, and then, when the first child, a boy, was born, I was made nurse.

Well, for the first three years they were married things went on all right, with plenty of fine parties and an open house to all comers, when suddenly a crash came, and it was found that Mr. Richard Westcott was by no means so rich as he had made people believe.

He had deceived his own wife as much as anybody, and it was a terrible blow to her to find that they were in debt right and left. As soon as she discovered how matters stood she set to work to straighten things as much as she was able. She was a little woman, and quiet too in her way, but she had the spirit and fire of fifty men, gentle as she seemed. She hated a debt worse than poison. She could wear a cotton frock and look a lady in it—aye, and was willing too, so that they could pay for it honestly—but to be dressed in fine clothes, and owe people money, was gall and wormwood to her.

Her first stroke was in housekeeping. Three servants out of the five received warning at once. She kept me and cook; and as all the company they used to see kept far enough away now that the junketing was over, we could manage the work easily enough.

Week in, week out, no one came to the house except Mr. George Westcott, Mr. Richard's uncle. He was an old bachelor, very rich, and very queer in his ways. He was a wonderfully outspoken old man too.

One day the master must have been asking him to help him, for he broke out right before me: "Look here, Dick," says he, "I won't either give you a penny or lend you a penny. When I'm dead your boy will get every farthing I own, but till then I won't part with a farthing, so don't bother me."

The master turned as red as fire and went straight out of the room. Old Mr. Westcott's fancy was to collect diamonds, and in that he was as odd as in everything else. Instead of having them bright and shining, he used to buy them when they looked like rough pieces of stone. I've seen him showing them to Mrs. Westcott, and saying they were worth hundreds of pounds, when all the while they didn't look worth a shilling.

He lived about five miles off, and when he intended to be away from home he would bring over a big leather case in which he kept these diamonds, and leave them in his nephew's care. This made Mrs. Westcott very uneasy, and two or three times she urged him to put them in the bank at Oakford, where they would be safer. However, he wouldn't hear of such a thing, and as they didn't wish to offend him they let him have his own way.

I remember well it was about a week before one Christmas when he drove over and left this case with them as usual, as he was off to France.

"I do wish he wouldn't do so," said my mistress. "It makes me very uncomfortable to have such valuable things in the house which are not our own."

Early the next morning I was cleaning the step when two rough-looking men came up and asked where the master was. As it happened, he crossed the hall as they were speaking, and came out at once. One gave him a paper to read, and no sooner had he looked at it than he turned as white as a sheet.

He drew the men aside and spoke to them for a few moments, and then they went away. "No longer than three days, sir, at the outside," said one of them, as he turned to go. It was evidently some other extravagance of his turning up and no money to meet the bill.

An hour afterwards I was passing the stables when I saw the master leading his horse, ready saddled, out into the yard.

"Jane," said he, "tell your mistress I'm going out on business, and may not get back before to-morrow."

To anyone but myself this would have seemed a most curious message, considering that the mistress was only just indoors, and he might have told her himself. But I saw where the land lay at once. He was going to beg some of his acquaintances to help him, and she would have died sooner than beg of any one.

He knew that well enough, and so he was slipping off without her knowledge.

That day the cook had obtained permission to go to Oakford to see her friends, returning, as it was some distance, the next morning, so that, unless Mr. Westcott returned, we should be quite alone for the night.

The short winter day went by, the evening began to close in, and he had not returned. In the afternoon the little boy had been rather feverish, and, as the evening wore on, he was worse, and both of us sat by him all the time. It grew later, and still Mr. Westcott had not come home. We were sitting in the night nursery when the clock struck eleven.

"Evidently Mr. Westcott is not coming back to-night, Jane," said my mistress, "so you may make the house secure."

She went round with me, and we saw every bolt and lock fastened, examining the windows carefully. In doing this we found that the window in a small room opening into the hall was unfastened and slightly open. I said at once that I had not left it like that.

"I must speak to Sarah about this," said Mrs. Westcott. "She must have been very careless to leave the window ajar in this fashion."

We made it secure and then returned upstairs. I had been going to put out the two big lamps in the hall when my mistress told me to leave them alight.

"I've heard that plenty of lights burning will make a good protection for a house," said she, "so leave them on, as if we were up." In a little while she said I might go to bed, and she would sit up with the baby awhile. I was not a bit sleepy, and I said so, and asked if I mightn't stay up in case anything should be wanted.

We had known each other so long that we were not exactly like an ordinary mistress and servant, so she agreed.

As I said, we were sitting up in the night nursery, which was immediately above the little room where we had found the window unfastened. Both rooms looked out on a small courtyard, which had no direct connection with the house.

It was about an hour later, when all of a sudden we both jumped and looked round at each other. What was that? We listened without drawing a breath. There it was again. Someone moving about quietly, but still we could hear their steps on the flags of the yard under the window.

It could not be Mr. Westcott, for there was no door there. Who was it?

If I live to be a hundred I shall never forget that moment I felt sick again with fright. "The diamonds," flashed into my mind like lightning. I knew they were in the house. I was so silly with fear that I hardly knew what I was doing, and I must have said "The diamonds" aloud, for my mistress said sharply, "Be quiet, Jane."

We strained our ears again. Whoever it was they were trying the window which we had found unfastened.

"There is someone trying to break into the house, Jane," said my mistress, as coolly as if it were quite the regular thing. As soon as her first start was over she was as calm as possible.

"Yes'm," said I, for I didn't know what else to say. The baby woke again and began to whimper. She took him up in her arms, laying her cheek down to his and quieting him.

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Then she carried him up and down the room, listening with all her might. Crash! My heart leapt into my mouth. The window below had been broken so that the catch might be reached from the outside.

It was certainly someone very well acquainted with the state of the house at the time, for the lamps were burning as brightly in the hall as if the whole household were at home and astir.

When my mistress heard the noise of the glass she stopped her walk and laid the baby again in his crib. Without a word she went out, and I followed to the door. I saw her go to a spare room at the other end of the corridor, where the master kept his guns and fishing-rods, and such like.

She was back in a moment with a rook rifle, do you call it? Yes; well, very likely that's what it was. I don't understand much about such things. Anyway, she'd got this gun and a box of the little brass cases you put in them. She knew what to do with it too. She opened it in the middle, as I've seen gentlemen do many a time, slipped in one of the cartridges, as you call them, and clicked it to. Then she stood again listening.

"Are you going to shoot them, 'm?" said I. She turned on me as short as could be.

"Why not?" says she as fierce as possible. "What's my baby done that these villains should come here to disturb, perhaps kill him? They came here of their own accord, and they must take the consequences."

While this was going on, the window below had been pushed wide open, and in another instant footsteps were heard in the room beneath.

"Jane," said Mrs. Westcott, "don't leave baby for a second." She gave him one kiss, caught up the gun, and went out. She had on soft bedroom slippers, which made no noise as she walked. Although she had given me strict orders to stop in the nursery, yet I couldn't help following her to see what would happen. I crept across the landing, and looked over the stair rail. It was quite plain at once what her plan was.

The room which had been broken into opened nowhere but into the hall, and from the middle landing of the stairs the door could be plainly seen. It was on this landing that my mistress had taken her stand, the gun pointed directly at the door. The lamps made the place as light as day.

I stood in the shadow above, my heart thumping against my ribs. It seemed hours and hours before the door was slowly and carefully opened. Then a man, in a long rough coat down to his heels, something black over his face, and a big, slouching hat, stepped out. He was alone, for he closed the door behind him.

"Stand there!" cried my mistress, in a deep, rough voice I should never have known for hers, levelling her gun with a sure aim. The man started in every limb, and looked up. He put his hand to his face as if to assure himself that the covering was there.

Whether his start disarranged it, or whether he hadn't been very handy at fastening it, I can't tell; but the stuff—it was a piece of velvet—slipped from his face and fell. For a second there was the deadest silence. Then my mistress gave a moan like some poor dumb animal. It was the master. It was Mr. Richard Westcott himself.

The stairs were winding, and from where I stood I could see both their faces. Never did I see such scorn and contempt shine in anybody's eyes as they did in hers that night. Never did I see such terror as his face showed. For a while she didn't move. Then she lifted the gun as if she would have shot him where he stood. He saw it too, and half raised his hands as if begging for mercy.

She dropped the weapon, then seized it madly again, and turned the muzzle to herself. Poor thing! I could see that she was beside herself with rage and shame at having such a husband, and didn't know what she was doing.

How the idea came into my mind I can't say, except that I am a woman myself, but I flew back into the nursery. The baby had gone comfortably to sleep, and lay there, one little fist tucked under his cheek, and the other lying out on the coverlet. I never stopped an instant, but—it was black and blue the next morning—I pinched his fat little arm with all my might.

He woke up and began to scream, I can promise you, and before you could turn round in flew my mistress, flung me away from the crib as if I had been a feather, and whipped him up into her arms.

"Go to bed at once, Jane," said she sharply; "there's nothing the matter."

"This riddle isn't very hard to read," thought I, as I undressed and got into bed. "Mr. Westcott meant to rob his own house of his uncle's diamonds, unless I'm very much mistaken." I listened for a while, but not a sound was to be heard anywhere in the house; and in a little time I went to sleep.

The next morning Mr. Westcott came down to breakfast with as natural an air as if he had let himself in with his latch-key the night before. My mistress had spent the night in the nursery with the little boy, and never a word did she ever say to me about our midnight alarm. Neither of them ever suspected that I knew what I did, and I was careful to hold my tongue.

From that day on she shrank from her husband, and clung more and more to the child, and for his part he always seemed to watch her with a sort of stealthy fear.

Six months later the little boy died very suddenly, and after that Mrs. Westcott never held her head up again. She pined and pined until she took to her bed, and three months to the very day after her child died she died herself.

I was alone with her at the time, for the nurse was down-stairs. I called her, then went to the dining-room where Mr. Westcott was. He was sitting near the window trying to look mournful, but when he saw the tears running down my face, for I had known her since we were children, he sprang from his chair. I shall never forget his face. The look of relief that leapt into his eyes—the rascal! He couldn't have kept it back for a thousand pounds—and the great sigh which broke from him showed plainly that his own skin was more to him than fifty wives.

It was all gone in a flash, and then he put his handkerchief up to his face. People who didn't know him were dreadfully sorry for him, for he did take on about it as natural as possible.

When the funeral was over I cleared out of the place bag and baggage, as quickly as I could, and I've never set eyes on him since.

What became of him? Oh, in about a couple of years he married a Miss Blake from Ufford way, and they went out to Australia, sheep-farming or something; got a host of children, too, I've heard. Old Mr. Westcott, his uncle? Lor' bless you, he's alive now, and lives at Brighton. He's over ninety years old, but they tell me he's as lively as ever and vows he'll live to be a hundred.

A MAN'S

first duty to his wife is to make her happy. If you ask her what happiness is, she will say—that is if she is addicted to telling the truth—the enjoyment of a companion whom she can consult on domestic matters when in doubt, and with whom she can spend her spare moments gleaning information. Her husband can't be expected to play this *rôle*. He is

A MAN,

with plenty to occupy his mind, without discussing the subject of cooking, or of ornamenting the fireplace. But he can buy her a pennyworth of happiness every week if he so chooses,

FOR A' THAT

Home Notes aims at is to be a perfect companion to a woman, no matter what her station in life may be.

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SEPTEMBER has many lovers. Its cool, clear days are a refreshment to poor humanity, after it has borne patiently (or impatiently) with the blazing August sun. Everybody gladly leaves the Alps or the seaside to return to the plain, where the trees hang full of luscious fruit, and where the grapes weigh the vines almost to the ground.

All know Verona, with its monuments and its glorious old palaces; and who does not like its wines and peaches? Never had there been a more promising year than 1882. Everyone was rejoicing, and even the poor were looking forward to a small share in the good harvest of the rich.

A stonecutter was living in a poor, very poor, two-storey house, not far from Verona, on the Adige. No one sees the Adige for the first time without some sensation of fear. It looks so angry, with its muddy water, rushing past, as if it hunted after some fleeing criminal. But the stonecutter had no such fear. All he cared for was to have a roof for his wife and three children, and he was proud to own those four walls, which he called his home. His wife was a gentle, good woman, and might have been very helpful to him; but unfortunately a sick child kept her at home, and she could only assist her husband by being neat and economical—if extreme poverty can be economical.

Two boys did their best to aid their father and mother, and in their small way succeeded in earning a few pennies here and there. One had found a purse one day, and hastened with it to Verona, where he had deposited it in the hands of the police. The reward given had helped buy a good bed for the little invalid, and it seemed a godsend. And now this year, in their make-believe little garden, a few vines were bearing grapes, oh, so beautiful, so nearly ripe! The boys would not touch one of those grapes. They were all—all to be for Maria the invalid. The boys actually believed the grapes might cure their little sister.

But this September of '82 began with rain. It rained and rained, and suddenly a cry of terror struck the whole Venetian territory, and part of Lombardy. The inundations had begun. The rivers rose from hour to hour, and the night, the night of horrors came when the Adige left its bed and rushed wildly through country and city, carrying with it all that attempted to hinder its wild course. Ruins of all kinds were floating, animals in a last attempt at saving themselves, beds, tables, trees—all passed, showing the terrible ravages of the angry flood. The country was one vast lake. Trains had ceased running, bridges had crumbled, and no telegram could be sent to soothe anxious hearts. Nothing but destruction was to be seen everywhere between Venice and Verona.

Troops were sent to help; boats came from all parts, and everybody lent a hand to aid the half-distracted population. The king hurried to the unhappy cities, and he was seen helping and encouraging soldiers and officers. The houses nearest the river were naturally the most in danger. The misfortune came so quickly and so unexpectedly that even the stonecutter had left home in the morning for his work which lay at quite a distance from his house. Late in the afternoon he heard the terrible tale from a soldier, who was passing rapidly with a message. The poor man stood for a moment, paralysed with terror and gazing helplessly at the grey sky. Would he reach his house in time? "Oh, my poor, poor wife!"

A hot, burning tear rolled over his blanched face. He tried to walk, but he was almost as powerless as his little Maria. Sinking on his knees, he prayed with his whole heart: "Oh, help us, good God!"

As if his prayer had been heard, the sound of a carriage came distinctly to him. When it reached him, his hands went up in a desperately pleading gesture to the two gentlemen sitting in it. Without waiting for the horses to stop, one of them jumped out and, lifting the poor man up, asked: "What is it?"

The stonecutter in a few words told his anxiety. Before he had finished, the gentleman had helped the poor man into the carriage, which had come to a halt, and making him sit near the coachman, said! "Tell him where you live," and he added, "*Presto*, Piero, go as fast as your horses will go." What had seemed impossible to the stonecutter was easy work for the two beautiful horses. But soon the wheels were partly covered by water, and as far as the eye could reach was water, nothing but water.

The heart of the wretched father became again utterly hopeless. He covered his eyes, in order not to see such desolation. Suddenly, mingled with the noise of the water, he heard cries for help, Looking up, he saw a woman struggling through the water and trying to hold a little child above it. A sharp "Stop!" and in a moment his benefactor was half wading, half swimming through the flood, and in a few moments the exhausted woman was lifted with her child into the carriage. A few yards further on, and, with a cry of pleasure, the stonecutter saw his own house in the distance. But his joy was very short. The water had reached the first story and would soon reach the second, even if the house stood firm. If only a boat were at hand!

"Unharness one horse, Piero," ordered the master of the carriage, and then turning to his companion, an officer with whom he had been exchanging words of deep interest and anxiety all the time, he said in a friendly, but decided tone: "You will ride to Verona, Count, and order a boat to come this way at once."

The count jumped immediately from the carriage, mounted a horse and fairly flew over the flooded street. Meanwhile, the sharp eyes of the poor father had more guessed than seen three figures on the roof of the house. He suddenly thought of the little Maria, who usually lay in the first-floor room, and a cold chill struck him to the heart. Yes, there were three figures on the roof, all of them shouting for help. His Maria, his sweet little girl, must be lost, drowned in that terrible water, which seemed to rise every minute.

He turned his pale face to the inside of the carriage. He saw how the gentleman had taken off his overcoat and was wrapping in it the mother and child whom he had saved, and was trying to comfort her. She was telling how she had come out to gather herbs for a drug-store and had suddenly been

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Sinking on his knees, he prayed with his whole heart.

surprised by the waters. She fled, until she felt her drenched skirt drawing her down to sure death. "And now," she said, "I am saved, saved with my angel!" and kissing her child passionately, she looked gratefully at her saviour. But he scarcely heard her, for he was now standing up, watching intently for the boat, which, though it had to come from Verona, up the river against the rushing current, must soon reach the spot. The water was invading the second floor of the house, and a cry of terror came from the man, who was almost losing his mind at seeing his dear ones so menaced.

"Courage, my man, courage! I see the boat coming," the gentleman exclaimed. And so it was. Six soldiers were rowing with all their might against the fury of the torrent. A man stood in their midst, leading and directing their efforts. But, oh, what slow progress. Will they never reach the house? Will the angry river get its prey? Will his dear ones die before the eyes of the distracted father?

They all stand up in the carriage, watching every stroke of the soldiers, breathless, unable even to utter a sound. The water rises, rises; and they see the women bend in terror over the border of the roof, as if to calculate how long the agony is to last. The horse neighs, and in the distance another neighing is heard. It is a soldier returning with the missing horse.

"There is danger!" he calls. "Turn the carriage!"

But his call is not heard, and receives no answer. A white, agonised face turns from the house. It has seen the boat. It is just high enough for the boys to jump in; but no, they refuse, and so does the mother. The house seems to shake under the power of the water. But what is that? Two soldiers leave the oars; one jumps on the shoulder of the other, and with a sign seems to say that he is steady. The leader clings easily upon this human pole and reaches the roof with a daring jump. He bends, and, lifting a form from it, gives some orders to the soldiers. A cord is thrown to him. He ties it strongly to the chimney, and then begins the dangerous descent. But he is young and brave, and God helps the brave.

The little girl is tenderly deposited in the bottom of the boat. He returns once more; the mother wants her other children saved first. Lastly he descends with her own slight weight supported by his arm. Looking up he gives rapid orders. The oars fall in the water, and now the current carries them rapidly toward the carriage.

The soldier meanwhile has harnessed the horse. At a distance, the boat stops. The water is too shallow to row further. The young officer unhesitatingly jumps out, and half wading, half swimming, reaches the carriage.

"For heaven's sake, Piero," he cries, "ride as fast as you can!"

Then turning to the stonecutter, "The soldiers will take your family to Verona to the hospital. We will find them there."

But the water is deep. The horses are frightened, and it takes all the skill of the old coachman to reach the dry part of the road. A loud crash behind them makes them shiver. The house is gone; they all know it. The stonecutter sits as if stunned; he hears and sees nothing. Can he ever forget the agony of this day! And the poor woman holds her baby tighter to her breast wondering who this powerful saviour is.

Soon they reach Verona, and drive up to the hospital. The young officer helps the woman to alight, speaking, as he does so, a few words hurriedly to the janitor. The man looks up and, taking off his cap, he directs the woman where to go and get dry clothes. She turns to thank her benefactor, but he is looking sadly away, and she dares not speak.

The stonecutter descends, and, hat in hand, he says only: "Grazia." His heart is full, for he sees his wife coming up the street, followed by a soldier carrying a little form tenderly wrapped in his jacket. The boys rush up, and, before he can speak again, the carriage with the two gentlemen has left.

The next day a manservant inquires after the whole family in the hospital, and leaves an envelope for the happy father. It holds a yellow bank-note—five hundred francs! The poor stonecutter wishes he could thank his benefactor, but he remains unknown to him. Perhaps, if he should go to Rome some day, he might find him in King Humbert's palace. If not there, he will be sure to find him where Italy is suffering.

He was now standing up watching intently for the boat.

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A DECEPTIVE DREAM.

"My dear, I have had an extraordinary dream."

Mr. Arnold Carewe spoke with solemn emphasis, a tone of gravity in his voice.

Scene, the sunny breakfast room of the Carewes; time, nine in the morning one clear, cold winter day. Mrs. Carewe glanced over the top of the silver coffee urn at her liege lord, with a look of mild interest in her deep, dark eyes.

"A dream! Why, Arnold, I thought you did not believe in such things!" she exclaimed. Then, at the sight of the gravity of his face, her own grew concerned. "What was it?" she eagerly asked.

"Well, of course, it was only a dream," returned Mr. Carewe, "but, to say the least, it was odd that I should dream the same thing over—in every particular—exactly three blessed times last night. It seemed a little odd, to be sure. Besides, I dreamed that I am to die upon a certain day, and at a certain hour. My dear, I shall not tell you when, for it is not far distant, and the knowledge of it might make you nervous, even though it is only a dream—and therefore not infallible."

Breakfast over, Arnold Carewe went to his office. It was Carewe & Carewe—a well-known law-firm—and Arnold was senior partner; his brother Jack comprised the rest of the firm.

As he entered the office, Jack, seated at a tall desk, glanced up with a strange look.

"I say, Arnold, I had a dream about you last night which made me a trifle uneasy," he began, "and as you are a little late this morning, I was beginning to fear that something was amiss. Had you not come in as you did I intended taking a cab and going up to your house. Glad you're all right, old fellow!"

"A dream"—aghast. "So had I. What did you dream, Jack?"

"Well, seeing you are all right, I'll tell you," returned Jack. "I dreamed that you are to die—don't look so pale, old boy; you are not dead yet, but a long way from it—I dreamed that you were to die on the 10th of January, exactly three weeks from to-day."

Arnold Carewe sank into a seat, and looked faint.

No wonder! That was the exact date which his dream—three times repeated—had indicated. But he controlled his nervousness, and turned to his brother, with affected amusement.

"Perhaps you dreamed the hour, too, while you were about it!" he jocosely observed.

"So I did. January 10th, as you will see by glancing at yonder calendar, comes on Tuesday. My dream said that at twenty minutes past two, precisely, on Tuesday, January 10, you would depart this life!"

Arnold Carewe started to his feet, trembling like a leaf. No wonder, for it was his own dream, in every particular. It seemed incredible. But he decided to say nothing to his brother as to the purport of his dream, but to patiently wait, and make all preparations for the great finale.

For a man to find that he has exactly three weeks—twenty-one days—in which to live is a very odd sensation. The murderer condemned to the scaffold feels very much as Arnold Carewe felt in the days that followed. He went about like a man in a dream. He first "set his house in order," making his will, attending to the various affairs of his business, paying off debts, doing all that he could, with a sort of satisfaction, to make it easier for the wife and little ones, soon to be left alone. They would be well provided for—that was a great blessing.

He became very devout also. Every day he read the prayers in his little family circle; and attended divine service on Sunday; feeling a shudder of nervous dread run over him when the second Sunday had gone, and he knew that only one remained to him.

It was wonderful how tenaciously the idea clung to his mind—the positive belief that he was a doomed man, marked by Death as his prey. How gentle and kind and tender he was to all at home. Perhaps, if more people could develop a similar hallucination it might be better for the peace of many a household. To be ever-preparing for the great event would keep us gentler and kinder and more considerate.

Looking back upon that time, in after years, Bessie Carewe was obliged to admit that it was the happiest, most peaceful time of all her married life. But, of course, she knew nothing of her husband's firm belief in his approaching demise. She had, in fact, forgotten all about Arnold's odd dream, and he had not explained to her its horrible exactness.

The days went by. The Christmas holidays—sad and sweetly solemn to the man who felt that they were the very last he should ever see upon earth—were gone, and the seventh day of January had come. Carewe now discarded his watch, placing it in his dressing-case. He did not wish to see a timepiece. Only seventy-two hours between him and the great Unknown!

So, carefully avoiding every timepiece, making all possible efforts to forget the fatal and fast-approaching hour, Arnold Carewe waited.

The 10th of January came at last—a bright, winter day.

He arose in the morning, after a sleepless night, saying to himself:

"My last day on earth! God help me!"

He looked so pale and worn, and so evidently ill, that his wife begged him to remain home from the office that day.

As that was what he had secretly intended doing, he consented.

As the fatal hour drew near—for he imagined it to be near the time—he made his way to the pretty guest-chamber and lay down upon a soft couch. A fire had been kindled in the grate and the fire was warm and cheerful. Over the fireplace, upon the marble mantel, a tiny clock was standing. Arnold Carewe turned his eyes resolutely away from it. He did not wish to know the exact moment. So he lay there, and gradually a slow feeling of torpor began to steal over him. His wife came into the room, and with her the two pretty children—he had told her to bring them. He took the loved ones in his arms and strained them to his heart in a passionate farewell, all the more solemn because he dared not tell Bessie that he believed himself to be dying. He was conscious of a feeling of gratitude that he had been warned in time.

After a time Bessie took the children away. Then she returned to his side with a glass of wine.

"Here, dear, drink this," she said sweetly; "it will help you!"

He obeyed her, and then lay watching the graceful figure as she moved about the room.

At last his eyes, in spite of his determination to the contrary, wandered to the clock and rested there.

Good heavens! Ten minutes past two!

"Bessie," he moaned feebly, "come!"

Then all grew dark before his eyes; he felt like one stepping softly away—then darkness fell.

"Arnold! Arnold! wake up! I am afraid you will sleep too long! It is six o'clock!"

Bessie Carewe bent over his prostrate form, and Arnold Carewe opened his eyes.

"Am I in heaven?" he gasped.

"Dear me—no! You have been asleep ever since half-past two! I gave you a dose of my sleeping medicine in that glass of wine. I know you have not slept for nights. Why, Arnold, what are you staring at?"

For he was sitting up now, gazing in the rosy lamp-light, at that clock.

Still ten minutes past two!

"Oh, yes," she laughed lightly; "the clock is broken."

. . . . . .

And Arnold Carewe has never believed in dreams since that day.

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	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
21	3 1 6	8 1 4	3 12 0	4 9 4
25	3 4 10	8 16 4	3 16 0	5 0 4
30	3 10 4	10 0 4	4 0 0	6 0 4
35	3 17 6	11 9 4	4 12 0	6 17 4
40	4 6 4	13 6 4	5 0 0	8 6 4
45	5 1 10	15 13 8	6 0 0	9 13 8
49	6 12 10	18 3 4	7 16 0	10 7 4

The full sum assured is payable at death. All premium-paying of ordinary members in the I.O.F. ceases at 70 years of age, when one-tenth of the amount assured is paid to them annually, the unexhausted balance being payable at death. The entrance fees are very moderate, a £100 policy costing 17s.; £200, £1 16s. 6d.; £400, £2 3s.; 600, £2 9s. 6d.; £800, £2 16s.; and £1,000, £3 5s. Court Dues (10s. to 12s. per annum) have to be paid by each member.

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ONCE BOUGHT, ALWAYS BOUGHT.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 288.—Vol. X. FOR WEEK ENDING JULY 7, 1894. [Price One Penny.

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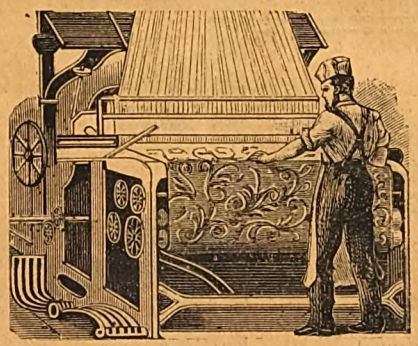

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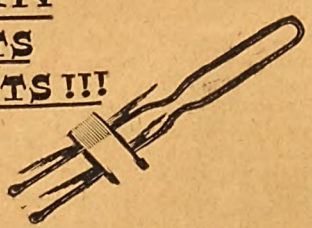

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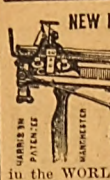

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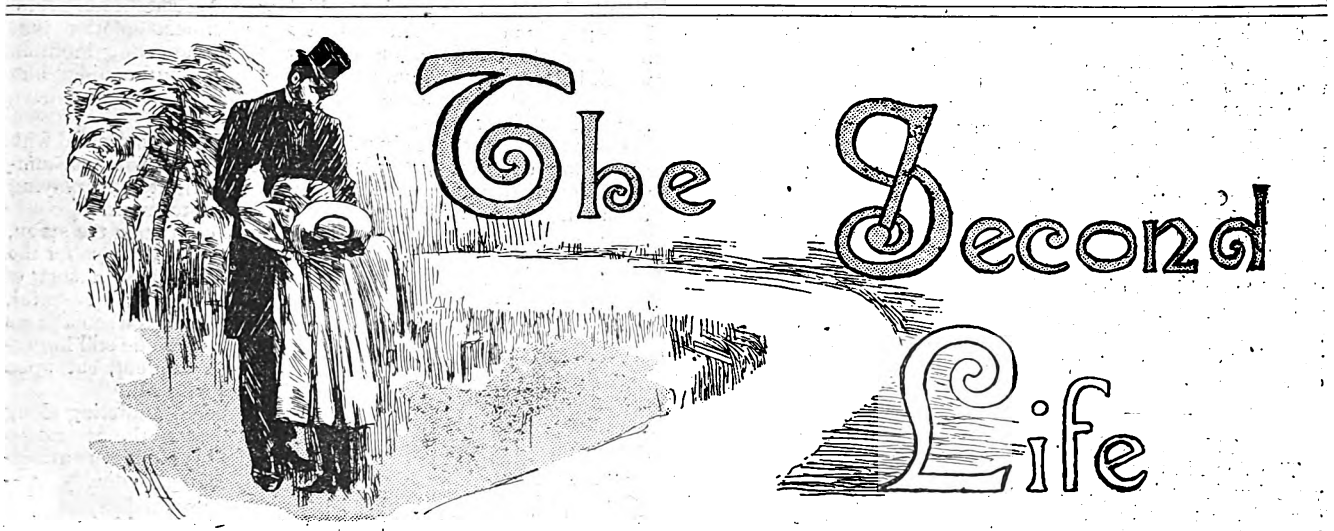
SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 288.—Vol. X. *FOR THE WEEK ENDING JULY 7, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.



The Second Life

CHAPTER I.

THE fiery rays of an almost tropical sun at noon slanted through the open windows of Rose Cottage, where Leon Renaud stood by the bedside of his deceased wife. His little girl Louise, a child of five years, stood at his side; but, for all that, he was alone—alone, though a troop of men and angels had surrounded him; for what can disturb the desert solitude which death flings about itself as a broad mantle and above all who enter its presence.

The very fulness of life on that summer day, hints of which were borne through the windows with the stately sighing of the wind and the fragrance of the flowers, intensified and heightened, by contrast, the rigour and abysmal silence of that slumber upon which Renaud gazed.

That terrible scourge of 18— had visited Worcester with the utmost severity. Rose Cottage was situated in one of the least crowded districts of the city; yet this neighbourhood had not escaped the fate of the others.

Renaud's young wife had devoted herself day by day to visiting and nursing the sick around her, until she herself was stricken down with the disease, of which she soon became a victim.

Fate had in its quiver no dart so poignant as this which suddenly pierced the heart of the fond husband. Leon Renaud was of French lineage on his father's side.

His father, Charles Renaud, had resided in Worcester for a short time, years ago, and had there married Leon's mother, but immediately after this event had returned to his home in Paris.

While Leon was a mere boy his mother died. Then Leon's father married again. This second wife, stepmother to the motherless boy, proved a curse to Charles Renaud's declining years. To escape her tyranny, young Renaud fled from Paris to Rome, where he devoted himself to studying art. Dreamer and poet he had always been. His temperament, inherited from his mother, induced to contemplation; his large lustrous hazel eyes betokened at once the passionate eagerness of inquiry and a disposition towards mysticism.

His keen analysis drove him from all the ordinary positions quietly assumed by the mass of men as to the great questions affecting human life and destiny; but, as if finding no rest beyond these landmarks, his soul seemed to wander ever in the shadowy borderland where the real blends so readily with the ideal and the visible receives the mantle of the invisible.

After a residence of some years in Italy, he was seized with an irresistible desire to visit his mother's native city. He came to England, and there, encouraged by the patronage of a few who had known his father, he easily contrived to satisfy his material wants, which were few and simple.

Here he met Marion Day. At this time he was over thirty, while she was only eighteen. She was a simple country girl who would certainly have attracted attention by her beauty; and her parents were plain people with moderate means. Her education had been of the simplest sort, and she had none of that distinguishing style which often in the world's estimate supplies the want of both wealth and beauty.

But Leon Renaud judged not after the manner of the world. He had lived for the most part a solitary life. He was now in the prime of manhood, but the dreams of his youth still lingered with him, though his youthful enthusiasm had been tempered by a ripened judgment.

Leon and Marion seemed to be spiritual counterparts, and there was a rare completeness, therefore, in their marriage. He was noble, and inspired in her a sense of grandeur. His wonderful subtlety of thought, his wealth of emotion, and the spirituality of his nature introduced her into a new world, where he was always her teacher.

Their chief delight was in music, which became to them a sort of universal language. His very conversation seemed to echo to grand old melodies, and as she listened it seemed as if the winds wafted fragrance and repose to her.

If her spirit soared to meet his, so that her love was almost adoration, it was also true that his grand sympathies found through her humble, womanly charity, a way to their expression in the beaten paths of life. This beautiful life they had lived together for years, and now the end had come.

Leon was startled, bewildered, stunned. It was as if the repose of heaven had been broken. The dearness of this woman, and his need of her, had never before been so sensibly felt. He stood upon the brink of an abyss which his thoughts—subtle and deep as they were—could not compass nor fathom.

His soul was moved to its depths. To such men the tragedy of such infinite loss is not simply solemn; it is a great agitator.

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It is not strange, therefore, that to Renaud in the presence of this mighty sorrow, the great problem of human destiny—as it seemed to him—namely, the question of a future life presented itself anew.

But eager as were the questionings of his soul, he seemed confronted by a sphinx that answered only in riddles. The suggestions of his own intellect seemed almost cruel, intruding as they did into the sacred presence chamber of his tenderest emotions.

"Is this the end?" he asked. "In the midst of life has my Marion drooped as do the flowers, to fall away into a mere heap of dust? Even the crazy old alchemists had a fancy that, by some magical process they could restore from the rose at least its phantom—a semblance of the real flower!

"Is not the Divine chemistry as potent as that? It cannot be that my rose is lost to me for ever!"

He reviewed in thought that movement of the glorious oratorio of the "Messiah" as it swept over his soul—so susceptible to the impressions of music—but still he was not satisfied.

The calm surface of his thoughts had been disturbed by the heavy hand of Death, and the waves still undulated in ever widening circles toward an uncertain shore.

CHAPTER II.

The dead in this time of peril were hurriedly buried. As the sun of the following day sank into the heavens, the face of Marion, after receiving the last fond kisses of the husband and daughter, was hidden from their view, and they followed the remains to its last resting-place.

Two men met the sombre cortège as it returned from the burying-ground whose characters must be described. They were not together, but met the procession at different stages of its course.

One of these was Dr. Eugene Marchand, who had just issued from the library in his house in Dauphin Street. Both by his dress and his walk it could be seen that he was a fastidious gentleman of easy manners and perfect self-possession. He was a passionate lover of the beautiful, and shrank from ugliness and deformity with almost a shudder. Yet this man, to whom disease was disgusting, made it the great study of his life.

Here he met Marion Day.

This lover of the beautiful spent no small portion of his time in anatomical dissections. The sight of pain was a torment to him; but he was so skilled in its alleviation that he was the most promising surgeon in the town.

As he met the procession, and could see through the windows of the leading carriage the sorrow-stricken faces of Renaud and his little girl, his heart was touched, and he said to himself:

"Alas, how sad!" and the frequency of such spectacles in those death-crowded days did not diminish the profoundness of his sympathy. Looking into his naturally cheerful but now somewhat pensive face, and into the clear, grey eyes that almost changed their colour under the influence of emotion, you would have said: "This man is a child of nature—open, as men rarely are, to all material influences, able or subtle. His smile answers to the faintest gleam of sunshine, and his heart is swayed by cloud and storm, and although he is so much of a philosopher, his philosophy affords no shield to cover, no mark to disguise, his susceptibility.

The other man to whom we alluded was Ernest Drivet. As he met the procession he also looked upon the faces of the chief mourners, and knew that Marion Renaud had been buried. He gazed with stolid indifference upon the insignia of their great sorrow.

He had once been a lover of Marion—if anything could be dignified by the name of love which was cherished in Drivet's heart; it was certainly the purest and worthiest emotion that had ever entered there. But she, with that unerring intuition which belongs to such pure spiritual natures, had avoided him from the first, until at length his passionate love had been turned into bitter hate.

Drivet was a thoroughly selfish man. He was endowed with a very fair exterior, with a strong intellect, and with consummate impudence; he loved intrigue, and delighted in playing upon other men as upon the strings of an instrument.

He had acted upon the stage, had written stray articles for the press, and was now a sort of attaché to the new hospital, which he had entered some years before, and where he still lingered, not as a student, but upon good terms with all.

He had been sauntering along the street, but as the procession passed him his steps were arrested as by some suddenly considered purpose.

"Ah!" he chuckled to himself, "a capital idea! Bold—but why not?"

Reaching the end of the street, his attention was directed toward a group of labourers lounging outside a public-house. A conversation followed in low tones between Drivet and two or three of this group whom he had drawn to one side.

Some bargain was completed, apparently, for as Drivet left them he slipped some silver pieces into their hands. When we left Dr. Marchand he was on his way to a remote and solitary cottage in the outskirts of the town occupied by a young medical student whose name was Frank, and who was a *protégé* of the doctor's.

This youth ushered the doctor into a room where three or four students were evidently awaiting him. This was the "Marchand Society," which pursued investigations on its own account.

The doctor was to lecture to this select company this evening on the structure of the human brain, and Ernest Drivet had been engaged to provide a suitable "subject" for additional investigations in the apartment adjoining the parlour, and which was known as the "Subject Room."

He had provided the necessary object in this way on previous occasions. Dr. Marchand entered upon his preliminary lecture, which was interesting and decidedly original. An hour passed. It was eleven o'clock and no advices had been received from Drivet.

But the topic of the evening was one of absorbing interest, and the doctor resumed his lecture. His mind was abundantly stored with narratives of peculiar psychological experiences illustrating his theories.

After midnight a knock at the outside door was recognised

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as Drivet's. The long expected "something" was hurriedly transferred to the dissecting room, where the mysterious bundle was opened by Frank and Drivet. Two dark blue eyes slowly opened which should have been for ever closed, and Ernest Drivet was confronted by a living face that should have belonged to the dead.

He gave one look of astonishment and terror, and then without one word, fled from the house as if pursued by a phantom. The other students were abruptly dismissed without knowing the details, and Frank, with Dr. Marchand, were left alone with their strange and unaccountably proceeding subject.

CHAPTER III.

A transformation had been wrought—a miracle. It was not simply the awakening, as from a sleep, of one who seemed dead, and who had been laid away for an everlasting slumber—it was a new life.

The eyes so familiar to Ernest Drivet had not recognised him. The world upon which they opened seemed as new as it does to a fresh-born child. The past to this awakened sleeper was literally a blank. This woman was mentally an infant.

The words which fell upon her ears seemed meaningless, and she could utter none in reply.

She was taken away in a carriage, which Frank had provided, to Dr. Marchand's home, where she was placed in the care of his wife. In all mental affairs—in all respects, indeed, except as to her age, she was a child; though she learned more rapidly than a mere child.

Dr. Marchand's mansion was well suited to his character. It was costly and beautiful, was furnished with all the elegance that the most refined and artistic taste could suggest or wealth make possible, and was surrounded by beautiful grounds. It was in this bright home of luxury and art that his "patient" began her new life. The doctor at first regarded her with simply a speculative interest.

She was a case inviting deep study—and he studied it. Very soon, however, science yielded to sentiment; for this woman in her life was very attractive. She was as different from her former self as the butterfly is from the chrysalis. As Marion Day, or Marion Renaud, she had been a simple, earnest, spiritual being, self-sacrificing, and the very impersonation of charity.

The brain is the flower of the body, and it seemed that out of the dust of the flower which had matured and decayed a new and different flower had blossomed. Serious she had been; now she was gay. Deep-natured previously, now the movements of her thoughts were light and airy. Perhaps the change could not be more happily expressed than by likening it to the transformations which have affected whole races, bearing them from the rude Pelasgian life into their Hellenic or artist era.

Only these were gradual changes as compared with that sudden and almost miraculous transformation which had here been effected.

It is not wonderful that Dr. Marchand found in this woman so much to study, nor that his studies grew to have an additional interest from the beginning of love for her in his heart, the love of a father for a child. But whenever he thought of the past he was sorely puzzled. He did not even know her name.

There was no clue to the mystery, for she remembered absolutely nothing. It is true, however—and this should be mentioned here for the benefit of those interested in the purely psychological features of her case—it is true that when she happened to be in places that should have been familiar there did come to her inner sense a vague shadow of reminiscence—something that could scarcely be called an impression, it was so faint and indistinct.

Especially was she haunted by the vision of reminiscence when she went into the cemetery—it was there that the Dupuys had all been buried—which she quite frequently visited during the summer that followed her strange resurrection. This puzzled her and caused her to linger about the place, as one who was in some way connected with the inexplicable wonder of her life. But the idea was as faint and shadowy as the fragrance of the flowers that decorated the tombs about her.

Dr. Marchand had never told her of even the single fact of which he was cognisant. He intimated that she had been ill and had been placed in his charge in so accidental a manner that he even did not and could not learn her name. With this she was forced to be content. She knew that the doctor loved her, and she was perfectly happy in loving him and his beautiful wife. But he was troubled by a horrible doubt. He was afraid some possible interruption of this new life—either through her return to her former mental state or through some intrusive claim from others who had known her and who might discover her present retreat. He therefore guarded her most jealously and felt anxious when she was out of his sight. After all, his great fear was Ernest Drivet, who must be able, he thought, to bridge over the hiatus between the two lives of this woman.

"Ah, a capital idea!"

CHAPTER IV.

Leon Renaud since the death of his wife had become a recluse. A year had passed, and still the sharpness of his grief had not been diminished. In this wandering life which he was leading, his eyes became hollow, his skin sallow, and his health rapidly failed.

Convinced that his present sufferings were redoubled by the remembrance of the past pleasures and that the passions gather renewed strength in solitude, he resolved to remove from the place which recalled the remembrance of his great loss. He had kept continually in action, walking in sunshine and rain, at night or day, wandering into the depths of the woods, over cultivated land and grassy fields, hoping to divert his mind by the fatigue of his body, and to change the course of his reflections by his seeming ignorance of the places where he was—but the soul of the lover finds everywhere traces of the beloved object; night and day, the calm of solitude, the noise of crowds, time even, which effaces so many other memories, has no power to remove these, for, like the needle once touched by the magnet, which, however it may be disturbed, turns so soon as it is still to the pole that attracts it.

Undoubtedly, love does delight in many bitter pleasures, and he consoled himself in his misfortune with thoughts of—"I have not deserved it, yet she has met the fate allotted to us all—to high birth and lowly, to beauty and to those less favoured. The life of woman and of man, with all its projects, is like building a tower whose crown is death—and in being born we are condemned to die. Death is a benefit to us all; it is the night of the restless day we call life; it is the sleep wherein the diseases, grief, vexations, and fears repose that molest without cessation the unfortunate living."

The old desire to wander had returned to him, and he contemplated an early departure for the Continent. With this in view, and the remembrance of a very vivid, peculiar, and startling dream wherein Marion still existed fresh in his mind, he went, towards the close of a summer afternoon, to visit the cemetery for the last time.

Through the avenues of tombstones Renaud walked until he reached the family vault. As he gazed, he seemed to be transported back to that summer noon one year ago, when the shock of death first fell upon his heart. His soul was not agitated as it had been then. At first the marble repose of the place, though in some sort a symbol of death, soothed

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and invited him. Then the suggestions of life that were thrown out even here seemed to answer his old doubts and to give him hope.

The climbing roses and the trailing ivy towered above the stony silence, as if hinting of ever-flowing change—as if whispering to his heart: "There is no place of rest! For see! out of the very dust life rises tremblingly but triumphantly over the mask of Death."

He remembered how this same idea of life and motion, as contrasted with the death-like stillness, had once occurred to him in reading that passage in the twelfth Odyssey, where Homer describes the cave of the Naiads. It all came back to him now—the picture of the Naiads weaving for ever at long stone looms, and of the wild bees humming and honeymaking round cups and casks of stone, where evermore the waves entered and broke upon the stony flooring.

The fading sunlight flashed across the name of the dear departed, and Renaud still gazed intently, as if there was something still to come for which he waited. Might not the veil of separation be lifted but for a moment?—and, as if in answer to his thought, there in the clear light, almost at his side, stood the living form of Marion! There she stood with one finger raised to her forehead as if she were trying to solve some laborious problem—stood thus for one moment, and then fled as from some haunted chamber. As for Renaud, astonished at his heavenly vision, as it seemed to him, and overwhelmed with the ecstasy of that glorious moment, he sank to his knees and buried his face in his hands. When he left the cemetery a few minutes later his face beamed with a smile of assured hope. The next day he started for the continent, and on the evening of his departure, Dr. Marchand gave his own name to the nameless woman who had come so strangely in his way. She became his adopted daughter. As a physiological mystery she was worth a fortune to him.

There she stood with one finger raised to her forehead.

CHAPTER V.

Dr. Marchand had rightly conjectured that Ernest Drivet knew Marion's past history. But he had not met Drivet since that memorable night at Frank's, though he had sought him diligently. Yet the object of his search had all the while been hovering closely about and had kept himself well informed as to the movements of the doctor and his patient.

It was only now that his time had come—now, when the developments over which he had kept watch had been fully matured and the doctor had openly adopted the girl. Drivet's original scheme, conceived on the evening when he had employed the labourers to assist him in carrying out his design, had contemplated nothing beyond the satisfaction of his malice toward Renaud and his wife.

He was startled—actually confounded at first—by the result of his night's work; and after his astonishment had somewhat subsided he was led by curiosity to see what would follow. We can readily imagine his surprise at the ensuing events, and especially at the doctor's extraordinary step. Why had not Marion fled? Had she ceased to love her husband Renaud, the broken-hearted? As a spy watching from a distance, he could not answer these questions.

A few weeks afterwards Drivet appeared at the doctor's house. To his astonishment—was there no end to mysteries?—she did not recognise him. Marion seemed to him more beautiful and fascinating than ever in the past years. She was the same, and yet not the same. Her dress, her manner, her whole expression had changed.

It was the old flower with a new and different fragrance. While he stood entranced with wonder he was aroused by a touch of the doctor's hand upon his shoulder, followed by the request for a private conversation in the library. He readily acceded, and a few words from the doctor explained the situation.

"You know, Drivet," said the doctor anxiously, "you know who the girl was?"

"Yes, I know some things, not much; but the disclosure of that little affair is a serious matter for me."

"It may be serious for me, too," said the doctor, "and meagre as your information may be, it is invaluable to me. I would give a hundred pounds to know all about her."

"Oh, it's not so very bad, doctor," returned Drivet. "You see, she had been an inmate of an insane asylum for a number of years, took the fever, died apparently, and was buried—you know the rest."

This invention of Drivet's lulled the doctor's fears, and his gratitude for relief made him generous, so much so that, while the brief interview had satisfied Drivet's cupidity, as well as his curiosity, he left the house with a large sum in his pocket—one that would go a great way, spendthrift though he was. But he could not keep away from the greater prize.

If the doctor could win Marion's love, why need he despair? Had he not rescued her from the grave? Did she not belong to him? Then he remembered she had not shown toward him any of that repugnance which she had formerly exhibited.

In a short time they would even become friends, and the doctor was compelled to suffer this to proceed, for fear of offending one whom in his heart he despised. Evidently, whatever Marion had gained in her new life, she had lost those spiritual intuitions which had guided and guarded her in her previous existence.

As Drivet's power over Marion increased so also did his hold upon her adopted father. He professed to be making a more careful investigation as to Marion's antecedents, and little by little the truth came out that she had been Leon Renaud's wife. At first the doctor was not inclined to believe it; but one day Drivet took him to the cemetery and showed

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She found him, quite by accident, in his studio.

him the empty tomb. That was done to obtain more money, but this time the attempt was in vain.

The doctor, amazed and bewildered, hurried home, and for hours he paced the floor of his library in a frenzy of agony. He had not the least idea what he ought to do or even if her husband was alive. At last he went out into the open air. The sound of voices in the summer-house, as he strolled down the garden, attracted his attention. As he approached, unseen, he recognised the voices. They were Drivet's and Marion's. He listened. It was evidently a leave-taking. Were these two lovers? He peered through the thick vine-clusters and saw Drivet standing by the side of Marion with his arm about her waist, and heard him ask, as he looked pleadingly down upon her innocent, upturned face:

"Shall it be to-morrow, dearest?" was the question he put.

In a moment Dr. Marchand stood within the arbour. Before those cool, searching grey eyes Drivet winced, released his hold upon Marion's waist, and slunk away without one word. And she—she simply cast upon the recreant one look of scorn and infinite loathing. The serpent that just one moment ago had seemed so bold and beautiful with its shining crest, had resumed its natural habit and was revealed as a crawling thing. Apollo had turned coward and she hated him.

Turning to the doctor she fell powerless within his arms. She had been simply as a child in all this, free and guiltless. This second life which she had lived before the doctor and his wife, who had watched her as if she had been her own daughter, was as pure and holy as that of childhood, but also undisciplined, for it was a life in which all that was beautiful and strong called forth a frank and fearless response, but in which experience had furnished no principles for guidance and no test against disguised villainy.

His own influence over her and all the circumstances with which he had surrounded her had tended to the development of such a life and with just that one woeful deficiency. While he thought thus she lay prostrate and nerveless in his arms. Gradually she began to realise her father's presence; then her apathy gave way to convulsive sobbings.

"Oh, take me away, take me anywhere; I can't stay here!" she cried.

"Yes, darling, I'll take you away," he said kindly. "Do not be troubled; it was only a dream and it is all over now." And he carried her to her own room, where he left her in care of his wife.

Yes, he must go away—away from Drivet, away from that cenotaph in the cemetery, the tablet of which was photographed upon his memory for ever. In a few days Dr. Marchand had let his house, and, with his wife and the poor widowed girl, he embarked for the Cape. Two evenings later, as he was sitting near the rail on the upper deck, enjoying his cigar and congratulating himself upon his happy escape from the troubles which had lately beset him, he looked round, and at his side stood Ernest Drivet.

Foiled in his last hope, the doctor seized his *protégée's* tormentor round the waist and tried to throw him overboard. A struggle followed, which resulted fatally for both of the combatants. They went overboard, each grappling the other in a death-struggle.

A deafening shriek was heard from Marion's cabin, from the window of which she had witnessed the fatal termination of the conflict. She was found upon the floor of her room, apparently lifeless. Every effort was made to recover Drivet and Marchand, but in vain—both had evidently been drowned. For hours the girl remained in this trance-like swoon. When she awoke she did not recognise the doctor's wife. She did not understand where she was, but murmured: "Leon, oh, Leon, where are you?" She was now Marion Renaud again, and in her thoughts was back in Rose Cottage.

"I've been ill," she murmured. "Who are you, and where is Leon?" Gradually the woman who had been a mother to her communicated to her the events of the past two years, but Marion comprehended not one word. There was some dreadful mistake; she knew nothing of Dr. Marchand, or indeed of anything that was told her. Only yesterday, it seemed to her, she was nursing the poor sick people under the shadow of Worcester Cathedral.

It was long before she could be made to believe in a life of which consciousness gave no testimony.

. . . . . .

We need not follow in detail the search for her husband, which was continued during several years. She went to Paris, to Rome, and almost over the entire continent, to the East, and at last, when she had quite given up in despair, she one day found him, quite by accident, in his studio in Worcester.

Renaud dropped his pipe and brushes and rose to his feet, and there before him stood his long lost Marion. He had no time for astonishment, for her arms were in a moment clinging about his neck, while they laughed and cried all in one breath.

. . . . . .

Leon Renaud is still alive, and in spare moments from his paintings is preparing a grand philosophical treatise on the "Human Mind," and its power of retention, in which, as may be easily imagined, he considers that element of human life to have been very much overestimated in its importance, and at least in its connection with the more intricate and greater features of an existence.

THE MAN WHO CAUGHT A TARTAR.

IT is not often that I find myself within the precincts of a police court, but a short time ago, happening to be seized with a sudden and unaccountable curiosity, I wended my way toward one of those interesting buildings, and effected an entrance.

I say effected, because it was a matter of no little difficulty, the outer chamber being crammed to inconvenience with forty or fifty individuals, mostly women, two-thirds of whom seemed in the last stages of despondency, while the remainder afforded contrast by exhibiting a sort of unhealthy cheerfulness.

The police inspector on duty that day was an old acquaintance of mine, and upon noticing me, he immediately beckoned me into his office.

"There's a peculiar case just decided," he said; "one you might like to know something about. The fellow is discharged and will be coming out in a minute. Why, there he goes!" ejaculated the inspector, "that man in the corduroys."

The "man in the corduroys" had only just got into the street when I overtook him.

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He was standing still, looking up and down the thoroughfare, apparently undecided what to do, all the time feeling in his trousers' pockets as though he had lost something. I divined his thoughts, and, accosting him quietly, said: "After the unpleasant proceedings just concluded, possibly a little light refreshment might be acceptable."

"Just what I was a-thinking, sir," he replied, smiling; "an' I was just a-feelin' to see if I'd got the price of a pint anywheres, but I find I'm quite broke."

"Never mind," I observed, and in less than a couple of minutes I had him comfortably seated behind a foaming tankard and a long pipe in an adjacent public-house.

He was a fine specimen of the British working man, tall and broad-shouldered, with a frank, open face—not at all one who could be judged as belonging to the criminal classes.

I was anxious to know what crime he could have been charged with, and I mildly inquired if it had been a matter of "assault and battery."

"No, sir," he said, "but it will be next time—that is, if I lay hold o' the chap that made a fool of me."

"Is it a long story?" I queried.

"Not very. Would you like to hear it, sir?"

I assented eagerly.

"Well, then," he began, taking a few preliminary pulls at his pipe and one drink at the tankard, "yer see I've been out o' work now for nigh two months, scarcely knowing which way to turn for a meal, and glad to pick up a sixpence when and where I can.

"Well, one mornin' I went out as usual—that would be just nine days ago—and found myself with only tuppence ha'penny over the West-end way, near Holland Park.

"No job was to be had that mornin', so, feeling rather down at heart, and desperately hungry, I turned into a little pub' for a bit o' bread and cheese and a drop o' beer.

"I hadn't been sittin' there long afore a short, stumpy gent, with no end o' watch-chain in front of him, comes sauntering in, and seats himself plump alongside o' me.

"I ought to 'ave felt flattered, no doubt, and perhaps I did a little bit, when he said presently, in a very pleasant way, 'Nice morning.'

"'Yes,' I said, 'it is for those in work, but the morning doesn't seem partikler nice to me.'

"'You're out o' work, eh?' he asked. 'Well, I might have guessed as much by your crestfallen expression. What would you say if I put a little job in your way?'

"'I should say God bless yer, and mean it,' I answered, pricking up my ears and looking full in the little gent's face.

"He looked at me, too, very hard, I thought, as if he were trying to read what was inside o' me and couldn't quite manage it.

"'I can trust you?' he asked.

"'Perfectly,' I said.

"'Now, look here,' he says, speaking quite confidential like, and in a very low voice, 'I'm a detective. To-night I'm going to have a good try to nab a fellow who has been fooling the police for the last three months. I've got first-rate reliable information, and with your assistance I believe I shall have him.'

"'But'—I was going to tell him I knew nothing about thief-taking, and that I was afraid I should only spoil the affair, when he stopped me.

"'No buts,' he said; 'I know what I'm about. You will be new to him. He knows all the plain-clothes men in London, but he won't know you. There's a big reward. If we catch him I'll come down handsome. What'll you drink?'

"I drank his health, listened while he went on talking by the yard, and telling me what I should have to do.

"He told me that the man he intended to catch was going to commit a burglary at a house in Holland Park—who informed him he didn't say, but he said he knew it—and that he meant nabbing him in the very act. The house stood in small grounds, and my part of the performance was to watch for the burglar, and should he by any means give the detective the slip, to chase and collar him if I could.

"'But s'pose,' I said, as soon as I could get a word in, 's'pose a bobby comes along and catches sight o' me in those grounds at midnight?'

"'Well,' the little gent replied, laughing, 'you've only to give the police signal, three loud whistles, and tell them Inspector Dawker has engaged you.'

"I was rather doubtful even then, but the little gent's quick tongue soon smoothed it over, and I agreed to go in for a share of the reward.

"We left the tavern together and parted just outside, promising to meet at the house in Holland Park at twelve o'clock the same night.

"He cautioned me again not to breathe a word about the arrangement, and further mentioned that when he met me at night he would be disguised.

"Twelve o'clock came. I reached the meeting place to time, and found the detective waiting for me.

"He was dressed in clothes something like my own, and looked the flash gentleman no longer.

"He seemed rather impatient, and hastily pulled me through the gates of the garden and into a part of it where thick shrubs grew, making a capital hiding-place, from which you could look up and down the road quite plainly without being spotted yourself.

"'Now, mind,' he said quickly, 'if you see the burglar run, chase him; if a policeman comes, three loud whistles. I must be off, or I shall lose my chance. I shall be back in an hour. If I want assistance I will give you the three whistles.'

"With these parting words the man disappeared.

"I stood waiting there for quite half an hour, I should think, when I heard on the still night air the heavy tramp of a constable.

"He was coming my way, I fancied, and I was right.

"Slowly he drew nearer and nearer, until he stopped right abreast o' the very place where I was hiding, close to the garden gate.

"He put his hand and tried the gate fastening. It opened; he came inside, and flashed his lantern full on the very bush behind which I was standin'. Quick as possible, I let go three very loud, shrill whistles, but instead of the policeman being awed by the sound he dashed at me and caught me by the throat, in about half a minute nearly choking me, and stopping me from explaining why I was there.

"Finding I didn't resist, he loosened his hold and questioned me.

"I told him plump and plain that Inspector Dawker had engaged me—that I was doing my duty, and that he had better not spoil game.

"He only gripped my arm the tighter and laughed, telling me not to 'try it on with him,' and blew his whistle.

"In a few minutes another constable arrived, and between the two of 'em, what with their laughing and their questions, I had a lively time of it.

"This was another of that Dawker's schemes, they said, and I was put down as an accomplice trying on the 'innocent humbug' with 'em.

"It was in vain I declared my innocence of any scheme besides that for the capture of a notorious burglar.

"It was no go. I was taken to the nearest police station and charged on suspicion.

"The next morning, when brought before the magistrate, I learnt, to my great surprise, that the man I thought was a detective was none other than the burglar he pretended to be after, and that, instead of trying to catch a criminal, he was robbing the house whilst I kept watch outside, and warned him by my loud whistles of the arrival of the police.

"I was remanded for inquiries to be made, and, they being found satisfactory, I was brought up again this morning and discharged.

"But I hope the fellow keeps out o' my path, for I shall certainly be brought up for assault or manslaughter if ever I clap hands on him."

Having replenished my companion's tankard, I left him apparently quite comfortable.

But I heard him mutter as I turned away, "Wait till I meet him—I'll give him Dawker!"

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THE TOWN MARSHAL.

"THE most extraordinary man I met in America," said my uncle, "was a young fellow named Dee Anderson. He was a pitiable object, afflicted with disease, propped up in bed, gradually losing the bones of one leg, but never losing his spirits.

"A May morning with chattering squirrels and birds swelling their breasts with the impulses of praise was no brighter, no blither than he. In the winter, close housed, he cheerfully waited for spring, and when the first warm day came, he had his bed drawn near a window, and lying down there he would gaze far down into the orchard and revel in the beauties that nature spread out for him.

"I was a special favourite with him; and sometimes I used to take my revolver with me when I visited him, and lying, propped up at the window, he would shoot at something down in the orchard. Once he killed a hawk, and it did him so much good that I thought he would get well, but he didn't.

"Then I went back with my father to England, and for years I thought about that pale crippled boy, propped up at the window. I wrote to him, but he couldn't write, and I don't believe that any of his people could, either. Many years passed, and he gradually faded from my memory.

"Last time I went to the States I went down to Hackenville. I had lived near there when a boy. I was standing in a familiar street. Not a mark had been drawn to change the countenance of the old place. Not a fire had caused the putting up of a new building — moss-covered and venerable, it gave back to me my boyish fancy. I spoke to an old man. 'What ever became of Dee Anderson?' I asked.

"'Why, don't you know? Hah! I thought everybody knew.'

"'Dead, I suppose?'

"'What! Well, I reckon not. He's about the brightest man we've got. He's our town marshal.'

"'Oh, he got well, eh?'"

"'Well, mebby not from your standpoint. Yander he comes.'

"And there he did come, little, humped over, pale, walking on a stirrup and with a crutch.

"There was the town marshal, sure enough, and in a place, too, where men were wont to drink, and raise a row. How gladly he greeted me, and reached up and grasped my hand. I gave him a thoughtless grip and he writhed.

"'Come over and let's sit down and talk about old times,' said he. 'Do you recollect the time I killed the hawk? I knew then that there was a career mapped out for me—had been sorter low spirited that day, but when I pulled the trigger on that old rascal and tumbled him out of the tree, I knew that if ever I got out of that bed I would make a mark in the world; I didn't think, though, that I'd ever get to be marshal of this town. Don't walk fast; I can't keep up with you.'

"We went to the livery stable, sat down, and were talking when someone came up and said: 'Dee, Jim Blake is in town, and is raising trouble up on the square.'

"'That's so? Well, I must go down and see about him. Come with me.'

"I went along with him, and in his haste to reach the scene of disturbance, he stumbled and fell. I helped him up and brushed the dust off his coat. As we approached we saw a crowd on the square, and a man running past told us that Blake had shot at the sheriff.

"'Dee,' said I, 'you'd better not go. Here's a cart. Let me put you in it and send you out of town.'

"He looked at me reproachfully and said: 'I am the marshal of this place, and the marshal is expected to do his duty. Come on.'

"I had no wish to be shot at; I had no wish to meet Jim Blake, and I hung back. Dee hobbled on as fast as he could, and the crowd parted to let him pass. Jim Blake stood with a revolver in his hand. Dee approached him. And this is the talk that followed:

"'Hullo, Jim.'

"'Hullo, yourself.'

"'What are you plumbin' folk round here for, Jim?'

"'Oh, to keep 'em from plumbin' me.'

"'Well, but I'm the marshal of this town, and I don't want any plumbin' done here. It don't look right. Now, look here, Jim. You are a big, strong man, the gamest and the strongest man in this here neighbourhood, and nobody that's got any sense would try to take you by main force; but I believe you've got a good heart, Jim, and would do most anything to help an unfortunate fellow along.

"'Now, I am the marshal of this town, and they expect me to do my duty, and if I don't the City Council will fire me and mine. Don't you see how I'm fixed? Of course you do, because you are a sensible man, and a kind man, although you do shoot at folks once in a while. Jim, I'm going to ask you a favour, just to help me along, you know.

"'You just take my arm, now, and help me down to the jail as fast as you can. Don't you see, livin' depends on you right now? You know that I couldn't hurt you; why, I could scarcely hold a pistol, much less fire it. Take my arm, Jim.'

"He held out his arm, shrunken and withered. 'Take my arm, Jim.' And hang me if the fellow didn't take his arm and walk off towards the jail with him.

"'Don't walk too fast, Jim.'

"'Excuse me; I'm used to walkin' purty fast,' Jim replied, pulling up.

"I followed and caught them up just as they arrived at the jail, and I stood peeping in. 'I can't get this door unlocked,' said the marshal. 'Will you please unlock it, Jim?'

"Jim unlocked the door and stepped inside the cell, and then the marshal began again to fumble with the door. 'I can't lock it,' said he.

"'Let me lock it,' I called.

"Blake wheeled about, his eyes glaring with rage. 'Tech that door,' he said, 'and I'll kill you.'

"I didn't touch it.

"'Can't you git it locked?' Jim asked. 'Here, let me reach round and lock it for you.' And he thrust his hand through the bars of the iron-bound door, turned the key in the lock, and started to amuse himself by shooting at the flies on the wall.

"When I went back to the town an old man said to me: 'We haven't had very much trouble since Dee's been marshal, but before that we had a good deal. Four marshals have been killed here in the last six years, but Dee sorter appeals to a feller's pity and that is harder to git away with than a knife or a pistol.'"

"*Don't walk too fast, Jim.*"

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THE MADMAN

THE man began thus: "My name, Director, cannot be altogether unknown to you. I am Giuseppe Gabrini. Although still young—I am thirty-eight years old—my inventions have brought me, if I may venture to say so, a good deal of renown. Of course you have seen in the newspapers that an English syndicate has paid me £20,000 for my electric railway.

"These details simply serve to show you that I am not an ordinary man, and will, at the same time, make you understand the extent of the misfortune which has befallen me."

A pause, then he continued: "About seven years ago I married Clara Renandi, a charming girl of very good family. At that time I was a young engineer, unknown to fame, working hard, but earning little. There were moments when it was difficult to get on, but my wife encouraged and helped me in the struggle for existence.

"Thus two years went by. Then I succeeded in making the company for which I was working accept an invention of mine, a machine for extracting fossilised carbon by a new system. I was paid a very decent price for it.

"From that moment my means were almost comfortable, and I was able, therefore, to dedicate myself entirely to the study and development of my electric railway, which I had already been at work upon. From that instant I ought to have been perfectly happy, and, indeed, I thought that I was . . . . Alas! Fate had decreed otherwise.

"One day—take note of this, Director—one day, I, who for lack of time read so little, chanced to cast my eyes over the account of a most frightful deed. It was the story of a man—a labourer—who was suddenly seized with a mania for infanticide, and while under the influence of this horrible idea killed his three children. At first I was astonished, and really doubted the truth of the tale.

"But little by little it seemed to me less strange, and I began to look into the question, even reading books of specialists on the subject. For hours at a time my mind would dwell on the matter, and in spite of myself I found my brain perturbed by the mysterious problems of will, power, and desire.

"Two days later, while dining with my wife, and still absorbed in meditation, I began to handle my knife rather feverishly, thinking, as I did so, that it was with a weapon similar to this that the workman had murdered his children . . . . . I made a violent gesture . . . . . A sharp cry recalled me to myself. Clara showed me a long red scratch on her hand.

"'Are you crazy?' she exclaimed. 'See what you have done?'"

"I did not reply, but with increasing agitation looked at the hand which she held out, and at the drops of blood rising on the white skin. Oh, the fierce joy I felt when I saw that blood! . . . . . I was suddenly assailed by a wild desire to see more of it: to see it flowing in a stream . . . . . Oh, to hold a woman tight in one's grasp, push her down trembling and frightened, and while she weeps and cries for mercy, while she sobs and screams by turn, to drive a knife slowly into her bosom. Yes, that was what I wanted to do now. Kill a woman ——my wife!——This horrible idea took posession of me, wrote itself on my brain in letters of fire. Then began a terrible, almost savage battle within me, a struggle without cessation.

"I forced myself to care more and more for my adored Clara, but in vain. Finally—finally—how can I say it? This life has been going on for two months. Until to-day I had been able to control myself. But this morning the temptation was stronger than ever, and I decided to put an end to it once for all, so, with knife in hand, I entered my wife's room. She had just left it. Then, like a madman, I started to run, and came here to beg you to protect me from myself; to shut me up; put me in a strait-jacket even, if necessary; anything, oh, anything, to prevent my committing a crime."

The superintendent of the asylum, who had grown a trifle pale during the recital, touched the bell at his side, and, as an attendant appeared, said:

"It shall be as you desire, sir."

. . . . .

Very blonde, with sapphire blue eyes, and that delicate doll-like beauty so attractive in some women, she lay back in a chair, in an attitude of absolute repose, musing. As the silvery tones of the clock chimed the hour—three o'clock—Signora Gabrini turned her head slowly. She sighed, and her eyes sparkled.

Only a few minutes to wait now, and somebody she wanted very much to see would arrive—her last admirer. She had had many, but, in the various flirtations she carried on from time to time, no man had every attracted her as did this one; no, not even at that period—before he became insane, and was confined in a madhouse—when, her husband too much

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absorbed in scientific researches to pay much attention to her, she had sought diversion in this pastime—had she cared for any of the knights who danced attendance on her.

True, in those days her ardour might have been quelled a little by the fear, always, of rousing the latent jealousies in her husband's nature. It was not easy to judge what observations the engineer might be making outside his work, apparently so absorbing.

Unconscious how deep her liking was for this latest flame, and how dangerous it might become in view of her present lonely state, she found herself actually counting the minutes until he should be there.

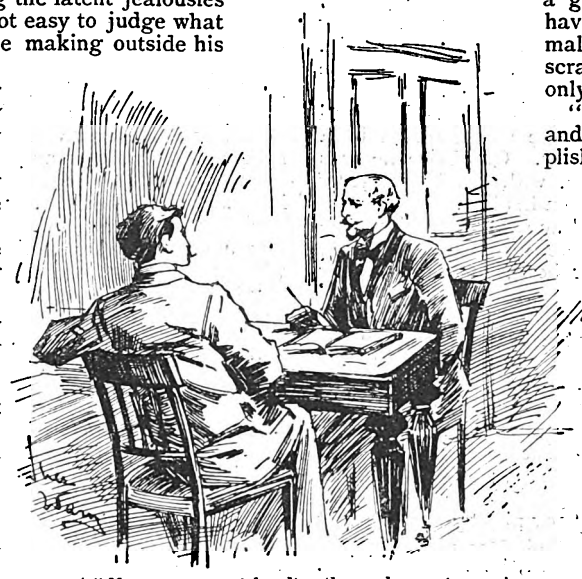
Suddenly she trembled—she heard footsteps in the adjoining room. At last! 'Twas he——

The door opened, and Signora Gabrini sprang to her feet, livid with terror. She gave a scream: "The madman!"

But Gabrini, very calm, almost smiling, said:

"You did not expect me, did you, madam? Pray calm yourself, however, I am no longer mad."

He drew a long breath, and then went on: "We have a great deal to say to each other—so, be seated. No one can disturb us. I have locked the door."



"My name cannot be altogether unknown to you."

Appalled, knowing herself to be perfectly helpless, however, she obeyed. He continued:

"I shall be brief. You know what difficulties I had to contend with at the beginning; what hand to hand struggles I had with poverty, and what an immense amount of work I had to accomplish before I succeeded in rising out of the obscurity in which I was vegetating.

"Notwithstanding the absorbing nature of my occupations and studies, I managed to steal as much time as possible from them to devote to you, I am convinced that I did my duty in this regard. But were you appreciative of my efforts, grateful for the attentions? No. Within two years after our marriage, not finding my devotion sufficient, you were encouraging admiration from another source, were carrying on a flirtation——"

She protested with a gesture, but he simply went on:

"Oh, it is useless for you to deny anything. I can prove the truth of my assertions. I have found letters, by chance, of course, and——any way, it is not necessary to go into details; suffice it to say, that I know exactly what your course has been. Harmless flirtations? Oh, no!

"You are naturally surprised that, knowing all this, I have maintained such an impassible demeanour, have kept silence so long. But what could I do? I did not wish my name, already growing famous, to become a byword for the public to scoff at, as must assuredly have been the case if my conjugal troubles were noised abroad, much less did I propose to furnish gossip for the newspapers.

"And again, I really hoped that you might stop all this nonsense——you see what a fool I was! I was ready to forgive you, to take you back to my heart at the first word of regret. I wanted to believe in you; but 'twas no use. You were frivolous to the core. Well, I had not strength of mind enough to rise above this daily torment—to shut my eyes to your continuous flirtations, carried on in my very presence. So I decided to put an end to the situation once for all, and it seemed to me that there was but one way to accomplish this, and that, to kill you."

Clara started from her chair with a cry of terror, but, seizing her by the wrists, he forced her back to her seat, and, his voice dry and hard, he added: "Kill you! Yes, this is the idea which has been formulating itself in my mind for a long time; but I wished to kill you without compromising myself in any way. I began by feigning insanity. Oh, I concocted some kind of a story, and they shut me up in the asylum, you know. Then, of course, I had to do a good deal of acting—pretending to have sudden and violent attacks of my malady, throwing myself on my keepers, scratching and biting them; but I was only waiting my chance to escape them.

"The occasion came about to-day, and here I am. My vengeance accomplished, I shall return to the madhouse. Doubtless I shall be tried for murder; but I shall be acquitted, and they will take me back to the asylum. I shall be kept there a year, perhaps five; then, when they see how docile, quiet, and calm I am, they will declare me cured, and I shall regain my liberty.

"Then, with no further obstacles in my way, no chains to bind or oppress me, and a tranquil spirit, I shall once more consecrate myself to study, to science."

He ceased. Clara, her breath laboured, her eyes staring at him in helpless terror, lay back in the chair, powerless to move. Finally, as he rose, tears began to flow from her eyes and down her pallid cheeks. Sobbing, she threw herself at his feet, imploring him, as she dragged herself along on her knees, to have pity on her.

* * * * * *

Giuseppe Gabrini was not prosecuted. He was declared irresponsible and shut up again in the asylum until cured. Dr. Leonardo Carbonelli, an eminent doctor, asked to have charge of his case.

His request was granted. The results obtained were simply stupendous. Gabrini, irritable and raging, suddenly became quiet and docile. He recovered his reason. When they spoke to him of his wife, whom he had killed, he wept bitterly. Two months later he was completely cured, and they hastened to give him back his freedom.

She threw herself at his feet.

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A USEFUL OPPONENT.

I HEARD the street door bang, I heard someone coming up the stairs and I sprang to my feet listening. They were the steps of a man deep in thought or suffering pain. Had my presentiment come true? Ah! Those terrible presentiments which made my life a misery to me.

The door opened and Horace stood before me. I noticed his face was flushed and his brows were slightly bent in a visible effort to concentrate his thoughts. Otherwise he was the same as ever. Calm, deliberate, with the brightest of smiles and the cheeriest of greetings on his lips.

"How scared you look, little one," he said as he kissed me fondly and then crossed over to where the spirit case stood, by the side of the ice in the silver bowl, and the seltzer syphons.

I nodded.

He finished the brandy and soda at a draught, and busied himself compounding another.

"Frightened! What at?"

I went a step nearer, and lifted my eyes appealingly to him.

"It's always the same when you are away," I said, swallowing a sob. "Oh, Horace the risk is too great."

"Risk be hanged," he said carelessly; "there is no danger, little one, I promise you."

"There is danger," I persisted; "any night you might get murdered in the streets, or if luck should turn——"

"I shall take good care that it doesn't," he said quickly. "You don't think——"

He bit his lip, and I was half frightened at the change in him. "Don't think what?"

He laughed with an evident effort, and took a cigarette from his case.

"Why do you always look at the blackest side of things?" he said with a smile, ignoring the sentence he had left half unfinished.

"I try not to," I said gallantly, "but I would give anything if you would promise never to go to that wretched club again."

We were standing side by side on the hearth now. He did not answer at once. I took a bunch of fragrant violets from his button hole and arranged them in water.

"I would give up gambling to-morrow," he said half to himself, "only—only, don't you see, I can't."

I did not follow the unexpressed thoughts which clinched that argument, and I told him so.

"Women never can understand," he said petulantly.

"Men never know when they are well off," I retorted, stooping down to throw a log on the fire which made the smouldering embers leap into a sudden flame. "Surely you are rich enough now to——"

"Please you," he interrupted with a little laugh.

"And yourself too, most scornful one."

He shrugged his shoulders.

"I suppose I shall have to explain it all to you," he said, "and then you won't understand."

He pulled up an arm-chair to the fire, and I leaned over the back listening.

"You know as well as I do," he said, "that when I married you I had no visible means of support, although your people were labouring under the most delightful delusion that I was a millionaire and a catch in the matrimonial market worth more than passing attention. Therefore, when it came to setting up a house I had to make some money, which was something I had never taken the trouble to do before for fear of offending my tradesmen. They don't like it, you know, in these days, if you seem in a hurry to pay them. And money I made by playing cards, which is easy enough when you know——"

The peculiar expression which I had noticed once before that night flitted across his face and settled there.

"'When you know how,' I suppose you were going to say," I remarked, wondering why for a second time a sentence should have been begun only to be left unfinished.

"Yes," he answered, "in all games which combine chance with skill, the skill is bound to tell in the long run. With a cool hand and a level head the odds are in your favour, especially when you are playing against men with more money than brains and fonder of whisky than soda.

"My luck, as you have good reason to know, has been phenomenal. It accounts for the pretty dresses you wear; it accounts for the horses you drive; it accounts for all this luxurious furniture; it accounts for my balance at the bank. It has enabled me to keep you going in the best society, in the fashionable circles which surrounded you when you were born—destined to marry an earl at least if it had not been for the penniless adventurer who made such capital out of his good looks and charming manners——"

"Good looks and charming manners indeed," I said, thumping him on the shoulder. "Well, go on."

"That's all," he said.

"Well, and what is there to prevent you leaving off now without tempting providence any further?"

"Good gracious, child," he said quite angrily, "don't you see? The men in the club expect at least a chance of getting some of their money back. They——"

"I don't see the good of winning at all if you feel bound to go on playing till you lose."

"I don't intend to lose," he said quietly. "Winning back lost money is the most expensive game a gambler plays. It makes him demoralised and reckless. Besides, people grow suspicious of a man who gives up play before play gives him up. Society would have nothing to do with us were the ghost of a suspicion cast on my honesty by some blackguard at the club. The loss of society's smile would be nothing to me, but to you——"

Nothing to him, indeed!

"Horace——"

A neat parlour maid opened the door and brought in a note on a silver tray. It is unusual for notes to arrive at three o'clock in the morning, but Horace did not seem in the least surprised.

He took it, read it through quickly, then tore it into fragments and put it carefully, very carefully, in the fire.

He watched the flames leap upon them, he watched the blackened scraps of paper curl and break into a thousand pieces.

"Thank heaven," he said. Then he drew a deep breath of relief.

"I shall have to go out for half an hour," he remarked, getting up and holding out his coat for me to put on. He turned as he reached the door and kissed his hand. "Perhaps I shall manage to take your advice after all," he said with a smile, "only you must give me time."

I sprang to my feet, but he was gone. Then my pent up feelings, like all other pent up things, found an outlet, and I cried a little to myself, wondering at the secret trouble which was gnawing at my husband's heart. That look on his face haunted me all night and for many a long day after.

* * * * *

Lord Bury told me afterwards the end of the story, although he never guessed the truth. About a week must have passed since that nocturnal conversation with my husband, and Bury was standing at the window of the Leman Club talking with my brother Lacy. "Well, if you don't know who the fellow is I'm sure nobody else does," he said. Lacy had a reputation for knowing everybody in London. "I can't imagine how he ever came to be elected, or, rather, why we never blackballed him. There was a time when we were select at this club, at all events."

"He plays a confoundedly good game of cards," said my brother. He had an intense admiration for anyone who could make money.

"So much the worse," said Lord Bury, turning his pockets inside out with a comic gesture of despair. "He cleaned me out last night. One does not mind losing one's money to a fellow like Horace Linley, that lucky brother-in-law of yours, but when it comes to a cad like this man Balsam, or whatever the fellow's name is, it—well, you know what I mean. He's so confoundedly confident about his luck too. Swaggers about it all the time. By Jove, I would give anything to see him

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beaten—not that I have much left that is worth having, even at a gift."

"Horace is the only man who could give him points."

"And Linley won't play with the brute, small blame to him either——"

"Linley is going to play with him to-night."

Both the men turned, and found Sir Alfred Wastemen at their elbow.

"Don't you believe it," said Lacy, helping himself to a cigar from the newcomer's case, much to his disgust.

"It's a fact. One hundred games of ecarté at £100 a piece."

Lord Bury whistled.

"Horace refused to have anything to do with him last night; whereupon Balsam remarked—'And just as well too, if he wants to keep his reputation as the best player in the club,' which brought old Linley up to the scratch like the thoroughbred that he is."

"You don't mean to tell me the fellow had the cheek to say that." Lacy was tremendously shocked. He could not understand anyone being rude, even.

"He did though. Dinner at the Metropole, and then back here to see them play. What?" And the three young men, casting a look of unutterable disgust in the direction of the great leather chair in which the new member of the club sat reading his evening paper, went out into the roar of Piccadilly.

. . . . . .

The card-room of the Leman Club was crowded as it had never been crowded before that night. The news of the great contest had spread abroad, and more than one M.P. had deliberately denied himself the pleasure of hearing one of Chamberlain's speeches in the House to be there to see the sport.

Lacy and a group of his intimate friends stood just behind my husband's chair and Lord Bury was on the opposite side of the table.

The first game was won by Balsam, the second by Horace.

Balsam looked up as the last card was played. "What do you say to doubling the stakes at the end of each game?" he remarked. "I would rather treble them," said Horace. Lacy patted him on the back, but Bury, who was standing in front of him, noticed his lips tremble as they began the third deal. After that, hand after hand was played and my husband invariably lost.

Balsam's success came to him in spite of the fact that he was obviously playing haphazard and against all the canons of the game.

Horace was evidently puzzled. The more irrational his opponent's play the surer he seemed of winning his tricks.

It was at the end of the third game that something occurred which made Lord Bury raise his eyebrows. He looked across to Lacy. Sir Alfred, who was an exceedingly nervous man, turned white to the lips, and suddenly left the room. Balsam had been detected cheating.

The tenth game was in progress when Horace pushed back his chair. "These cards are marked," he said, quietly, "they must have been smuggled into the club with the connivance of one of the under servants—"

"It's a lie," Balsam hissed. He looked round the room hoping to find some support among the members and finding none he made a sudden movement towards the door.

In a moment Bury sprang at him and seized his wrists. "Not so fast, my friend," he said.

Lacy sent a waiter for a policeman, but my husband called the man back.

"Don't make an ass of yourself," he said; "whatever happens, let us avoid a scandal."

Then he turned to his opponent. "There's the door," he said, pointing with his hand. "Go." The other put his hand in his pocket and laid his winnings on the table, feeling like a whipped dog.

Horace took up a little packet of notes and handed it to him without a word. A murmur of approbation at his generosity ran round the room,

When the door was closed upon Balsam, and those who had witnessed the disgraceful episode had returned to the card-room, my husband begged to be allowed to say a word publicly.

"Gentlemen," he said, "I am going to act on impulse. From this moment, and in your presence, I swear solemnly never to touch a card again for the remainder of my life. Whether I am a fool for my pains or not will probably be a matter of dispute, but my mind is made up. I have never before seen cheating at cards, and never again will I, willingly, submit to such an experience. I am impelled to the course I am about to take, and I take it confident that I shall at least have your sympathy."

There were murmurs of applause, which were drowned in louder murmurs of surprise, and several men said openly that they considered Horace an idiot. However, it was admitted on all sides that my husband had conducted himself admirably.

. . . . . .

I never knew until the day of my husband's death the truth of the matter. As he lay dying, mourned by all fashionable London, and, above all, by the members of the Leman Club, he called me to him and told me the secret of his life. Ah, how shall I tell the rest?

My Horace, the husband whom I loved, who was more to me than all the world, was the most successful card-sharper of this or any other age. Balsam was his accomplice, and he used him most ingeniously to cover his retreat from the card tables, after he had become a millionaire. Not a soul ever suspected him or guessed the secret of his mysterious opponent.

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THE MAN MY SISTER MARRIED.

SUMMARY—Chapters I. to V.

The story is told by Violet (Letty) Lombard, who, at the opening, is living at Galveston, U.S.A. with her grandfather, Enos Lombard, Liz the coloured servant, Justina her old nurse, and her Aunt Marg, who has been the recipient of mysterious letters, post-marked New Orleans, necessitating a fortnight's absence from home. John Scott, who married Katherine, Violet's step-sister, a very beautiful girl, pays for Violet's board and lodging, and has just decided that she is to go to a convent in New Orleans. On the strength of information gained from the torn pieces of one of Aunt Marg's letters, and curious to solve their mystery, Violet so arranges that she goes to New Orleans a day earlier, and that she stops at the Hotel Gilbert. Through a crack in the wall, she sees what happens in the next room to hers. John Scott, Captain Dana—an old friend from Galveston—Aunt Marg, and others are sitting in judgment upon a Mexican, Antonio, who has, it transpires, assisted in the seizure of Scott's wife, and of Dana's wife and daughter, and whose terrible crime has been brought to light by Yara, a spy. Antonio is compelled to end his life by taking poison, with his dying words laying the blame upon one Xarras.

Letty goes to the convent in the morning, and during her schooldays there secretly meets James Gregory, who is introduced as the son of a friend of her grandfather's. On her way home again, some months later, with her chaperone Miss Wilson, Colonel Dean Gregory, James' brother, introduces himself.

* * * * *

CHAPTER VI.

When I look back on what I have written, I am tempted to write no more; for, though my picture of myself is a true one, it is hardly flattering. I do not care for goody-goody books, nor love in a cottage, nor dish-washing, nor acquaintance with food before it comes on the table, and most girls I know are like me. Besides, a girl of eighteen is rather a goose in this generation, not like our sober, decorous grandmothers, who married early, and began rearing families and growing old.

I wanted to be rich, and after the pleasure of companionship at school, the monotony of my cottage home was unbearable. Aunt Marg was so grave and silent; grandfather was always too tired to talk, and Liz was always fault-finding and disagreeable. Only one relief I had from everlasting sameness. I secured the position of a singer in the choir at church. I had long since ceased to worry myself about repaying John Scott.

"Someone should enjoy that money," I said, in a communistic way; "then he was Katherine's husband, almost a relation."

I hunted up *beauté du diable*, and, as near as I could make out, thought it flattered me. I looked at myself in the glass. A clear olive-skin, dark violet eyes, long-lashed and shaded by those odd shadows, a small nose and chin, one dimple in left cheek, and curly bronze hair that I wore in a little knot at the top of my head.

Jim says that I look like a thoroughbred. My feet and hands are small and well-shaped, and I carry myself well, when I am nicely dressed, as any woman does that is not a dowdy. We walked with books on our heads at the convent to make us straight.

No one from the mansion came near me for two weeks. Jim had not come home, and I fancied Mr. Scott did not care to see me any more than I did him; but the second Sunday when I sang in the choir, I saw Colonel Dean Gregory. When the minister preaches, I always look round—did you ever see a choir-singer pay any attention to the sermon?—and I study the new gowns and the people in them.

The colonel was in the pew with his mother and Mrs. Scott. Those two sisters always wear rustling silks and creepy crape; they make an everlasting funeral out of living. I looked very pretty, in a cream coloured muslin, a bunch of violets in my bosom for a bit of colour, and he was staring at me so steadfastly that I turned my head away with a look of cold admonition.

When I came out of church, he was waiting at the door, having put his relatives in their carriage; they keeping up the illusion of first mourners by sitting shrouded and silent.

"You are more charming than I dreamed," said the colonel "What a voice, and not one moment did your pretty face look the same. Even that scornful glance was irresistible."

"You must not talk to me," I said coolly; but, as the gossips were watching, I felt defiant.

"Why not?"

"I have promised not to speak to you," I said, and fled, but I wickedly dropped half my violets at his feet. I had been fingering my bouquet on purpose. He laughed, lifted his hat, and, when he passed me a moment later, he had some of my violets in his buttonhole. Now, why I did that I do not know; I must lay it to my grandmother.

Happier days followed, for Jim came home; and such a dandy he was, too; but grandfather called him a graceless drunkard.

"A young man must sow his wild oats," I said one evening, as grandfather and I sat in the porch. Jim had just gone by on horseback, and had driven grandfather to fury by taking off his hat to me.

"And a young woman, too, eh?" he grunted, taking his pipe out of his mouth, and fixing his beady blue eyes on me.

"No, women must be hypocrites, whited sepulchres."

"You won't make much of a success with that kind of a tomb, then," grinned grandfather. "But Katherine—now she was smart, and was—well, I won't say any more, but the only fair and square woman I ever saw is Margaret Collier."

"Your experience with our sex has been so unfortunate," I said.

"H'm"—and he gave me a deep look—"h'm, well, miss, there are not many men that have to be punished in a third generation by a living conscience walking about and being impudent. Women weren't ever finished in the making, they have no faculty of being trusted."

"You must trust Liz, for you send her with me to rehearsals."

"Old women are different. They can't be wicked if they would."

"If I wasn't watched like a cat I should be happier," I

Give you rope, Vi'let, and you'd hang yourself.

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cried angrily. "I don't like these ways of spying. Girls should go out alone, and John Scott's slavedriver notions are obsolete."

"Give you rope, Vi'let, and you'd hang yourself," grunted grandfather, going down the steps to his rose bushes, his pets. He looked slowly at me, "I ain't so certain in my mind that you won't, anyway."

However, the monotony of this evening, with Aunt Marg in the porch, sitting looking out to sea and never saying a word, was broken by Bruce, Mrs. Scott's servant, bringing me a note; an invitation to dinner at the mansion on the following day. The carriage would call at half-past six. I accepted with pleasure and ran to my room in a whirl of delight. I opened my window wide and looked out. All of a sudden Galveston seemed the most delightful place on earth.

How plain he is in a bathing suit.

Perhaps all do not know that Galveston is an island, and I have heard that sometimes great storms cut it off from the world for days. Never a moment of life here, but the sound of the sea thrills you, gives strange fancies of far-away Pacific islands and coral reefs, an enchanted land beyond the blue horizon where the white sails go.

The city is so old, too, and so staid, with its fine old mansions, the oleander trees, the gnarled salt-cedar by the beach, and rare foreign shrubs brought home by old sea captains. The streets are paved with wooden blocks, and the horses' feet chime out a xylophonic melody with the sea. Our season is spring the year round, save now and then, when a norther comes with its frozen breath and chills us all. I call it a great moral wave.

And the flowers here, the violets and hyacinths, the magnolia and the jasmine, those passionate flowers with their white souls and fragrant breath, and roses red, roses of every kind and colour: white for a bride, pink for fair girls, Jacqueminot and Marechal Niel for the brunette daughters of the South.

And then the sea, the shining blue sea! How it rolls and plays upon the sand, and seethes and splashes, rises dark and thunderous, or coos so softly on a summer's day! And the beach! so many miles of hard smooth sand, where one may ride a horse to death and never realise the flight of time or distance.

Among all those old mansions, I like none so well as that big three-storied dark brick one, John Scott's home. It is so old, the trees have grown high above the wall that shuts it in from the vulgar gaze; vines have festooned the stone posts and peep over the rim of the wall, like little captive princesses eager to see the world.

But the garden, that I love most. It has so many pleasant paths; such wondrous flowers; such mases of roses along the shady walks; and so musical a fountain. It is replete with a dreamy delight where every sense is satisfied and all the noise outside sinks into the murmur of the sea; for the nineteenth century is far away from that enchanted land.

My home is down on the beach, near the sea, a tiny cottage set upon upright logs of wood, so that the waves may wash under. When people warn my grandfather for being so near the treacherous sea, he tells them he has been there for over thirty years, and in the great storm of years ago his home withstood the shock of wind and wave.

All along the beach are shanty bathing-houses, and I have one so far from the house that even Liz's sharp eyes cannot tell me from the other nondescript creatures disporting in the tide. I have a pretty bathing suit of blue and white, and I can swim well. In that sea, by the buoy, I have met Jim every day since he came home, when the weather permitted a plunge. Tuesday, the morning of my invitation, there he was waiting for me, blue and shivering.

I swam out to him. I like to go away beyond the buoy, for I hope a shark will get me or the undertow carry me out, and I picture quite tranquilly grandfather's remorse at calling me a living conscience, and Aunt Marg's misery because she never understood me before; though why my death would make my character any easier to comprehend I never thought out.

"Coming to-night?" called Jim, his teeth chattering. How plain he is in a bathing suit, and so cold and blue! "Been wait-ing a half-h-ou-r, it isn't fair to keep me here s-o l-o-o-ng."

"Couldn't help it. Aunt Marg was hanging about. You'd better go in. You'll get cramp and drown."

A big wave comes, and I lift myself away up on its crest and dive into the green wall of water. I love the sea; it is never rough with me. I could hug those waves or lie cradled in them as in a mother's arms. If I must come back to earth as a lower form of animal life, I want to be a fish—a slimy shark, so I cannot be eaten. Jim comes wobbling after me.

"Did-did you get-t-t the no-te? Got-Dean to send it. Ma said you wouldn't behave - told her you-you had re-formed."

"I won't go," I said indignantly.

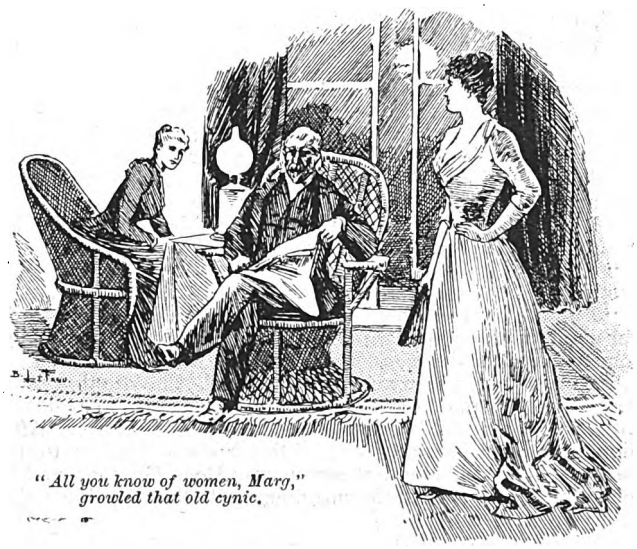
"Please, Letty," he chatters, and looked so funny that I laugh. I know well enough I would not miss that dinner for the world. Then finding he cannot stand the cold he swims to shore.

That night I looked my best in a a simple white wool gown with violets, and a meek look. I meant to show Mrs. Doctor Nathan Scott what a lady I was. Really, though, she had reason to dislike me. Jim and I once cut white eyes in one of her paintings, and made the people look like ghouls, and we put the skeleton we found in the garret in the best spare-room, where she found it when she went to see if the room was aired for the bishop, who was coming on a visit. I always wished he had been the one to find it.

"Do I look pretty, grandpa?" I asked, tripping down to show my finery.

"She does," cried Aunt Marg, who seldom praised me. "so innocent and good."

"All you know of women, Marg," growled that old cynic. "She is in her worst mood for mischief."



"All you know of women, Marg," growled that old cynic.

I can tell by Bruce's look, when he opens the carriage door, that I am very fine.

"Yo' changed a heap, Miss Vi'let," he says politely. He called me a "trifflin' brat" two years before.

I bowed haughtily, and swept up the steps. My gown is lined with silk throughout, for I cut up my second best silk to do it. I have taught myself to believe that John Scott ought to be grateful to be allowed to spend his money on such a perfect creature as Letty Lombard.

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A maid took my hat and gloves, and ushered me into a stately room, with rare old paintings; bric-a-brac, gathered from the whole wide word; ebony furniture, upholstered in faded yellow satin; and a carpet as thick as they are ever made, a yellow ground with red roses: I used to think it grand. The room was dimly lit with wax candles. Mrs. Scott pretends she likes soft light best, but I know she wants to hide the ravages of time in her countenance.

She came in at that moment to meet me, a tiny woman, with microscopic hands, and rustling silk. She makes one think of crape. After her came Mrs. Gregory, angular and frigid. A tall, bony woman, with cold black eyes, and Pompadour hair. She always has jet trimming on her silk gown, and sheds beads everywhere. She could be tracked, as lost children are in fairy tales, when they take pebbles along to keep the path. She gave me a chilly hand, and a few beads rolled down my gown off her sleeve.

Mrs. Scott then, as if she had been fighting against her better nature, and the better nature conquered, came and kissed me. Her cheek, with its odour of powder, is like a crumpled rose-leaf; both old ladies are pretty liberal with cosmetics. Grandfather says Mrs. Gregory has not given up the hope of a second husband.

We engaged in a dreary and discreet conversation, wherein I found myself Johnsonian. My acquirements at the convent rolled easily off my tongue, awing poor Mrs. Scott, who likes simple novels in three volumes. Mrs. Gregory, to subdue me, dashed into the Greek philosophers. I remembered Dean Gregory's conversation with Miss Wilson, and proved a match for her, airing her teacher's pet theories as if I had acquired them myself.

"Your complexion is so perfect, Violet," interrupted poor Mrs. Scott, who does not like the Greeks, "and you are so careless of it."

"Perhaps," I said carelessly; "but it may be because I don't use powder; I think it ill-bred."

I flung that shot at them both, and it made them wince.

"But it is so necessary in this climate," sighed Mrs. Scott; and I thought of the bit of powder-laden chamois skin in my pocket and nearly laughed out loud.

"Do you think," ventured Mrs. Scott, "that she is like Katherine?"

"Not the slightest resemblance," answered Mrs. Gregory icily, and rose to meet other guests. I am so used to those remarks I heed them no more.

"What a witch you are," said Dean Gregory. He came quietly up to me, looking very handsome in his evening dress. "I listened to your talk." He sat down by me on the sofa, and I chatted away with him, forgetting my promise; but I grew tired of him. I hated the way he stared and some queer physical repulsion grew in me toward him. When Jim came I jumped up with a little cry of delight.

"I am 'nowhar' as they say here, beside my Adonis of a younger brother," laughed the colonel goodnaturedly.

"Are you in love with him?" Jim asked, watching his brother's retreating figure; "they all are."

"I don't believe I even like him," I said, and we stayed in our corner until dinner, where we had a place together behind some flower ornaments, and enjoyed ourselves. I watched the other guests eat, and made no mistakes. Jim drank a great deal of champagne, and I kept thinking of what grandfather said about him. Not very kind to my entertainer. After dinner we slipped softly out of the French window to the garden. The only one that saw us was Dean Gregory, and he looked at me with a hateful meaning smile that felt like a slap in my face.

CHAPTER VII.

Oh, that garden in the summer night, under the stars! Far off sounded the sea, hushed and slumbrous, and the music, dulled by distance, chimed sadly and softly through the trees.

"Don't speak to wake me, Jim," I said, and dropped his arm. I wandered on alone. I owned that lovely place; I was a captive princess in a far, tropic land. Over me a date palm thrust its graceful branches to the stars; beside me a banana shrub, here and there queer snaky palms, or great, quivering palm-fans; by the fountain, the marble Diana looking steadfastly for the moon, gleaming white like a sister spirit.

"Oh, Jim!" I cried, "if all this were mine! That lovely home and this."

"And a fine crib it would be," he growled, sitting on a bench lighting a cigar.

I left him in disgust. A pale little moon peeped over the tree-tops as I wandered on, and the music ceased. So wrapped in dreams I grew that suddenly I turned, afraid of my own thoughts, and ran hurriedly back to the bench guided by the red light from Jim's cigar. I sat down near him and he put my light wrap over me.

"Does smoking annoy you?" he said.

"How long ago was it, Jim, that you and I were rolling cigarettes at Justina's?"

"Don't. You are different now, Letty." A saucy answer came to my lips, but something checked me; then my mood changed.

"This is a night for dreams," I said softly, "not to talk of silly sins. Oh, that I were the lady of the manor!"

"Why should you not be?" he said hoarsely. "Listen. Years ago Doctor Scott got angry with Dean and left him out of his will, but directed that John should help him if he needed it, and do for other children if there were any. John has always been good to me, and now he has no heir but me, as Dean is rich. Scott will never marry again, so you see, Letty, this place will be mine some day. Scott's liable to be killed by a Mexican at any time—Dean said so. They hate him like poison in Mexico; there's a gang there, sworn to kill him."

"You must not talk so," I faltered.

"A cad like that can't enjoy money as we could," snarled Jim, throwing away his half-smoked cigar.

"We?" I echoed blindly.

"We! for I love you, Letty." He threw out his arm and drew me to him, and I, who slapped him once for trying to kiss me, said never a word. "It's queer, too," he went on, "for I have known you so long and know just what a spitfire you are; but I am going to marry you."

I think he meant it then, for his face was fond and loving, his voice tremulous, his eyes shining with admiration for me.

"You are so pretty; there's not a girl in Galveston anywhere near you."

I did not care for him, save as my one friend and fellow evil-doer. We sympathised with each other and got into the same scrapes all our young days, and now he was the only brightness in my dull life. He slipped a ring on my finger.

"You never asked if I—I liked you," I said crossly; "you seem pretty sure of me."

"Why not?" he laughed and kissed me, and I did not struggle. I looked at him keenly. He seemed very pale and good-looking in the moonlight, and because he was no longer plain to me I took it for granted I must care for him as girls do for lovers. "I think I do care for you," I said aloud; but added mentally, "because you don't appear so plain."

I rose, and went to the back of the bench, then I leaned over and laid my cheek against his. "Let me kiss you once, Jim," I said. "I never kissed a young man in my life." Then I ran to the house, the frou-frou of my gown following me like a ghost. By the hall mirror I saw I was looking radiantly pretty, Colonel Dean came to meet me.

"No one saw you go out," he said, glancing at my new ring that seemed to gather all the light in the hall in its diamond eye. "Jim must have been very entertaining." I ran past him and made my adieux. At the door of the cottage, after the carriage had gone, I saw Jim come out of the shadow.

"I had to see you once more, Letty," he said hoarsely; "only tell me you love me, and kiss me again. I would lay down my life for you." I pushed away his hand and ran into the house. Up in my own room I looked at my flushed face.

"The truth is, Letty Lombard," I muttered, "you don't like men at all, any of them; but can you live here all your days? Why not be a schemer and marry Jim and be rich some time. Here is your chance."

From that day I began a course of silly deceit that fills me now with shame. Jim being forbidden the house, I used to

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meet him outside; and there were notes, by queer and impudent messengers, and places and times of being with him that made the neighbours talk. Grandfather heard now and then of my having been with Jim, and how angry he was! and Aunt Marg was grieved and silent; Liz cross and rude. Truly I grew to hate them all. Once, in desperation, I asked grandfather why I should not marry Jim, and in a very fury he turned on me.

"You are a curse to an honest house," he cried; "ungrateful, selfish, heartless; but even then you shall not marry a Gregory while I am on this earth; I swear it. If you won't be ruled by your Aunt Marg's misery and my pleading, I'll watch you till the end of my life."

He and Liz never left me alone after that, and even my door was locked at night. Oh, had they told me then, or reasoned with me with kindness, I would not have gone on. Force made me defiant, unkindness drove me to frenzy, and so, one October night, I put on a dark gown, and with my black cloak and hood about me, sat by my window to wait. I had promised Jim to run away with him. It seemed as though Aunt Marg and grandfather would never go to bed, and even when she came upstairs she had to try my door and ask if I were asleep, but I would not answer.

Solemnly the old clock in the hall tolled midnight. Twelve sonorous strokes, echoing through the quiet house. I swung myself to the ground by the grape-vine over the back porch. It was a dim moonlit night, cloudy and threatening a storm; the sea was so high I had to creep close to the street above the sand. I drew my hood over my face when I heard voices, and slunk into the shadow of Justina's cottage, whither I was going.

"This is the house," said a voice, hollow and odd in the fog, and I dimly saw two spectral forms so near me I could have touched them. I fairly dug my nails into the wood of the house for fear they would see me. "She is to be here at twelve o'clock—an hour yet." Then I remembered, with a great sob in my throat, that our hall clock was out of order, and did not tell the time correctly. What had fate saved me from? "She is to run away with Jim, but he must not marry her. I have won him over."

"I can't see what you gain, Dean," said a strange voice.

"This is the house," said a voice, hollow and odd in the fog.

"Dr. Scott meant that I should have some of his property; but that canting sneak, John, beat me out of it. I know he told about that mulatto girl. You know the story. Well, John has a will now, leaving all his property to this girl, Katherine's sister. He doesn't like Jim, I can see that. If I can ruin the girl's chances, I am the only heir. He seems very friendly to me now, and if once the girl is out of the way I have a good show."

"He may marry."

"Never, his infatuation for the sainted Katherine stands in the way. That's why he leaves this sister his money. Egad, the girl out of the way, John may not live so long himself, only Mexican cowardice stands in the way and his vile luck."

"His cunning, you mean. He has the eye of a hawk and the wisdom of a serpent, and that steel hand besides. Not an easy man to kill, Dean. Egad! though if you are broke, there is a big stake to play for."

"You play the preacher to-night, for the girl may not fall into the trap unless she thinks it is all right. She's an odd one, half-bad, half-good, not handsome like Kate."

"A good thing there was only one Katherine," said the other, "for the morals of the community."

"She's smart, the little one though. Jim's wild over her, and I only won him by saying I'd tell Scott the whole story, and he knew John would never let him marry her against the old grandfather's consent."

They walked on, still talking. In a curious daze, I staggered past the cottage, out on the beach, and then I ran as fast as my feet could carry me straight away from the town. I heard nothing but the crashing of the sea. I saw only the grey fog closing in, and almost on the brink of a deep tide inlet I staggered and would have fallen in, but strong arms caught me and brought me to my feet.

"It's Letty," said a kindly voice, and there stood old Captain Dana holding me tight in work-hardened hands. "Aye, it is you, and I've watched for ye so long. Oh, Letty, it's a path straight to perdition."

The captain had aged terribly since that night at the Hotel Gilbert; grown bowed and shrunken, the light gone from his eyes, his whole bearing saddened and despairing. What were *his* dreams, if mine, an innocent looker-on, were haunted by that tortured Mexican, his defiant voice, his frightful death, and the poisoned wine dripping on to the floor?

"I was going to run away with Jim," I cried. I would never deceive again.

"Yet you seemed running away *from* Jim," he said dryly, "and I prayed ye would, an' I was sent here in time." I scarcely heard him, but went on and told what those two men had said. "We were to be married at Justina's by a minister," I sobbed.

"That Mexican cat," he muttered.

"It was me, Captain; she would shed her blood for me, she loves me so. Don't blame her."

"No minister would marry ye at twelve o'clock at night, at such a place, Letty," he went on kindly; "being so young and wild-like, you never thought of that. There's no good in the Gregory family, in the whole line. Their ancestors fought against the United States soldiers at the Alamo, and they were Americans too. There is a vein of treachery in the race; they can't be fair. Think of you, tied for life to a drunkard and a gambler, and willing to hurt you by a runaway like this. Oh, Letty, those meanderings of yours have borne fruit."

"What do you mean?" I asked, vaguely.

"Jest meanderings. Many's the night you've passed me out here when you've stole away from your innocent girl's bed to walk with him. And I've followed you close; for I says, 'Dana, you'd a daughter once, thank God now in happy death; think of her in this poor innocent child's place.' I knowed the Lombard spirit in you. I never told tales; I jest watched. If Enos had tried ye too fur, you'd growed desprit and flung yourself away. I daren't take the risk. I just waited for your sense to come.

"It's tired me to follow you, for you was strong and I'm old and lame; but I kept myself up, thinking of my dead Clarice. If I, with all the burden of my years and trouble, could save you, some of that I've been forced to do might be overlooked in the last account. Then I growed to care for ye. You was so innercent and childlike. Home may be trying, Letty, but it's safety and shelter, and you are kept pure and good there."

The night had grown brighter, for the clouds had blown seaward, and the moon, unobscured, threw a dazzling radiance on the dark rolling sea. Never did I feel such gratitude to a living creature as to that old man at my side. Far ahead I saw a spectral, shadowy figure.

"There is Jim," I cried, and my heart beat so fast I could not walk, but stood there in an agony of fear and shame, while he, seeing me, came rapidly toward us.

(To be continued next week.)

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CUPID'S SERVITOR.

LIKE a batch of bread made with stale yeast—sodden and sour—was the face of Clymer Ames. He was the very last man you would have supposed to be the salaried servitor of Cupid. Yet, so fond of paradoxes is fate, that this man, who had eschewed Love, made his bread and butter by serving him. But, like all who wait on Love with interested motives, he received nothing but dross for his pains.

Yet every day from eight in the morning till five in the afternoon this man, who could have killed Eros for his perfidious conduct, was obliged to toil in his behalf. He was, in short, the clerk who issued the marriage licences.

When he first went into the service of the greatest of cosmopolitans, Cupid, he dedicated to him a very bad chirography, a totally uneducated perception, and an indefatigable industry.

In the course of a few weeks spent behind the little window in the county court's spacious apartments, the chirography of this young man began to improve. So did his perception.

He could tell when a man approached him whether he had family pride or not; whether or not he was sentimental and impatient; whether he was inclined for hymeneal display; whether he was happy or fearful; whether he was going to marry a woman of whom he was proud, or only one with whom he was in love.

Clymer Ames, who at first only saw the stage carpentering and scene-shifting in this drama of the emotions, began to wonder how it would look from the front.

He found himself getting very curious as to what a man did and said before—armed with the age, name, maternal and paternal parents' names of his bride—he came to ask for legal permission to be for ever happy.

It would be very easy, of course, for Clymer Ames to get that legal right. In his capacity of lover he could approach himself in his capacity as clerk, and without unnecessary embarrassment or hesitation ask for a licence, and get it.

To be sure, he could not well be on both sides of the window at once, and he had some doubt about the complete regularity of a licence granted under circumstances in which the applicant associated with such unseemly familiarity with his superior, the clerk.

This, however, was a difficulty which he felt could be overcome. But that was the fifth act. What led up to it? What did a lover do through the four preceding acts?

Clymer Ames determined to find out.

Lydia Eastwater lived in the next street to the one in which Clymer Ames boarded, and she came down to see the daughter of the landlady and play tennis with her on the lawn. Clymer, who had hitherto detested tennis, felt convinced as soon as he saw Lydia Eastwater that exercise was the only thing for him after office hours.

"It must be dull staying in the house all day this hot weather," said Lydia Eastwater one night when they stood together on the same side of the tennis net.

"It's dull enough. But nothing to what it used to be, you know. I have something to look forward to now."

"Have you?" said Lydia Eastwater innocently.

"It's the tennis in the evenings I look forward to. It brightens up my whole day. Don't you care for it, too?"

"Me?" ejaculated Lydia, with ungrammatical nonchalance. "Oh, yes, I like tennis well enough. I wish, though, that these people would come back and go on playing."

She flirted out one foot as she talked, and revealed a marvellous stocking. Clymer wondered if the twenty-two fellows who had that day applied to him for the sanction of the law to their bliss had experienced such difficulties in the first act—he felt himself to be nearing the end of that part of the drama.

If Lydia Eastwater would only show some sign, however slight, that her heart throbbed as his did he would be willing to have the curtain drawn down for the *entr'acte* and let the orchestra play a while.

"It is not because I play tennis that I am happy," he cried explosively, "but because I play tennis with you."

"Oh," cried Miss Eastwater, as she re-tied the yellow bow on her hat; "isn't it too bad, then, that I am going away to-morrow for the rest of the summer!"

Going for the rest of the summer! Clymer was sure none of those twenty-two men, with licences in their pockets, had ever known such suffering as this. He leaned against a tree. He could not remember feeling so strange since that day he fainted in the office, after being up all night with the poor clerk who had the rheumatic fever.

"Then you are not sorry to go?" he whispered. "You will not miss me?"

Lydia Eastwater tied the yellow bow once more. It was growing into a deeper twilight. The one bar of red in the west was all that was left of the day. She hit at a moth that fluttered by in the dusk.

"Why, yes, I shall care. I shall care very much indeed." She looked straight at him, and the red in the west got into her cheeks. Clymer leaned forward, throbbing with a new life. He forgot all about the first act, and even about the fifth one. All he saw was a girl's eyes; all he felt was her soft lips.

Then the other players came walking across the lawn in the twilight, and the next day Miss Eastwater went away.

Clymer wrote to her, of course. He stole the time in which to do this from the service of his county. But the answers were not just what he had expected they would be.

They were full of pleasant gossiping and even of the expressions of those girlish opinions which most young maidens hold, and which so strongly resemble copybook mottoes. But she said very little of just the sort of thing that Clymer desired her to say. He consoled himself by looking at every applicant for a licence who thrust his face in at the little window, and reflecting:

"Ah, my man, you look happy now. But I know what you have been through. You may not believe it, but I myself have experienced the rapture of the first act, and am now in the midst of the perplexities which are so necessary to the progress of the play. My dear fellow, take this form, with my blessing. It looks very commonplace, perhaps, to the uninitiated; but you and I are perfectly aware that it is the passport to heaven."

None of these remarks were audible, of course. They were combined soliloquies of Clymer the lover and Clymer the clerk.

One day a stranger entered the office, a fine young fellow with a handsome face and a swinging walk.

"Man of importance, of property, of temper, and enthusiasm," said the clerk to himself, after his usual manner of summing up customers.

"I want a marriage licence," said the young man gaily and peremptorily.

"Name?" said the clerk, trying to be perfunctory, but actually throbbing with sympathy with this happy young animal.

"Alfred Sydney Johnson Clayton."

"Name of lady?"

"Lydia Ernestine Westwater."

The clerk went on filling out the rest of the form, and did not move a muscle. The lover—but there was no lover except the young man who went out, swinging his shoulders as he went.

And so the face of Cupid's servitor became, as was mentioned at first, like a batch of bread made from stale yeast. And though he works for Love, he and his clerk do not speak when they meet, and the capricious boy has ever been seen to fold his wings closer about him with an air of contempt when he looks at Clymer Ames, clerk of the court, and the issues of marriage licences.

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A FIRST-CLASS COMBINATION

INDUSTRY and intelligence make a first-class combination. But it is rare. A lazy fellow who is inventive and intelligent often accomplishes more than an industrial fool. In the infancy of the steam engine a boy was set to let the steam into the ends of the cylinder alternately, by hand. He found it a boresome task, and so invented a way to make the engine wait on itself. His method has been in use ever since - the principle of the "eccentric" motion. "What do you mix your paints with to produce those wonderful colours?" asked somebody of Sir Joshua Reynolds. "With brains," curtly answered the great artist.

This is a big idea, and it has to do with everything under the sun. Here, for instance, is the case of a man who spent a whole summer in bed when he might just as well have been on his feet looking after his business and having odds and ends of pleasure on evenings and holidays.

Along in the spring of 1889 he took a chill; exactly the time of year to take chills if you don't watch out, and often if you do. Well, immediately afterwards a dreadful pain struck into both his hips and legs. The result of this was that he had to go to bed, and he stayed there sixteen weeks. Just think of that! Fancy it a problem in arithmetic—a child's simple "sum" to be worked out on a slate. Add the pain, the trouble and worry to his family, the direct extra expenses, the loss of time and income, the loss of the summer's enjoyments, the doctor's bills, etc., etc.—and see what it tots up at.

The first doctor who attended him said he had sciatica, and had it very bad. The doctor was either right or wrong. If he was right the result showed that he didn't know how to cure sciatica. If he was wrong it showed that he couldn't diagnose a disease from its symptoms. Put it how you will, he might have been an industrious, hard-working man, but lacked something of being a proper doctor. Well, he gave up the case, and Mr. Dawson (our suffering friend's name) sent for another. This one blistered him and painted him with iodine from his waist to his feet. By this time Mr. Dawson was unable to get out of bed or to dress himself without assistance.

The doctors' medicines and applications failing to help him he went to the hospital at Buxton, where he was advised to try the baths. After being there three weeks he returned home but little better for the treatment.

The conclusion of this exasperating experience is set forth in a few words by Mr. Dawson himself in a letter from which the abovementioned facts are taken.

"I had," he says, "little or no use of my legs, and it was wholly out of my power to attend to my business. I lost a deal of sleep in consequence of the pain, and owing to a want of appetite and necessary nourishment I grew very weak. Even after leaving my bed, if I went out for a breath of fresh air, I had to stop and rest every few yards. I was so broken and helpless that my wife and others who saw me thought I never should get about again. In this condition I remained until January, 1891, when I read of cases like mine having been cured by Seigel's Syrup. Persuaded by the clearness and evident sincerity of the reasoning, I began taking the Syrup, and soon found relief. My legs had more power, and the pain gradually subsided, until it ceased altogether, and I could go about as I did before I was taken ill. If I had only known of this remedy and used it sooner, I should have been saved suffering *and heavy doctors' bills.* You can publish this statement if you think it will be of use to others. Yours truly (signed), Harrison Dawson, Heap Bridge, Bury, April 27th, 1893."

Our friend's inference is perfectly logical as to the advantage he would have derived from an earlier knowledge of Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup; as his ailment—acute rheumatism—arose from the poison generated by a torpid digestion and a clogged liver, for which the Syrup is a specific. His doctors laboured hard to cure him, no doubt, but without an understanding of the *cause* of his condition. Blind men may walk, but are apt to walk in circles. The remedy that succeeds where others fail is a product of industry *and* intelligence.

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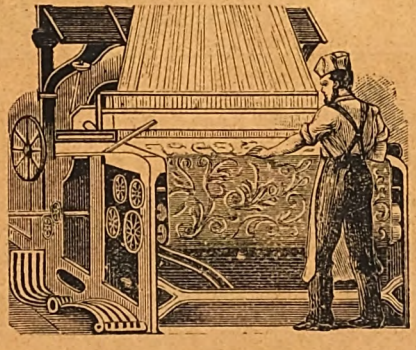

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

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CHAPTER I.

I HAPPENED to be detained for a time in a small and exceedingly tumble-down old town in Germany.

The place of which I speak is little better than a large village, though in deference to the feelings of its worthy inhabitants, who consider it, no doubt, as the "hub of the universe," I have dignified it with the appellation of town, and it lies quite out of the ordinary run of tourists, high and dry above the restless ebb and flow of the great excursional ocean.

Dummelsheim lies in one of the loveliest of the many lovely green valleys which run like tongues of verdure between the pine-clad heights and crags of the Black Forest.

It is set down on a small patch of tableland, above which rise some wonderful shapes of crag and pine forest, and below which a little mountain stream rushes frantically night and day, raging and tearing its little life out among the great boulders and between the fern-clad banks, yearning to obliterate itself in the nearest river that offers a refuge.

I happened to be detained in this place by special business for a whole fortnight.

A fortnight in Dummelsheim, with nothing to do, represents about five years of ordinary existence in length and tedium.

I explored the lovely valley, not without feeling the charm of its peace and isolation; I drank, as in duty bound, very many tumblers of the peculiarly nauseous spa water, of which the Dummelsheimers are so unreasonably proud; and then time began to hang heavily on my hands.

There was no gaming table, no theatre, no concert-hall.

At last I discovered a diversion. It came in the shape of a compatriot, a resident compatriot. Not that in appearance or garb he was much of an Englishman. Twenty years' residence in Dummelsheim had made him as much a German as the Germans, and had quite obliterated the handiwork of the good old land that gave him birth.

He had all but forgotten his mother speech, and when he endeavoured to use it his sentences were patched together by the Teutonic words and phrases which came most readily to his tongue. He was as regardless of his personal appearance as the most inborn of the Dummelsheimers, and as devoted to the consumption of tobacco as the best of them.

It was supposed that he was a bachelor. At any rate, of "womankind" he had none, and lived alone with merely the intermittent aid of a supernaturally hideous frau at those times when scouring and cleansing became a bitter necessity.

It was in a *café* that I first met with him. I thought when I first saw him, "What a dreadful shaggy old German that is; no one could mistake his nationality, at any rate."

He seemed to be a part and parcel of the green, mouldy place, a sort of human lichen, an animated fungus on two short and sturdy legs.

However, a compatriot is a compatriot, and if one has to scrape the dirt from his countenance in order to recognise him, the operation must be gone through for the sake of the dear land of our fathers.

My German Englishman proved, as a companion, decidedly more entertaining than one would have expected from his looks, and in his morning rambles with me pointed out, with great care, what he knew of the antiquities of the little town; showed me a wood where one of the Dummelsheimers had once, in a fit of playfulness, applied a hatchet to the back hair of his betrothed, and also the gaol in front of which he was afterward hanged as a punishment for his little escapade.

Many other spots of interest, where incidents of a less tragic though still striking character had occurred, were also designated by his kindly walking-stick as we strolled along.

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After a day or so my newly-found friend began to resume his native speech, so long disused, and by that time I also had learned to translate into ordinary English his quaint and puzzling Anglo-German expressions.

So we managed to get on very well together, and I found him an interesting, if a slightly dirty old man. The town, when explained by such a cicerone, was invested with quite a new charm of interest.

It was quaint enough without any extraneous help, and the houses, being for the most part ancient timbered edifices, and the gables leaning forward with age and hanging over the streets, one obtained every now and again a street vista of delicious picturesqueness, in which the ancient houses, nodding toward each other, seemed to be whispering forgotten piquant scandal of the good old German days.

There were at every turn and corner abundant "bits," which an artist for an illustrated paper would have found very handy, and sketches which he could have rapidly converted into current coin of the realm.

I am no artist, but, to my great surprise, I discovered that my dear and dirty new-found acquaintance and countryman was. One day, having accompanied him to the queer and humble lodging which he inhabited, I found on the walls certain indubitable proofs of his artistic bent.

There were many admirable sketches in chalk and sepia of striking points in the valley, and of certain buildings and objects in the town itself.

The fountain in the market place was there, with its great St. Christopher as its centre figure. There were the porch of St. Christopher's Church, the quaint turret at the angle of the town hall, and the crumbling ruins of an ancient fortress on the Ganzberg. Among other things I noticed a sketch of a certain picturesque old house which I had indeed seen, but the locality of which I did not remember at the time.

I mentioned this fact.

"Ah, I have never shown you that! It is in the Lederstrasse," he replied. "We will see the place to-morrow."

On the morrow, accordingly, we walked together to the Lederstrasse.

As we entered the dirty old street my companion remarked, "I have never been in this street for twenty years or more, and I never wish to enter it again."

My curiosity was roused.

"Why?" I inquired.

"I got so great a fright here once, and I was so much laughed at," he answered.

"Why, what is there about this street to frighten you? It is old enough, certainly, and quaint enough, and smells rather—pah!" I exclaimed, as a full flavoured German stench saluted my nostrils; "but nothing terrible after all."

"Well, mein Herr, it is not the street; it is that house, and—the ghost in it," the Anglo-German replied, with a sort of shudder, so to speak, in his voice.

"Oh, oh! then you have not lived long enough yet, and you are not quite a boy, to get rid of your superstitions, eh? You are still afraid of ghosts, are you?"

A supernaturally hideous frau.

"I was afraid of what I saw," he replied, with a certain amount of dignity, as if hurt by my light manner and my tones of mockery.

My curiosity was of course aroused by this speech, and I was about to question him further when, pointing with his stick, he said briefly:

"That's the house there."

A sketch of a certain picturesque old house.

I looked and recognised in the ancient timbered edifice on the farther side of the street the original of the chalk sketch of his lodgings.

It was a tumbledown pile, with overhanging storeys and carved "barge board," having, however, a curiously twisted chimney of ancient, ruddy brickwork, and certain obscure remains of armorial bearings over the door. There was a date which, however, I could only make out in its state of dilapidation to be fifteen—and something or other.

The edifice seemed to have been long deserted, and the grass was growing in tufts among the stones at the front door as if the passers-by had long been accustomed to avoid a too near acquaintance with the old tenement.

Indeed, something about the building said as plainly as the German version of Tom Hood's poem could have said:

"The house is haunted."

Nay, the very street itself seemed to be haunted. It was in a great part deserted. The tumbledown buildings on either side of the picturesque house seemed to be devoid of occupants, and the few sordid and wretched houses in the street which appeared to enjoy the presence of tenants had, to my imagination, and in the gathering dusk of evening, a scared and terrified aspect.

"Look well at that window," said my conductor, pointing to a large, battered casement just above the door, "and when we go I will tell you what I know about it. That will do," he continued, taking hold of my arm; "you have seen it, and it is not good to stay in the street; it chills the blood, I imagine."

"Indeed it does," I replied, and we moved off, not, I fancy, without a thrill of pleasure at leaving behind us the ghostly atmosphere of the Lederstrasse. A few crows, flitting inhabitants of the desolate street, were wheeling about the roofs and chimneys of the house as we departed.

CHAPTER II.

I went with my acquaintance back to his lodging, and there, over a plentiful supply of lager beer and the smoke of two big pipes, he told me his experience of the house and street we had quitted.

"Twenty years ago—I was rather younger then, I fancy; I mean not in years merely, but in life and hopes—I had recently come to this town, and before I was long in it I heard a great deal of talk about a queer ghost, quite unlike any ghost I had ever heard or read of, which was said to haunt the Lederstrasse, and which the people of the town so much dreaded.

"Hans Hubbler, down the Granzstrasse, had seen it when

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a boy, and old Frau Hertzler had all but died from fright when she was sixteen years old in consequence of a mere glimpse of it. It was the celebrity of the little town.

"Well, I laughed at all the stories, and grew very courageous over the matter in my *café* when the night grew late and the bottle was low. Some of the fellows there tried to chaff me on the score of my nationality. 'Ein Englander,' they said, 'always asserts that he will brave anything—dog or fiend or fraulein—but let him be set to the test and he is not always so brave as a lion.' Then one of them said:

"'This Herr Englander here, he has heard enough and is brave, but let him face a test we will give him if he be a brave Englander, and we shall see.'

"So one night in the Restaurant Kloppart, in the milk market—I remember well that night. Ach, mein Herr, is that door fast? So! I remember that night. I was fired with courage, and I said, when they spoke of the ghost, that I would face it, come what might.

"A grin of incredulity passed over the countenance of my listeners, and they puffed away at their pipes in contemptuous silence. At last big-boned Krantz Hubscher, the butcher, made me a bet that I would not sleep for one night in the old house in the Lederstrasse alone.

"'Done!' I cried, and the money was staked, not much, a few louis, and I was pledged to an adventure.

"It struck me afterwards that a great number of the ghost stories I had myself read turned upon some unused house or room and an undertaking to sleep there; but further than this you will see, my case had little resemblance to any other spectral adventure. Nor did this render my case less real or less terrifying.

"'What sort of a ghost is it?' I asked. 'Tell me just that, so that I may know what kind of an appearance I am about to face.'

"'Ach hein!' they said, 'mein Herr must just see him as he is, and enjoy him as he will.'

"So the night was fixed upon and the key of the ancient house procured. A mattress and some candles, and also a pistol (at my request), were taken into the biggest and best room—that one just over the doorway. A good bottle of Zeltinger and a supper for me were got ready, and a roaring fire of big logs was built up in the afternoon in the fireplace there.

"The people living in the Lederstrasse were much astonished and a good deal interested at the unwonted glare in the windows of the haunted house; and, when they were informed of the reason of the illumination, expressed a good deal of pity for the mad Englishman whose craze had tempted him to brave the ghost of the locality.

"Night came—a dark night it was, in November, with windy gusts every now and again sweeping down the street and among the crazy old chimneys. There was a pale, gibbous moon that showed itself at intervals from between the drifting clouds in a very weird and uncanny fashion.

"'Just the night for a ghost story,' I said to myself, and thought, as I felt a little thrill come over me, 'Shall I pay the small debt and have done with the matter? Shall I cry off and smoke my pipe at home and turn into my bed at my usual hour in peace?'

"'No!' I decided, after some consideration, 'I will go through with my undertaking now, come what may, and show these Germans what an Englishman can do, and will do, at need.'

"So I made all my preparations for my adventure, and about ten o'clock entered the house with two or three friends, who had resolved to accompany me in order that they might see me comfortably disposed of.

"Stay a bit," I said to myself.

"The crazy old stairs creaked a good deal as we went up them, but the room looked exceedingly cosy, for the great logs were smouldering in the chimney, and cast out an agreeable heat. In all the corners, and hanging from the beams, were many dingy cobwebs, the work of generations of spiders, undeterred from their toil by the house's evil reputation.

"Save these cobwebs, my mattress, a couple of chairs, and a small round table, upon which stood my supper and the good bottle of Zeltinger, the room was unfurnished.

"As a further aid to courage I had provided myself with a flask of eau de vie, and, of course, had my pipe.

"My friends, having cast an approving glance round the room, sat down smoking for a few minutes, and then bade me 'guten abend' and 'gute nacht,' and left me to my meditations.

"I listened to their heavy boots as they went stump, stump, stump down the stairs, and to the street door as it shut to with a bang.

"I was alone in the house of evil repute.

"'Stay a bit,' I said to myself; 'this is perhaps a joke, a trick, and it will be with the living Germans that I may have to deal. Well, the pistol will give an account of them; but I will make myself as safe as I can.'

"So I took from my pocket a screwdriver and a paper of big screws, and with a quiet smile at my own cunning—for of these screws I had said nothing to any one—proceeded forthwith to screw up the door.

"The door made fast, I walked round the room and carefully took stock of it. There was a small corner cupboard. I opened this; nothing there but spiders, their webs, and the carcases of their victims.

"On the other side of the fireplace was a very low door, about the height of my shoulder. Another cupboard, I thought, and endeavoured, for a long time without success, to prise it open. When at last it yielded, I discovered, with some surprise, a step, and another low door, evidently strongly nailed up, and which, from its appearance, had been for ages in the same condition.

"This discovery gave me for the moment a turn. 'What a strange thing,' I said to myself, 'a passage leading to somewhere; just like these haunted chambers usually have. However, I will take good care that no one makes use of this passage to-night, at any rate.'

"And so closing the low door I proceeded to make it fast with some more of my great screws. As I did so and was driving the screws home I felt a queer sensation from my right hand to my elbow, something like a faint electric shock; 'pressed on the nerve somehow,' I said, and continued my work.

"This done, I had my supper, lit my pipe, and drank the half of my wine. The chimes of St. Christopher's tower startled me sounding the hour of eleven. I was, however, in a peaceful frame of mind, without the least fear of anything human or superhuman, and I gazed placidly at the red smouldering logs and puffed my pipe in peace.

"Suddenly, however, the fact that the hour of midnight would soon approach gave me a little shiver. I quickly quenched the feeling with a drop of my eau de vie.

"Nevertheless, I thought, there is no use in sitting thus. I may as well go to bed, then I shall, without doubt, fall asleep, know nothing till to-morrow morning, and be able to go home with flying colours.

"Accordingly I prepared for rest, and as I can never sleep well with my clothes on, pulled off all my attire with the exception of my shirt, took a final drink of the eau de vie, laid

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ready my pistol, and lay down upon my mattress, drawing a single blanket over me.

"I lay with my feet turned toward the glowing embers, which diffused grateful heat and gave sufficient light to enable me to discern the objects—such as they were—in the chamber after I had extinguished my candle. The feeling of security, born of the fact that I had securely screwed up the only two doors which opened into the room, did its work, and in a very little time I fell asleep.

"I cannot tell how long I slept. All I know is that I seemed to wake up from a feeling of cold, as if someone were blowing upon me with a pair of bellows. I rubbed my eyes, remembered where I was, and experienced a slight feeling of unhappiness to find that the night had not passed over and that I was still in the haunted chamber.

"The fire was all but dead, the moon, as I could see through the uncurtained window, seemed to be plunging her way among great banks and masses of cloud, the room was fitfully lighted here and there with a strange twilight of moon and fire.

"Somehow my eyes fixed themselves on the low door by the side of the hearth. Could it be possible? Was that door opening? No; impossible! I had screwed it up far too tight for that.

"Yes; something strange was taking place. Whether the door was opening or something was coming through it I could not tell; but I felt that a change was taking place, and sat up in my bed in silent terror, with that peculiar sensation in my body which persons of an imaginative disposition are pleased to call 'goose-flesh.'

"Fixing my gaze firmly upon that mysterious door, I sat and watched it. Little by little the aspect of the door changed. It became white, bleached as it were, and then, to my intense horror, a something seemed to pass through it and to stand in front of it.

"Yes; that something gradually assumed shape and proportion. I could see the head, the body, the arms—the form was that of a man. Then, while my hair stood up right upon my head with terror, I noticed its stern, wan face, its costume of a long bygone age, its lean and withered arms and its attenuated legs. Could it be a man in the flesh? No, clearly no, for I could see through it and discern that the little door at the back of it was fast screwed up as I had left it. This was no man in whom was the breath of life, a phantom, a form, a show, merely an image, and how inexpressibly ghastly and terrific.

"When I had fully realised this fact I became a prey to the most abject terror. It was true, then, about the ghost! It was no trick, no joke, that I was to be subjected to, but before me was a supernatural shape for the first time in my life.

"I became seized with a species of fascination as well as by terror; I gazed fixedly at the appearance, covered as it was by a strange, unearthly light.

"It was the figure of a tall, lean man, for it had by degrees risen far above the height of the low door from which it had emerged.

"Its eyes were fixed upon me, and over one of its arms it carried a number of dark objects, the shape of which I could not make out.

"But, horror of horrors! it was quietly nearing my bed.

"I arose at once and stood erect, trembling in every limb. In vain I tried to speak; my lips refused to utter a word. I could only stare fixedly and in silence at the strange, glittering figure. The form, doubtless it was, of some creature who had walked in the streets of Dummelsheim in the flesh and lived in this house some 150 years ago, still haunting, in its ancient shape, the well-known spots.

"The spectre advanced and I retreated before it, holding out my arms as if to ward it off.

"I never thought of using my pistol save at one moment, but the fact that the figure was transparent at once convinced me that to fire at it would be of no avail.

"Still the terrible shape approached with a silent, noiseless stride; then, on reaching the middle of the room, it seemed to motion me with one of its arms towards the chair.

"I hesitated. Its actions became imperative, and I was constrained to obey. Once seated, the spectre, which appeared to have acquired a perfect control over my paralysed senses, took something from over its left arm, and signed to me to stretch out my leg. I did so mechanically—and then—how can I convey to you the feeling that came over me as it proceeded to pull what seemed to be a stocking of ice upon my left leg?

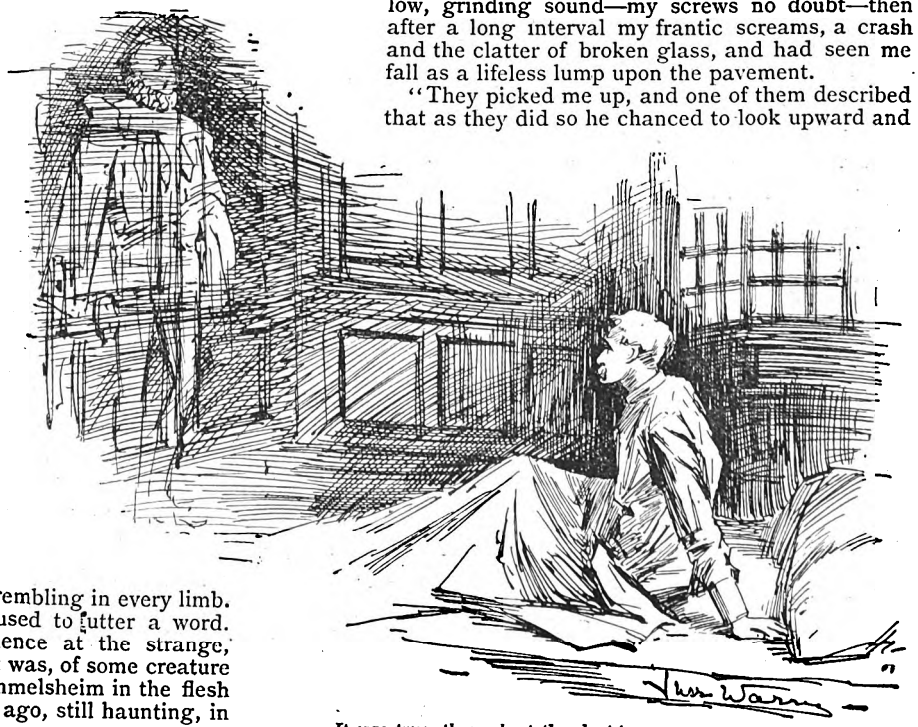
"I can even now at times feel the horrible icy coldness of that spectral hose. It was a stocking that the figure was pulling upon my bare leg and foot. It was chilled to the very bone, my hair bristled, my head swam, my heart ceased to beat for a moment; higher and higher crept the ice cold stocking upon my leg. The stocking was on. This accomplished, the spectre motioned me to stretch out the other leg.

"My horror now fairly broke the spell that chained me. I fled to the door, the spectre glided after me smoothly and silently as a fate. I seized the handle of the door—miserable! I remembered that I had fastened myself in with the ghost. My reason seemed to be escaping me. The steel-like glitter of the spectre's eyes was fixed upon me. Like a hunted and doomed animal I fled round the apartment. I leaped at the window, crashed through it, and fell into the street below.

"I must have lost consciousness at once, for the next thing I remember was lying on my bed in my own lodgings, with my good landlady and the acquaintances who had dared me to the terrible trial standing round my bed.

"It was said for some time after that the poor Englander was going mad, as all the others who had seen the ghost of Lederstrasse had done. I cheated them however. My head was too strong, I suppose, for I got over my fright, and after my broken leg had been set, could listen to their recital of what had taken place. I learned that those who had set themselves to watch in the street had heard first a strange, low, grinding sound—my screws no doubt—then after a long interval my frantic screams, a crash and the clatter of broken glass, and had seen me fall as a lifeless lump upon the pavement.

"They picked me up, and one of them described that as they did so he chanced to look upward and



It was true, then, about the ghost!

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saw at the broken window above, in the moonlight, a pale, shadowy face and the glitter of two bright eyes.

"It is not strange to say my right leg was broken by the fall; but it is, I think, somewhat strange to relate that my left was blackened to the knees as if scorched, nay, it is so to this day—see!"

My friend showed me his blackened leg.

"And that is all?" I asked.

"All, lieber, Himmel! Is not that enough? Can you wonder after what I have told you that I don't like the Lederstrasse?"

"Wonder, not I! I would not go near the place again after dark for a grand duke's ransom. But who do they say the spectre was?"

"I don't quite know. There is a legend of some hosier who once lived in that house and was rich, who fell into some disgrace, and the reigning duke of Saxe-Dummelsheim seized upon him, and with a refinement in cruelty, in order to extort from him his money, caused him to be put to a torture something in the manner of our ancient machine called 'the boot,' which crushed the leg of the victim.

"In this case the instrument was a hose of steel, which was at the onset icy cold and was then heated by fire to almost a red heat. The poor hosier sank under the dreadful torture.

"It is said that his ghost now seeks to avenge itself upon all who approach his ancient abode, and that he tries on them his ghastly hose; if he succeeds in getting both hose on their legs they die and his spirit is released from its wanderings."

Such was the case of the queer old Anglo-German. I went to my inn and to bed; there I lay and pondered long upon the strange story I had heard. My sleep, when sleep came, was not of the best. Every now and again I awoke with a start and a shudder, and fancied that a ghostly hosier was pulling upon my own legs the spectral hose of the story.

A day or two passed by, and one night, as I was packing my portmanteau for my homeward journey on the morrow, I was startled by a great yellow light in the sky. Soon after I heard the hoarse and blatant voice of the alarm bell. I dressed and went out, and found the whole population of the place running in one direction.

I followed the stream of folk. It was a fire, someone told me, in the Lederstrasse; the haunted house was burning down. We arrived in the ancient narrow street; the sight was magnificent; the whole building was enveloped in flames. No one took the slightest trouble or endeavoured to get the flames under control. All were staring and gaping in idle curiosity.

"It was a bad place," someone said, "and we are well content to see it perish."

How or by whom the fire was kindled I never knew.

THE ADVENTURES OF A MATRIMONIAL AD.

THE *Roseton News* was not a great paper. It did not subscribe to the Association, nor did it have a special correspondent in Fleet Street. Ofttimes the shears vied with the editorial pencil in filling out its columns.

It had but one reporter, yet a more energetic, irrepressible, self-satisfied penman than Fred Stokes seldom existed. In a dearth of news, or amid the pleasant lethargy of good times, he could fall back upon the reportorial imagination, evolving from airy nothings a succession of rumours and prognostications with an unfailing shrewdness that verged upon, yet never overstepped, the dim line of probability.

When not chasing the festive item, or cornering an elusive sensation, he would assist his editorial chief in the latter's more onerous task. He would concoct poetic and taking advertisements; extract the pith of some great London editor's opinions on the "burning issues" of the day; and all this in addition to other multifarious duties.

Often would the editor remove his cigar, elevate his legs, and, as the blue smoke curled upward, reward his satellite with a jovial nod of approval and say—

"Fred, me boy, next to mesilf, the *News* would be lost without ye."

The editor's ancestral fluid was of an Irish tincture, and a slight suspicion of brogue often intruded itself upon his tongue when the editor grew interested.

"I'm indebted to ye, and if ever ye get into a toight place, call upon your chief. Gratitude, me son—a—ahem! Here's that account of young Shurtleff's marriage. Terrible swell affair that; we must shove it in the third column—editorial page—and be hanged to it!"

"Look here, sir," said Fred, after one of these pleasant interjectional colloquies with his chief, "here's a matrimonial ad. in the *Daily Post* for a wife: 'Wealthy Cuban'—rich—presumably unsophisticated—'wants to Anglicise himself, and as a preliminary step he wants an English wife. She must be young, handsome, refined, and so on. Money not essential. Address, Zanaga, Box Q.K., *Daily Post* office, in confidence.' I believe I'll answer it—huge joke, you see."

Here the editor looked dubious. "Perhaps we can work up something stunning out of this for the *News*. Who knows?"

The editor brightened enthusiastically.

"Roight you are," said he. "But it will take exceedingly adroit manipulation, me boy."

Fred considered the matter, and then indicted a modest reply in a flowing feminine hand, signing himself (the deceitful rascal) "Miss Nellie Jardine." The editor read it with admiration.

"A roight tender and circumspect rejoinder. It wouldn't surprise me, now, if ye weren't a born novelist, after all."

So Sammis was given a tip. Fred posted his letter, then carelessly waited further developments. In due time came a reply. Our Cuban expressed his surprise and pleasure at hearing so assuringly from Miss Nellie Jardine, and said that, out of a score of answers, hers was the one that pleased him most.

She alone, he continued with tropical ardour, was the one woman for him. He felt it, his heart told him so, and thus on, through several pages of blind infatuity. He concluded by hoping, praying, imploring that she would at once reply and exchange photographs with her adoring slave.

"Bedad, sir," said the editor, "you are in for it. I behold already the consummation. Ye'll be donning petticoats next, and the reportorial department of the *News* will feel an aching void, that is, when you're off to visit this Cuban in London, me boy."

Several letters on either side were sent and photographs exchanged, Fred sending that of an extremely pretty girl he had met at the seaside one summer. He was beginning, however, to tire of the tender monotony, when, one day, he laid upon the editor's desk a neat package, which, on being opened, disclosed a pair of earrings and a brooch set with garnet and pearls. The editor examined them critically. Fred seemed more dismayed than amused.

"They're worth a hundred guineas, me boy—if they're genuine. What does the fellow say about them?"

"Why, it's a present, he says, and hints of more to come, and that we must arrange for a meeting, all this with the wildest protestations of eternal love and fidelity. Hang it! This is getting serious. I never thought the fool would go so far."

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"Write him that the sudden death of one of your uncles, cousins, or aunts, calls you off to the Continent instantly, me boy. Hint of great riches falling your way, of a family mystery imposing silence. Tell him to possess his soul in patience, and that he will hear from you in a month or so. Then you can return his confounded jewellery and break up the affair—somehow—anyhow."

The editor felt himself sagacious, yet his conclusion was misty, too misty it seemed, when, two days later, Fred rushed into the sanctum with an open letter in his hand, his eyes dilated and his hair dishevelled. "Sir," he said, "I'm ruined, devastated. I must leave, obliterate myself, and the *News* will have to get another man. Read that."

He dashed the letter down upon the desk and fell to gnawing his nails nervously. The editor looked up wonderingly, then read the note. After a few passionate, devotional interjections, it wound up by stating that this fond lover would run down to Roseton on the following Friday to see his "adored one," his "queen."

"Isn't this something like a predicament?" exclaimed Fred, as his chief sat tapping the arm of the editorial chair with his blue pencil, and his eyes fixed reflectingly upon his assistant. "Can you make me an advance of £10 or so? I'll get Meigs to take my place and flee to some pathless wilderness for a while, until this infatuated foreigner recovers his reason."

"Fred, me boy," said the editor sagely, "I know a trick worth two of that. Write me a touching obituary notice of Miss Nellie Jardine's very sudden demise. A congestive chill, spinal meningitis; anything of that sort will do. We'll just insert that little notice and have one copy struck off.

"Have it marked and sent to that poor fool of a Cuban, together with the jewellery he has sent, and, presto, me boy! you are out of the whole affair in no time. We won't need Meigs then; he's a dunderhead, and you can still go on with your work."

Fred, though at first doubtful, fell in with this idea, and the programme was fully carried out.

The announcement, beginning, "Sudden death of an estimable young lady," was really quite pathetic, and so tickled Fred's fancy that his nervousness vanished as Wednesday and Thursday passed. He became so absorbed in other things that when on Friday, a wild-eyed, haggard, foreign-looking man burst into the sanctum with a paper in his hand, Fred looked up serenely, then recognised, with an appalling thrill, that it was the Cuban from the photograph the latter had sent.

The editor had just gone out to take some liquid refreshment with a big advertiser and a political candidate, and probably would not be back for half an hour. Fred realised that he had to face his own particular lion alone.

"Roosviele News—ees it here?" asked the stranger in a sombre tone.

"Well—a—I'm not so sure." Fred hesitated whether to frankly own up or ignominiously flee.

"E—et must be. I was so told. Señor—have you see zat?"

He pointed to the notice in the paper he held, and watched Fred anxiously.

"Zat—zat——" his voice was profoundly melancholy. "Oh, señor! I am desolate—I am inconsolable. I no one know I here. Will you—so kindly—to take me to the grave? Her last resting place, señor?"

Fred here suddenly felt an inspiration that lent him a glimpse of rescue. Only two days before, in the little cemetery, a new grave had been made. A member of a family little known and recently arrived at Roseton, had died and been there.

Why not take the man there, and leave him alone with his sorrow? Then Fred could have a little time to devise some method of escaping from him. He arose with an amiable and sympathetic smile.

"Certainly, sir," he said, reaching for his hat. "Come with me. It was a most melancholy event, and as you seem interested, I see no harm in showing you the grave of our esteemed young townswoman."

The stranger grasped Fred's hand, wrung it feverishly and prepared to follow him. He called in the office boy and then the two men sallied forth down a back street. Fred did not wish to meet acquaintances just then. After a while they came out on a pleasant road that led to the cemetery. Arriving there, he pointed out the way to the grave.

"No trouble in finding it, sir, it's the only new one. You will want to be alone, and—should you wish to leave a place connected with such sad memories at once, there's a London train at four-fifteen. Good-day."

Fred was off like a rocket, half determined to pack his worldly goods and go to see his mother, whom he had not visited for two years. But, on his return to the office, the editor was awaiting him with a telegram in hand.

"Look here," said his chief. "I've got to leave you in five minutes. There's a plot on foot to unseat Jones, and he and I have got to run up to town and see about it. I'll be back in two days; not a word now, I trust you as I do mesilf. You can run things. Where's my overcoat?"

So the editor departed with a rush, giving Fred hardly time to open his mouth. He felt desperate. That mad and melancholy Cuban would be back, asking troublesome questions, and anyone might drop in. He shuddered at the thought of the direful possibilities ahead.

But the afternoon wore off, and the Cuban did not return. Fred breathed easier; perhaps the fellow had really taken the train. When he locked up the office and started upon his evening walk, his fears had flown.

He felt exultant, and also pitied good-humouredly the wild-eyed foreigner and his imaginary woes.

He turned down a grassy lane, near which stood a house seclusively sheltered by shrubberies and trees. From the front gate a man and woman came forth, and walked toward him arm in arm. His fears suddenly revived as he recognised his Cuban again.

The other was a lovely lady in deep mourning. Imagine his surprise when the man greeted him joyfully, ecstatically, all his former dejection gone, and his face wreathed in smiles.

"Ah, my friend," said the Cuban, "you have saved my life and restored my happiness. Señor, I cannot tell how much to you I owe. You send me to that grave, and there what do I find? I see there alive and well, my old, old love, from whom I long separate for years. I forget my new grief. I go there sad, I come away rejoicing, and to you, señor, I owe all of zat—yes—all—all."

Explanations ensued, during which the Cuban eagerly introduced his companion. It appeared that years before, in Cuba, he wooed and won the daughter of a prominent patriot leader of the island. After a time, a price was set upon that chieftain's head by the Spanish authorities and he and his family suddenly disappeared, while our Cuban was away in foreign parts on business. On the latter's return, he could find no trace of them, and after months of fruitless waiting, he gave up all hope of ever again seeing his affianced.

Years passed. He came to England and began to think of marriage again. Hence the advertisement and the cruel practical joke that had, after all, resulted so happily. The grave to which Fred had sent him was really that of a brother of the lady now by his side. He met her there, in tears over her own family bereavement.

They recognised each other. She had remained true to him, and she was his first love. Their grief was changed into joy, and he went home with her. The strange family spoken of was hers, and for political reasons they were living in England under an assumed name.

They had renewed their troth, and, in his happiness, the mystery of Miss Nellie Jardine was not again alluded to by him. Perhaps he had not wanted his first sweetheart to know. Fred himself was only too glad to drop the subject. He left them well on towards the seventh heaven, but learned in a few days that the whole family, together with the Cuban, had left Roseton for parts unknown.

"'Twas a very queer little episode," said the editor, upon his return. "But I can't see that it brings any grist to the *News*, unless ye write it all up. Ye owe the paper that much, me boy, and me too, bedad."

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A CONTEST OF WITS.

THE village of Aygalades is pretty enough on week-days, but it is on Sundays that it is seen at its best. Nestled, as you know, on a mountain slope close to Marseilles, placed neither too high nor too low, looking out over the sea without actually being on its border, it appears from a distance to be buried in a mass of small trees, which quite overshadow it.

You would suppose, I am quite sure, that the people of this quiet corner of the earth, with their lovely sky, their sunshine, and their famous fish soup, would have no great ambition for talking politics. Yet they do, the foolish fellows! And it was precisely about a matter of politics they were discussing one fine Sunday—some question concerning Society at large—as they were seated face to face at one of the tables in Mother Germanos' arbour, that the two oldest friends in Aygalades—friends of thirty years' standing, neither more nor less, Joséphin the postman, and stout Josué, the farmer of Ile-aux-Cébes—almost came to blows, so that it was necessary to separate them after one of those terrible Southern disputes in which the combatants become enemies for life, never speaking to each other or visiting each other again.

Strong language had been used.

"*Canaille!*" Josué had said.

"Old villain!" the postman had retorted.

You will say that every day in political disputes things like these may be said between old friends, such as they were. Perhaps so. But on Sunday! And before all the people who were there! That settled it. Without another word, without a gesture, the farmer set out for Ile-aux-Cébes.

Then between these two men there began one of those half-concealed, but implacable warfares that are much like the gentle fine rain which falls almost imperceptibly and silently in winter at Aygalades (and, perhaps, elsewhere), and which, little by little, without one's noticing it, in the end soaks one to the bone. Every day, in his tiresome round through the forest, Joséphin stopped, sometimes at one house, sometimes at another. People would give him drink and engage him in talk. Naturally, the constant subject of discussion was his quarrel with the farmer, and once his glass of wine finished, there were always execrations and heavy blows of the fist on the table, always the same evil predictions. "He will end his days in the penitentiary; he will never die in his own bed!"

The farmer, on his part, did not rush about from place to place, but in his thick peasant head he evolved a very neat means of avenging himself on his former friend.

This Ile-aux-Cébes, where he occasionally lived, is quite out of the world—at least six or seven miles from Aygalades. It is—once you get there—a pleasant enough corner of the country to look at, with its tilled land, its vineyards rising row upon row upon the hillside, and above all its *cébes* (edible mushrooms), such as you can find nowhere else. But to get there at all over the stony mountain paths is by no means an easy matter. This the farmer knew very well, but it was in this way that he expected to worry his former friend Joséphin.

The next day after their combat, abandoning his little *château* at Aygalades, he went to live for good and all at Ile-aux-Cébes, and every day he arranged to have sent to him by a friend in Marseilles a package or a letter—no matter what, even a blank paper in an envelope—so as to compel the unhappy postman to make that terrible trip, and to add those six miles in the sun and dust to the fatigue already sustained by his wearied limbs.

Joséphin was altogether too proud to complain; he did not flinch. Heaven knows, notwithstanding, what rage was in his heart. Not only this terrible fatigue every day, but, besides that, the jeers of the country people that he felt sure were being uttered all around him—for in a village like this people are not over-delicate, and the fine joke which the farmer had evolved struck everybody as highly amusing—all this was bad enough, but what was worst of all for Joséphin was to hear, when toward noon he arrived at Ile-aux-Cébes, and stood enduring the jeering looks of the farm hands coming up to their dinner, the deep voice of his former friend, Josué, crying mockingly to his servant-maid:

"Here! run downstairs, Annette; I think there is some mail for us again."

As long as the fine weather lasted, the postman stood it pretty well; but when cold weather began, and the paths were covered with frost, the poor wretch could hardly endure it any longer, and when one morning he slipped on the rocks, wet with the dew, and almost fell into a ravine, he determined to beg for mercy—not from his enemy, you may be sure, but from his official chief in the postal service, who, moved by his complaint, and recognising that this six mile's walk daily evidently constituted an extra and supplementary duty, gave him his choice of having an assistant granted him to make the trips to Ile-aux-Cébes, or of himself receiving forty sous by way of indemnity every time he had to take a letter to the farmer.

Joséphin did not hesitate; he chose the forty sous. He did this not so much from the love of gain, as you might suppose, but because he was resolved on revenge—and it certainly was a fine revenge that he had. When it became known in the country round about that his trip to Ile-aux-Cébes brought him in forty sous additional, there was a general admiration of the postman's cleverness; and public opinion, so easy to shift from side to side, now made sport of the stout old farmer. "Decidedly," people said, "Joséphin is the more cunning of the two."

And this he proved still better a few days afterward, when Josué, who was quite crushed, suppressed his daily letters from Marseilles, naturally supposing that he would thus cut off the supplies from his enemy. For Joséphin, by one of those strokes of genius which down in that country seem born with people, subscribed in the farmer's name to a little Marseilles newspaper, and every day carried a copy of it to Ile-aux-Cébes, thus continuing to gain his indemnity of forty sous in spite of his enemy. Now, indeed, Joséphin was regarded as a great man.

And, really it was a sight worthy of the gods to see him trotting steadily along the road with his most deliberate gait, whistling as he went, and describing circles in the air with his hollywood walking-stick. And when he arrived at the little entrance to the farm, still as before at the hour of noon, and in the presence of the same farm hands whose mocking looks were now turned toward their employer, he would in his turn cry out—

"Here! Just run down here a minute, Annette. I think there is some mail for you again."

There was no reason why this should not continue indefinitely; and, in fact, if I may believe Mariù, of the inn in the lower town, whose story I am faithfully transcribing, the great quarrel did last all summer and all winter. It was only in the spring time that they concluded peace, one clear April day when there was nothing but good in the air. It was very simple, very touching. The stout Josué in time had become interested in the paper which came to him in this odd way every day; so he would go down to look for it himself. The postman usually threw it on a table. This particular morning, without thinking, he handed it to the farmer. Their hands touched.

"Joséphin!"

"Josué!"

And since then you may see them both, as I have—a good deal older, to be sure, for this tale is already one of the distant past—again engaged on the square before the church in their games of bowling, and highly respected at Aygalades, and all the country through, because they were clever enough to gain through their quarrel—the one a paper that cost him nothing, the other forty sous a day from the Government; for I need not tell you that the paper continues to arrive every day, and that also every day Joséphin takes it to the farm.

But now Josué comes half way to meet him, and the two friends arrive at Ile-aux-Cébes tranquilly reading together the serial story in the paper, and comfortably seated in the farmer's carriage; while at the house the old servant Annette, and the farm hands—now full of respect for both—await them with the still smoking fish soup ready on the table.

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The Hairless Tiger.

"WHAT do you think of him?"

"Horrible!"

"Is he not a beauty?"

"Ugh! A look at those white, glassy eyes is enough to make one's blood turn to ice. Whatever possessed you to have such a monster mounted?"

Colonel Bob Downing laughed at my plainly expressed horror of the terrible beast he had set up in his smoking-room—a creature more repulsive even than in life, because of the taxidermist's faithful reproduction of a most suggestively ferocious and cruel expression on the face of the stuffed animal.

"I had him set up there, Taylor, because of the associations," said Colonel Downing finally. "But for the Great Jhoot Demon I should have still been knocking about the world a confirmed bachelor instead of being comfortably settled here in London with the nicest little wife that ever man had."

"You told me there was an interesting story connected with your marriage," I observed.

"It is interesting and highly dramatic," he went on. "Light your cigar and take that easy chair, so that you can keep the monster in view. It'll be a realistic aid to your imagination as my history of how I won Mrs. Downing develops itself. Now make yourself as comfortable as possible."

I adopted his suggestion, and never in my life did I listen to a story with such interest.

Every word thrilled me, and I could well imagine myself an actor in the whole drama, and fancy that the lifeless beast within touch of my hand was alive and again the murderous demon of an Indian jungle.

Just before the Colonel began, I noticed that a small monkey, which had before escaped my attention, was perched among the limbs of a dwarf tree in front of the demon, that the taxidermist had used to give his subject a more lifelike pose.

I realised that the monkey was part of the picture, for its grinning face was turned toward the demon, and clinging to the limb with one paw, it had the other extended, as though pointing to something ahead.

"What has the monkey to do with it, Colonel?" I asked, my curiosity aroused.

"The lungoor? You shall hear. He plays a very important part in the story."

With this assurance I was forced to be content, and, settling himself in his chair, the Colonel began.

As an enthusiastic scientist and mighty hunter, he had travelled over every part of the globe, his wanderings having been chiefly in the wildest and most inaccessible portions of our planet.

Three years ago, while in search of a peculiar plant which grows only in the deepest of East Indian jungles, and which he was employed to hunt up and secure specimens of, for a celebrated inventor, who wished to experiment on the use of the pith of the plant in some electrical contrivance, the Colonel found himself at Ramgargh, a Bengalese village at the foot of the Behar mountains.

Here he was the guest of an ex-army officer, Edward Meaney, whose beautiful daughter, Katharine, made a deep impression on the Colonel's susceptible heart.

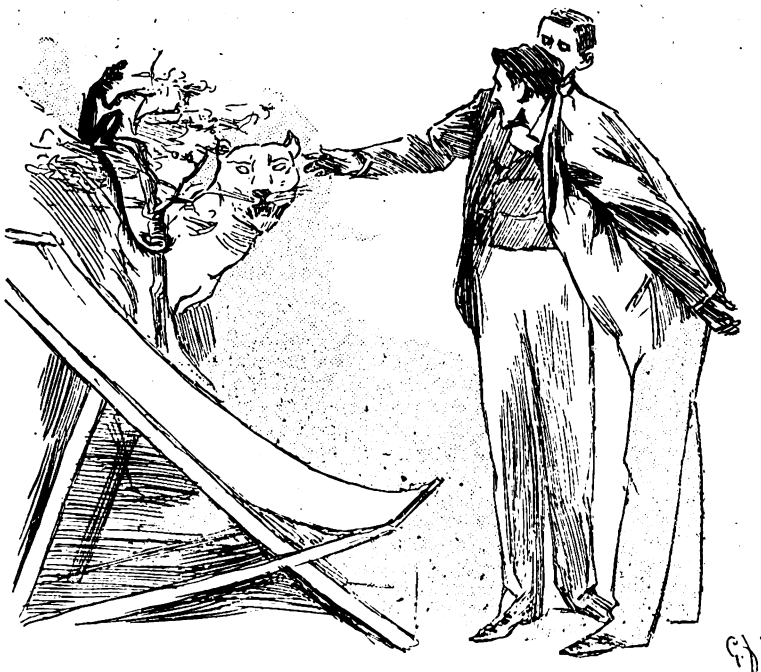
To use his own description, "she was a woman among women, courageous, gentle, kind, sensible, and accomplished."

The major was the owner of an extensive plantation, situated about sixteen miles from Ramgargh, where he had a very comfortably appointed bungalow, in which he lived a portion of the time, his only companion being his beautiful daughter.

Major Meaney had a smattering of botanical knowledge, and when his guest described the plant of which he was in search, the Major said:

"I think that I have met with it while hunting for the Jhoot Demon, in a dense jungle that lies to the south-west of my place."

"Hunting the what!" demanded the Colonel, whose sporting instincts were aroused at the very mention of the name of a creature of which he had never before heard.



"What do you think of him?"

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"The Jhoot Demon."

"And what in the name of all that is horrible is a Jhoot Demon?"

"It's the name the natives have given to an enormous man-eating tiger which is the terror of the whole country."

"Ever got a shot?"

"Never."

"I'll try my luck," said the Colonel carelessly. "I'll combine business with pleasure. When I'm hunting for this plant I'll look up his demonship."

"Be careful that the demon does not look you up instead," continued Major Meaney.

"Nonsense. I'm not an ordinary shikari (tiger hunter), but a man who has slain over a hundred of the beasts."

"That's exactly what poor Dick Culverton said, and Dick shot over fifty tigers in twelve months once, for a wager."

"And did the tiger get him?"

"Yes. In the past ten years the tiger has killed every shikari, native or European, who went out against him. He has never even been seen, and, as he never mangles a body, but only sucks the blood through an orifice made over the jugular vein, the terror that the Jhoot Demon has inspired is not surprising. He does not confine himself to jungle man-hunting, and, although he never forces a door, he has got into house after house. Last March he killed two of my servants, and a third, who was lying beside them, was not even awakened."

"You excite my interest."

"I shall do well if I develop your caution. Before I went on half-pay, I was in command of a cantonment which was pitched on what is now my plantation. Two of my subalterns—likely lads—went out for him, and the next day were found dead like the rest."

"Boys are proverbially careless."

"Doubtless. One of the poor lads, with his last strength, had managed to scratch in the soft ground, the words: 'Look out for a L——.' But no amount of conjecture could solve the riddle of this uncompleted sentence."

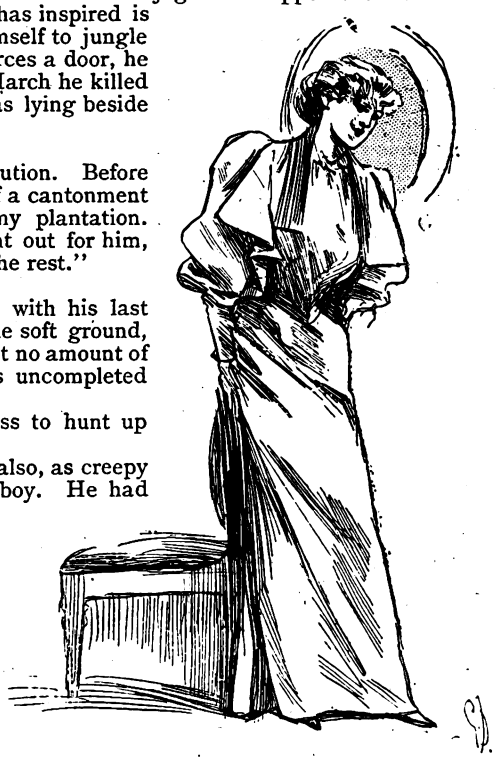
"I shall certainly make it my business to hunt up the demon."

"Poor Dick Culverton left a message also, as creepy and mysterious as that written by the boy. He had managed before life left him, to grasp a twig which was found in his stiffened fingers, and with this rude pen had written in the sand two letters only before his strength failed him.

"Those letters?"

"A M——" answered the Major.

Far into the night, Major Meaney talked of the Jhoot Demon, its cunning, its ferocity, its murderous rapacity, and the Colonel nodded his head, and more firmly than ever resolved to hunt the terror of the jungle to his death.



Katharine.

The day following they set out for the plantation—the Colonel, Major Meaney, and Miss Katharine.

The bungalow was built close to a palm thicket, and the Colonel was given an end room, the windows of which, protected only by a mosquito netting, overlooked this grove.

The front corner room was occupied by Katharine Meaney, and as all were weary from their day's journey over the rough roads, they retired early.

There was a full moon, and the Colonel, arrayed only in his pajamas, seated himself at the window to smoke a cheroot before retiring.

His feet were elevated on the low sill, and he was gazing dreamily out toward the palm grove, when there was an almost inaudible rustle of leaves among some low shrubbery which grew close to the bungalow, and looking sharply in that direction, he saw a little grey brown paw very cautiously putting aside the twigs.

Behind the paw he could discern two small green eyes attentively regarding him.

"A lungoor!" he muttered to himself, as it vanished from view. "A monkey."

Then he sprang suddenly but noiselessly to his feet, and his whole frame quivered with excitement.

"A lungoor—a monkey!" he repeated, in a whisper. "What was the message that poor lad left? 'Look out for a L——' a lungoor, he meant. And Culverton's two enigmatical letters written with the twig as he lay dying, 'A M——.' A monkey he meant. By George! There's mischief afloat!"

Moved by a sudden inspiration, for which he could never afterwards account, he picked up one of his heavy express rifles, both barrels of which were charged with explosive ball, and opening the door of his room stepped out into the wide verandah that encircled the bungalow.

A mass of creepers growing up to the thatched roof afforded him a place of shelter, from which he could keep his eye on the shrubbery and command a view of the windows of Katharine Meaney's room.

He had scarcely got himself into position when the lungoor hopped out into the clearing, the shrubbery shook, and there followed the little creature one of the most repulsive monsters his eyes had ever beheld.

It was a gigantic tiger, absolutely naked, not a hair anywhere—a huge, ghostly monstrosity—a very Caliban of tigers.

As the ghostly creature crept after the monkey, he followed the slightest curve and deviation of his guide with the delicate alacrity of a needle under the influence of a magnet.

The monkey crossed the little cleared place and made straight toward one of the windows of the room occupied by Kate Meaney, alongside of which was the beautiful girl's bed.

Holding his breath, Colonel Downing followed with wide staring eyes the movements of the two strange companions.

The adroitness displayed by the tiger was suddenly converted into a subject of horrified wonder, for, as the brute approached the window behind which lay the sleeping girl, he turned his hideous face up to the moon, and the watcher, standing breathless among the sheltering creepers, saw that his eyes were of a dull white, without light, intelligence, or movement.

The creature was stone blind, but, for all that, evidently knew what lay before him, for the saliva of anticipation was clinging to his wrinkled jaws like a mass of gleaming icicles.

The monkey, when it had come within jumping distance, gave a low signal cry, made one vigorous spring through the window upon Kate's bed, and then leaped upon the head-board.

The little guide was instantly followed by the tiger, but, while his huge, hairless body was in mid-air, the Colonel's express rifle rang out.

The tiger uttered a scream of agony, his great fore-paws dug at the air viciously, and his huge body fell with a crash upon the floor of the verandah.

The monkey, with a shill cry, sought to escape, but a ball from the second barrel stretched it lifeless beside the dead body of the Jhoot Demon.

It is no wonder, then, that, seeing the interest he had excited in the beautiful girl's heart, the Colonel pressed his suit, and was rewarded, before many days, by becoming her accepted husband.

The native servants carefully removed the skins of the demon and his monkey guide, and, as I glanced toward their stuffed forms, when the Colonel rose and announced that lunch awaited us, I could not repress a shudder of horror.

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A SISTER'S TREACHERY.

SIX o'clock. The hands at John Pilborough's factory stood ready with their shawls and bonnets on waiting for the signal of dismissal, and, when the clamour of the noisy bell broke on the air, they were out in the streets of Lowell, pushing, jostling, hurrying like a flock of frightened sheep released from bondage.

The crowd dispersed in twos and threes, but Margaret Miller walked apart. There was no companionship for her in all that noisy throng, no companionship in all the wide world. A strange life for so young a woman to lead, but those who would win love must earn it, and Margaret neither wished nor courted human sympathy.

There had been but one bright spot in all the dull years. One drop of honey in her cup of life, and that had turned to bitterest gall.

Margaret at seventeen had been a wonderful beauty, and her great black eyes and peach colour had caught the fancy of John Pilborough's son, who had taken no pains to conceal his admiration, but sought her company whenever it was possible.

At last it grew a common thing for him to walk beside her in the winter twilight, on the road that lay between the factory and her home, and these walks were the events of Margaret's life, and there were tender whisperings that would have been highly disapproved of by the young man's prudent father had they come to his ears.

Margaret grew very gentle in those days. It was so sweet to think that someone watched for her coming when the weary day's work was over, that someone thought of her when she was absent. So sweet to know that someone loved her, that she was tender to all the world for that one's sake.

The girls began to grow fonder of Margaret, and some, even when they guessed the secret of the change, clung to her still, while others were filled with envy and spite toward the girl who was no better than they, yet aspired to the friendship of their employer's son.

But all this came to a sudden end, and Margaret never knew the reason. She could only guess that the young man's father objected to their intercourse, for he had met them once or twice together. They parted as tenderly as ever, but there was no leave-taking, and shortly after Arthur Pilborough left his native town, and for five long years she had heard no more of him. This love, which had seemed so much to her, was with him but an idle fancy.

But there had been a nine days' wonder and gossip about young Pilborough and Margaret Miller, and Margaret resented this, and was more shy than ever of the girls who had so concerned themselves with her affairs. Those who disliked her increased in their dislike, and those who would have been kind to her grew tired of kindness which met with no return.

The days were so like one another. She would go home to eat and sleep; perhaps spend an hour or two over her sewing, silent, while others talked of things that were less than nothing to her. But this day was destined to be unlike all the others.

There was a letter awaiting her, a letter bordered in black and signed Bessie Miller, the sister from whom she had parted many years before.

It told of the death of the old uncle who had adopted her, and offered, nay forced on Margaret's acceptance an equal share of the fortune which had fallen to his adopted child when his affairs were all arranged.

"And Margaret," said the writer, "you are my darling sister, though I have forgotten even how you looked when they took us from each other. I have loved you all my life long, and you must come and live with me and we shall be happy together."

And Margaret went.

It was a snowy day in winter, when Margaret alighted at the house that was to be her home. Bessie flew to meet her. Standing at the portal with her golden hair blown backward from her smiling face, and a welcome spoken with lips and eyes and outstretched hands, she looked to Margaret's eyes like an angel at the gates of Paradise.

When the first greeting was over, Margaret and Bessie sat together before the fire, talking of the past. Margaret in a great armchair, and Bessie on a little ottoman at her feet. They were as different as sisters could be. One tall, dark, and stately; the other a diminutive blonde with a fairylike figure, and full of life and motion, and pretty winning ways.

As they sat there, deep in reminiscences, Bessie fell to caressing her sister's hand with hers, patting them softly against her rosy cheeks, and Margaret feeling the gentle touch, looked down and thought with a sudden pang, how different they were. Those tiny rose-tipped fingers made her own look so large and coarse.

"They have the factory stamp on them, Bessie," said the elder sister, and Bessie who had been thinking of anything rather than this, blushed with embarrassment, and then sprang from her seat and threw her arms round her sister's neck for the hundredth time.

But Margaret stood before her mirror that night, and laughed a bitter laugh.

"The stamp of the factory is on me," she said. "Money can never give me back what I have lost. She might have been the drudge and I the lady with soft white hands, but for the merest chance."

But the morning brought better thoughts. No one could long have lived with Bessie Miller without partaking somewhat of her happy nature. She was a living sunbeam, a creature like the birds and flowers, rejoicing that she lived; but underneath her gaiety there was a well of pure, deep feeling which Margaret could not understand.

One evening the two were sitting alone; the elder idly dreaming—she was always idle now—the younger planting roses in a barren field of canvas.

"Margaret," said Bessie in a voice that was scarcely more than a breath, "I have something to tell you I wanted to tell you before."

Margaret laughed and roused herself to listen. One look at the blue eyes glowing like winter stars, the little mouth quivering with its tender smile, told Margaret what the "something" was.

"Come, Bessie, and tell me all about it now. Better late than never."

So Bessie left her needle in a half-blown rose and nestled in her favourite seat at Margaret's feet.

"Margaret," said she, "someone likes me"; then hid her crimson face in Margaret's draperies.

"How strange!" said the other, laughing. "Is that all?"

This time Bessie drew her sister down to her with both her hands, and whispered in her ear as though it were a guilty secret that she was engaged to be married, and the day was settled.

"And who is the happy man?" said Margaret. "Who am I to have for a brother-in-law?"

Just then the door bell rang, and Bessie sprang to her former position as two gentlemen were announced.

"Mr. Pilborough," Margaret heard the servant say, and the name came to her like a voice from the buried past. She could have prayed it might not be the one whom she had known.

But there he stood, not greatly changed. She had ceased to care for him, yet she could not feel to him as to a stranger. It seemed like living in a dream to hear his voice and touch his hand again.

Of all else that passed that evening Margaret was unconscious. His voice was the only one that had a meaning to her. She wondered at first if he had recognised her, changed as she was and in her altered circumstances. But she found that he remembered all. He spoke of their former intercourse as a boy and girl friendship, and totally ignored the manner of their parting.

But his voice was low and tender, and his eyes were the eyes of the olden time, and Margaret felt the influence of other days creeping over her, and knew that he wished she should. Meanwhile Bessie chatted and laughed with the stranger, and these two talked of the long ago.

"How do you like him?" said the younger sister, when the gentlemen had taken their departure.

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"Like him? Why, Bessie, I am ashamed to say, I hardly noticed what he was like. You know most of my observation was taken up with Mr. Pilborough. We are old friends, and we had a great deal to say."

"Why, what are you thinking of, Margaret? It is Arthur I mean. Did I not tell you? I gave you ample opportunity to make his acquaintance."

And Bessie laughed her merry joyous laugh at her sister's astonished countenance.

But Margaret rose up fierce and angry.

"I hate him!" she cried; "and I hate you!" she might have added, for the thought was in her heart. But Bessie, pale and trembling, put her hand upon the angry lips.

"Oh! tell me what is the matter, sister, darling sister," she pleaded, and Margaret, frightened at her own angry words, stood still and thought how she could mend them.

"Has my Arthur done anything wrong—anything to offend you?"

Margaret made no answer; she would have given worlds to recall the hasty breath, but she was forced to tell the story at last. And her sister listened with tearful eyes. Inconstancy seemed such a terrible thing to this faithful heart.

"Margaret," said she, "I can never marry Arthur now."

But Margaret begged her to forget what she had told her, and they parted for the night with fond embraces.

Alone in her own chamber, Bessie thought till the morning broke.

He was Margaret's first love as he was her's; but, perhaps, it had not been as Margaret thought; perhaps it had been but a boyish fancy, and Arthur must not suffer if his happiness depended on herself. Come what might, she resolved to do her duty unselfishly and cheerfully. Poor Margaret, she had had but little sweetness in her life. It might be that Arthur had loved her truly in those early days and had only forsaken her upon compulsion.

So ended her meditation. Time passed on, and day by day she watched the two, and saw, or thought she saw, that they loved each other still, and as this conviction forced itself upon her, Arthur Pilborough's image faded from her breast.

He who knoweth all things could alone know the secret of that innocent heart. If she suffered she gave no sign, and Margaret, guessing nothing of what was passing in her sister's mind, and believing her happy in Arthur's love, felt all the old bad feelings return with double force, and set herself the task of winning Arthur Pilborough's love, scarcely thinking of the end of her triumph, but resolved to punish him in some way for the unhappiness he had caused her.

She strove her best to fascinate and dazzle him, and he, quite willing to be entertained by a handsome woman, entered with zest into a flirtation, all the while reserving such love as he possessed for the one who was to be his wife.

But in all this Bessie only saw the signs of feeling that could not be repressed, and one day, when the two were sitting together, she came and sat beside Pilborough with a resolute look in her earnest blue eyes.

"Arthur," she said, "the day that has been fixed for our wedding is close at hand, but I must say what I have to say before that time."

She begged of her sister not to leave them, and then, in a clear, steady voice, she told Arthur Pilborough her feelings had changed, that she no longer felt any stronger regard than friendship, and that she hoped he would try to forgive and forget her. She hinted of no change in him, of no reason for the alteration in her feeling, and Arthur, utterly abashed, knowing well what cause he had given her, listened in silence, tongue-tied in Margaret's presence.

Next morning there came to the door a missive in Arthur's hand addressed to Bessie Miller. As the letter was placed in Margaret's hand she stood in her dressing-room, holding her sister's costly wedding dress.

There was no question of right or wrong, only a mad determination to know of all that passed between Bessie and Arthur Pilborough. Margaret opened the letter and read what was never meant for her eyes—tender, penitent words, warm with the love for which she would have bartered her existence. Pleading humbly for forgiveness, for that heart which he had lost through his own misdeeds, and through and under it all a hint, not anywhere written but subtly expressed, that the fault was not all his own.

A light step sounded along the passage, and Margaret tore the paper with an angry hand and cast it at her feet, crushing it under the folds of the snowy satin.

Bessie looked in, and seeing what she held cried out:

"Oh, Margaret, please put the dress away, and never let me see it again."

Margaret laid dress and paper away in an unused drawer. But for the confession it involved of her own treachery she might even yet have given her sister the letter; but, as it was, she said to herself that Arthur Pilborough might make his peace in his own way.

That night Arthur bent over Bessie with his whole soul in his eyes, and asked her if she had anything new to say.

"I have not changed my mind," she said, quite coldly, and Arthur went, vowing never to enter the house again.

For a time the sisters saw no more of him. They ceased even to speak of him, but after a time Margaret met him frequently, and Bessie knew of the meetings, and was glad that all had come to pass as she had planned, and would have been as gay and happy as ever but for a sudden illness that came upon her.

It was heart-disease, the doctor said, and a sudden shock might be her death, but with care she might recover. So Bessie gave up all pleasure that tended to excitement, and remained at home to guard her health.

One night there was a party to the opera proposed by a lady at whose house Margaret and Arthur Pilborough frequently met. Both the sisters were invited, but Bessie pleaded illness.

"Come and see me when you get home. I'll be sure to be awake," and Margaret left her with a kiss.

That evening Arthur sat beside Margaret in the crowded opera house, and in the pauses of the music asked her to make him happy with the promise of her hand; and Margaret promised, regardless of her revenge, reckoning little whether pique or love had made him so soon forget her sister, for this was the anniversary of Bessie's proposed wedding-day.

He assisted her from the carriage on their return, and with his last touch on her hand, his last word on her ear, Margaret sped up the stairs to her own room. At Bessie's door she paused and looked within. The shutter was open wide, and the long curtain, loosened from its fastenings, blew half across the room, the gaslight flickered and flared, and on the floor lay a heap of snowy satin and lace, her sister's discarded wedding dress.

Margaret's pulses stood still. There was but a step from her to the bed that was hidden by its massive head-board, but that step seemed a yawning gulf. It was taken, and there lay pretty Bessie, the colour fled for ever from her lips and cheeks, her little fingers clasping fast a tattered paper—the paper Margaret knew so well.

Her sister had loved and trusted her with a boundless love and faith, and the knowledge of Margaret's treachery had pierced that tender heart as absolutely as though the cruel hand had held a murderous knife. For a moment Margaret hoped that she was dying too, but the horror that swept her frame left her alive to remorse and agony, it seemed to her for ever more.

When Arthur Pilborough came to look upon the lifeless form, the love that had been the purest feeling of his heart, came back to overwhelm him with a hopeless sorrow.

"Oh, Bessie! little Bessie!" he cried; "I loved you better than my life!"

There was no word of explanation, of leave-taking between Margaret and her old time lover; but the two looked into each other's eyes and knew that they must part.

They never met again. Margaret is an aged woman now. The world died to her with Bessie's death, and life since then has been a long, unceasing penance; but sometimes in her dreams she sees her sister's radiant form and hears her voice, not stern or angry, not reproachful, but pleading gently for her sinful sister, forgiving and pitiful as in her life. And Margaret, full of contrition and penitence, looks forward not quite despairingly to the life beyond.

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THE MAN MY SISTER MARRIED.

SUMMARY—Chapters I. to VII.

The story is told by Violet (Letty) Lombard, who, at the opening, is living at Galveston, U.S.A. with her grandfather, Enos Lombard, Liz the coloured servant, Justina her old nurse, and her Aunt Marg, who has been the recipient of mysterious letters, post-marked New Orleans, necessitating a fortnight's absence from home. John Scott, who married Katherine, Violet's step-sister, a very beautiful girl, pays for Violet's board and lodging, and has just decided that she is to go to a convent in New Orleans. On the strength of information gained from the torn pieces of one of Aunt Marg's letters, and curious to solve the mystery, Violet so arranges that she goes to New Orleans a day earlier, and that she stops at the Hotel Gilbert. Through a crack in the wall, she sees what happens in the next room to hers. John Scott, Captain Dana—an old friend from Galveston—Aunt Marg, and others are sitting in judgment upon a Mexican, Antonio, who has, it transpires, assisted in the seizure of Scott's wife, and of Dana's wife and daughter, and whose terrible crime has been brought to light by Yara, a spy. Antonio is compelled to end his life by taking poison, with his dying words laying the blame upon one Xarras.

Letty goes to the convent in the morning, and during her schooldays there clandestinely meets James Gregory, who is introduced as the son of a friend of her grandfather's. On her way home again, some months later, with her chaperone Miss Wilson, Colonel Dean Gregory, James's brother, introduces himself. After that, Letty sees a great deal of James, and at length promises to elope with him. Whilst waiting for him to come, she overhears Dean Gregory telling a friend of a plot whereby he has won James over, and has made it probable that John Scott's money will come to himself instead of to Letty.

* * * * * *

CHAPTER VIII.

"LETTY," he said thickly—I saw that he had been drinking, for his voice was unsteady, his manner wild—"what kind of game were you trying to play on me? It is two o'clock, and I have waited since twelve. Where did you find that old fool?"

I dropped the captain's arm, while he stood there, silently regarding us both, and looked at Jim with a hopeless air.

"You will wait for ever for me, Jim," I stammered. "I have changed my mind; I am going home."

"Do you think one of your conscience spells will change me?" he went on rudely. "I know you and your moods too well. You said to-night you would run away with me, and I hold you to your word." He started towards me, but Captain Dana interposed.

"I can hold you back, old as I am, and give her a chance to run," he said sternly. "She's as fleet-footed as a deer. I want you to talk it over, fair and square, but no roughness, Jim Gregory, and I tell you she has come to her right senses."

"It is too late," said Jim, with white lips. "You old idiot, I would not hurt her. She came of her own accord. This is all acting. Why, she wrote me herself that she would come. There is no need of hysterics on your part!"

Then I remembered my silly letters. I would have given a year of my life to have never written one. "I shall never go with you Jim," I said timidly.

"You must think me a chump, Miss Lombard. It's a duty I owe to society to show what sort you are. I have some pretty letters of yours too——"

"You think that will make John Scott break his will," I said coolly. "Oh, you miserable cur! What good will that do you? Don't you guess that he reads you? I defy you to do your worst."

Then I dragged the captain away. "That was wrong, Letty," he said feebly; "you should not set him on, for there's only old, helpless folks to stand between you and the world. I see evil days for you like many a poor girl has lived through that was foolish like you." He wrung my hand at parting, and I went softly through the hall. Our doors were seldom locked. At the foot of the stairs I stopped by the old clock and laid my cheek against the case. Then and there I, silly, repentant Letty Lombard, kissed the senseless wood as fondly as I ever touched a human being's lips.

"Home safe, because you lied to me, old friend," I thought; "because you are three, when it is only two o'clock; because you were morning when it was night. When I was a tiny, fearing child, I used to think a witch dwelt in your shining case. Now I know it was a good fairy, who watched over me until the time of helping came."

Oh, my white little room! The scent of the flowers that, warm from my breast, I had flung on my bed before I went; my gown, with a half-shaped outline of me to it, and all the carelessly-flung-about pretty knick-knacks I loved to have about me! How peaceful everything seemed, and how secure that shelter which I had scorned. I sank on my knees by the bed. Whenever I feel so lost and friendless, my heart goes back to my prayers at Aunt Marg's knee, and I cry to that one Friend she taught me to love.

But as I prayed I grew afraid. Something had gone from my spirit, a touch had blackened the white petals of my life. I had not been guilty, but what would the world say? I got up and shut the window, drew the key inside and locked my door, and in a perfect frenzy looked in every place where a person might hide.

I felt no longer safe, nor did I sleep until it was almost day, and a faint rosy tinge had softened the dark shadows of fog and night. Then I dreamed that John Scott came to me and gave me a white camelia, its petals foully stained and black.

"I told you years ago that this would come," he said gently; "you will never be white again."

In the days that followed, I saw Jim Gregory kept his word, and though a reputation dies so hard when it must be poisoned by microscopic doses to screen the murderer, mine went into the shadow of death.

I travelled in the valley of humiliation. Men looked at me rudely. Some women who had been kind to me did not see me when we met, and the girls I used to associate with hardly answered my greeting. Dean Gregory used to say some insolent pleasantry when he met me, that I could have killed him for in my helpless anger. Justina said she had heard from some Mexican sailors that my name had been mentioned lightly in a low bar-room by Gregory, and a friend of hers had flung a glass at him. "It did not kill him," said Justina mournfully.

Then one afternoon I received a letter from the pastor of the church where I sang, that my services would be no longer

"I can hold you back, old as I am.

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I laid my cheek against the case.

required. A small city is like a country town in the matter of scandal and gossip, and what assassin's weapons both are! I like better the Mexican's knife, one can sometimes dodge that, but from venomous tongues there is no escape.

I went straight to the pastor's study and wondered, when I did so, if his wife would scold him for hurting his character by receiving me. I have such a way of thinking things in all my troubles. He told me gently he did not believe any of the stories. He admitted there were some, his wife had mentioned them; but he never listened to gossip; but the lady members of the choir objected to me.

"Well," I said calmly, "I am punished for looking on church just as a recreation; luckily I never did look to it for any comfort."

"Set-backs like this, such talk from young people whom we are powerless to aid, is what hurts ministers of the gospel most to-day," he said sadly; "we seem to be hampered from doing what we wish at every turn."

"By the lady members," I said wickedly.

He half smiled. "There are certain influences we cannot withstand; and believe me, Miss Violet, that, though I know you have been sadly imprudent, I am sure you are a good, true woman, and I want you to come to church just the same. Facing scandal bravely often silences it, and in time we will have you in your old place in the choir; the other singers are very nice, but a little narrow."

"The narrowness of good women and men is what keeps your pews unfilled to-day," I said recklessly. "To aid the multitude you must go back to open-air meetings. You shut the doors of your churches on sinners. I am going down to the sailors' Bethel to sing on Sunday. There are women there who are trying to lead better lives, and yet you could not induce them to set foot in your church because of the scornful looks of your narrow lady members."

"I think, out of your anger, good may come to the Bethel," he said kindly. He was such a pleasant gentleman, and I was ashamed afterwards of my silly talk. "You sing so sweetly; our hymns will have a truer meaning to their hearts and make them better."

Half angry, half pleased, I went home, where, as I sat by the window, cooling my flushed face, I heard grandfather talking to Captain Dana in the porch. My name, uttered in his angriest manner, caught my attention.

"You can't take up for Letty. I tell you, Dana, you are wrong. You must not make her quarrel yours. What was Katherine? Think of the misery she caused, and how little it ever touched her. There is no good in Letty either. I am too old to worry and suffer over her ill-doing. Look at my son—blown with ev'ry wind, no comfort to himself or to me, and his girls were that way. Selfish, heartless, and wrong-headed, she never thanks Marg for that good woman's life of devotion to her, nor my giving her a home. John is the subject of her ridicule with young Gregory. He's her kind; let her abide with him."

"I never thought you such a hard man, Enos," quavered the captain.

"I'm too old to break colts, such bad stock too. Letty flirted with young Gregory; I saw that, and she can take her punishment. If only Liz will hold her tongue, for Marg must not be worried by the stories floating about. It would kill her. It's a pity that ungrateful girl didn't die when she was a baby."

"And Marg didn't know a word of the talk?" asked the captain.

"No. She don't seem to half belong to our world. But I fear it may come to her, try as we may. She sets such a store by Letty. Poor Mary! Her life was wrecked like a fine new ship, drifting on the bar on her first v'yage and going down. I've writ to John, but he ain't back from Mexico, and I sent the letter to New York. If he was there he'd have sent for her perhaps, and got her out o' town till the talk blew over, if it ever will."

"Poor little lass!" sighed the captain; and I loved him for that. I put on my hat and went softly down the stairs. Liz, acting under my grandfather's order, made no attempt nowadays to accompany me anywhere, and that fact used to hurt me. It seemed he thought I was no longer worth guarding or loving; that I had put myself beyond both.

I used to hate to have her watch over me, but now I could have cried for her to take that old friendly interest, to make me think myself not quite so evil. I knew John Scott was not in Mexico. I saw him ride by that day; and full of a desperate purpose, I went along the beach to the street leading to the mansion.

It was very quiet in the flower-scented yard. My steps echoed guiltily after me as I went up to the porch. The great mastiff John loves came to meet me. We were old friends. There was a light in Mr. Scott's study, so I rang the bell. Bruce came to the door, and, as he saw me, drew back as if he would shut me out. "Missus sed I wasn't to let yo' in," he muttered.

"Did Mr. Scott, my guardian, say so?" I asked defiantly.

"Deed he didn't," said Bruce, brightening up. "It's a wicked shame to act like dem two. I ain't no use for the Gregorys, Miss Vi'let. I allus liked yo', but yo' bin a leetle toppy lately when yo' comed here; doan seem to see me no mo' den the furnitoor. Dem ain't no quality ways, I tell yo'."

"Go on, Bruce," I said humbly "I deserve all the unkind things you can say."

"I'se dreffful sorry I sed dem, missy.

"Missus said I wasn't to let yo' in."

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Yo' got so pale and skeered lookin'. Bless yo', chile, Mars Scott set a store by yo'. He's in de dinin' room wif de kurnal and Jim. I'll fotch him out kinder sly, an' yo' step in de study. De ladies upstairs."

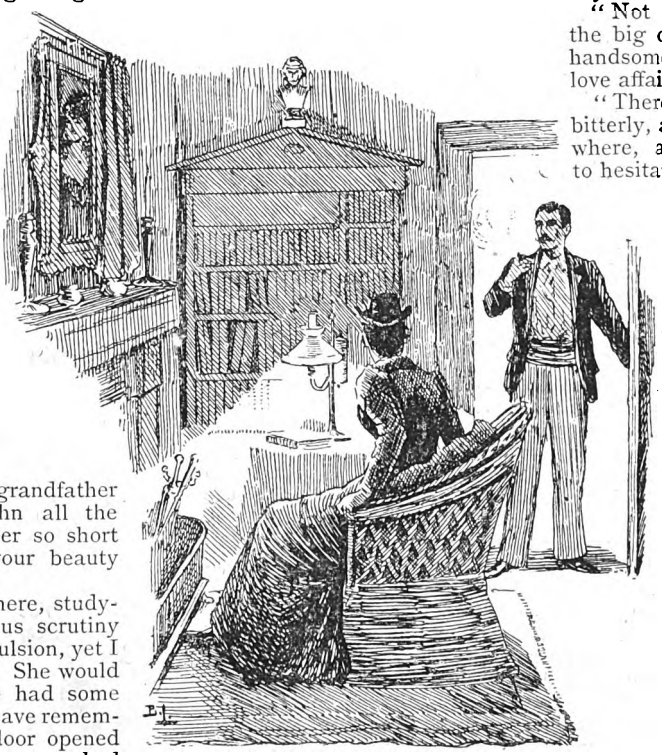
He closed the door behind me, and I stared curiously round the room, that had never been opened to Jim's and my explorations. Over the mantel hung a portrait. Once, when we looked in the blinds, I saw it veiled with a crimson plush curtain, and Jim said it was Katherine's, and John kept it covered. Now the curtain was drawn aside, and, I suppose, from the chair below the mantel, he had been sitting there looking at her.

She was worth a life's devotion, I thought then. Such a face! that glorious Spanish beauty: great dark eyes; clear, pale skin; features of perfect form and classic outline; a mouth made for kisses, full-lipped and rosy, pouting as if she would smile, for her eyes had already the merry light in them. Over her blue-black hair was a Spanish mantilla, half revealing her matchless shoulders and bosom, and falling over the sheen of her yellow satin gown. I fancied she loved rich, warm colours, none too glowing and brilliant for her beauty to cope with.

How proudly her head was set on her full round throat—not a large head either, but so well shaped, and her forehead low and broad, defied you to dare ask for intellect when beauty satisfied your every sense. I don't believe in high foreheads or narrow ones, despite Tennyson; I have seen some bald foreheaded women with their frizzes on the tops of their vacant heads, and all they knew was the last pattern in worsted work or tatting. As I looked, the eyes took on a mocking light; the lips a meaning smile.

"The artist knew you better than your husband," I thought; "that stranger read you as grandfather did. How did you blind John all the years, or were you only together so short a time that the glamour of your beauty held him enthralled?"

I forgot my errand as I sat there, studying that perfect face in jealous scrutiny and with a curious sense of repulsion, yet I knew I should have loved her. She would have understood me and have had some pity had she lived. She would have remembered her own youth. The door opened and the fragrance of a good cigar reached me as I started in my chair. I felt that my hour had come as I turned to meet Mr. John Scott.



I turned to meet Mr. John Scott.

CHAPTER IX.

"The idea of Bruce not telling me you were here," he said quickly; "he gets more useless every day. I kept you waiting, and you look so pale and worn." He did not offer me his hand, and sick at heart I thought he must already know all. He read my thoughts. "Remember you would not shake hands with me once," he smiled.

I held out my cold hand and he pressed it in his big warm, palm, and still holding me, led me in front of Katherine's picture.

"Don't contrast us," I pleaded, "it is not kind of you."

"You hold your own very well, Miss Jealousy, and are like and unlike her, the same mouth and chin."

"Oh, that is enough," I cried breathlessly, "I am more than satisfied; most women would be content with one of her perfect features, and you have given me two."

He laughed, drew the curtain across the painting, and brought me a chair. "There must be something direfully wrong, Letty, to bring you to your pet aversion."

"There is," I stammered, "and I need a friend, someone to be kind to me. I thought that you——" then the room grew suddenly dark, and I must have fainted, for when I remembered I was lying on the sofa by the open window, and he was bathing my forehead with some strong perfume, while Bruce, very scared and round eyed, stood staring at me.

"Where is my mother?" said Scott anxiously; "I sent you for her."

"Tel de troof, Mars John," answered Bruce uncomfortably, "dey bof down on de po chile."

"If anyone has hurt that little heart he shall answer to me," said John, with that metallic ring in his voice.

"It was my own doing," I said, sitting up and pushing my wet curls out of my eyes, "and I am all right now. I was so afraid to come, and all of a sudden I lost courage and sense too." The tears came then and I hid my face. Bruce quietly went out at a sign from John.

"Don't try to talk to-night, Violet," said John; "why not another day?"

"Because I can bear it no longer. Please sit there, and don't look at me nor say one word until I'm finished."

"Not a whisper," he smiled, taking the big chair near the sofa, shading his handsome eyes with his hand. "Is it a love affair, you poor little maid?"

"There was no love in it," I cried bitterly, and with many sobs and pauses where, ashamed and miserable, I had to hesitate, I told him the truth about my engagement to James Gregory and all our stolen meetings, and of my knight-errant, and what a friend he had been to me.

"You must destroy that will," I said. "I know you must. If you left me one coin it would haunt me; I am so unworthy of any one's kindness."

"You knew of my will?" he said sternly, then leaned forward and took my hand, holding it tight. "Tell me how you learnt that. You have kept something back. You only said you heard that talk by Justina's cottage. Who were the speakers?"

"That I will not tell you, Mr. Scott. I shall not bring you more trouble than I can help. That would not be your quarrel."

"Yet you said you were going to be honest."

"If you do not help me I will drown myself. I have got to the end of my tether. I am desperate."

"The will shall be destroyed," he said coldly; "but can you be honest? How much truth and how much falsehood is there in what you have told me?"

"It is all truth," I sobbed; and like the camelia, a rude touch has blackened the petals of my girl's life. I can never forget all he said, it stings me now when it comes back to torture me.

He rose and walked up and down the room; his hands behind him, his eyes on my face. "If I could believe you," he muttered.

"Don't," I cried recklessly, "be like the rest! Why I came here, I don't know. There is no pity in any man or woman. There is one road for me, and I am driven to it. I have the blame now, why not——."

"Hush!" he said, and came and took me by the shoulder as I stood there. "Don't soil your lips with such sentiments, or I shall side against you. You do look good, Letty. Your pure child's face, your innocent eyes; you would never have come to me if there had been wrong. I believe you, dear."

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He went to the bell. "Bruce, send Mr. James in here."

"I will not see him," I cried; "you shall not force me to. It is wicked, cruel. Is that the way you would help me?"

"Yes; what have you done that you must be a coward?"

I knew Bruce did not tell Jim that I was there, for he stopped short when he saw me, and half turned to escape.

"This isn't fair, Uncle John," he choked.

"I am glad you acknowledge it," said Scott quietly. "Now you see your victim it does put you in a bad light. It marks you for life as a cur and a sneak."

She gave me her hand with a polite little speech.

"I will not listen to this," cried Jim, with white lips.

"You will," said Scott, his back against the door.

"A great brute like you can bully," sneered Jim.

"Yes, and I have taken up Letty's cause. She has told me everything."

"Has she?" echoed Jim, with an indescribable accent; "everything?"

"You contemptible cub," said Scott, "I've a mind to take a whip to you."

"I am not one of your Mexican peons," cried Jim, "or one of the women they say you beat. If I haven't your strength I have arms with me."

"Don't draw that revolver, Jim," said Scott coolly, "for before you get it your arm will not be fit to handle it. Even if I beat my slaves, as you say, I think I would stand a better show than you do now. Pshaw! I won't quarrel with you. Now give me Letty's silly notes. All of them, and——"

"I don't propose to."

"Yes, you will, for I am going to buy you, Jim. You want to go to New York and start in business. Give me the letters and your word to say no more about Letty, never to mention her name, save in kindness, and I will help you as you and your mother wish. Refuse, and I will adopt my slave-driver methods. Truly, Jim, I am a better friend than enemy."

Jim pondered for fully five minutes, while Scott watched him quietly, with that mocking smile in his bright eyes and on his lips. Then Jim handed the packet of letters to him across the table. He always carried them with him for fear I might get them, with Bruce's assistance, if they were hid in the house, I suppose. Scott tossed them to me.

"They are all here," I faltered. "What shall I do with them?"

He took them from me, and Jim watched him with an ugly smile while I hung my head. If he read one of those silly, silly things, he would hate me. Scott, with a tender smile at me, flung them into the grate, touched a match, and they burned into a bright little flame, then quivered into white ashes. He went to his desk and wrote a cheque.

"Here is your money, Jim. I have written it carefully, so you cannot add a cipher. I never trust a blackguard. My house is no longer a home to you, the sooner you go the better it will be for both of us."

"That will suit me," said Jim, pocketing his cheque; "but I tell you this, you don't know her. They all say any woman can fool you."

"Don't give me your brother Dean's sentiments second-hand," said Scott coldly. He flung open the door and Jim departed, with a malignant look at me.

"Now, Letty," said John, coming back, "you see when you face a danger it often disappears. Honesty is a very good weapon. I only ask of you one promise, that if you are ever tempted to write to a man again, one that you love and think worthy, you will tell me and let me judge. I don't want to pry into your affairs, but after this I think I deserve your confidence."

"I hate all men," I cried angrily, "and with what I have cost you, and all the trouble and the quarrel I have made in your family, I seem to be a blot on everyone's happiness."

"Because you do not try to add to it. Turn over a new leaf and find sunshine in your home and duties. Try to be loving and kind to Margaret and your grandfather. It will cost you very little, Letty, only patience and gentle, kindly ways, to make people love you. Then (with the half-pathetic smile) leave us our mysteries, us old folks, and live in your own present. Now, will you try to do these things for me?"

"I will, with all my heart," I sobbed. What a swollen face and red eyes I had! Such a fright as I looked in the glass! I drew my hat over my face. I knew he was laughing at my vanity, too, for his voice had a merry ring in it when he told me to wait a moment and he would go home with me. He came back with his mother after a few moments, and she gave me her hand with a polite little speech, that I knew John had made her say.

"Letty is to go to church with us on Sundays, and to dine here after this," he said firmly; "you will make arrangements for that, mother."

A big rebellious sob choked itself up, and I could not control it.

"Repentance is so hard," I said, "and that very same minister too."

I hated myself then. Did I not know he meant to show the world it had no right to slander? Would not all those venomous tongues be silenced when they saw me with his mother in the family pew? Even then a wicked thought came into my mind, of how every one would stare as they saw me between the crêpe draped ladies.

"My mother always liked you, Letty. She has the kindest heart in the world," John went on, his arm about that tiny, dainty figure.

"But she is so naughty," said Mrs. Scott helplessly. "I thought the convent would have changed her; perhaps they were stricter in my time. And then you know about that skeleton. Suppose the Bishop had seen it first. But, John, I do think James was to blame; but you must not say so for the world."

"I intend to win over Aunt Ann," laughed John. "What fortresses I have stormed for you, Letty!"

Mrs. Scott put out her little wrinkled hand again, and I, with a sob, bent and kissed it.

"My lips, dear," she said. "I know you will be a very good girl now."

Blinded by my tears, I went out with John. I had been rude to that dear lady, and even that powder speech came back to haunt me. In silence we walked along the beach. At last I said, clumsily:

"I used to write in my copy-book, 'Honesty is the best policy,'" then I relapsed into shamed silence.

"And 'A friend in need is a friend indeed,' was that not one of the copies too? Am I to be the friend, Letty? Don't fret your little heart about Jim. I meant to send him away. If there is a cub on earth it is my nephew."

"But I have said such nasty things about you," I cried. "I called you a 'Mexican,' and 'Old John Scott,' and all such hideous and ungrateful things."

"What a very deluge of tears and repentance, Letty. Only keep half those good resolutions, especially about the 'Old John Scott,' and we can be very good friends. Good-night."

He pressed my hand and left me. I watched him with wistful eyes. I would have given half my years if there had been no memory in my heart of that awful night at the Hotel Gilbert to stand between him and me, to darken the gratitude and affection for him that had come into my life.

(*To be continued next week.*)

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THE END OF THE FAMILY FEUD.

"WHAT in thunder——" began Colonel Starrett.

"Confound them! Why haven't they straightened things? Where's my breakfast?" He rang the bell savagely. "Here! Jane—Kitty—where are you?"

A minute later the door was timidly opened.

"Please, zur," said a very small voice.

A girl of ten, her dark, pert face peering out from a dark blue hood, stood on the threshold.

"Well?" questioned the Colonel sharply.

"Kitty told me to wait in the hall till I heard the bell, zur, an' then to come in an' tell you as how Jane got took bad last night with the influenza an' went home."

"Why couldn't Kitty tell me that herself? Where is she?"

The diminutive envoy shook in her well-ventilated shoes.

"My—my sister Kitty, zur—she's gone to get married."

"Married!" roared the Colonel.

"Yes, zur. To the butcher's young man."

Colonel Starrett's indignation had been appallingly fierce, but now he broke down laughingly. He tossed the child a coin.

"She was right. Now, then, off you go—and save me a bit of the wedding cake."

She ran off grinning, and he set himself to light a fire in the kitchen grate, and make a cup of coffee. Half an hour later he gulped down a drink of the bitter, blackish mixture he had evolved from the best Mocha; then, saddling his horse, he rode toward the neighbouring town.

Less than a mile down the road he passed a long, low hedge, now leafless, a skeleton orchard, and, set back from the road, a comfortable gabled house. The sight of it brought up an annoying recollection, and he actually groaned.

"That idiotic lad!" he muttered, referring to his only son. "The idea of his writing me to say he had met a daughter of George Stine's, and that she was so pretty he had forgotten all about the feud, and fallen in love with her. I think," grimly, "that my letter brought him to his senses."

It would have puzzled Colonel Starrett to explain lucidly the original cause of the feud. It was something about a disputed strip of meadowland. His grandfather had begun the quarrel, his father had reverently perpetuated it, and he would have considered himself a traitor if he had failed to harbour resentment against every member of the Stine family.

Not that there were many left. There was George Stine's plump, brisk, bustling widow; the girl, of whom Harry wrote, who had been away at school almost all the time of late years; and a wild young slip of a lad, just entering his teens.

In the small town, Colonel Starrett found it impossible to replace his vanished domestics. That is, to replace them to his satisfaction; for the Colonel was inclined to be a trifle exacting. However, a few hours later, he wished he had not been so hard to please, for after supper he went into the cellar to get some firewood, stepped on a potato lying on the stairs, lost his balance, and fell headlong down the vegetable-scented darkness.

He lay there half stunned. After a while, with a painful effort, he managed to drag himself upstairs, and into his cheerless sitting room.

He lay on the sofa, wondering how long it would be before any one happened to come in. His nearest neighbours were the Stines, and he reflected, with a sarcastic snort, that there was no danger of any of them dropping in.

"Thank goodness, Robin will be home to-morrow," he murmured, as he fell into an uncomfortable sleep.

And, sure enough, about eleven o'clock the following day, Robin Starrett, a tall, good looking, well-dressed young fellow, strode up the avenue to the paternal mansion, and discovered his helpless father railing against things in general and servants in particular.

"Desolation, indeed!" assented Robin. "No fires—no promise of dinner—no comfort at all. What luck!"

He put down his bag and grabbed up his hat.

"Where are you going?" demanded Colonel Starrett.

"To hunt up a girl who got out of the same train as I did at the station. Good cook and first-class housekeeper generally. A treasure for us, if I can induce her to come."

His arguments, whatever they were, proved successful. In three-quarters of an hour he triumphantly presented his prize to the Colonel. The old man regarded her searchingly. She was a slender, pretty girl of nineteen, with a soft little fringe of dark hair across her white brow; large, grey, appealing eyes, and "a mouth like a baby's, dewy red." Even his masculine eye perceived that she was not only well, but fashionably dressed.

"Humph!" he muttered to Robin. "Too stylish to be worth her salt. But let her try."

And, six hours later, he was willing to admit his mistake, for the cool bandages the doctor had ordered to be frequently renewed, were reducing the swelling of his injured ankle; his favourite room was neatly swept and dusted; a bright fire burned in the grate; and on the small table set for two, that was drawn up beside his lounge, a tempting little dinner steamed savourily.

"I'll give her half as much again as I gave Kitty," the Colonel declared, as he drank his coffee. "I haven't eaten such an apple turnover since I ate those my mother used to make." And he beamed approvingly upon her while she removed the dishes.

Robin lounged about the house reading, smoking, talking prospects and politics with his father, apparently well satisfied with his dull holiday.

One dreary, dismal February evening, when the rain was coming down in noisy sheets, and the trees were waving their black arms in contortions of unrest, the old man, who had been hobbling about the corridors with the aid of his stick, called to the girl, when he saw her lighting the hall lamp.

"Run upstairs, Dolly, like a good child, and bring me down the book you'll find on the window-sill of my room."

"Yes, sir," she answered, and ran up the stairs to fetch the book he required.

The Colonel heard a knock at the back door. He made his way to the kitchen. The large room was clean and well-lighted. There was an appetising smell of muffins and devilled ham in the air.

Rap-tap-tap! The Colonel opened the door.

A dripping boy sidled in, and stood looking up at the Colonel in a stupor of affright.

The Colonel, who always looked over the heads of his small neighbours, did not recognise the lad.

"Well?" he demanded. "What do you want?"

The little chap grew bold with the importance of his errand.

"Mother's had a spill," he said, "and want's Dorothy as soon as she can come."

"Dorothy? There's no Dorothy here."

"Oh, yes, there is—my sister, Dorothy Stine. There she is now. Mother's ill, Dorothy."

The girl in the doorway stood dazed a moment, her colour coming and going. Then a firm arm was clasped round her waist, and she was drawn gently forward

"What—what's this?" stammered the Colonel, staring hard at the girl and his son.

"This is my wife, father," said Robin. "We were married three weeks ago. I left her in the town the day I came from the city, until I learned how you would receive her. But, after I saw the real state of affairs, I persuaded her to give you a chance to learn to love her for her own sake."

"But," spluttered the Colonel, "the feud?"

"Let it die a natural death," advised Robin. "Get your hat, dear, and a coat, I'll take you over to your mother's."

When they returned the master of the house, sitting by the fire, looked up and said, "I—I hope your mother is better."

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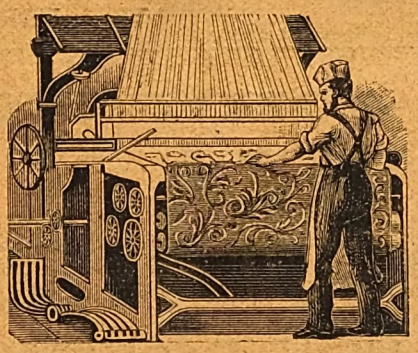

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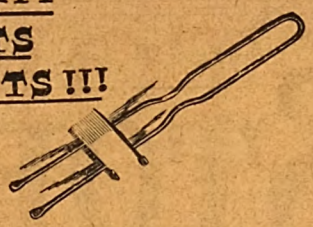

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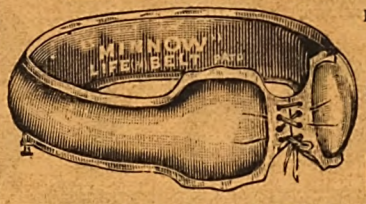

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

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A Lost Soul

IT was a chance remark, and one that is often made concerning an intelligent animal, but its effect upon my friend Sidney Darrow was very remarkable indeed.

His shoulders twitched nervously, and his hand went up to his throat as though something choked him.

I have a large mastiff that I call Wodan. A moment before he had left his accustomed place on the rug in the corner of the room and had come to my side to receive the caress which at intervals through the day he seems to find necessary to his happiness. As I smoothed his wrinkled forehead and patted his soft large ears, I observed with what trustful affection his great eyes beamed on me.

It was then that I remarked to Sidney Darrow, who sat near at hand carelessly watching us through the smoke of his pipe:

"Does it not seem to you sometimes that Wodan has a very human look?"

And my friend made answer with the peculiar motions which I have described.

Wodan left my side and walked slowly back to his rug. Darrow watched his movements with half-closed eyes, his hand still clutching his throat. When the dog had laid down, my friend turned his gaze upon me.

"Don't—don't ever say that about Wodan again. It will make me hate him."

He was plainly much disturbed, and the seriousness of his appeal was not to be doubted.

Presently, before I was ready to make any reply, he separated the heavy beard that covered his chin and neck, disclosing a deep zigzag scar.

"See here," he said, "I never showed you this."

"What made it—a burn?"

"No. Let me tell you the story."

* * * *

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There was a period in my life, some years ago, that I spent on my uncle's ranch in Australia. At that time, as I believe it is now, the raising of sheep was one of the chief industries of Victoria, and much of the land in our vicinity was devoted to pasturage.

About half-a-mile from my uncle's house, in a lonely valley, stood the hut of a herder—built of wood, repulsive without, cheerless within, grim and squalid, that one might think he had constructed it about himself, as the nautilus does his shell.

He was a tall, hard-visaged Basque, with a great shaggy black beard, haggard features, and eyes that you could not look into without a shudder. Do you understand what I mean? He was one of those wild beasts of men whose faces, seen but once, live always in your memory; and when sleep will not come they show themselves—bodiless masks as they are—through your tightly closed eyelids.

The trail of the valley passed within a few yards of the hut, and my duties—I assisted my uncle in the management of the ranch—frequently led me in that direction. When not away on the hillside with his flock of sheep, the herder usually stood or squatted motionless in front of his hovel. A few feet away from him crouched his dog.

The pair, man and beast, stared at me from the moment I came in sight, until I passed amongst the oaks beyond, making no movement, save a slow turning of the head, and offering no response to my salutation. At last I came to pass them in silence, but never without a vague sense of dread.

I learned from the men on my uncle's ranch that the Basque was considered queer, or, as they expressed it, "locoed." They said he was in the habit of talking to his dog, as though he were a man, and that even his fellow-countrymen feared and avoided him.

Crazy he may have been; a drunkard he certainly was. At frequent intervals he appeared in the town with a large black demijohn, which he carried away filled with liquor of the sort that makes men maniacs.

One afternoon, as I came down the valley, I heard the yelping of a dog, and, approaching the hut of the Basque, I beheld a sight that filled me with anger and distress.

The fellow had hung up the dog by the hind legs against the side of the house, and was beating him with a large knotted stick.

I did not stop to think much of consequences. I did as you or any man who has ever known a dog would have done. I jumped from the saddle, and drawing my knife as I ran, cut the animal down. Then I turned and faced the Basque.

I suppose he thought I was armed—which I was not—for he did not take up the gage of battle—but stared at me fiercely out of bloodshot eyes. The dog hobbled away to a short distance, shook off the riata with which its legs were ensnarled, and, crouching low, watched us.

"Come," I said in Spanish; "why should you kill your dog? You have drunk too much. To-morrow you will be glad that I saved his life."

He emitted a strange sound through his teeth and lips. It was very like the snarl of a wolf.

"If you do not care for the dog, will you sell him?" I asked.

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"No!" he replied with an oath, "I will not sell him; I mean to kill him!"

"Very well," I said, "if you do wish to take the animal's life, shoot him; but you shall not beat him to death."

The Basque turned towards the hut muttering imprecations against the dog and myself. When he came to the door he called to the dog,

"Demonio, come here!"

The animal eyed him, but did not move. Then the herder disappeared from view in the dark interior of the hovel.

I remounted, and continued on my way down the trail. I had gone about a hundred yards when suddenly there was a crashing in the chaparral behind, and I wheeled hastily round, to discover the dog. He had followed, evidently for the purpose of making my acquaintance, and to thank me for the rescue.

I called to him, and patted the side of my saddle, meaning that he should come where I might touch him. He started to obey, but as he approached nearer, my horse gave a violent snort, showed signs of fear, and began to shy away from him.

The act surprised me not a little, for the animal was a stolid old bronco that rarely started at anything, least of all at a dog. The dog stopped his advance and watched us, while I struggled to bring the horse nearer to him, and to calm his very evident terror.

But my efforts were unavailing, though I used whip and spur, and threw all my strength on the bridle. The horse would not allow the dog to touch him. For some strange cause he even trembled in his presence. At last I gave up the undertaking, and examined the Basque's companion from a little distance.

He was considerably larger than the average collie. I imagined that he must have had some Newfoundland, or, perhaps, St. Bernard blood—the sheep dogs of Australia are rarely of pure breed. His hair was short, curly, and black as night. He squatted on his haunches and looked steadily at me during the time that I was occupied in making this survey; and when at last I spoke to him, he lifted his ears a little, but made no other movement.

"Demon," I said, "is that your name—Demonio?"

"Let me tell you the story."

At first I thought that the name had been given him because he was dark in colour, as the popular belief paints an evil spirit. But a moment later, when my eyes rested on him, I saw, or I should say I felt, that there might be some further reason. I scarcely know how to describe the effect that his steady gaze produced upon me.

It was at first merely an impression that this dog was different from any of his species that I had ever known before; then a conviction that *something was wrong*; and then, an uncontrollable terror. These sensations followed one another in quick succession, almost in a flash; and without stopping to ask myself any questions, I gave my horse free rein and we plunged headlong down the trail.

Once again in the open plain, I tried to deceive myself into thinking that my terror had been only apprehension lest the Basque should come upon me from behind. The rapid descent of the twilight, and the peculiar behaviour of the horse, served to heighten the effect of this dread.

A few days later, when I passed the hut, the herder and his dog, in their usual attitudes, stared at me, sullen and silent. I looked closely at the dog's face, but could see nothing beyond keen animal intelligence.

Several months passed.

One morning, as I went out towards the corral, one of the men employed on the ranch came up to me and said:

"I believe that something has happened to that crazy Basque sheep-herder. His dog came here last night and would not go away."

"What, Demon?" I said, and as I spoke the animal came running up. I patted his head and talked to him, but he jumped uneasily about, as though he were anxious to be gone.

I suggested to the man that we should ride to the valley, and mounting, we followed the dog out into the road. He ran along several yards in advance of us, looking back occasionally to make sure that we were coming. When the valley was reached his pace slackened, and some distance from the hut he stopped and fell in behind us.

"He dreads a beating," said I.

From the trail we called to the hut, and receiving no answer we rode to the door and looked in.

There lay the Basque in the middle of the floor, his arms outstretched, and his head thrown back—dead.

An uncared-for corpse is always a disagreeable object to look upon, but something had happened to this one that rendered it impossible for me to give it more than one quick glance.

I hastily turned my horse's head away, and rode over toward the spot where the dog was crouching. The man, more resolute than I, dismounted, and went into the hut. When he came out again he said:

"I covered it over with one of those sheepskins, so it wouldn't scare anyone else. His bottle was lying near him, and I guess he must have drunk himself to death. That was probably done by coyotes, or maybe a mountain lion."

We rode to town, where we gave notice to the authorities of the man's death and also to several of his countrymen. In talking with one of the latter I asked what disposition would be made of the dead man's sheep and of his dog.

"The sheep," answered the man, "were not his; he had sold them. As to the dog, nobody wants the brute, I imagine."

"Why not?"

The man shrugged his shoulders, and looked askance at Demon, who had followed me.

"Very well," I said, "then I will take him."

No objection was made, and Demon passed into my possession.

My uncle had several hundred sheep, which were tended by an old native Australian and his son. I took Demon to them, and offered his services in the care of the flock. To my surprise they refused. I urged the matter, and finally demanded the ground of their opposition. At last the old man said:

"He looks like a sheep-killer."

This accounted for the refusal of the Basque shepherds to take the dog; they, too, suspected him. Knowing how prone such men were to superstitious prejudices, I would not allow the animal to be condemned without cause.

He shook his head. Then I asked if anyone had ever seen the dog prowling about at night, or behaving in a suspicious manner? Again he shook his head.

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One of the men employed on the ranch came up to me.

"It is all nonsense," I said, finding myself fairly forced into the position of the dog's defender.

"Now, I tell you," said the old shepherd, "I know that dog. I think that a bad dog. I will show you something."

He went into his hut and brought out two half-grown puppies—lively, wriggling little fellows—and put them down on the ground before Demon.

"You see," he said, "puppies always try to play with strange dogs—never afraid of them. Look! I told you he was a bad dog."

The infants waddled up to Demon, who approached them wagging his tail good-humouredly. The instant they got a good view of his face they whirled about and went off ki-yi-ing at a great rate of speed.

The performance struck me as amusing, and I laughed, but the old shepherd looked very grave.

"A bad dog," he reiterated slowly, "very bad."

"Well," I said, "I will take him myself, since you will not. But if I ever learn"—here I instinctively looked down into the dog's face, as though speaking to him—"if I ever learn that he has killed a sheep I shall have him shot."

The dog's eyes looked into mine with a keen, intelligent gaze; and I could not resist the belief that he had understood.

It is not improbable that my prejudice against the animal was even stronger than that of the shepherd's; but as I was an educated, reasoning man, proud of my freedom from every form of superstition, how could I bring myself to countenance such irrational fancies?

On the contrary, my duty seemed to lie in the opposite course, to defy this prejudice and to protect and defend the object at which it was levelled. Besides, I had come to feel a powerful curiosity with regard to this creature which, though apparently inoffensive, was so generally hated and feared.

What was it that inspired all other animals with such distrust of him? Not my horse alone, but every quadruped on the place manifested a very evident unwillingness to have him about. The other dogs would not associate with him. Yet he was not quarrelsome or bad-tempered.

One thing he did which, though not a serious fault, was often annoying. He had a habit of watching closely every motion of the person nearest him—usually myself. Sometimes I almost imagined that I could feel his eyes, when I did not see them, his gaze was so constant and intense.

Demon had been in my possession several weeks, when all at once I began to hear complaints about the killing of sheep. Every morning a fresh victim was found dead—now of one flock and now of another, yet all within a limited range.

They were all mutilated in the same way, and the work was plainly that of a dog practised in sheep-killing. As I had expected, suspicion immediately fell upon Demon; and one morning, when I came out of the house, I found a couple of herders waiting to see me.

They had no evidence against the dog, yet they demanded that he should be put to death. The injustice of it roused my indignation, and calling Demon to me I said:

"I want you to look at him. You say that a sheep was killed last night. Where is there any signs of blood about his jaws?"

One of them examined Demon's mouth, but found no mark of a slaughter. The other said:

"That does not prove anything. A regular sheep-killer does not spill much blood, and sometimes he learns to wash it off."

This sounded improbable to me, but I did not argue the matter.

"Very well," I said, "to-night Demon shall be shut up in the corral, and if a sheep is killed we shall know that he is not the guilty dog."

They shook their heads. "He will find some way of getting out of the corral," said one of them.

"Then he shall sleep in my room with me," I said, "and the doors and shutters shall be closed. Does that suit you?"

This arrangement seemed to satisfy them, and they went away.

That night I took Demon into my room, and gave him a mat in the corner for a bed. His only possible means of escape was by the door or the window. I locked the door and closed the venetian shutter and hooked it in place. Then I went to bed and almost immediately fell asleep.

In the morning, when I woke, Demon lay upon his mat apparently in sound slumber.

I began to dress. When I was nearly done my uncle rapped at the door.

"Have you Demon in there?" he called out.

"Yes," I answered opening the door.

He exhibited much surprise. "Another sheep was killed last night," said he.

"Well," I replied, "that merely proves what I said—that Demon is innocent."

"Yes, of course," said my uncle, looking doubtfully at the dog. He went over to the window and inspected the fastening.

"Impossible," he said.

"For him to open it?" I asked—"of course."

My uncle threw the shutters back and pointed significantly at the flower-bed below. The plants had been crushed down and the earth displaced, and round about were numerous dog-tracks.

"That was not there yesterday," said he.

My room was on the ground floor and from the window to the earth was only two or three feet. Had the shutters been open the dog might easily have climbed out and in again, but it had been locked all night.

I turned and looked at Demon. He was watching us steadily with the expression in his eyes that I knew and dreaded.

"Yes," I answered opening the door.

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My uncle made another examination of the fastening of the shutter. At last he said, "I am convinced that the sheep-killer is not Demon. There is no dog in existence who could manipulate that crooked hook to open the shutter. Those footprints were left there by some stray animal."

The conviction seemed inevitable, and I agreed with him. At the same time I was resolved to try the experiment again, and watch the dog more carefully.

That night I shut Demon in as before, and closed and fastened both door and shutter. There was a full moon, which made the landscape bright as day without, and it occurred to me, just as I was about to turn out my lamp, that I could throw open the upper section of the shutter and admit the light.

It fell in a broad white square directly across the mat where the dog lay, and after I got into bed I found that I could watch him easily, without turning my head upon the pillow.

Then I discovered that he was watching me. There was nothing unusual about that—only his eyes were strangely bright.

I tossed about in the bed for a time, but he never moved.

At last I determined to deceive him into the belief that I was asleep. I closed my eyes and presently by a careless movement drew the lace edge of the pillow-slip across my face. Thus I could watch him and yet conceal the fact that my eyes were open.

When I had lain in this position motionless for perhaps ten minutes, Demon suddenly lifted his head and turned it on one side. Plainly he was listening—for what I could not imagine. He put his head down and for another ten minutes did not move. Then gradually and noiselessly he rose to his feet and came towards the bed. A little distance away he stopped and listened again. Evidently he did not hear what he had expected, for after standing a moment he returned to his corner and lay down.

Suddenly I found the explanation of his strange conduct. He had listened to my breathing that he might determine if I slept.

Resolved to deceive him, if possible, I began to slowly lengthen my respiration, and to expel it with more sound and force.

The thing sprang at my throat.

At the end of a few minutes I saw that I was succeeding in my design. A second time he rose with perfect stillness and came to the bed. His face wore an expression of devilish cunning, so utterly foreign to his customary mien that under other circumstances I should have failed to recognise him. A swift flash of satisfaction in his eye showed that he thought me asleep, and he turned to the window to make his escape.

His motions were slow and cautious, reminding me of a cat rather than a dog. I had expected him to make some slight noise in unhooking the shutter, for I doubt if I myself, with my life in hazard, could have accomplished it inaudibly. But there was no sound to be heard in the room except that of my slow, steady respiration.

I think it must have taken him five minutes to draw the hook. Then the shutter was swung back quietly inch by inch, and his way was clear.

He stood for a moment with his forepaws upon the window-sill and looked back at me. As he did so, I felt again the same strange impression of terror that had overwhelmed me the first time my eyes met his in that lonely valley. For an instant I held my breath, and had he continued to look he must have discovered that I was not asleep. But now, with a sudden yet noiseless leap, he went out of the window—gone on his murderous quest.

It was several minutes before I ventured to move. At last I rose and went to the window. Far away, where the bright moonlight fell upon the side of the hill, I could see a small piece of darkness scudding swiftly along. It was Demon on his way to the sheep pastures.

I scarcely know what impulse sent me, but I went to the closet in my room, took down a large navy revolver, and when I got back into bed, slipped it underneath my pillow. I did not then, and I will not now, confess to any real fear of the dog—that is to say, physical fear.

There was dread—a vague indistinct horror—at something unexplainable that I seemed to see in his eyes. But had I really feared him I should have immediately closed the shutter, rendering his return quite impossible.

I lay still and watched for an hour. The nearest flocks, I knew, could be reached in a few minutes, and his return might be expected at any time. I drew the lace over my eyes again and listened for the sound that should indicate his approach.

Suddenly a great black head appeared in the window—without warning—materialised as it seemed out of the darkness of the night. In it two round red lights gleamed like coals of fire. The moon shone clear and full on his head, and I could plainly see the blood and foam with which his jaws were covered.

He climbed slowly into the room. Then, with an ingenuity that was even more than human, he drew the shutter back—noiselessly—and fastened it in place.

He gave one quick glance at me, and went over to his corner. Through the network of lace I watched him, while he licked the bloodstains from his feet and washed his face and neck, with the motions and attitudes of a cat.

I grew faint with the horror of it all, and at last forgot the part which I was playing, and ceased to counterfeit the respiration of one who sleeps. Even when Demon suddenly started up, looked at me and listened, I did not notice my mistake.

Then he came nearer to the bed, a few feet away, and glared at me out of those horrible eyes.

That was the moment in which I saw the thing and understood it all. You will not believe it. I don't ask that you should, but I saw through that creature's eyes down into the lost human soul that occupied its body.

It was the soul of a murderer—the destroyer of the drunken Basque in his lonely hovel, the slayer of the sheep—now, at last, throwing off all disguise.

With a strange half-animal and half-human cry the thing sprang at my throat, I threw my hand up and it missed its aim, the teeth closing only on the skin. The next instant I fired the revolver, and it rolled over dead.

The wound was not serious, but it left that ugly-looking scar. There is another scar that the experience left, which is probably much larger, if one could see it. I mean on my memory.

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THE JEW OF ROUDNIA.

I WAS travelling post-haste through Poland on most important business, and stopped for a change of horses at a little village called Roudnia. Here, as everywhere in this country, the population is divided into Jews and Catholics, and a church sacred to each religion lends dignity to the miserable collection of huts which constitutes a town in Poland.

While the horses were being unharnessed, I stretched my cramped limbs by a brisk walk up and down the bit of road before the post-station. Night was coming on and a singular rosy light appeared in the sky, against which the cross of the Catholic church loomed blackly.

"There is a fire in the town," said my driver laconically. "It is the house of a Jew."

"How do you know?" I asked in surprise.

"Ouf!" said the man, "I can smell the grease!" He was a Russian.

On a long weary journey any incident is a distraction.

"It is not far; I will walk on," I said. "You may follow when your horses are ready."

When I reached the scene of the fire, a great crowd had gathered. My driver was right; the house of a Jewish butcher was burning. The Jews were running in and out of the building, saving what they could carry in their arms. The Catholics stood with folded arms watching the progress of the flames. The butcher, himself, had gathered his family of frightened children together on one side of the road, and beside them, on a pallet stretched on the ground, he had laid his wife, with her new-born baby at her breast. He turned and looked at the burning house and his cries rent the air.

"Ah! God of Israel! What a loss!"

"We have saved a great deal," said a neighbour, pointing to the furniture piled on the road.

"But not everything—not everything!" wailed the Jew. "I have lost ——" he broke off with a sharp cry as his eyes rested on his family group by the roadside. "God of Israel! my mother! my old mother!"

The woman on the pallet rose with a groan. The cries of the children mingled with her sobs. A shudder ran through the crowd. Even the Catholics were stirred. A Jewess—yes! But a woman—an old woman.

The soldier lifted the figure of the woman high in the air.

The Jew took a step toward the burning house, but his wife, who had struggled toward him, fell into his arms.

"You shall not!" she cried, holding him fiercely.

"God of Israel!" shrieked the Jew, "she is paralysed! Who will save her? I will give half my fortune. I will give five roubles!"

Not a soul stirred.

"I will give half my fortune!" repeated the Jew, desperately.

A huge Cossack stepped from the crowd of Catholics. It was plainly to be seen that he had been drinking heavily.

"Pig!" he said, addressing the Jew, "where is your mother?"

"In the room to the left, my good kind friend! In the room where the fire has not yet reached, my noble friend!" whined the Jew.

"And you will give five roubles? Good. You hear?" turning to the crowd. There was a murmur of assent. He set his shoulders and took a long whiff of his pipe. "Peste! it looks warm in there!"

With a bound he disappeared in the smoke pouring from the open doorway. The crowd shivered in silence. Scarcely an instant passed before the huge figure of the Cossack struggled back through the blinding smoke, carrying a light burden in his great arms. His hair and beard were burned, and his face was blackened, but he had not removed his pipe from his mouth. The crowd broke into a wild cheer.

"There is the old woman," he said, placing her not ungently on the ground. "She has fainted—that is all! Give me my money!"

"What!" cried the Jew, his avarice reasserting itself now that fear was at rest. "At once, my good friend? Ah! that cannot be. I have not so much as that here with me. You must give me time to pay; when my affairs are settled; when I have rebuilt my house."

The Cossack advanced furiously upon him. From force of habit the Jew raised his arm to ward off a blow.

"Dog of a Jew!" thundered the soldier. "Do you think you can play with me? Do you think it was for pleasure I went into that fire? Give me the money!"

"I am a poor man," whimpered the Jew, "but the living God knows I am honest. I pay my debts."

He drew a greasy wallet from his breast, and fumbling in its depths, fished out a ragged piece of paper. As he held it out to the soldier the roof of the burning building fell with a crash, and a shower of sparks was scattered over the crowd. A great volume of smoke rose in the air and the flames leapt and danced like devils.

The Cossack glanced at the dirty piece of paper and, with an oath, flung it back in the Jew's face.

"Dog!" he thundered, "Thief! robber! One rouble——."

"The rest in good time," began the Jew. "In good——."

"One rouble!" roared the Cossack. "Is that a price for entering a burning house? Good! You shall see me enter it again for nothing."

With incredible swiftness, he picked up the helpless figure of the old paralytic, and, before the crowd could gather his intent, rushed toward the burning ruin. Nothing remained of the building but the door-frame outlined blackly against the vivid background of fire. The soldier sprang on the sill, with a roar like a beast in rage, lifted the figure of the woman high in the air, and, with all his strength, flung it from him unhesitatingly into the bed of fire.

It was so sudden, so awful, that not a sound escaped the crowd.

I was stunned by the horrible tragedy—sickened by the infernal picture still before me. The silent, horror-stricken crowd swaying and surging before that sea of fire, the huge figure of the Cossack grotesque and awful in silhouette, the agonised face of the Jewish woman, ghastly in the red light!

The voice of my driver reached me. I seemed to hear it from a great distance:

"Your Excellency, the horses are waiting."

To prevent unnecessary labour, and consequent disappointment, to any readers of this paper, who in the past have forwarded original stories for insertion, we would take this opportunity of saying that our arrangements for the provision of matter for "Short Stories" are complete for some time to come.

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THE OLD PEOPLE.

"A LETTER?"

"Yes, Monsieur, it is from Paris."

Good old Father Azan was proud that it came from Paris. Not I. Something seemed to tell me this dainty Paris letter, from Jean, Jacques Street, coming so unexpectedly and so early in the morning, would torment me and take up my entire day. That I was not mistaken you may see. Thus ran the letter:

"Would you be good enough to do something for me, my friend? Close your mill for the day and go immediately to Eyguières. Eyguières is a small village six or seven miles from your house—only a pleasant walk. When you reach there, ask for the Orpheline Convent. The first house beyond the convent is low, with green blinds and a garden in the rear.

"You must enter without knocking—the door is always open—and on entering call out, 'Good morning, good people, I am a friend of Maurice.' Then you will see two little old people. Oh, very, very old—as old as anyone you have ever seen. Seated in their great armchairs, they will hold out their hands to you. Greet them warmly, with all your heart, as though they belonged to you.

"Then begin to talk. They will talk to you of me alone. They will tell you of a thousand of my childish pranks, but you must not smile. Listen, but do not laugh—do you understand? They are my grandparents, two beings to whom I am all the world, and who have not seen me for ten years. Ten years! A long time! Yes; but what can I do? Paris holds me captive. As for them, they would come to me but for their age. If they tried to come they would die on the way.

"Happily, you are near them, my dear Miller, and in seeing you those pobr old folk will feel they have seen a part of me. I have often spoken to them of you, our good friendship that——."

"Plague take friendship!"

It was, indeed, a charming day, but not the day to walk along country roads. A violent, north-west wind blew, and, besides, it was too sunny to walk. When this tormenting letter arrived, I had already determined on a shelter between two rocks. There I planned to spend the whole day and bask in the sunlight like a lizard and listen to the sighing pines. But what was I to do? I closed my mill, growling and grumbling meanwhile, hid the key in a hole, took my stick and my pipe, and departed.

I arrived at Eyguières in about two hours. The village was deserted—everybody in the fields. In dusty elm trees by the roadside the grasshoppers hummed. Before the Mayor's office was a mule sunning himself, a flock of pigeons on the fountain in the churchyard, but no one to tell me of the Orpheline Convent.

Fortunately, an old woman appeared suddenly, sat down in the shadow of the doorway and began to spin. I told her what I wished to find, and, like a witch, she seemed all-powerful, for she raised her distaff and pointed. There before my very eyes was the convent. It was a large building, dull and black, and proudly above the porch, in a pointed arch, was an old red snag cross, with a short Latin inscription round it.

By the side of this building I saw a small house. Green blinds, a garden at the rear. I recognised it immediately and entered without knocking.

All my life I shall remember the long, clean, cool hallway, the rose-tinted walls, with their panels of flowers and faded violins, and the little garden at the end, with its wealth of colour. It seemed as though I had gone back to the time of Sedan, and stood in some old bailiff's house.

At the end of the hall, to the left, through a door half open, I could hear the tic-tac of a great clock, and the voice of a child—a school child—who, in reading, stopped at each syllable.

"When Saint—I—re—née—call—ed—out—I—was—the—wheat—of—the—mas—ter—I had—to—be—bro—ken—by the—teeth—of—these—an-i-mals."

Softly I approached and looked in.

In the quiet and half-light of the little room was an old man with red cheeks, and wrinkled to the tips of his fingers. There he was, asleep in his chair, his mouth open, his hands on his knees. At his feet was a little girl dressed in blue—a long cape and a little hood, the costume of the convent orphans—reading the life of Saint Irenée out of a great book as big as herself. This reading affected all alike.

The old man slept in his chair, the flies on the ceiling and the canaries in their cage by the window—all slept. The great clock kept up its tic-a-tac, tic-tac. Only a beam of sunlight moved; glinting through the closed shutters it danced and shone. In the midst of this calm the child gravely kept on her reading:

"Sud-den-ly-two-li-ons-pre-cip-i-ta-ted-them-selves-on-him, and-de-vour-ed-him."

Just then I entered.

If the lions that precipitated themselves on Saint Irenée had entered the room, greater consternation could not have been. The child screamed and let the book fall to the floor, the canaries and the flies woke up, the clock struck, and the old man, sitting up with a start, stared.

As for me, I stood on the threshold, a little disconcerted, but said in a clear voice: "Good day, good people. I am a friend of Maurice."

Oh, if you could have seen the old man—if you could have seen him come towards me with his arms stretched out, and fold me close, shake my hand and wander round the room, saying, "Oh, my! Oh, my!" All the wrinkles in his face smiled. He blushed and stammered, "Ah, monsieur and monsieur!" Then going to the door he called, "Mamette!"

A door opened, and the sound of a light, quick, mouse-like footfall in the passage—it was Mamette. Nothing could be prettier than this old lady, with her high shell-comb, her carmelite dress, and carrying in her hand her lace handkerchief, according to the old-fashioned custom, to do me honour.

How beautiful! How tenderly beautiful! They two resembled each other. With the aid of the comb and gown the little old man might have been mistaken for Mamette herself. Only Mamette's face showed the trace of sorrow. She was more wrinkled. Evidently she had shed many tears during her life. But, like him, she had a little orphan, with the inevitable blue cape, by her side. It was a touching sight to see these old people protected, as it were, by the little orphan tots.

On entering, Mamette began to make me a deep curtsey, but one word from her husband cut the bow in two. "He is a friend of Maurice." Then she began to tremble, she cried, lost her handkerchief, blushed, grew redder and redder, even more than he. These poor old people. At the slightest emotion the few drops of blood left in their veins mounted to their cheeks in a second.

"Quick, quick, a chair," she said to the little girl at her side.

"Open the blinds," said the old man to the child at his knee.

And each taking my hand they led me to the window to scan my face lineament by lineament. Then, between them in their armchairs, I seated myself in a folding chair, and with the children behind us the questions began.

"How is he? What is he doing? Why doesn't he come to see us? Is he happy?" etc., etc., for hours.

As for me, I answered as best I could, giving what details I knew concerning my friend, and inventing others, of which I was ignorant, even going as far as to declare his windows faced the best way, and what coloured paper he had on his walls.

"The paper of his bed-room?"

"It is blue, madame. Light blue, with garlands."

"Truly!" interrupted the dear little old lady. And turning to her husband she added, "Isn't he a great child!"

"Yes, indeed he is!" was the enthusiastic response. And all the time I talked it was between shakings of the head, little laughs, winkings of the eye, a manner of quiet understanding. Or, perhaps, the old gentleman would say, "Speak louder! She is somewhat hard of hearing." And then she would interrupt and whisper, "Just a little louder, please. He doesn't hear very well."

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Then I would raise my voice and each would thank me with a smile, and with these smiles they would search my eyes for a trace of the picture of their Maurice. As for myself, I was too much moved to recall his face. It seemed vague, veiled, almost unrecognisable, as though I saw my friend smile on me through a mist.

Suddenly the old man got out of his chair. "But think, Mamette, perhaps he has not breakfasted!"

And Mamette, in her astonishment, raised her arms in the air, replied: "Not breakfasted? Mercy me!"

Believing they were still thinking of Maurice, I hastened to assure them that their good grandson never fasted beyond the noon hour. But no, indeed, it was of me they spoke, and it was touching to see their hurry when they learned I had not eaten.

"Quick! the tablecloth, children! The table in the middle of the room. The Sunday linen and the plates decorated with flowers. And don't waste any time, if you please, but hurry!"

And, indeed, no time could have been wasted, for before one could hardly turn round breakfast was there, served.

"Only a little breakfast," said Mamette, as she escorted me to the table. "You see, you will have to eat alone, for we ate ours earlier this morning."

Poor old people. At what hour must they have risen, and already breakfasted!

Mamette's little breakfast consisted of a small glass of milk, some dates, and a crisp white roll. It was enough to feed her and her canaries for at least a week.

There was great indignation round the table. The little blue-caped children nudged each other and whispered, while the canaries in the bottom of their cage seemed to say, "Oh, see that gentleman eating a whole roll!"

But, indeed, I did eat it all; and, meanwhile, without my kind host's perception, I furtively looked round this bright, peaceful room, which seemed to breathe a perfume from the past. I could not keep my eye off two little beds. I could imagine these two beds, almost like cradles, in the early morning, their fringed curtains still closed. The clock strikes three—the hour when old people waken. "Art thou asleep, Mamette?" "No, dear." "Isn't Maurice a good lad?" "Oh, yes, such a good lad!" I could seem to hear the conversation while I looked at those two little beds placed side by side.

While thus musing, a great commotion was going on at the other end of the room before the cupboard. He was trying to reach the very top shelf, where there were some brandied cherries which had been waiting ten years for Maurice, and which he now wanted opened for me. In spite of Mamette he would get those cherries himself, and, standing on a chair to the great terror of his wife, he tried to reach up.

Can you imagine the picture—the old man trembling and reaching up, the little blue-caped charity children holding the chair, and Mamette back of all, breathless, her arms held out? And from the open cupboard a great perfume of bergamot. Oh, it was charming!

Finally, after much effort, he brought out of the cupboard the famous jar and also an old silver cup, all embossed. It was the cup Maurice had when a little child. They would feed me with those cherries—Maurice had so loved them; and when serving me the old man whispered in my ear, with an appreciative air: "You ought to be very happy to eat these. My wife preserved them. You are going to have something fine."

Alas! his wife had made them, but she had forgotten to sugar them! That was only natural. One becomes childish as old age creeps on. The cherries were atrocious, my poor Maurice, but that did not prevent my eating them, just the same, without the least quiver of an eyelash.

. . . . . .

The repast finished, I rose to take leave of my hosts. They would have gladly kept me longer to talk of their Maurice, but day was darkening, my mill was far distant, and I had to go.

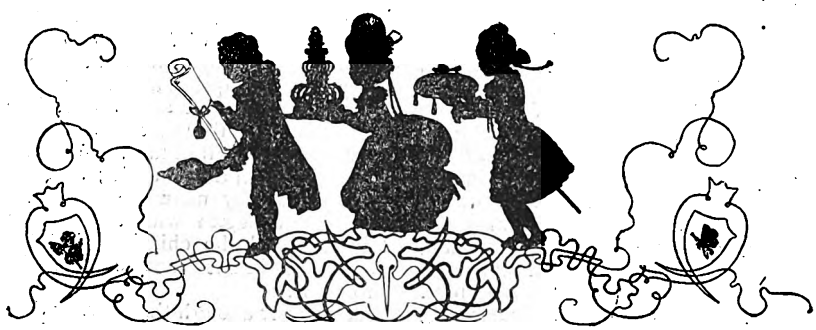
The old gentleman rose with me and said: "Mamette, my coat. I wish to escort him to the square." I felt sure Mamette thought at the bottom of her heart it was too cold for him to go out, but she said nothing.

Only when she helped him put his arms into the sleeves of his coat—a nice coat, Spanish tobacco in colour, with pearl buttons—I heard her say softly: "Thou wilt come back before it is too late, wilt thou not?" And he, with a little air of resistance, replied: "He, he; I do not know—perhaps."

And then they looked laughingly at each other, and the little children laughed to see them laugh, and in their corner the canaries laughed, too, in their own way. Indeed, the odour of the cherries had affected all of them a little.

Night was falling when we left, the grandfather and I. The little maid followed us afar to lead him back. But he did not see her, and was proudly walking by my side, his arm in mine, like any other man.

Mamette, beaming from her doorway, shook her head proudly, as though to say: "All the same, my old husband walks as well as the best of them."



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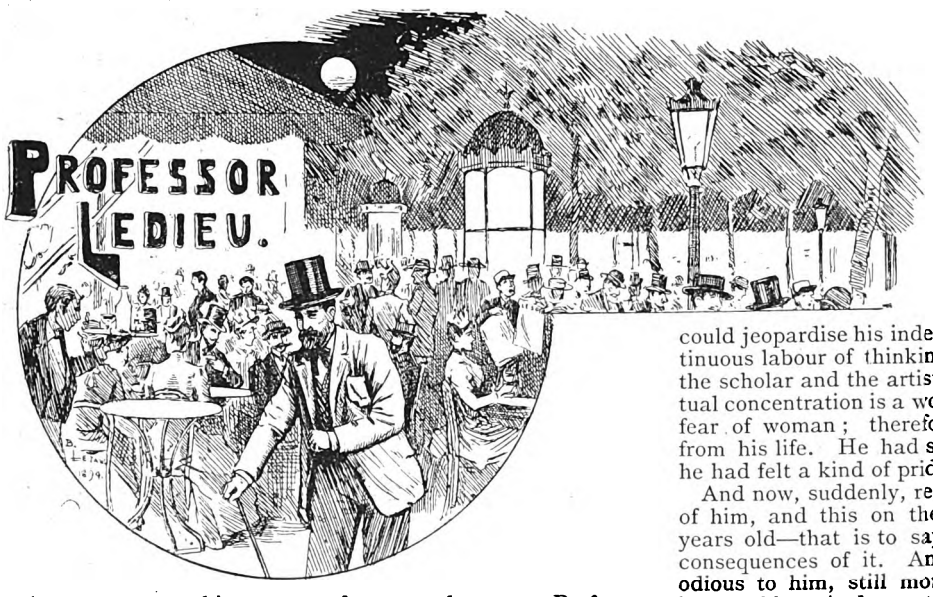

ACCORDING to his custom for several years, Professor Ledieu on Sunday evening, a few minutes before seven, turned the handle of the door that leads into the restaurant Cherbois, Place de la Sorbonne, Paris.

After a glorious day the sun was setting behind the little hills of Meudon, purpling with the last rays the gables of the houses of the square and the old dome, which glistened under the pure azure of the heavens. All Paris had been rushing into the country since morning, and was now returning in haste before nightfall. Everywhere the crowd, moving from the circumference to the centre, were filling the highways with bright toilets, gay countenances, ringing laughter and bundles of flowers, bringing into the depths of the old musty streets the assurance of spring and the perfumes of the country.

With a bow to the maid behind the bar, Professor Ledieu turned to the left and seated himself at a table placed in a corner beside the window, which was kept vacant for him each Sunday. After giving his hat to Leon, he sat down abruptly, threw his pamphlets on the table with a frown, and, when the waiter placed the bill of fare for the day in his hands, he perused it with a gloomy stare, as if he was reading there his sentence of death.

When Leon came to help him in making up his menu, he agreed silently with all the opinions of the waiter, but without responding this time with the benevolent smile with which he was in the habit of thanking him, and, as Leon disappeared, crying, "A printanier for one!" he murmured, "What can have happened to monsieur le professor this evening?"

However firm his will, what man is there who has not had his hour of discouragement? However plainly his way may be traced before him, who has not asked himself once in his life, "Have I followed my true path?".

This same day Professor Ledieu had entered his forty-eighth year. Attracted by the glorious sun, he had gone to take his Sunday walk into the woods of Meudon. By what odd reaction did it happen that all the joys of Nature condensed themselves into a profound sadness in his soul? How was it that this intellect, so well balanced, instead of pursuing the laborious dreams that made the enchantment of his whole life, should suddenly lay him flat in the groove of human realities?

Stopping to think for a moment, he had looked around him. Here and there, in the country, people were coming and going, laughing and chatting, families overflowing with little children, groups of noisy young people, all had been passing before his eyes, crossing him without even giving a single look in his direction, and he only had been alone.

Yes, alone with phantoms—Tiglath-Pilezer, Bel-Kat-Irassu, Sennacherib, Salmanazar, Semiramis—phantoms that haunt, penetrate, and envelop him. And now the intensity of the life that surrounds him makes this intimacy of his with the dead appear sinister to him. He is thinking that in a few hours he will be sitting alone at dinner, will then return to his obscure lodgings, will light his lamp, and there, too, will be alone in raising up his spectres; and for the first time in his life this abandonment weighs upon him, and he complains, and he suffers from that which till now he had considered the chief food of life—solitude.

He had so valiantly defended his beloved solitude. He had so resolutely banished from his path all that could jeopardise his independence and disturb him in that continuous labour of thinking which is the supreme pleasure of the scholar and the artist. The great enemy of this intellectual concentration is a woman. Therefore he had an instinctive fear of woman; therefore he had pitilessly eliminated her from his life. He had so far escaped from every chain, and he had felt a kind of pride in the fact.

And now, suddenly, regret for his misogamy took possession of him, and this on the very day when he was forty-eight years old—that is to say, when it was too late to escape the consequences of it. And now his beloved solitude became odious to him, still more odious from the fact that it was irreparable. And now the longing for feminine tenderness, for the family life, sprang up in him, held him fast, the more alluring that it could no longer be realised.

This thought seized him with irresistible force; it took entire possession of him. He walked with it the whole day, gloomy and despondent, under the blue sky and amid the verdure. He brought it back in the evening with him to Paris. He sat down with it at his solitary table at the restaurant Cherbois. It absorbed him to such an extent while he was eating his "printanier" that he did not see a new group of guests enter and take their places opposite him. But Leon having replaced the "printanier" by a "gigot Bretonne," as the professor was about to swallow the first mouthful, and had raised his eyes mechanically, the picture presented to him was such that he let fall his arm and fork, and remained open-mouthed, not tasting a morsel.

The group which thus riveted the attention of Professor Ledieu consisted of four persons—husband, wife, and two childen; evidently a family belonging to the class of little Parisian shopkeepers, who dine at the restaurant on Sundays, in order to give a holiday to the woman who does the cooking for the household the other days of the week.

She was pretty, this young mother. Her beautiful chestnut hair framed a rather refined face, somewhat pale, with irregular features, but lit up by two large laughing eyes. She had the roguish, self-possessed air of the Parisienne out for a holiday, as indefatigable in pleasure as in labour. With a graceful movement her hands rose to a level with her head to take off her hat, throwing her fine figure into relief as she bent backward, while the two children, a little girl of about seven, and a boy somewhat younger, clung to her. While replying to the questions of her husband—a brisk, squat, little fellow, with waxed moustache, hair brushed back from his forehead, and the gait of a corporal—who was asking her opinion on the bill of fare, she took off the children's hats and arranged them at the table; and soon the whole family being seated, the boy near the mother, the girl beside the father, the dinner began with a noise of dishes and forks, with laughter and the chirping of children—in fine, with an air of noisy merriment that completed the melancholy of the professor.

It was not enough that during the entire day the thought of his isolation had pursued and tortured him. It was still necessary that the spectacle of the happiness he had so long disdained, which he regretted now and to which he could never henceforward aspire, should be paraded under his very eyes. And yet these people were not very fortunate. It only required a glance to tell that their life was laborious and hard, their toil incessant, without hope of fortune possible. Whence did they derive that fine temper, that contented air, that joy,

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if not from mutual love and the common affection for the little beings sprung from them—in a word, from the family life?

Thus was clearly demonstrated to him the natural law he had disowned. How could he have taken so long to comprehend that man is not made solely for the purpose of burrowing in tombs and deciphering puzzles, and that there are other means of pleasure in this world besides adding a name to the incomplete list of kings of Nineveh or a date to Assyrian chronology? He saw it well now. The true sense of life was revealed to him.

As to the joys one has lost, there remains at least the memory of having tasted them. But are there any regrets more bitter than those for a happiness we might have enjoyed, and yet have voluntarily deprived ourselves of? Wifely tenderness, the laughter of children, household pleasures, mental rest, and relaxation—what a clear idea he had now of all this! How he felt its value, and how he understood that for him it was all over, over for ever!

"Monsieur does not eat his mutton!"

Professor Ledieu raised his saddened eyes to Leon, who was watching him with anxious solicitude, then lowered them immediately on his plate.

Absorbed in the contemplation of his neighbours and by the painful thoughts the sight of them suggested, he had remained without eating, fork in hand, for now nearly half an hour. A pale layer of grease had formed on the surface of the "gigot Bretonne." It looked like a kind of frozen pond in his plate, from which the meat emerged as a barren isle and the beans like little scattered rocks. Still he resisted the attempts of Leon to have the whole re-warmed. Cold mutton was good enough for a poor wretch, deserted by everybody, who was never to know the delights of a comfortable home, the attentions and caresses of a loving wife; and he began to eat with a kind of fury.

"I would never have to slap his ears if you did not give him his own way always."

At this moment the voice of the little girl was raised—

"I say, Robert, will you stop?"

It seems that young Robert was not disposed to yield to the entreaties of his sister, for, after a few minutes, the latter cried:

"Papa, make Robert stop; he is kicking me under the table. Please speak to him."

"Come, come, Robert, be quiet," said the mother, and she resumed her conversation with her husband.

But the amiable Robert did not appear to have more respect for the maternal commands than for the entreaties of his sister. Having assured himself by a glance that his father was not attending to him, and yielding to that need of motion which children feel at table when it is impossible for them to eat more, he continued the sport that amused him, and stretched his legs energetically in the direction of those of his sister.

Unhappily for him, the latter, foreseeing the attack, had drawn her chair back out of his reach. The clever child, seeing that he could no longer reach her without projectiles, found nothing better to do than to steep his hand in the coloured water in his glass, and sprinkle his little sister, who uttered loud cries.

"Papa, he has stained my dress."

The father, furious at being interrupted, turned toward his son and darted a menacing glance at him.

"Wait a little," he shouted, "you are going to have such a whipping as you never had in your life!"

The criminal, seeing already the paternal hand suspended over his head, made a terrified movement, when, unfortunately, his arm encountered the glass of coloured water. The glass and the child lost their balance at the same moment, the glass spilling all the liquid it contained on the mother's gown, the child catching at the table cloth and dragging with it to the floor bottles and glasses, plates and dishes, sauces and viands. Heavens, what a noise! The waiters ran up; the mother wipes herself; the children roar, and the father swears like a trooper, while young Robert is being picked up.

"You young scoundrel," shouts the father.

The child bellows louder than ever. The mother in fury interferes and says to her husband:

"It is your fault, too!"

"How, my fault?"

"Yes, your fault!"

"Well, that's rather good, that is!"

"If you had not frightened him, this would never have happened."

"Ought I to let him behave so abominably without minding it?"

"That's no reason why you should knock him down. No one ought to be such a brute with a baby like that."

"What! knock him down? Why, I haven't even touched him."

"Oh, you might restraint ourself a little!"

"I would never have to slap his ears if you did not give him his own way always."

"Oh, yes, of course, it's all my fault now."

"Yes, it is your fault."

"Do you dare say that to my face?"

Professor Ledieu lost nothing of the scene, and, in proportion as it developed, the smile spread again over his lips. Now, without ceasing to listen, he was eating his asparagus (in oil, according to the advice which Leon had given him).

His neighbours attacked each other with increasing acrimony. The replies exchanged became more bitter, and in this oratorical struggle it was easy to see the husband would not get the upper hand.

His wife bombarded him with words so rapidly that he no longer found an answer. She had extinguished his fire.

"And for all that, what pleasure have I ever had in my my life? Nursing children, cooking, a maid-of-all-work, indeed."

"Ah! it was my luck to have met with such a good-for-nothing as you! And monsieur complains! Well, if you are not content, you have only to say so."

The husband, annoyed at seeing himself the object of all eyes, tried to make her at least lower her voice. "Humbug! Little I care who hears me!"

A blush mounted to the face of the poor man, who was rapidly losing his self-possession under the scathing sarcasm of his wife's words.

The dispute between husband and wife lasted through the dessert, which the professor was enjoying with ever-increasing cheerfulness.

Then Professor Ledieu, having first of all paid his bill and given Leon a tip so unusually large as to make that functionary open his eyes, replaced his book and pamphlets under his arm, left the Restaurant Cherbois and directed his steps to the Rue de Monsieur le Prince, thinking with delight that in the calm solitude of his little apartment, all encumbered with books, he would again find Tiglath-Pilezer, Assur-Bani-Pal, and Queen Semiramis.

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AUNT CAROLINE'S WEDDING PRESENT.

YES, we were really married.

The clergyman, with impressive solemnity, announced that we were now one, and sanctioned our union with the blessing of the church. He shook my hand, and the tears stood in his eyes as he wished me unending happiness. He kissed Eleonore, whom he had christened twenty years before, and repeated again: "God bless you, my dear child!"

Then came the wedding-guests, one after the other, to congratulate us. There was quite a procession.

The sixth person in the procession was Aunt Caroline. She is Eleonore's aunt, but I am quite as fond of her as if she were my own. She is the best of creatures, always ready to come when you need her, and quite as willing to stay away when she fancies that her society might be burdensome. She is one of those generous, patient aunts who in winter always have on hand a store of goodies for hungry nieces and nephews; and in summer are ever ready to take charge of a particularly restless schoolboy or girl, whose exuberant vacation spirits render him or her an annoyance to the quiet home circle. In a word, Aunt Caroline is a noble example of what an aunt really ought to be.

"Dear Felix—Dear Eleonore," she said as she clasped our hands, "my wedding present is so cumbersome that I arranged to have it sent directly to your house, where you will find it when you return from your bridal tour. It will welcome you to your new home, and I trust it may give you much pleasure, and daily remind you of your old Aunt Caroline."

A dozen times a day during our journey we spoke of Aunt Caroline's present, and tried to guess what it might be. Eleonore was certain that it was a handsome book-case, while I maintained with equal confidence that it must be a superb bronze ornament.

At last, after fourteen October days of crimson-tinted forests, and deep blue bays, enchanting sunsets, and cosy evenings beside sparkling hearth-fires in comfortable hotels—after two weeks of perfect enjoyment, we returned to the charming little home which had been prepared for us, and which was henceforth to be our haven of happiness.

I kissed Eleonore when I helped her from the carriage, and murmured: "Welcome home, my dear wife."

She returned my caress rather hastily, and, running past me into the house, said: "Now we shall see what it is."

Alas! we learned only too soon. Martha, our little maid-of-all-work, had illuminated the little drawing-room for our reception. The handsome swinging lamp above the centre table—a present from Uncle Augustus—was lighted. Red wax candles burned brightly on each of the two bronze candelabra—Uncle Christopher's present—on the mantel; while two lighted student lamps, likewise other wedding gifts, stood on the piano. The light from all these served to illumine, and to direct our glances the moment we entered the room toward, Aunt Caroline's present, which hung directly opposite the door. It was an atrociously painted representation of the parable of the Prodigal Son, and looked as if it might have originated in a manufactory of "curiosities." Its true origin I never learned, although I had ample opportunity to study it.

It is quite certain, however, that dear Aunt Caroline, knowing my own and Eleonore's fondness for pictures, and with her heart overflowing with benevolence and affection, had purchased the huge canvas at some auction, paying for it a good round sum, and consoling herself for the extravagance with thoughts of the pleasure the picture would give us.

The canvas measured eight feet by ten feet. The frame was a broad, gilded affair; the composition itself absurd in the extreme. In the middle foreground a group of figures in gala attire represented the returned prodigal, his parents, and the guests invited to celebrate the return. On a sort of raised gallery in the background were a number of figures with cymbals, dancing and singing. All these persons were in a kind of pillared hall, to the left of which was an abject-looking individual in tattered garments, feeding some swine with ears of corn. To the right of the hall was an Oriental butcher with a Turkish scimitar, slaughtering the fatted calf.

Aunt Caroline confided to me afterwards that it was because the canvas contained really three pictures instead of only one that she decided to secure it, adding with a triumphant smile:

"You see, my dear nephew, you have the entire allegory on one canvas!"

And there it hung—taking up almost one entire wall of the room in which we had decided Eleonore should spend the most of her time.

We surveyed the monstrosity in silence; in silence listened to Martha's admiring comments on the "perfectly lovely painting"; then we went to inspect the dining-room and my study. We spent the evening in the latter cosy chamber.

. . . . . .

But Eleonore could not at all times use the study as a sitting-room, especially when I had business callers. At such times the poor child would bravely conquer her aversion to the "Prodigals"—thus she designated both the bipeds and quadrupeds in the picture—and, with her back turned resolutely upon them, would sit in the drawing-room until my visitors had departed.

We have a large circle of acquaintances. Of course, they all called on us, and Eleonore said she always felt as if the "Prodigals" helped her "do the honours." Indeed, the picture seemed to receive the larger share of our visitors' attention. Some of Eleonore's more intimate friends asked her why she had hung such a "very large picture" in our small drawing-room. Some, who considered it impolite to make such remarks, maintained a discreet silence; while those who thought it "good form" to talk about pictures, and to pretend a familiarity with art, would inquire if "that large painting was the work of a British artist," or remark that it reminded them of something similar which they had seen at the Academy—or somewhere.

Then there were some who would observe that the same subject had been treated in so many different ways—that it was very "instructive," and so on. There was still another class of art critics. It was composed of those who knew nothing about pictures, but who were quite ready to admire anything the moment they found out that somebody else admired it.

Now, there was no one in our village who was as familiar with really good pictures as myself. When any of my neighbours wanted to buy a painting, or engraving, he first consulted me; consequently the fact that I had the "Prodigal Son" hanging on my wall was sufficient to convince, even those of our friends who really thought the picture an abominable daub, that there must be "something in it"; and they exerted themselves manfully to discover this something.

"How very natural those swine are!" one would say.

"Just see what brilliant colouring in those clouds!" another.

"How repentant the 'Prodigal' looks," a third would remark, with the air of a *connoisseur*.

"It is really quite interesting to see those ancient fashions. Now, that tunic is really quite picturesque," and so on, until my poor little wife actually grew to despise these well-meaning art critics.

When I came home in the evening, and found Eleonore almost worn out, and would inquire tenderly what wearied her, she would sigh, "Oh, those 'Prodigals.'" And really, it was almost unendurable. But we could not offend dear Aunt Caroline—whose admiring gaze always hung with devouring interest on the mammoth canvas every time she visited us—by cutting it in pieces, burning it, or hanging it in the cellar.

However, after everybody had called, and had been called on in return, there came a season of comparative peace, during which Eleonore went to pay a two days' visit to an old school friend.

During her absence I had the upholsterer and two of his men to come and remove the "Prodigals" into the dining-room; and when Aunt Caroline, on her next visit, missed the picture from its accustomed place, she seemed quite down-

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hearted. I, however, boldly declared that the light in the dining room was much better, and that the subject—feasting—was more suitable for a dining-room than a drawing-room.

Dear Aunt Caroline! She had so much faith in my reputation as an art *connoisseur* that, notwithstanding her disappointment, she said I was quite right to move the picture.

Now, thought I, with self-gratulatory feeling, Eleonore can receive her callers in comfort.

But I reckoned without my "Prodigals."

Although the picture gave us less annoyance in its present position, we did not become reconciled to it. Far from it! but as I sat with my back toward it during meals, and Eleonore had only a side view, it was not so constantly obvious as it had been, and when the warm weather came, we covered it with gauze—on account of the flies!

It happened that the distinguished botanist, Doctor S——, visited our town during the holidays.

There were no flies at that time. Our guest was a most amiable man, and the friends whom we had invited to dine with him did their best to help entertain him.

During the soup he related a highly amusing adventure he had had in Egypt. When Martha removed his plate, he looked up—the "Prodigals" were directly opposite him—and, well-bred though he was, he could not help a look of wondering surprise at sight of such a travesty on art. He paused, stared at the picture, then, turning toward my wife, stammered confusedly:

"I—I beg pardon, madam, but—really I forget—ah, yes—what a marvellous painting—ah—ah——!"

Naturally every glance was directed toward the object which had so confused the learned gentleman.

Eleonore declared that from the moment his eyes fell on the "Prodigals" the doctor talked to her as he would to a child; and she is certain that it is because of that unfortunate canvas that he did not pay us a farewell call, notwithstanding my assurance that he was hastily summoned away by a telegram.

A few days later Eleonore went to visit her mother, and while she was gone, I again sent for the upholsterer and his men, and had the picture removed to my study. To do this, I was obliged to take down about two hundred books, together with the shelves.

The light here was execrable, but that did not matter. I placed my desk so that my back was toward it, and commended my visitors of taste to the mercy of their good angels. On New Year's Day Aunt Caroline dined with us, and you may imagine her surprise when, seated in the chair Doctor S—— had occupied, she looked up and found the picture gone. She didn't say a word, however.

"We hung your picture—your lovely picture, dear aunt—in my study," I answered casually, adding, in my desperation, "I intend to exhibit it to my Sunday class."

The dear old soul did not say anything, nor was she offended; but she appeared so melancholy that I was conscience-striken. Before I went to bed I tried to make amends for the detestable story I had told Aunt Caroline. I wrote to a friend of mine, and invited him to bring his Sunday class on the following Thursday evening and take tea with us. The invitation was accepted.

I received my friend and his scholars in the drawing-room. I asked the little fellows all sorts of questions about their studies, and Eleonore showed them our photographs. At last came the welcome summons to tea, after which I invited the children into my study to see the picture of the "Prodigal Son."

The lamps were placed in the most favourable positions. The youngsters ranged themselves in a row in front of the picture, I took my station on one side, my friend on the other. I cleared my throat, and began in a didactic tone:

"This picture, my dear children, is partly allegorical, partly realistic. These two rows of columns on either side of the centre divide the different eras of the parable. Here on the left you see the prodigal, hungry and wretched, sharing the swine's food—as the Scriptures tell us. Here in the background you see them singing and dancing, rejoicing over the return of the prodigal. Here, again, on the right is the butcher in the act of killing the fatted calf."

While I delivered this highly-instructive lecture my friend pointed with a ruler toward the designated objects.

The silence which followed my remarks was actually oppressive. At last one little fellow, Frank Diegel, the butcher's son, feeling that something ought to be said, stammeringly asked:

"Be them Berkshire pigs?"

The laughter which followed the general oppressiveness was wonderfully hearty, and, the clock striking nine soon afterward, Eleonore and I gave thanks for our release.

These are only a few of the many annoyances which Aunt Caroline's well-meant wedding present brought upon us.

Fortunately, there were some very warm days in March—quite warm enough to bring to life two flies in my study. Once I should have put an end to their premature existence. I did not do so now. I fetched the gauze veil and draped it securely over the Prodigals. The next day Aunt Caroline called. Said I to her when she came into the study:

"Have you noticed, dear aunt, how very early the flies have made their appearance this spring?"

Aunt Caroline had not noticed.

I should not be adhering strictly to the truth were I to say that we were not perfectly happy in our little home. We were—even though there was hardly a forenoon, afternoon, or evening that one of the Prodigals—either the son, one of his parents, the butcher or one of the swine—did not somehow mix in our conversation. It was not for this—though it helped somewhat—that, when summer brought my holiday, we determined to spend it in the New Forest.

Those were enchanting days!

Eleonore embroidered, sketched, and read to her heart's content, while I wrote diligently at a new book I had begun.

Thus we passed six delightful weeks with never a thought of the Prodigals, when one morning, Fate, in the person of the postman, brought me a newspaper.

"Are you Mr. Trubury, from Bromley?" he inquired.

"I am."

"Then here's something that may interest you," he added, pointing to a paragraph in the paper. I read:

"Yesterday, in Bromley, a fire consumed the residences of Miss Surrey and Mr. Felix Trubury. The loss is partly covered by insurance."

I summoned my poor little wife, to whom I communicated as gently as possible our great loss.

We began at once to prepare for our return journey; and as our train would not leave until the afternoon, I wired a friend for further particulars of the fire.

The answer came as we were leaving the hotel:

"Fire started in the Surreys' house. Unfortunately, very little saved."

As I concluded this rather depressing message, Eleonore clasped my hand in both her own, and whispered assuringly: "We have each other, dear Felix, we shall not be poor—we have each other—and our love."

A few hours later we were in Bromley. As we drew near to the station, Eleonore leaned toward me, and said, smiling through her tears:

"Felix, dear, we have one comfort."

"What is it, love?"

"We are rid of those detestable swine."

"That's so," I assented. "There is never a misfortune that has not some recompense."

I had sent a word to a friend to meet us at the station. He had not come alone. There were several sympathetic acquaintances with him.

"It was so late," said my friend, referring to the fire, "and so sudden. There was a furious wind——"

"But," interrupted another friend, "one thing will give you great pleasure."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Eleonore expectantly. "What, pray?"

"You have to thank Frank Diegel's courage for it. When all hope of saving the house was gone, he and several of my Sunday scholars broke open the shutters of your study window, and Frank bravely entered the burning dwelling and cut the large painting from the frame. That was the only thing saved!"

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THE MAN MY SISTER MARRIED.

SUMMARY—Chapters I. to IX.

The story is told by Violet (Letty) Lombard, who, at the opening, is living at Galveston, U.S.A. with her grandfather Enos Lombard, Liz the coloured servant, Justina her old nurse, and her Aunt Marg, who has been the recipient of mysterious letters, post-marked New Orleans, necessitating a fortnight's absence from home. John Scott, who married Katherine, Violet's step-sister, a very beautiful girl, pays for Violet's board and lodging, and has just decided that she is to go to a convent in New Orleans. On the strength of information gained from the torn pieces of one of Aunt Marg's letters, and curious to solve the mystery, Violet so arranges that she goes to New Orleans a day earlier, and that she stops at the Hotel Gilbert. Through a crack in the wall, she sees what happens in the next room to hers. John Scott, Captain Dana—an old friend from Galveston—Aunt Marg, and others are sitting in judgment upon a Mexican, Antonio, who has, it transpires, assisted in the seizure of Scott's wife, and of Dana's wife and daughter, and whose terrible crime has been brought to light by Yara, a spy. Antonio is compelled to end his life by taking poison, with his dying words laying the blame upon one Xarras.

Letty goes to the convent in the morning, and during her schooldays there clandestinely meets James Gregory, who is introduced as the son of a friend of her grandfather's. On her way home again, some months later, with her chaperone Miss Wilson, Colonel Dean Gregory, James's brother, introduces himself. After that, Letty sees a great deal of James, and at length promises to elope with him. Whilst waiting for him to come, she overhears Dean Gregory telling a friend of a plot whereby he has won James over, and has made it probable that John Scott's money will come to himself instead of to Letty. She consequently refuses to have anything to do with James.

* * * *

CHAPTER X.

THE next morning Bruce brought me a kind little note from Mr. Scott, telling me I had better not mention my visit to him, but to let my grandfather think the world itself had found out its mistake. He was so wise and helpful, and I felt I had one friend I could trust; and dear me! the resolves to do better that I made that day; and I even caught myself singing. After tea, when grandfather was sitting in the porch, I went out and offered to read him his paper. His sight is poor, and Aunt Marg's voice is too weak for her to read aloud.

"It'll last one reading," he grunted, giving up the paper unwillingly; but after a week, when I persevered in being accommodating, he surprised me one night by going down to his pet rose-bush and cutting off a handful of blossoms. These he handed me with quite a courtly air. My voice choked a bit when I thanked him and I forgot he had called me a living conscience.

Sunday morning, when John Scott's carriage surprised grandfather in his shirt-sleeves in the garden, he was vastly astonished, and I saw him peeping behind the blind as I drove away in great state with those shrouded sisters. Mrs. Scott was kind, but never have I seen such a statue of ice as Mrs. Gregory was. She even suggested that I had better take her place, for John might not wish me to ride backward, and other pleasant feminine flings that I bore with marvellous patience and silence. I could feel the eyes just scorching my back as I sat in that pew, but I held my head high and looked haughtily round at the wondering members.

John and I had the same hymn-book, but not a note would I sing. I had not repented so far as that, in spite of the best resolutions in the world. I watched his profile during the service, and began to think him handsome. I wondered of what he was thinking with that far-away look in his eyes. He insisted on my walking home with him, knowing, I suppose, the misery I endured coming in the carriage. I talked very meekly all the way, but I did admit that the new alto sang very flat. Then he laughed in that quiet way.

"What a very human Letty you are," he said; "and you wouldn't sing either—not a note."

"I am out of practice," I answered, and he only smiled the more. He seems to read one's very thoughts.

On Monday morning, although she was grumpy and cross, I helped Liz fold the clothes, and made a cake for tea.

Just about then old Captain Dana was taken very ill, and one day I asked Aunt Marg if I might cook something nice for him.

"Of course you may, dear," she said; "isn't this your home? I would go with you if I were strong enough."

I stooped and kissed her, though I am not much given to affection, but she did look so sweet and frail. I wish she had not kept me at arm's length all my life.

"Yo' go 'long outer here," growled Liz. "I won't have you boderin' me, yo' g'long 'bout yo' business."

"You know that purple sash of mine, Liz; I've been meaning to give you that."

"All wore out an' faded," she snapped. "I know yo' palarverin' ways."

"I'll drape it over your corn-colour gown, Liz," I pleaded; "and if the captain died you'd be sorry you were so nasty."

I conquered her and concocted some dainties for the captain, who, I know, has a sweet tooth, and set out across the beach for his cabin, a mile from our house. He lives alone, in a regular doll's house, always as neat as wax. I found him sitting by the window, wrapped in an old coat, looking very ill and feeble.

"Hullo, Sunshine," he said, as I brought him my dainties; "well, you didn't forget the old man, and such a room to see you in, an' I look so wretched."

I stood there on the chair.

I went and kissed him. "You do look forlorn. Let me get you a pillow, and brush your lovely white hair; now you are like yourself."

I fussed over him, washed his face, got a chair for his feet, and made him comfortable, then I brewed him some tea and brought that to him on a little table.

"You're a born nurse," he smiled; "now don't go putting the house in order, I'll be about myself in a day or two."

"I know it frets you not to see things ship-shape, cap'n," I said, trying to be nautical.

"You'll spile your gown."

"My old blue gingham, and Liz's kitchen apron," I laughed rolling up my sleeves; "now I am going to wash that window, for you've got to sit there and you can't see a thing." I made such a joke of it, he stopped making objections and watched my efforts with considerable pride. Outside, I mounted on a chair and finished the job. Just as I got it done, something bounced up against the chair, knocking

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my pail over, and nearly upsetting me. It was Mr. Scott's mastiff, and there right behind me—I was blindfolded with a sun-bonnet—was his master watching me.

"Out cleaning by the day?" he asked soberly, his hands in the pockets of his short coat. "Shall I fetch a pail of water in the Jack and Jill style?"

"No, I have just finished. I wanted the captain to see out of doors. I'm beginning to look at life through clean windows myself."

He only smiled that tender smile of his, and I noted how soft and fine his eyes were.

"She *would* do it, John," the captain said, apparently much disturbed. "She can't be ruled."

"Only by kindness," whispered John. "Do you know I used to think, when I was young, that I would like to kiss a girl in a sun-bonnet. They are homely things, but bewitching over a pretty face."

I stood there on the chair and looked straight into his eyes.

"It's lucky you are old," I said. But he turned and walked soberly to the house.

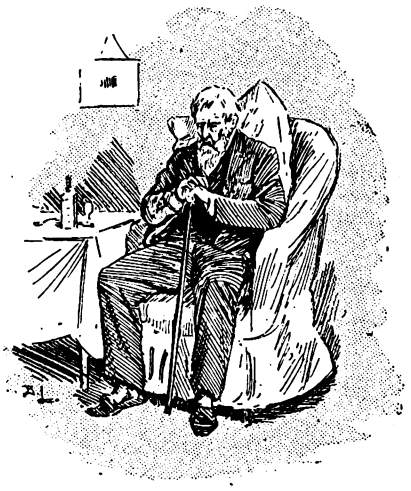
"You needn't blame me for flirting," I muttered, "you brought it on yourself."

"I don't," he answered, turning and laughing at me. What sharp hearing he had, but I was rather pleased, and went home in great good humour. After that, as the captain grew worse, I went often to the cottage, and finally stayed there all the time for the captain was so fond of me. He said no one else did him good but me. Aunt Marg, Liz, and the neighbours helped me, and grandfather stayed at night with the sick man. It was so pitiful to see those old friends together. "You're good for twenty years yet, Josh, if you only thought so," grandfather would say.

"This is my last voyage; I'm near port, Enos," the captain would answer, but grandfather would obstinately hold to his own opinion.

One night, when I lay in the little room off the captain's, Justina snoring on the floor beside my cot, I heard voices in the next room, and saw that grandfather was gone, and Mr. Scott was sitting, holding the captain's wrinkled hand.

From the few words I heard, I knew they were going on a long journey to the past, living through dread days and heavy sorrows. Often the captain mentioned his wife and daughter in sobs, and I knew there must have been a most dastardly crime against his nearest and dearest, to make that good old man an executioner. I realised his heart's blood had been drained, drop by drop, all those miserable years, and that even his last hours were saddened and made fearful by the recollection of a crime.



"This is my last voyage; I'm near port, Enos."

When a pioneer finds his cabin in ashes, his baby's bleeding body, his wife's dishonoured corpse, he does not call aloud in his agony for the law, nor send a slow petition for troops—not he. On his swift-footed steed, he rides night and day across the desert a spectral lonely figure with a white set face; he watches the burning sands for the trail, then on and on, until he nears his prey. When his hands are deep-dyed in Indian blood; when on lonely hillsides, under the gnarled scrub-oaks, or rotting in lonely canons, Apaché corpses lie unburied, then he turns back to his ruined home to go mad and die.

"I don't want to see any parson, John," said the captain; "how could he that never suffered as I have tell me the right? We men made no mistakes—no innocent man died through us; but you, John—when your hour of retribution comes—be sure of proof, swear on your honour to withhold your hand until you know the truth."

"I swear it," said John steadily; "but why say that? Did I not furnish you with proof for all the rest? Would I fail in my own case?"

"You won't forget Margaret—how she has suffered for us?"

"I hold her the noblest among women," said John softly.

"And little Violet—wonderful how she was saved too! And what a ministering angel she has been to me! I followed her those nights on the beach, John. She's an innocent little girl, and you must tell all I've said about her to the man she will love some day, for evil tongues might bring back the old story and mar her happiness."

"I will guard her while I live," said John, "for her own dear sake and Katherine's."

"John," and there was a troubled note in the feeble voice, "I know ye of old, allus brave and fearless, just, but terrible when in anger. If the worst should come to you—I'll not say that—stay your hand. We ain't all strong, God-fearing creatures, though why we're weak I can't say, but we are. Reckon according to the nature and the blood, John, and have pity and forgive. Now bring the child I like to watch her innocent face. As I pass out of life, I think of how she was saved, that helpless baby, and I see a purpose in it."

When John called me I was ready and went into the room. My brain was sadly confused. Who had saved me, and from what? I saw John sitting by the window watching the sea. Something was troubling him, for he sighed, and passed his hand often across his eyes.

"Read about the storm on Galilee," said the captain; "them poor mariners, no sort of sailors neither, but them boats in 'postolic times warn't never seaworthy."

As I read, his face grew calm and peaceful. "I'll sleep now, Mary. I thought you were your mother, you looked so like her then. I'm weary, dre'ful weary." He reached out his hand to me. "My blessin' on ye, Violet. Some day you'll find your happiness in a good man's love. I want to think your life will be bright, not like my girl's—my Clarice. John, I can't forgive," he cried, with a bitter moan; "on my death-bed I will not forgive."

When he slept, John made me go home, and that afternoon took me for a long drive on the beach. I was so sad and tired, I talked little, but he was kind and gentle When we turned homeward, the sunset sky was ruddy and golden, shimmering beyond the dark rolling waves, and the spray from the sea dashed in our faces, and over the horses shining coats. The blinds of the captain's cottage were down, and there was a Sunday quiet about the place. John went in, and when he came back I knew by his face the worst had happened.

"The captain's ship has sailed," he said, "he is beyond the sunset gates. And oh, such a sad life, too, Letty, borne so bravely, so patiently. I believe he went to heaven," cried John, with quivering lips; "men could not be so sorely tried if there was no forgiveness."

All that night I dreamed of Antonio, waking often with a shuddering cry, thinking I saw that dark, restless face, those terrible eyes. How I prayed that I could forget; and yet, when the clods of earth fell on my old friend's coffin, that dreadful scene came back to me. A power wiser than mine must settle the question of guilt and crime, if there was that injustice. Not all the adverse comment of the world can keep me from believing that old man a good man. Though he sinned much, I think I am sure there was forgiveness and pity for Captain Joshua Dana, that he found rest at last, and met somewhere those dear ones, torn from him so cruelly in this world.

CHAPTER XI.

If I ended my story here, the reader might go on believing my conversion complete, but, like many of the shining lights of revivals, I slid back. There was so little to occupy a girl like me in my life—the neighbours were well, my efforts at

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With enthusiastic praises of my voice.

indiscriminate charity were notable failures, and at home there was no work for me.

John went away a week after the captain's death, and though Mrs. Scott was always kind, Mrs. Gregory contrived to make my visits to the mansion decidedly unpleasant. Before John went he sent me a piano, and that was such a pleasure! Still, grandfather and Aunt Marg would have liked my playing and singing just as well if I had no talent at all. Anything I did was delightful to them, no matter how it was done, until after a time I felt all my best work was wasted on blank walls.

Then it was that I met Maestro, a queer little Italian, who believed through his political views he was forced to flee to the new "contraire." I used to believe all he said about his foes and troubles, but now I know they existed in an extremely fertile imagination. He heard me sing at church, and once met me in the street, introduced himself, and said I had "ze grand voice, and did I not long for ze career?"

I had money saved, for John sent Aunt Marg so much for me, and Maestro got this and all I could ask for besides. They were golden, those hours in the shabby back-room, where he sat at the piano and played for me to sing, sometimes breaking off with enthusiastic praises of my voice, clapping his hands or wiping tears away—he wept so easily, especially about his political troubles! What girl, placed as I was, would not dream of a future! He said I had the voice, and it was only a question of time and teaching when I would be famous.

"I haf one pupil who will make me known," he would cry, "me ze exile. I vill show ze world ze grande alto, ze greatest dare is now to-day."

As my lessons went on, I ceased to care for clothes, or even to comb my hair more than once a day. I fell into artistic disorder. I walked very straight, though, and threw out my chest. I carried my head high, and regarded my past and present life as interesting biographical facts. I held wealth and power in my hands. I could pay John Scott all I had cost him, for the desire had returned. I pictured the scene often. With what grief and reluctance he would accept the money! how he would realise I was not a silly girl, but a woman and an artiste.

He would be sorry—then I had to think a good while what he would be sorry about, for in all my escapades I was the culprit, not he. I scorned allegiance to grandfather and Aunt Marg. They should be glad I had the talents to rise above other women, and certainly they were old-fashioned and odd, anyhow. Only to Justina did I confide, and how her brown face lighted up and her little eyes sparkled.

"You shall go with me always," I said, "to take care of me."

"Si, and I carry a knife to stab anyone who makes Chica angry, like Jeem, the black heart." She hates Jim because I do. She is my echo in everything. Then here is another piece of my wickedness that I hate to confess.

Justina is a clairvoyant. Lots of old Mexican women pretend they are, but Justina really is. She told me when Captain Dana was going to die. She said once (after my trouble) that she knew all the time I would not marry Jim, and she used to go into trances and tell the girls all about their young men.

So one day, after my music lesson, I got her to go into a trance and tell me my future prospects. She sits and looks at the wall, then a quiver goes through her. She shivers all over and finally turns rigid, her eyes dull like a dead person's. She won't say a word till she comes out of her spell, sometimes not then.

"Well?" I asked, as she shivered, and began to rub her elbows, her usual habit on waking up; "am I going to be great?"

"If I tell you, Chica," that is her pet name, meaning "small" in Spanish, but I know not what in Mexican; she invented it when I was a baby; "if I tell you what you do not want, you will be angry; if I do not tell you one word, you will not know."

"Pshaw!" I said, and went away in a very bad temper. She is really like a Mexican sometimes. As I went along the beach I saw advancing toward me a singularly miserable figure. A lean, limping Mexican, clad in rags through which his limbs showed like the bones of a skeleton. Over his long, straight black hair, was a faded sombrero that shaded his seamed and bronzed face and deep-set, wild black eyes.

As we met I looked full in his face. It was the spy at the Hotel Gilbert, Jose Yara. A sudden resolution leaped into my reckless mind. I would speak to him, offer him shelter, and find out that story of the past. I have been cursed with an ungovernable curiosity all my life, and into what pitfalls it has led me.

"Are you ill?" I said in Spanish. His yellow face gleamed at the friendly question in his native tongue.

"Si, I have walked so far." He thrust out his foot in its ragged shoe, and I saw there were unhealed sores and blisters on the dark flesh. "I am so lame, and I have neither friends nor money."

"I know a Mexican woman who will take care of you; my old nurse, Justina."

He looked at me suspiciously. "You are friendly to a stranger, senorita."

"I try to be charitable," I said airily, "and I know more than you think of your people. When you are well I will help you to get work." What a simple and arrogant idiot he must have thought me.

"You are an angel," he cried; and angel in Spanish does not sound so odd as in English; "and the name of señorita?"

I saw a singularly miserable figure.

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"Is Violet Lombard," I said slowly, my eyes on the sand, such an innocent expression on my face. I knew he was studying me.

"I thank you, I will accept your gracious goodness," he said, and I led him to Justina, who scolded roundly at first, but, as I gave her some money in advance, consented to care for the stranger a few days.

"He has been among the Apachés, Justina, and you should pity him." She hates the Indians, for they murdered her husband and her children, so she was more willing to do for him after that.

"How do you know that I was among the Apachés?" Yara asked with bloodless lips. "You are a spy! I never told you, how you know?"

I freed my arm from the clutch of his talon-like fingers. "I know things that happened before I was born," I answered solemnly; "I dream them."

Out on the beach who should I meet but Maestro. I will not write his name, for the poor little soul suffered enough through me without seeing his name in print. He was dancing up and down, wringing his hands, and waving a letter frantically in the air.

"Mees," he cried, running up to me, "mees, this is fortunat. I haf been to your home, I look for you, I meet you. Oh, mees, all are lost!"

"What?" I faltered.

"Ze career, ze artiste. I loaf mees, so I write ze guardeen, Monsieur Scott. I find his address. I zay his charge haf ze grande voice. She vill be prima donna; I am intrest in her. He moost furnish ze monaire to put her on ze stage; she vill repay it."

"You wrote that to John Scott without telling me! That was foolish," I cried bitterly.

"I do not comprend," he replied; "I man of honour, mees; I fil you wif vanity about ze voice, I do wrong until I write ze guardeen. Ze old man he not comprend, he know notin', ze gran'pere; but ze guardeen, I hear he was a gentleman. He is a beaste. Diavolo! Ze lettre is frightful."

Waving a letter frantically in the air.

I tore it from his trembling hand while he roared out his grief in Italian, French, and broken English, calling the very waves to witness what a beast John Scott was. The letter, in John's clear and forcible style, plainly intimated that the writer considered Maestro a charlatan and a fraud, who had taken advantage of the vanity of a very young girl; and that he, John Scott, would be in Galveston in a few days and would see Maestro personally and explain matters to their mutual satisfaction.

"He has no right to interfere," I said angrily; "he is not my guardian, save by his own desire. I have no money of my own, but you told me I could make so much."

"You moost study years. It cost so mooch; zare is no room for poor girls wif voice eef they haf not ze monaire. It is one grande disapponmen to me; I go no farther."

"Some other teacher will give me lessons, and you will be sorry for this some day."

"I may, mees, I may," he said pompously; "but ze honaire of a man is more to me. I haf been insult; I will haf satisfaction."

"They don't fight duels here," I said cruelly; "they don't wait. They simply shoot on sight. John Scott is a monstrous man—the strongest, they say, in the new country you hate."

Having terrified him to my satisfaction, I departed, and for three days indulged in a real fit of temper. I planned revenge on John Scott. I would humiliate him, and show him he had no right to even pretend to guide me. I would let him know I was aware of his past, and silence any objections he had to my career as a singer.

"It is like blackmail, Letty," I said to myself, as I walked to Justina's cabin late one afternoon; "but a vocation excuses all." I would consult my adviser, Justina.

"Chica wants something," she grinned, puffing rings.

"Yes, you know what I asked you?" (I had never told her of the Hotel Gilbert.) "I want you to find out that mystery about my parents and Aunt Marg, and that self-righteous John Scott. You can put Yara into a trance, I know. You have put me to sleep lots of times. You could mesmerise him ever so easy."

"He is a very bad man. He would kill me."

"How would he know it? You say they are never aware of being in a trance. I say, dear," and I laid my cheek against her shoulder, "tell me about me when I was a baby?" She loved to tell that, so she began slowly stroking my hand as she talked.

"I was very miserable, Chica. My husband, my children, my little baby, all killed by Apachés. We lived on the border of Mexico and Texas in a little house, and one day I went way out to pick some flowers for my shrine, for my bambino's birthday, she was just one year old; and when I come back there is only some ashes, still smoking and hot, and some human bones. The Apachés have passed by.

"I walk three days; then I hear horses' hoofs behind me. I turn swift and there are two people on horseback. There is a big man on a bay horse, and there is blood on the man's coat, and his face is the face of the dead; his eyes blaze; his lips are set, and he looks straight before him as if far off he could see his vengeance.

"On the other horse is a woman; she is dusty and her gown is torn and draggled; she has that wild look too and sees nothing; she is a young woman, but her hair is as white as snow.

"'It is a Mexican woman,' said the man, 'and quite mad I think. Margaret, those ashes we passed must have been her home.'

"The woman did not seem to hear; she looks that queer way, straight before her, and then the baby cries, such a wee, feeble little cry, but I hear, I hear! something stirs in me; a great longing. I ran to that big horse, and stretched out my arms. Ah, Chica, how I cry!

"'My baby, my baby, give it to me, mine is burnt! O, gracious God, no, this is mine, my baby!'

"I drag it from his arms, and hold it to my breast. I feel it alive from my life; it opens its blue eyes like the sky; it is such a white baby, and mine was so brown with its bright eyes; God has sent me this one though, and I take it. He lifts me up on the big horse behind him, and we ride on to San Antonio. I keep you five years in my cabin, my Chica, and when they take you away I follow you."

"And you never asked any more about me?"

"I never asked, Chica, I wanted only my baby."

(To be continued next week.)

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UNDER THE SOFA.

THE room was hung in pale blue silk; the Prayer from Orpheus was open on a spinet; the chairs had lyres for backs; a mahogany writing desk; a white bed with its decoration in roses; painted doves in pairs along the cornice; the whole seems to smile with a tender grace. The lamp shone softly, and the flickering firelight filled the dusky corners as with palpitating wings. Seated before the writing-desk in a loose gown, her delicate neck inclined under the pale, magnificent aureole of her hair, Juliette is looking over old letters, which have lain, tied up with ribbons, forgotten in the drawers.

The stroke of midnight sounds; it is the sign of the merging of the old year into the new. The dainty clock, upon which a laughing, gilded love is perched, announces that the year 1793 is ended.

The sharp, pure air quickens the flame in the fireplace. Julie is going to burn the letters, but not without reading them.

They are arranged in order, for Julie infuses everything pertaining to her with the exactness of her mind. Some, already yellowed, are dated three years back; and Julie, in the silence of the night, lives over again enchanted hours. Not a single page is consigned to the flames before the beloved syllables that cover it are ten times spelled.

The calm is profound around her. Occasionally, as the hours pass, she goes to the window and, lifting the curtain, sees in the silent darkness the spire of Saint Germain-des-Prés silvered in the moonlight; then she takes up again her work of slow and regretful destruction. And how can she refrain from drinking in for a last time these delicious pages? How can she give to the flames those dear lines without first engraving them for ever on her heart? The calm is profound around her, and her soul is palpitating with youth and love. She reads:

"I see you when absent, Julie. I walk surrounded by the images my fancy creates. I see you, not motionless and cold, but warm, alive; always changing, always perfect. I draw around you in my dreams the most magnificent spectacles of the universe. How happy is he who is Julie's lover! All things charm him, because he sees her in them all. Loving her, he loves to live; he admires the world that she illumines; he cherishes the earth that blooms under her footsteps. Love reveals to him hidden meanings in all that surrounds him. He understands the infinite forms of creation; they all picture forth Julie's image: he hears the innumerable voices of nature; they all murmur Julie's name. Enraptured, he lets his gaze float out upon the broad sea of daylight, knowing that the same radiance bathes Julie's face, like a divine caress thrown over the most perfect of human forms. To-night the first stars will make him tremble; he will think, 'Perhaps she is too looking at them now.' He breathes her in all the perfumes of the air. He could kiss the earth that bears her. . . ."

She reads and dreams. The night is ending. Already a pale, grey streak shows under the curtains; it is the dawn. The servants have commenced their tasks; she wishes to finish hers. Were those voices she just now heard? No; the calm is profound around her.

The calm is profound, but it is because the snow deadens the sound of footsteps. Men are approaching; they are here; loud knocks shake the door.

She has not time to hide the letters, to close the desk. All that she can do she does; she gathers up the papers in her arms and throws them under the sofa which has a deep valance around it. Some of the letters are scattered outside on the carpet; she shoves them under with her foot, seizes a book, and falls into an arm-chair.

The President of the District enters, followed by twelve patriots. He is a former chair-mender by the name of Brochet, whose limbs tremble as though with fever, and whose blood-shot eyes are perpetually rolling as though at sights of horror.

He signs to his men to guard the doors, and addresses Julie:

"Citizeness, we have just been informed that you are in correspondence with various agents of Pitt, and with emigrants and conspirators in prisons. I come to seize your papers in the name of the law! You were designated to me a long time ago as an aristocrat of the most dangerous kind. Citizen Rapaix, who stands before you"—he pointed to one of his men—"has admitted that in the severe winter of 1789 you gave him money and clothing to corrupt him. Lenient magistrates, without proper public spirit, have spared you too long. But I am master now, and you shall not escape the guillotine. Give up your papers, citizeness."

"Take them yourself," said Julie, "my desk is open."

Sundry notices of births, deaths, or marriages, old bills and business papers still remained in the desk, and Brochet examined them one by one. He turned them from side to side, and felt them as would a man uncertain of his ability to read, and at intervals ejaculated, "Bad! the name of the ci-devant king is not erased. This is bad, bad!"

Julie concludes from this that the search is to be a long minute one. She cannot refrain from casting a furtive glance toward the sofa, and she sees the corner of a letter peeping out from under the valance like the white ear of a cat. At sight of this her anguish suddenly ceases. The certainty that all is lost brings a tranquil assurance to her mind, and upon her face a calm like that of security. She is sure the men will see this point of paper that she sees, gleaming white upon the red carpet. It seems to force the eye toward it. But she does not know whether the discovery will come at once or later, and the doubt occupies and amuses her. She even in this tragic moment watches the patriots as they approach or turn from the sofa, as though their movements were part of a game.

Brochet, who has finished with the papers in the desk, becomes impatient, and declares that nothing shall prevent his finding what he seeks.

He overturns the furniture, examines the back of the pictures, and raps with his sword-hilt on the wood-work to discover possible hiding-places. He finds none. He removes the glass from the mirrors to see if anything is concealed behind. There is nothing.

During this time the men are tearing up some of the boards in the flooring; they swear that a worthless aristocrat shall not make game of good *sans-culottes*, such as they. But not one of them has seen the little white point peeping out from under the valance of the sofa.

They take Julie through the other rooms of the house, and demand all the keys. They break up tables, smash the window panes in fragments, rip open chairs and disembowel couches. And still they find nothing.

But Brochet has not yet given up; he returns to the bedroom.

"In the name of God! The papers are here—I am sure of it!"

He examines the sofa, declares it suspicious-looking and thrusts the whole length of his sabre through it five or six times. Still he finds no trace of what he is seeking, and with a frightful oath he gives his men the signal for departure.

He has reached the door, when, turning to Julie with his fist extended toward her, he exclaims:

"Tremble when you see me again!"

He is the last one to pass out.

At last they are gone. She listens to the sound of their footsteps dying out in the stairway. She is saved! Nor has her imprudence betrayed him!

. . . . . .

Julie shone for a time with considerable brilliancy under the Consulate; but in the midst of her splendour she would often murmur at night sad secrets to the trees on the park. She was stronger to withstand the terrors of death than the trials of love.

Her husband became a baron and a prefect under the Empire, and little Pierre her son died, a colonel of gendarmerie, at Versailles, in 1859.

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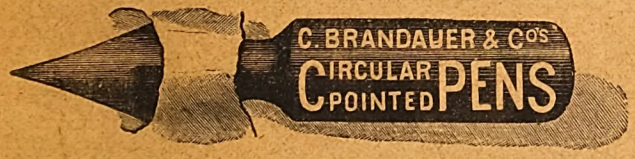

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EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 291.—Vol. XI. FOR WEEK ENDING JULY 28, 1894. [Price One Penny.

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 291.—Vol. XI. *FOR THE WEEK ENDING JULY 28, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

THE PORTRAIT OF LADY BEATRICE.

I REMEMBER perfectly how it happened. I received an invitation from my old friend and fellow-artist, Stanley Harcourt, to spend a week with him at Harcourt Park. It was early in the season, and only a few other guests were invited. Although my friendship with Stanley dated back to days at Eton, I had never visited the Park, and I accepted with alacrity.

Before starting I slipped into my pocket my latest purchase at "the old curiosity shop"—a bracelet of twisted gold, with a miniature on it, surrounded by diamonds. This out-of-the-way corner in London, called by Stanley "the den," and which I had christened "the curiosity shop," attracted us frequently. Here we bought a good deal of our studio paraphernalia—effective drapery, swords, and old armour.

The bracelet, I felt convinced, had a history, although Mr. Isaac, proprietor of the shop, could give me no information concerning it. He had purchased it a few months before at the bankrupt sale of L——, the celebrated jeweller. The gold, Mr. Isaac remarked, was good, but the brilliants were off colour, and the miniature of doubtful execution. I did not agree with him on the last point, for I admired the portrait extremely. It represented a man of about eight-and-twenty, with a sad, pensive face.

From the dress—high rolling collar and stock—I concluded that it had been painted some time in the fifties. It attracted me strangely from the first, nor was I content until I had become the owner of it. The sum paid was, no doubt, but a fraction of its real value; for although Mr. Isaac was a Jew, he would often let us have things for a mere song. Perhaps he was not wholly disinterested in these transactions, knowing well that we could speak a good word for him. Indeed, we gave the little shop quite a boom, and one particular style of candlestick became so popular that it was known as "the Isaac."

I considered the bracelet a treasure, and I anticipated surprising Stanley with my good fortune, at the same time making him quite green with envy.

Arriving at my destination, I found a cordial welcome. Stanley made an ideal host, while Lady Harcourt, his mother, did the honours most gracefully His sister Edith I had not seen for years and I found her a charming girl—tall and superbly proportioned, with reddish brown hair and that wild rose complexion which seems to belong exclusively to English maids.

As for Harcourt Park, it was fascinating.

The house was of grey stone, a rambling structure which had been remodelled, until hardly a trace of its original design remained. The older parts—the tower and outer staircase—were almost in ruins, and were covered with ivy.

"You are to choose your room, old fellow," said Stanley, as we were exploring the grounds. "What will you have? Tower, time of Queen Bess; east wing, Charles II.; west wing, Queen Anne; northern projection, George I.; southern projection, George III.; and the rest, grand medley, principally Victoria in the thirty-fifth year of her reign, You see you can choose any period of history and your favourite sovereign, but if you have an eye to comfort, I should recommend Victoria."

"Isn't there a haunted chamber?" I asked. "Such a mixture ought to develop something of the sort, and I am particularly fond of ghosts. Wait a minute," I continued, not heeding my companion, "I see just what I want. Look! the three windows up there. No! higher up—to the right, with the stone ledges and blue hangings.

My friend's face fell.

"Really, Hal, I am afraid it's impossible. It hasn't been occupied for years. In fact, when the whole house was put in repair, that room and the one next to it were left out. My mother had a little sentiment about them, for they belonged to my father's favourite brother; he is dead, you know. Still, if you don't mind being rather uncomfortable, it might be managed."

"It was merely a whim," I answered. "I was thinking what a glorious view you must get from the last window; but of course I shall be delighted with any other. Pray don't give it a thought."

"I have no earthly objection," Stanley continued, "and I doubt if my mother has. Your traps have been carried up to the room next mine, but Wilson shall move them."

When Lady Harcourt was asked, she graciously consented, but I noticed that she seemed absent-minded all that evening, and I feared that I had stirred up unpleasant memories.

When the room was shown me, I could hardly suppress an exclamation of surprise and delight.

"You admire, it, I see," said Stanley. "Nearly everybody does."

"Admire!" I answered. "Admire is a poor word. It is superb."

The walls were hung with gobelin-blue tapestry. The woodwork was ivory-white, and the ceiling was beautifully carved in arabesques of gold. Above the hangings, in the wide, carved frieze, were medallion portraits of the court of Louis XIV.

The furniture was very beautiful, and in perfect harmony with the decorations. There were luxurious divans, such as Madame de Maintenon might have reclined upon, exquisite tables of inlaid wood, and dainty chairs of blue and gold.

One article, a writing table, heavily inlaid, was apparently all ready for use, with a bewitching array of materials—trays and candlesticks of Dresden china, wax of palest colours, and a little pile of tapers.

The bed was a massive structure, with a canopy of old blue brocade.

"And you would never have shown me this, if I had not insisted on taking possession?"

"We often show the room, but it is seldom occupied—I might say never."

"But it is in such perfect condition!"

Stanley smiled a little sadly. "My mother's orders!"

"This room has a history, I know. How came it to be furnished so beautifully, and in such a different way

My friendship dated back to days at Eton.

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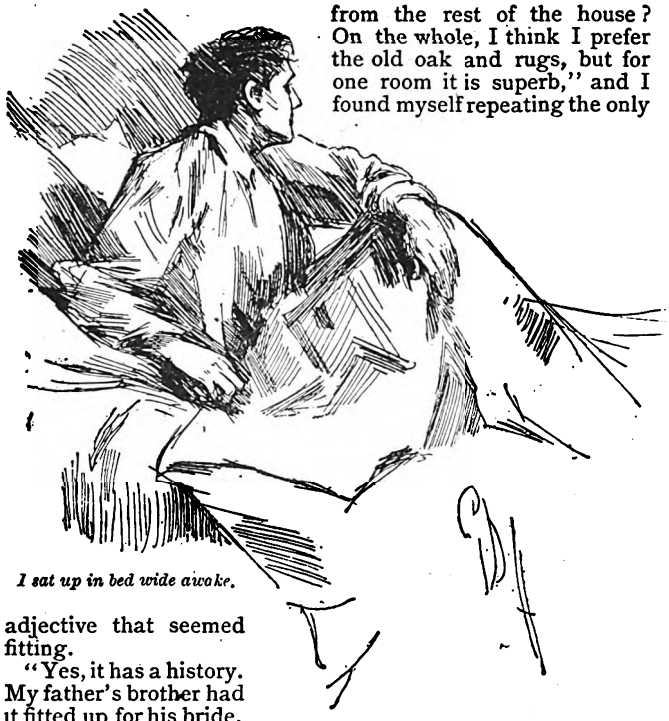

I sat up in bed wide awake.

from the rest of the house? On the whole, I think I prefer the old oak and rugs, but for one room it is superb," and I found myself repeating the only adjective that seemed fitting.

"Yes, it has a history. My father's brother had it fitted up for his bride. It was the reigning fashion then—early in the fifties. He died shortly after his marriage, and the room has never been occupied, save once or twice; but it is a long story. I will tell you later, say to-morrow, when we have more time."

The evening passed off agreeably, and it was late when we retired.

"Happy dreams, Hal," said Stanley, as he left me at the door.

By the light of the candles, the room was more beautiful than ever. The faces from the frieze seemed to look down upon me. There were Madame Maintenon, cold and cynical; La Valliere, mild and gentle; fascinating Madame de Rambouillet; and Julie d'Argennes, fairest of all.

What was the mystery connected with the room? What secret did these patched and powdered ladies guard? I found that I could not drive the subject from my mind, and after I had gone to bed, and lay looking up at the ceiling, the gold tracery dimly visible in the moonlight, I still wondered what it could be.

I do not know how long I had slept, when I was awakened most suddenly. There was no noise—not a sound pervaded the room—and yet I sat up in bed wide awake. The silence seemed oppressive, almost suffocating. I scanned the room to see if everything was the same as when I went to bed. Yes, the position of each chair and table was identical. I looked up at the faces. They were one confused mass. Then I followed the tapestry hangings with my eyes, beginning at the left and looking into every fold. As I neared the right, my attention was riveted on what seemed to be a full-length portrait of a young and beautiful girl. How, in my close examination of the room, I had failed to notice it, seemed to me inexplicable.

The light that streamed in from an adjacent window showed every line. The face was pale, with dark, luminous eyes, while the hair, equally dark, was parted and puffed slightly at the sides. As nearly as I could make out it was the fashion of thirty or forty years back. The gown was white, soft and clinging, with short waist and loose sleeves. The frame seemed lost in darkness, but the face and figure were wonderfully clear.

I now felt certain that the picture was not there when I entered the room, and yet, how was its existence to be accounted for?

Could the wind have drawn back the tapestry, thus revealing some old family portrait? And who was this charming girl?

I now noticed points which had escaped me at first—the exquisite moulding of the arms and hands, the jewelled dagger in the coils of dark hair, which even in paint seemed to change and flash, and the background, which appeared to be copied from the very tapestry of the room. The face fascinated me. The eyes, so dark and magnetic, seemed to burn beneath their arched brows, and as I gazed they drooped, almost closed, then dilated.

Good heavens, this could be no portrait! *The arms were moving!*

The hands clasped and then fluttered to the sides; then slowly went up to the head, and took the dagger from the black coils of hair.

Surely this was no painted canvas. I tried to rise, to reach for the bell, but I seemed bound hand and foot. Every trace of energy had left me. It was as if my own life and activity had been transferred to the figure before me, leaving me lifeless as clay. As I looked, the girl bent her head over the dagger, and when she raised it I shuddered. The face was beautiful still, but every bit of feeling was gone, leaving it cold, sinister, cruel.

Then she raised her arms high above her head, and the lips moved. No sound came, but I felt that in that moment she had made a vow. The lips parted as if in laughter. All was silent, but it was so hard and cruel. Then all grew confused. The face and figure seemed to melt away. I closed my eyes for a moment, and when I looked again, the background of the picture seemed the same, but here the resemblance ceased.

On a low divan reclined a man, of perhaps nine-and-twenty. His eyes were closed; his face was very pale; but it was not the pallor of death. His dress corresponded in period with that of the girl's gown, although he looked ten years her senior.

The face was very familiar. Somewhere—and I racked my brain in vain to remember where—I had seen that face. Every line I knew. How long the man reclined thus I cannot tell. It seemed hours. It was, in all probability, a few moments, perhaps only seconds. A door seemed to open somewhere in the rear, and the girl entered. She bent over the man and listened; then softly knelt at his side. When she rose, the jewelled dagger slipped to the floor, Her hands trembled now, but the face remained unchanged.

Once more all grew indistinct, and when I could distinguish form and colour I seemed to be looking into a room, panelled with oak, from floor to ceiling. Before one panel stood the girl. Her hands moved uncertainly over it, and then chose the next one. It opened, as if by magic, disclosing a space about a foot square. Into this she dropped the dagger. For the third time the colours mingled, and again I was looking at the motionless figure on the divan.

His face seemed like alabaster in contrast with his dark hair. One hand, delicate as a woman's, hung at his side. Suddenly it flashed across me that the face before me was identical with the miniature on the bracelet. Yes, every feature was the same. The high rolling collar and stock which he wore completed the resemblance. Had it been in my power to sink back on my pillow, I certainly should have done so at this discovery, but as movement of any kind on my part was impossible, I could only gasp.

Near the divan stood the girl. Her arms hung motionless at her sides. She was almost as pale as he, save her lips, which were scarlet. Her beauty repelled and yet fascinated me. Never had I beheld such a face. She shivered slightly, and slowly, very slowly, sank down at his side. Her hair became unfastened and fell over her like a veil. For an instant I closed my eyes. The horror of it was overpowering. When I opened them she lay as if lifeless, and her hair, no longer black, gleamed in the moonlight like driven snow.

A moment later there was only the tapestry stirring in the wind.

Then I lost consciousness, and when I came to my senses the sun was high in the heavens. Before descending the stairs I took the bracelet from the case, for a close examination.

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There was no room for mistake: the face and that which I had seen in the night were one and the same.

To come down from that chamber to the cosy breakfast-room seemed like stepping from one world into another. It may have been imagination, but I fancied that all regarded me rather curiously.

Lady Harcourt was the first to break the silence. "You rested well, I trust?" she said quietly, but, as I thought, with veiled interest.

I answered in the affirmative.

"And had pleasant dreams, Hal?" inquired Stanley.

"I don't think I dreamed at all," I replied, and the subject was dropped.

Immediately after breakfast, I found opportunity to remind my host of his promise in regard to the room. It is needless to say that I was now doubly anxious to know its history.

An hour later, we were seated alone in the small library acknowledged by all to be Stanley's special property.

"It is a long story," he said, "and I hardly know where to begin, but perhaps it would be as well to get to the point at once. First, let me say that it is only my great friendship for you, Halstone, that leads me to speak of this. It is something we seldom mention.

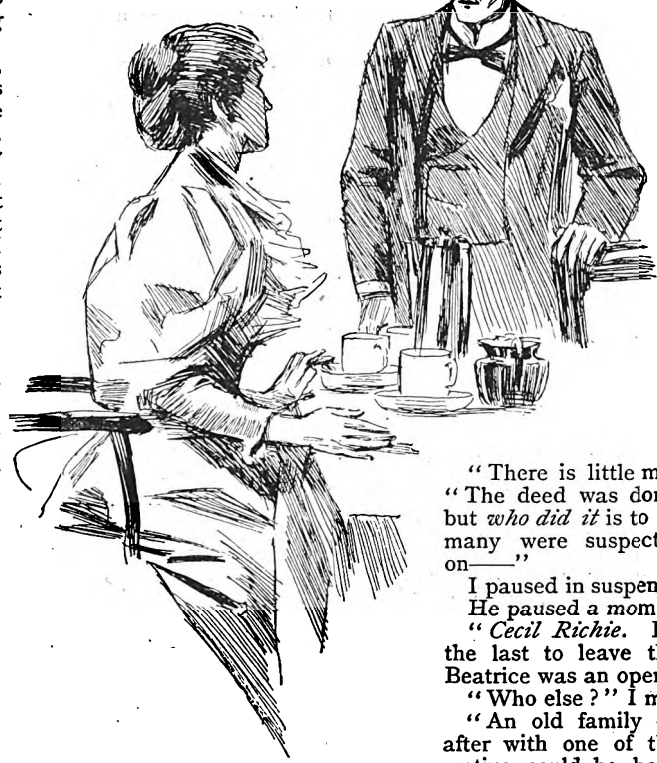
"My uncle, Lord Stanley, after whom I am named, was my father's eldest brother. He married a Miss Hartwell, Beatrice Hartwell, the only child of old Harold Hartwell. She was very beautiful, but absolutely without heart. At least, so I am told; of course I know nothing of her, for this was over thirty years ago. But her beauty is almost a tradition. There is a miniature of her, which I will show you later, and you can judge for yourself.

"Before her marriage with Lord Stanley, she had been engaged to Cecil Richie, her cousin. You know of the Richies?"

I nodded.

"It was broken off, and she married my uncle. He was a better match, of course; but now, when I think of it all, I believe she always cared for Richie.

"Well, my uncle had the west rooms fitted up, and she came here a bride. I will show you the second one later. You will like to see it, I expect. It is panelled entirely in oak—rather interesting in its way."



"You rested well, I trust?"

The book I was toying with fell to the floor.

"It was only a short time after the wedding that a very strange thing happened."

He stopped short and glanced quickly round the room.

"Edith knows nothing of this," he said. Then, dropping his voice, he continued:

"It was in September—the eleventh, I think."

"Last night," I said softly.

Stanley did not hear me.

"A large party was given, and half the county was here; among others, Cecil Richie. I remember my old nurse telling me how beautiful Lady Beatrice looked in her white gown and jewels. She had magnificent jewels, by the way. That evening, at dinner, a strange thing happened, and my old nurse used to say it was an omen of what followed.

"Beatrice wore a pair of bracelets—Stanley's bridal gift. They were of twisted gold, each with a miniature surrounded by diamonds. One represented Lord Stanley; the other her ladyship. It was a quaint fancy, carried out by a famous French artist."

I sank back in my chair.

"Why, good heavens, Hal, how pale you are! Why, what is the matter, man?"

"Nothing," I answered, "go on! Your tale interests me strangely."

"After dinner, as the ladies were leaving the dining-room, Lady Beatrice drew back the portières for them to pass out.

"As she did so, one of the bracelets caught in the meshes of the curtain, and although of excellent workmanship, or apparently so, when it was disentangled it was in pieces. It seemed a trifle at the time, but superstitious people remembered it."

"Was it the bracelet containing her portrait?" I asked.

"No, it was his."

Stanley rose from the chair and paced the room, looking at me in some anxiety.

"Odd how the mere relating of something you know only by hearsay stirs you up."

He seated himself and continued:

"The guests were late in taking their departure, and it was long after midnight when the family retired. My uncle had gone to his room some what earlier, not feeling particularly well.

"That night," and his voice sank to a whisper, "he was murdered—yes, *murdered* in his own house. Next morning they found him stretched lifeless on one of the blue divans, and Lady Beatrice unconscious at his side."

I leaned back in my chair, while a feeling of deadly faintness came over me. I could hardly breathe.

"There is little more to tell," Stanley continued. "The deed was done; there was no doubt of that, but *who did it* is to this day a mystery. Of course, many were suspected, but suspicion fell chiefly on——"

I paused in suspense.

He paused a moment and then said softly:

"*Cecil Richie.* It was brought out that he was the last to leave the house, and his devotion to Beatrice was an open secret."

"Who else?" I managed to ask.

"An old family servant, who disappeared soon after with one of the maids. But what possible motive could he have had? He was devoted to Lord Stanley and always had been, and was a favourite with the whole household. At this time certain jewels also disappeared. The dagger that Lady Beatrice wore in her hair that very night was never seen again, and the broken bracelet seems to have melted into thin air, too. I regret the loss of the latter extremely, for it was the sole portrait of Lord Stanley, and the marked resemblance he bore to my father would have made it doubly precious. Then the diamonds made it very valuable, for they were of the purest water. The servant, as I said, disappeared, and Cecil Richie, evidently finding English air not quite to his taste, went abroad and to all appearance dropped out of existence."

"Was no one else suspected?"

"My mother," and Stanley again dropped his voice, "had one theory, which differed from that of everybody else, and that was, that Lady Beatrice herself did the deed." He paused for me to take in the full import of the words.

"Poor mother! She never liked Beatrice. There had always been a good deal of girlish rivalry between them, and I sometimes think Richie was at the bottom of that, too."

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"Rather odd," I interrupted, "providing they cared for one man, that they should have afterwards married brothers."

"Yes, the whole affair from beginning to end is strange, and one I should certainly doubt, if I were to hear it from any one else."

"What is your own theory, Stanley? Do you agree with your mother?"

"Do you think I am mad?" he replied. "How could I believe a young girl capable of such a thing? She was heartless; but, good heavens, it takes more than lack of heart to do such a deed! I should suspect Captain Richie far sooner, and yet all his conduct was very straightforward and manly at the time. But as for Lady Beatrice, why, man, it nearly killed her. In that one night her hair turned white as snow. Oh, they say she was 'regal,' and that she was far lovelier than before! People were not at all surprised when five years later she became Countess de Rousillon. Poor Beatrice! misfortunes followed her. It was a very unhappy marriage, and, to crown all, her only child was stolen. Kidnapping seems to have been in vogue twenty years ago; only this child was never recovered. It is small wonder that the Countess died of a broken heart."

Lady Beatrice drew back the portières.

I rose from my seat and went to the window. "Stanley," I said, "who has occupied that room since the affair?"

"Let me think. Two persons, I believe."

"Do you mean to say that I am only the third?"

"Why, yes! What is it! You don't mean you saw or heard anything? The servants call the room haunted, but that is scarcely to be wondered at. Besides, in these enlightened times, ghosts are out of fashion."

"Tell me about the other two," I persisted.

"The others—why, one was my cousin—and it was years ago. He was taken ill that night with a raging fever, and died a few weeks later. But the room had nothing to do with it. The doctors said it had been in his system for weeks. The other was a little scatter-brained French governess. She was put in there, when the house was crowded with guests. She was a queer thing—believed in spiritualism and all that, and I was not surprised to hear of her becoming insane."

"One died," I muttered, "one became insane. I wonder——." At this moment the door opened, and Edith stood on the threshold. She made a charming picture in her simple cotton gown and garden hat.

"May I ask the meaning of this solemn conclave?" she said. "I don't think it's a bit kind of you, Stanley," turning to her brother, "to drag Mr. Craig off to this stuffy room when the tennis court is just suffering to be used."

"I will compel him to release me as soon as possible," I answered gaily, and the door closed.

"I fear I have been rather selfish, Hal."

"Not at all. I haven't had my say yet. First let me ask if you have ever doubted my sanity; that is, you have believed me to be of tolerably sound intellect."

"Generally—yes," laughed Stanley.

"Very well, then, listen to what I am about to say, and never again express your disbelief in ghosts."

I began disconnectedly; but before I had gone very far, my friend was as white and speechless as I could wish.

"Now," said I, "let me see Lady Beatrice's portrait, for that will be the final test, and after that I have something to show you," and I drew out the little box. When Stanley handed me the bracelet, I gave a cry, for the face that looked out from its frame of diamonds was the one I had seen the night before—the same dark eyes, the puffed hair—even the gown was not unlike. The bracelet was of twisted gold, the only difference in the two being that the diamonds in mine were of inferior quality and a suspicion now flashed across me that they were not the original stones.

"Now," said I, "you will see my latest purchase from Isaac," and with considerable pride I opened the box and handed it to Stanley. I have seen surprise depicted on the human countenance, but I never saw, nor have I seen since, quite such an expression as came into my friend's face. After that, our talk was absorbing, and it is needless to say that Edith and tennis were forgotten. Stanley was eager to go to London, find L—— and ferret out the bracelet mystery at once.

Later in the day we examined the panelled room, but no amount of tapping and pressing would reveal the hidden recess.

That night we watched in the white-and-gold room, but the silent guests did not appear. The rest of the week passed off delightfully. Edith and I became excellent friends. When I left Harcourt Park, I carried away two distinct impressions, one of Lady Beatrice and the other of Edith Harcourt.

Stanley and I spent a fruitless week in searching for L—— and when at last we found that worthy, the information which he gave us was anything but satisfactory. He remembered vaguely about the bracelet. It was left to be mended years ago—he thought, by a woman—and was never called for. As for removing the diamonds, he was shocked that one of his high standing should be accused of such a thing. As for the Jew, he had purchased the bracelet at his sale when many such articles went for nothing—positively nothing.

Almost immediately, I began a full-length portrait of Lady Beatrice, as I first beheld her against the tapestry hangings. I had the miniature as a guide, but that was scarcely necessary, for her face haunted me continually. One morning, when the picture was nearly finished, I received the following telegram from Stanley:

"*West wing totally destroyed by fire. I send you something found in the ruins.*"

A box arrived later, and when opened disclosed a dagger of quaint workmanship. It was dim with rust, and the blade was badly damaged, but the jewels were in perfect condition.

The portrait was finished. It won me fame and fortune, and fame and fortune won Lady Harcourt's consent to my marriage with her daughter

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THE MAN MY SISTER MARRIED.

CHAPTER XII.

JUSTINA was in the right mood now to do anything for me, so we went into the house. Yara sat by the table, and after speaking to me, he asked her to play monte.

She sat down at the table with him, and I watched them—their brown evil faces and small bright eyes; straight, black hair; he so gaunt and lean; she so wrinkled and old; they age so young, those women. I thought what a queer girl I was, and what company I kept, and I wondered if there ever was a worse charge to unfortunate relatives than myself.

Justina joked about putting him in a trance. She had evidently mentioned it before to him; finally he agreed, saying she could not. Shading the flickering candle with a book from his face, she went to him and began making passes over his forehead with her fingers, wringing them lightly each time, as if she had dipped them in water.

"He will talk soon," said Justina softly. I looked at the man; his eyes had a strange, dull look, staring straight before him, and his breath came heavy and regular like a sleeper's.

"Tell me, who was Xarras?" asked Justina, repeating my whispered question.

"Xarras was our captain once," said Yara proudly. "He was very young. He was one of the band, but so brave that when our old leader died we elected Xarras in his place. He was brave, but not prudent; he loved women, and through them our band was scattered."

"Tell me how?" asked Justina.

"Xarras was mad for a woman in Texas; he loved her years; he often went to see her. When she married another man, he was never the same afterward. One day he came to us in great joy. She had written him that her husband and other men were going to Mexico; she told the route they would take. There would be only one or two old women, the rest young wives and two girls. 'Emigrants have no money,' said one of the band. 'But these have,' answered Xarras, and described the leader.

"We knew him, a dashing young fellow who had hunted us when we robbed his father's ranch on the border; for his family owned great properties in Mexico. 'They will have arms and plenty of men,' said another of the band. 'One can buy Mexicans,' said Xarras, 'we must watch for an opportunity to raid the camp. All I want is one woman; the plunder you can have.' 'Why the trouble? The lady must be willing to come since she herself wrote you,' said an objector. 'It is this,' he answered, 'she fears her husband; he loves her madly, he trusts her; if she is stolen bodily, he will believe her innocent and will not kill her.'

"The rest argued; some wanted the other women; then the band divided, and—I went with Xarras.

"We followed their train of waggons for days, often meeting them, two or three of us, on pretence of asking the way or getting tobacco. Xarras never went near, though he directed us. Dios! what a time it took, but one day our spy came to us; the men were hunting; only one on watch, his name Lombardi, and some Mexicans, two of whom were our own men whom we had smuggled in.

"They were camped on the borders of a little stream. It was near sunset when we rode down, seven of us and the captain. We were painted as Indians—we did not wish to be tracked or known. We killed Lombardi, the Mexicans ran away. Caramba! how the women screamed, the captain's lady loudest. Dios! she was a beauty! They were idiots, those women; they all wished to die."

"Where are they now? How did they die?" asked Justina eagerly. I clutched her arm and shook my head. I could not bear that.

"I am weary," answered the man, "I cannot tell you all; they are dead. The captain's lady too. I have heard those emigrants swore an oath to hunt us down and kill us. They succeeded. I and my captain only are left. He is a great lord in Mexico."

"How did they know you were not Indians? One of us tell?" asked Justina; she has no faith in her own people.

"They dared not; it was a woman; too late the captain's lady remembered we had not all the women. One girl had gone for a walk that afternoon, and was missed in the excitement. She, hidden in the trees, saw us, and she knew us all. She identified all but the captain. She never will find him."

"Why didn't the captain help you among the Apachés?" I cried, and the man gasped, moved uneasily, half-waked, then fell forward on the table.

"You broke the spell," cried Justina, "I told you not to speak. See, he is really sleeping now."

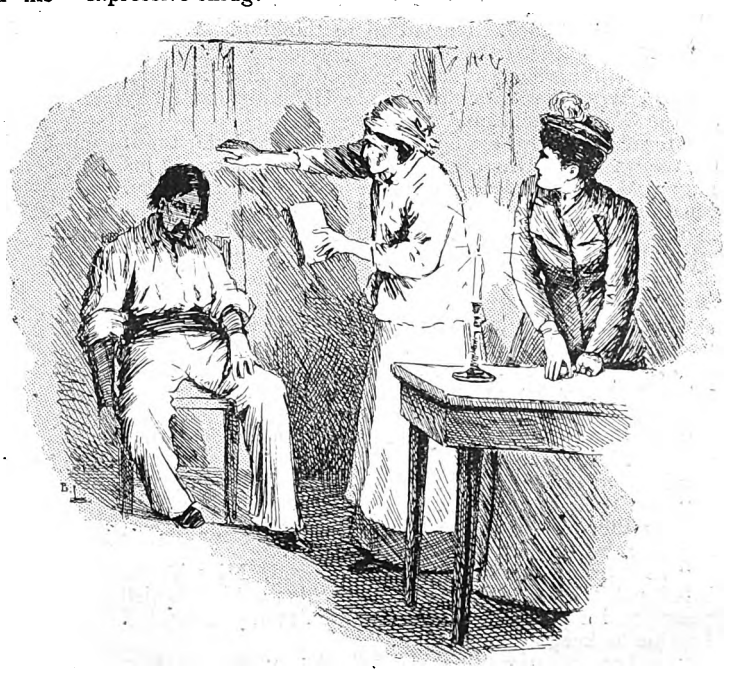
I ran past her, out into the air, over the beach like a mad creature, even in my room hiding my head and locking the door. I could not shut the horror out, and all that night, and many more, I saw Antonio's hideous face and a throng of ghastly, murderous men. I hardly dared look Aunt Marg in the face for fear she would read my guilty thoughts, and Justina became to me as grandfather said I was to him, a living conscience.

At last, however, unable to bear my terror alone, I set out to her cottage. There she was, ambling along the beach, just ahead of me, looking very smart for her. She heard me running, turned quickly to see who it was, and dropped from her hand something yellow and shining that rolled along the sand. I picked it up, a gold piece. She took it from me, looking away from my eyes.

"I went to buy Yara medicine."

"Justina," I said severely, "you are lying. Yara said he had not a farthing; if he had you'd have robbed him when he was ill. You couldn't help it."

"I couldn't help it, Chica," she repeated coolly, with that expressive shrug.



She began making passes over his forehead.

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I could not shut the horror out.

"Well, where did you get the money?"

"I found it in the street."

"You never did; Galveston isn't paved with gold. If you don't tell me I will never come to your house again; never be your Chica any more."

"A gentleman gave it to me."

"What for?"

"Caring for Yara."

"Was it Mr. Scott?"

"Yes, Chica, he has been twice to see Yara."

"You awful story-teller," I cried; "Bruce told me to-day John Scott had not got back from up North, where he went with his mother and aunt. You see I have caught you. If you will act the liar with the only being you love and who loves you, we part here, Justina."

I turned away, and she, seeing I meant it, hobbled up to me. "You take the money, Chica; don't be angry with Justina."

"You insult me."

"The man was Colonel Gregory," she hissed, in a frightened whisper. "Chica, if you tell he will kill me; he is a wicked man. Don't you cometo my house and make me do wrong. I will go back to San Antonio; what prayers I have to say, because you have made me sin; and the priest says I must burn for years in purgatory because of lies for you. Never a mass will you have sad for my soul; and when I am dead you will forget me."

"You shall have all the masses I can buy—I love you!" I cried, and hugged her; "and no more trances, dear, nor will I come till Yara is gone. Send him away any time. I hate him; but that was a real true trance, Justina, not one you used to play on the girls."

"It was true, sweet," she said, scuttling away with a queer sly look on her face. I stood there thinking. Why did my Aunt Marg hate the Colonel, and how did Xarras know Katherine, the wife of a man who stood as high as John Scott? What had brought Yara to Galveston, and why did the Colonel visit him?

I turned quickly round and walked toward the town. On the way Dean Gregory rode by. He never raises his hat; only an insolent nod, like a slap in my face. Meeting him spurred me on. I went straight to the market, where I thought I would meet Bruce. It was about his time to be there. Sure enough, he was just driving down the street. I called him to stop and take me in the waggon.

"Mr. Scott told me to come up and get flowers when I wanted them," I explained. He was pleased to have me for company, and as we drove along I said carelessly, "Did you ever see my sister Katherine, Bruce?"

"Yes," he said shortly.

"Was she married to John Scott long before they went to Mexico?"

"Dat ain't none ob yo' affairs," grunted Bruce.

"You used to have such good manners, Bruce, I've heard; they said you were like the doctor, John's father, so polite, but you are cranky enough now."

"Yo' own manners ain't none too good, Miss Vi'let, I tell yo'," he said crossly; "yo' allus askin' foolish questions dat ain't yo' business. I won't tell you nothin'. I gwine to keep my mouf shut."

"Just one question," I said coaxingly. "Wasn't Dean Gregory just a little bit in love with my sister Katherine?"

What Bruce had known in the past of the affairs of those two I never knew, but there must have been something, for he jumped as if he had been shot.

"I declar' Vi'let, yo' mo' debbil in yo' den enny libbin' creetur'," nor would he say another word. I got out of the waggon in sulky silence. In the garden, in a spirit of wantonness, I picked handfuls of roses and crushed them in my arms until my gown was covered with their petals, and my face moist and sweet from their dying fragrance.

I prowled along, then, in the shadiest path, seeing none of the beauty there, hearing neither the soft echoing of the sea nor the tinkling fountain. I only watched a little window under the eaves where I knew Dean Gregory's belongings were stored. When I saw the servants were at dinner, I went softly into the hall, where the door stood ajar, and then, with a guilty look over my shoulder, fled upstairs, then up another flight, and then up a third, short one, to a dim, low room under the roof. In the wilderness of boxes and trunks I burrowed, but not a sign of the past I wanted to read came to me.

There were plenty of curious relics in the box marked D.G.; letters from many ladies that I fancy they would not have liked me to see, faded and simpering photographs, unpaid bills, lots of them, and garments of every style and cut. In despair I gathered up my roses and started away. On the wall hung a faded grey coat; the uniform of the Confederate army. I went to it and searched the pockets. In the breast pocket were two letters postmarked New York and Charleston. I looked at the signatures: "Ever yours, Katherine."

I thrust them in the bosom of my gown and went quietly down the stairs. I had proofs that Katherine was not the angel John Scott thought her. He should fling her in my face no more. The fact that I was aiming to destroy the good name of my sister never occurred to me. I was sure Dean Gregory was Xarras. Had I not heard his mother say he used to be so often in Mexico, in his youth, and how she used to worry about him?

I went softly into the cool dark parlour to think over my store of information, and what I should do with it. The room was darkened with blinds and thick lace curtains, very cool and fragrant with flowers from the garden. It was divided from the front room by heavy portieres, that I blessed afterward. I sank into a chair, my roses still in my arms.

"If I tell all this to John Scott," I thought, "he may murder his own cousin, and there's another horror to haunt me all my days."

At that very moment a voice sent the blood to my face.

Dean Gregory rode by.

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"Show the gentleman in here, Bruce," said John Scott. I heard the sound of footsteps over the soft carpet and the rolling of chairs. I saw through a chink behind the portiere that the visitors were Maestro, white and scared, and two solemn-looking Italians. "This is better than outdoors," said Mr. Scott pleasantly. "Now I assure you I meant no offence in my letter, not the slightest. I will even apologise."

"We came to demand an apology or to seek satisfaction," said one of the solemn men stiffly.

"I don't believe in fighting," said Scott, and I could detect a ring of laughter in his voice; "besides, I am in the wrong. Before I met your friend I thought him an adventurer seeking to impose on the credulity of a young girl; I find my mistake. He meant well, and I am sure that he will pardon me and accept my hand."

I could imagine Maestro gingerly shaking that iron hand, looking as if the whole Italian Government was on his trail.

"When I went to the gentleman's house," continued Mr. Scott, "he evidently distrusted my motives. He shut the door in my face, and informed me, from an upper window, that he would call the police. Truly, I am not a ruffian. You will find us very civil men in this new country, if you only knew us better."

"I seek not ze knowledge, I vil not try ze experiments," cried Maestro; "I depart for ze city what you call Boston."

"I am sorry," said Mr. Scott, "for I hoped that you would continue Miss Lombard's lessons."

"Nevare! ze young mees haf deceived me. I understan' she was reech."

"She will be," continued Scott cheerfully, "much better off than most singers, unless she has a wonderful voice. Bruce, bring some wine." I heard the click of glasses, the popping of champagne corks, and a flow of conversation soon afterward.

"You must not think Miss Lombard deceived you," said Mr. Scott; "she will have a large fortune some day, but her family would never consent to her going on the stage."

"Ze old man, most probable, is vat you say, he does not compr'end, but you, signor, I may spek wif you, I call you my fren," said Maestro thickly. "Mees haf not ze grande voice; she is not great artist; zare are few of zem; she is pretty mees, an if zare was monaire, I will be frank wiz you, my fren, my brodaire, I would go into vat you call a spec, a speculate with mees. Why should I not haf monaire as well as ze milliner, ze merchant; why not ze lessons instead of ze dresses, ze diamonds? It vil do her no harm to think she cantatrice. Diavolo, one must live?"

I sat there in burning indignation; I believe I could have strangled the little wretch. I heard them talk of other things and finally go away. Then, Mr. Scott came back. He stood in the doorway looking at the glasses, then he broke into a laugh. That was beyond human endurance; with my arms full of stolen roses, scattering them as I went, I rushed into the room and confronted him.

"Upon my word," he gasped.

"I heard everything," I cried. "You always make me out a silly thing, and win my friends away. You always come out right, in your self-righteous way, to humiliate me. I won't be good any more—never, never—I will be a very demon."

He laughed and looked at me. "You are beginning well," he said, "yet you came in more like a goddess of the morn, scattering flowers as you went; but your hair is all cobwebs, your face actually positively dirty, Letty. You are doing well in the demon line. In the career there are no frivolities of gown and ribbons, I suppose. Really, I am a brute to tease you. Come here, and let me play father confessor. Why did you not tell me?"

He drew me to the sofa, and held my hand tight to keep me there.

"I suppose you think it is manly to break people's bones," I muttered.

"No, I do not," he answered, "and you know that," but he did not release my hand. "Was it not better to learn the truth, even as you heard it, Letty, than to go on being self-deceived?"

"I would have succeeded," I said swiftly, "and oh, it gave me something to live for. In time I thought I could lift the millstone of gratitude that has hung round my neck all my days and pay you back. I could support Aunt Marg and grandfather when he was too old to work. I would be a great and good woman, and you would not dare to look down on me. I would be more than your equal, for I would have won my fame and money, and you were born to wealth and had good looks, and just fell into all you wanted because you were a man."

"I am glad that you admit I am good looking," he said, smiling.

I stamped my foot. "I hate you! I hate you!" I cried, "and if I told you all I knew, you would not dare smile in that self-righteous way. You would not look me in the face. I am tired of hearing you held up to be so good, so wonderful. When I tell you what I know, and every word is true, you will see why I hate you, and why to me, with all your airs and sermons, you are no better than a criminal, Mr. John Scott!"

The moment those wicked words were out of my mouth I would have given all the world to recall them. "Oh, forgive me," I sobbed, when I saw his face; "in my grief and anger I did not know what I was saying. I do not mean it; on my knees I ask you to forgive me." I sank down on the floor, at his side, hiding my face. "If I could be struck dead I would be glad."

"I wonder," he said, gently looking down on me and stroking my hair, "if death would ever blot out that scene from your memory, my poor little girl. I have wondered always at the odd things you said, the way you shuddered when I touched you." He took his hand away from my head. "On this trip to the North I went to New Orleans, and there—God help us both!—I learnt your sad secret."

He took a tiny packet from his breast-pocket, as I looked at him with wide, wondering eyes. Then, with a sad look into my face, he laid in my lap my own handkerchief, that I had left in the Hotel Gilbert.

My own handkerchief that I had left at the Hotel Gilbert.

(To be continued next week)

To prevent unnecessary labour, and consequent disappointment, to any readers of this paper, who in the past have forwarded original stories for insertion, we would take this opportunity of saying that our arrangements for the provision of matter for "Short Stories" are complete for some time to come.

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THE MAD MOTHER.

THE insane have for me a peculiar attraction. They dwell in a mysterious realm of fantastical dreams, in that impenetrable cloud of madness, where everything they have seen on earth, everything they have loved, everything they have done, comes to them again in imaginary existence untrammelled by all the laws that govern events and rule the human mind.

For them, the impossible no longer exists, the improbable disappears, magic is real, and the supernatural familiar. The previous barriers of common-sense logic and reason break, fall and crumble beneath their freed imaginations, escaping, with fabulous leaps which nothing can arrest, to the limitless land of fancy. They make no efforts to control events, overcome resistances or obstacles; for at their whim they can be princes, emperors or gods, can possess all the riches of the world, all the good things of life, enjoy all pleasures, be always strong and comely, eternally young and ever cherished. They can only be happy here below; for, for them, Reality is dead.

I love to bend over their vagrant reason, as one bends over an abyss in whose depths foams an unknown torrent, come from one knows not where, and bound one knows not whither.

Still the strangest fancies of madmen are in sane and familiar ideas, strange only because no longer enchained by reason.

The capricious source fills us with astonishment merely because we have not seen it spout forth. Nevertheless, the insane always interest me, and I constantly seek them out, irresistibly attracted by that commonplace mystery, madness.

So, one day, while visiting one of their asylums, the doctor who was escorting me said:

"Wait. I want to show you an unusually interesting case," and he opened the door of a cell where a woman, about forty years of age, still beautiful, was seated in an arm-chair, and gazed persistently at her features in a hand-glass.

As soon as she perceived us, she rose, ran to the opposite side of the room, picked up a veil, and, after carefully covering her face, responded to our greeting by a slight movement of her head.

"Well," said the doctor, "how are you this morning?"

She sighed deeply. "Oh, ill—very ill, sir; there are more marks every day."

He replied decisively:

"No, I assure you that there are not. Indeed, you are mistaken."

She leaned towards him to whisper:

"No, I am sure. I counted ten more pit-holes this morning—three on the right cheek, four on the left, and three, too, on my forehead. It is frightful, frightful! I shall no longer dare to see anyone, not even my son—no, not even him! Nothing can be done, I am disfigured for life," and sobbing bitterly she dropped heavily into her chair.

The doctor seated himself near her, and said in a low, consoling voice:

"Come, show them to me. I know they are not serious. With but a slight cauterisation I can efface them all."

She shook her head in denial, but did not speak. He then tried to raise her veil, but she seized it so strongly with both hands that her nails pierced it.

The doctor once more strove to coax and re-assure her:

"Come, you know that I always get them away, those ugly marks—that no one can see them in the least after I have attended to them; but if you will not show them to me, of course I cannot cure you."

She murmured:

"Well, you I do not mind; but I do not know the gentleman who is with you."

"He is also a doctor, who will care for you still better than I."

Then she allowed her face to be uncovered, suffused with blushes from emotion and the shame of being seen. She lowered her eyes, turned her head from side to side to avoid our gaze, and stammered:

"Oh, how I suffer at showing myself like this! Horrible, is it not? Horrible!"

I contemplated her with the utmost astonishment, for not the slightest mark, spot, or scar was visible on her countenance.

She turned to me, her eyes still lowered, and said:

"It was while taking care of my son that I caught this frightful disease, sir. I saved him, but I am disfigured. I gave him my beauty, poor child! Well, I did my duty, and my conscience is at rest. If I suffer, only God knows it."

The doctor had taken from his pocket a small camel's-hair brush.

"Sit still," said he, "and let me take out those spots."

She turned her right cheek, and he began touching it here and there as lightly as though placing small dots of colour. He then treated the left cheek in the same manner, next the chin and forehead, and exclaimed:

"Look, they are all gone, all gone!"

She took up the mirror, contemplated herself fixedly for some moments, with the keenest anxiety, striving, if possible, to discover something; then said with a sigh:

"No, they no longer show much. I thank you infinitely."

The doctor had risen. He bowed to her, showed me out, and following after said, as soon as the door was closed:

"I will tell you that unfortunate woman's cruel history. Her name is Hermet. She was exceedingly beautiful, very coquettish, sincerely beloved and entirely happy. She was one of those women who have nothing in the world but their beauty and the desire to sustain and cherish it to console them. The constant care of her complexion, her hands, her teeth, and each visible charm occupied every hour and all her attention.

"She became a widow with an only son. The child was brought up as are all children of greatly admired society women; nevertheless, she loved him.

"He grew tall and she—old. Did she see the fatal crisis approaching? I cannot tell. Did she, like so many others, look each morning for hours at the skin, once so delicate, transparent, and fresh, now beginning to wrinkle a trifle under the eyes, to change beneath a thousand lines, still imperceptible, but which would grow deeper day by day, and month by month?

"Did she also see increase, slowly but surely, the long forehead lines, endure the torture, the abominable torture, of the small handglass, that one cannot decide to lay down, and yet throws angrily aside to seize upon again and view nearer, still nearer, the calm, odious ravages of approaching old age?

"Did she lock herself into her bedroom ten or twenty times a day, leaving, for no reason, the drawing-room and the conversation of friends, to gaze once more on the work of destruction, to view with despair the slow progress of the ill that no one else seems yet to see, but that she herself sees so clearly? She knows where the ravages are greatest, the bites of time the deepest. And the glass, the little handglass in its graven silver frame, tells her abominable things, for it seems to speak, to smile, to mock at bodily suffering and atrocious mental torment, which she must undergo until the day of her death, which will be that of her deliverance.

"Did she weep, distracted, upon her knees, and pray, pray, pray that one who thus kills human beings, and gives them youth to make age more unbearable, and lends them beauty but to take it quickly back again: did she pray and supplicate Him to do for her what He has never yet done for any—to leave her until death her freshness, grace, and charm? Then, comprehending that she implored in vain the inflexible Unknown who hastens the years, did she beat her brow and wring her hands in an agony of silent despair?

"Doubtless she endured all those tortures, for this is what happened.

"One day—she was then thirty-five years of age—her son, aged fifteen, fell ill.

"He was confined to his bed before anyone could determine the cause of his suffering or its exact nature. A priest, his tutor, watched constantly beside him, while Madame Hermet came morning and evening to see him.

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"She would come in the morning in her dressing-gown, smiling and perfumed, and ask, even before she passed the door:

"'Well, Georges, are you not better?'

"And the big boy, with his face swollen and red from fever, would reply:

"'Yes, mother dear, a little better.'

"She would remain a few moments in his room, look at the vials of medicine with an expression of disgust, then exclaim suddenly: 'Oh, I've forgotten something very important,' and run quickly out.

"At night she would appear in a low-cut bodice, in still more of a hurry, for she was always late, and would have but just time to ask:

"'Well, what did the doctor say?'

"The tutor replied:

"'He has not yet decided, madame.'

"At length, one night, the tutor answered: 'Madame, your son has the small-pox.'

"She uttered a cry of terror and fled.

"When her maid entered her bedroom on the morrow, she smelled a strong odour of burned sugar, and found her mistress in bed, trembling with anguish, and with cheeks pale from want of sleep. Madame Hermet asked, as soon as her blinds were drawn:

"How is Georges?"

"'Oh, not well at all to-day, madame.'

"She rose at noon, ate only an egg and drank a cup of tea, as though she had been ill, then went out and learned of a chemist how to guard against contagion from small-pox.

"She returned at dinner-time loaded down with vials, and went immediately to her room, where she saturated herself and her clothing with disinfectants.

"The tutor awaited her in the dining-room. As soon as she met him, she exclaimed in tones of deepest emotion, 'Well?'

"'Oh, no better. The doctor is very anxious.'

"She began to fret, and could eat nothing whatever.

"On the morrow at daybreak she sent to inquire, and, receiving news no more favourable, passed the entire day in her room, where smoked innumerable small braziers that gave forth pungent odours.

"Her servant also stated that she could be heard moaning all night long.

"A week passed thus, during which she did nothing save take the air an hour or two in the afternoon. She asked for news every hour, and wept bitterly each time it was worse.

"On the eleventh day, in the morning, the tutor, having had himself announced, entered her apartment, his face pale and grave, and, refusing to seat himself, said:

"'Madame, your son is much worse, and asks to see you.'

"She fell on her knees and cried:

"'Oh, my God, my God! I shall never dare! Help me, oh, my God!'

"'The doctor has little hope, madame, and Georges is waiting for you!'

"Then he left her.

"Two hours later, as the young man grew weaker and again called for his mother, the tutor went once more to her room, and found her yet upon her knees, still weeping and repeating:

"'I cannot! I cannot! I am too afraid. I cannot!'

"He strove to persuade, to fortify, and urge her; but succeeded only in bringing on an attack of nervous paroxysms of long duration.

"The doctor, having returned towards night, was informed of her cowardice, and declared that he would bring her, willing or not.

"But after having exhausted all arguments, as he took hold of her to carry her to her son, she clung to the door with such obstinate grasp that it was impossible to move her.

"Then, when they had abandoned the struggle, she prostrated herself at the physician's feet, calling herself a wretch, and begging for pardon.

"'But, oh, he will not die!' she screamed. 'Tell me he will not die! Tell him I love him, worship him!'

"The youth was in the agony of death, and, feeling that he had but a few last moments, he implored them to persuade his mother to come and bid him adieu. With the presentiment which the dying often have, he seemed to know and comprehend all that had taken place, and said:

"'If she fears to enter, beg her just to come by the balcony to my window, that I may at least see her, and bid her good-bye in a look, since I must not kiss her.'

"The doctor and the tutor returned once more to that woman.

"'You incur not the slightest risk,' they declared, 'for there will be a window pane between you and him.'

"She consented, covered her head, took up a bottle of smelling-salts, and made three steps upon the balcony, then, suddenly, hiding her face in her hands, she moaned:

"'No, no, I dare not see him—never—I am too ashamed, too afraid! No, I cannot!'

"They tried to drag her, but she clutched the rails in desperation, and groaned so piteously that she attracted the attention of passers-by in the street below.

"And the dying boy still waited, his eyes turned toward that window, for a last look at the sweet face of his dearly-beloved mother.

"He waited long, and night came. Then he turned his face to the wall, and spoke no more.

"When day broke he was dead.

"On the morrow, she was insane."

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THE NEW BURGLAR TRAP AND ITS VICTIM.

In building my house in the suburbs of London I had an eye to comfort, convenience, economy of space and—burglars. I built my burglar trap at the same time that I built the villa. A covered verandah ran along the west side of the house, the roof only twenty inches below the second-storey windows. There are two bedrooms on that side, but a burglar would have imagined that there were three. The third window did not light a bedroom, however, but was the entrance to my trap.

I could not reasonably expect a burglar to climb up the pillar at the north end of the verandah and creep past the first window to the second. The convenience of a burglar must be consulted in planning and building. I had a stout trellis work made and fastened to the centre pillar exactly under the middle window.

I told my wife that it was for a climbing rose, but I deceived her. It was placed there for the sole and single purpose of assisting a burglar to get into the house. A burglar had but to cross a vacant building plot next door, where trees and bushes gave him shelter, drop over a fence and creep a distance of ten feet, and there he was. In planning the house I said to the builder:

"I have seen a dozen burglars in court or prison, but I had no hand in their capture. My strong desire is to capture one myself. I want to take him in the very act. My house must, therefore, contain a burglar trap as well as a drawing-room."

The middle window lighted a room twelve feet long by eight wide, which was provided with chests and drawers as a linen room. On each side was a bed-room, and at the far end a door opened into the hall. The burglar alarm connected with all other windows but this. All other sashes had a patent burglar proof catch, but these had one which a child might open from the outside.

Inside the window, and sliding up and down the casings, as a drawer pulls out, was an iron shutter, which worked by means of a spring. By pressing a knob in my bed-room at the front of the house I could drop this shutter. The walls on either side were of brick, and the inside of the door was covered with heavy sheet iron. It was a floor paved with wooden bricks, and exactly under the window, just where a burglar must put his foot, was a square of flooring so arranged that a pressure of five pounds on it rang an alarm at the head of my bed.

From one of the adjoining rooms was a peephole, and the burglar trap was lighted by electricity, which was turned on and off from the hall. There was one thing more. A gas pipe was run into the room from the hall, and the end left open. The flow of gas could be regulated by a stopcock outside the room.

As I had been to considerable pains and expense in fitting this trap for a burglar, I hoped for an early visit, but for some reason or other the profession seemed to have lost its push and ambition. Weeks and months went by, but no burglar came. Other houses were visited and ransacked, and my nearest neighbour was even shot at by a midnight visitor; but, alas! I was entirely ignored. In this emergency I resorted to stratagem. No, it was not stratagem, but base deception. A reporter called on me to get the particulars of an accident in my neighbourhood and I told him a falsehood about a burglar effecting an entrance to my house. I spoke about my silver plate and jewellery and of the large sum of money I usually kept in the house, and gave him to understand that I was a nervous, timid man, and had no weapons to defend my treasures. The reporter worked up a very readable and seductive article, and, to ease my conscience, I sent him a £5 note in such a manner that he could not possibly trace its source.

Yes, I must say that if I had been in the burglar profession, that article would have filled me with enthusiasm. I hadn't read it half through when I felt convinced that I should receive an early visit. No burglar worthy of the name would go off fishing and leave such an opening as that to go to seed.

Two days later, as I took the train for my three-mile ride home, it so happened that there were but four other passengers in our compartment. Three of them I knew; the fourth was a stranger, and I was bound to give him more than a passing glance. To be frank, he annoyed me. He not only had small feet, but the heel of his right boot was badly over-trodden.

You may think it was queer that I was vexed about the young man's boot-heel, but such was the case. Nothing makes a man look so slouchy as runover heels. They spoil his walk, produce blisters and corns, and keep his temper unnecessarily sharp.

I thought of the young man several times during the evening, and he was in my mind when I went outdoors after breakfast to stroll about and smoke my cigar. I had not to look long before I discovered that he had also been thinking of me. In the fresh earth of a newly-made flower bed were the prints of his heels. I could have identified that heel in China. During the evening he had looked the ground over, passing twice round the house. If not a burglar, then he was a burglar's scout. I couldn't say what he had thought of things, but I rather expected he would take the trouble to push his investigations a little further before he attempted to enter the house.

Therefore, before leaving for the City, I said to the cook:

"Some time to-day a young man will be here to ask about the burglar alarm. Tell him that it is all right except on the linen-room window, and that we don't care about."

When I came home at night I asked if he had been there. He had. He came with some tools tied up in a piece of carpet, and the cook even went out and pointed to the unguarded window. Then I knew that he would visit us that night. As near as I could guess, he would come by the eleven o'clock train, and in that case there was only half an hour before he made his *début*.

I may tell you without conceit that exactly thirty-one minutes after eleven o'clock my burglar trap alarm sounded. Five seconds later I had pressed the knob which let the shutter fall. I had timed my caller to within a minute. My wife was aroused and wanted to know what was going on. While dressing myself I explained matters, but not to her satisfaction. When I left the room, she was enveloped in the bed-clothes and on the verge of hysterics.

I turned the electric light on in the trap and carefully opened the peep-hole.

There stood my young man in the middle of the room, and he was winking and blinking with surprise. In his hand he held a pistol, but it was of no more use than a stick. While I gazed at him he went to the window and examined the shutter and then stepped over and inspected the door. He was as secure as if in a prison cell.

"Well," said I at length, "you did not disappoint me."

He started; then, catching sight of my face, he said, "You expected me, then?"

"I did. What do you think of the arrangement of things?"

"Seems to be a regular trap."

"Just so. Had it put up on purpose to catch a burglar. Let me ask you if you have read that newspaper article the other day?"

"That's just what brought me here. I thought it was a place which only wanted walking into. It was all a put-up job, eh?"

"Advertising always pays," I answered evasively. "I presume you have a pal outside? I am not thoroughly up in the burglary business, but as I understand it they generally go in pairs, and one is left outside on the watch."

"You needn't worry yourself about the man outside!" growled the captive. "Come, now, let me out of this!"

"Why, my dear sir, the man who would capture a burglar and turn him loose within ten minutes would be an idiot. Put down your revolver, and I'll come in and clap the handcuffs on you."

"You show your head in this room, and I'll fill you with lead. Open that door or we'll wipe out the whole family!"

"Will you quietly submit?"

"Never. If you've got me, I've also got you! If I can't get out, you can't get in!"

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"But you forget about the gas. I can fill the room, and asphyxiate you in ten minutes. That's part of the trap, you know."

For answer he raised his pistol, and fired three shots at the peep-hole, but, as it was a wrought-iron plate, pierced with small holes, his bullets were wasted. I turned on the gas, and within a minute he began to cough and move about. As the flow continued, he went over to the window to find a breathing hole, but there was none.

"Will you knock under?" I asked at the peep-hole.

"No!" he shouted, as he lay down on the floor, with his mouth to the crevice under the door.

I descended to the pantry for a bottle of cayenne pepper, and when I had sprinkled a lot of the stuff just outside the door, the burglar had to retire. He was a plucky fellow, and it took twelve minutes to bowl him over. I heard him strangling, and gasping, and moaning, and, after opening the hall window, I threw open the door to the trap.

The increase in my bill that month proved that I gave him 850 feet of gas. He was lying like one dead when I pulled him out in the hall, clapped on the handcuffs, and called to my wife and the cook to help resuscitate him.

We got water and camphor and brandy, and we bathed his head and chafed his hands, and poured stuff down his throat, but it was forty minutes before he came to. While the cook tartly informed me that she was not paid to assist in reviving asphyxiated burglars, my wife was still more ungracious.

She said the idea of trying to restore a dead burglar to life, and thereby give him opportunity to burglar again, just showed what an idiot I was. I had been downstairs after more brandy, and the burglar's eyelids were fluttering, when my wife, who had been bathing his chest, looked up and said:

"Well, you ought to have a medal for your smartness! Your burglar is a woman!"

Stupid that I was not to connect the small hands and feet and other points with a woman, but I hadn't done it. She came to and sat up and stared and blinked at us, and it was a long ten minutes before she realised the situation.

"Isn't this rather out of the line of your sex?" I finally queried, and received no answer.

Well, a woman is a woman, no matter what her offence, and when daylight came I turned the "burglaress" loose. More than that, we gave her a breakfast and her tram fare. I even followed her out to the gate and returned her pistol. Stupid thing for me to do, no doubt, but, you see, I had a burglar trap all baited and ready and could probably catch another without cost or trouble. Everybody lets the first rat go in honour of the new trap, you know.

A BACKWOODS TERROR.

If you are a stranger, and travelling the roads over the mountains and through the woods of northern Pennsylvania, you will find yourself wandering frequently from the way you want to go, and it will be safe for you to ask for information and direction at every backwoods cabin or farmhouse you may come to.

One day I stopped at a rather rickety-looking cabin or house in a small clearing along the headwaters of the Sinnamahoping to get a better understanding of my bearings. A raw-boned, sinewy six-footer, in overalls and shirt, with long, bristly, reddish hair straggling from under an old felt hat, sat on a chopping block at the road-side.

"How do I go to Kelly's camp?" I asked the formidable looking mountaineer.

"You kin go by Wolf Holler, or you can go through Painter Woods, or you kin go by the way o' Fogerty's Mill, whichever way you want to," replied the man in a voice that rasped and rattled.

"Which is the nearest?" I asked.

"Han't much difference," replied the man. "Ever been in Wolf Holler?"

Having left England only six weeks before I admitted unblushingly that I never had.

"Are you much on b'ar?"

No I wasn't; not particularly.

"Mebbe you hadn't better go by way o' Wolf Holler, then," said the six-footer, with an ominous shake of his head. "I s'pose Wolf Holler is the terriblest place for b'ar there is in the hull Sinnymahopin' spread.

"They call it Wolf Holler because it was a ch'ce place for wolfs wunst, but they'm all gone, 'n' I ben tryin' to hev 'em change the name to B'ar Hole.

"I don't reckon they will, but they orter. It hain't pooty nigh safe for a feller th't hain't much on b'ar to go through the Holler, for he's more'n likely to get stopped by a b'ar or two and mebbe hurt.

"I go that way to Kelly's pooty often, just for a change. Whenever I feel limp 'n' don't feel just in the humour to tackle the Painter Woods or Fogerty's Mill, I just take a jaunt through the Holler. It sorter rests a chap, arter he's been to the woods or to Fogerty's to give the Holler a whack. I got away with three—lemme see, a week ago to-day. Yes, it was just a week ago to-day."

"Three what?" I asked.

"B'ar," replied the man nonchalantly.

"Are they as thick as that?" I asked.

"Thick! Thunder an' Mars! they'm jist swarmin'! The fellers over to the camp sends for me on an av'rage o' wunst a month to jog down to the Holler 'n' weed out a parcel o' bruins, 'cause they got too many to be comf'table. Puts me in mind. I jist got word, a little while ago—not more than half-an-hour 'fore you kim along—that the Holler's jammed with b'ar again, 'n' asting me to go down 'n' kinder harvest some of 'em, just to give the teamsters a little confidence ag'in. 'Spose I'll hef to do it t'morrow or next day. I think the Holler's about two mile the nighest way to the camp from here, cap'n."

"Couldn't you make it handy to do your errand at the Hollow to-day, and see me through all right?" I asked.

"Couldn't do it nohow, cap'n," said the man. "My ol' woman's been coaxin' o' me all mornin' to go back on the hill yonder an' knock over a b'ar that's been hangin' roun' for a couple o' days, 'n' a wild cat that stole a couple o' her geese last night th't she 'spectin' to sell to git a new bunnit with. But I says no. To-day's my tired day, 'n' I kill no b'ar nor wild cats for nobody. I don't keer if they carry off all the pigs 'n' geese there is on the clarin', new bunnits or no new bunnits! The old woman's in yonder bellerin' like a calf now, cause her geese is gone. I'd like to accommodate you, cap'n, but I'm tired to-day, 'n' don't calkalate to do nothin' for nobody."

I thought to myself that here must be a cheerful and amiable consort for a woman of even some degree of sensibility, as his wife evidently was. Then I said:

"How about the Panther Woods route?"

"You said you wasn't much on b'ar," replied the man; "mebbe you're conside'ble on wild cats?"

"No more on wild cats than I am on bears."

"Wull," said the bushwhacker, but with a doubting shake of the head, "you mowt git through ol' Painter without any of 'em tacklin' of you, but if you do there'll hef to be a record made of it, for I never knowed anybody to go through yit without havin' to argy with from one to seven wild cats. A good many smarty folks has tried it, 'n' never got the best of the argyment, nuther. There was Jeb Croker, who was one of those chapsth at was allus braggin' that he could lick his

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weight in wild cats. Wull, Jeb he made a bet he'd go through Painter Woods 'n' come out on t'other side without a scratch nor a tear in his clothes.

"Jeb hain't never come out yet 'n' that was ten years ago. It mowt be that he is dodgin' 'n' scroochin 'n' twist'n' around in the woods yit, to keep out o' the way o' the wild cats, so ez to win his bet, but I hev my doubts about it.

"I never went through ol' Painter yit without hevin' to lay out less'n four wild cats, and I s'pose I've had most a baan full o' shirts 'n' overhauls torn to wuthlessness in argyin' with the pesky critters. Most folk goin' to the camp from here'd ruther any time take the Wolf Holler road or the way by Fogerty's Mill than to spend their time goin' through ol' Painter. I hear my ol' woman bellerin' yit over them squawkin' geese. If she don't shut up pooty soon I'll go in and settle her!"

"Well, what kind of a gauntlet does a fellow have to run if he goes by the way of Fogerty's Mill?" I asked this specimen of backwoods conjugal amiability.

"Be you much on the fight?" he asked me.

"Man fight?"

"You call it man fight, but it's more like tiger fight!"

I said I was not anything at all on that kind of fight.

"Then I'll be sorry for you if you go by Fogerty's," said the man. "Didn't you never hear o' Ike Buncher, Sam Slewton, Twister Groot, 'n' Logchain Bill Gibbs?"

"Never."

"Thunder 'n' Mars!" exclaimed the strapping bushwhacker. "Say, cap'n, if I hadn't made up my mind not to raise a finger to do nothin' for nobody to-day, I'd just like to hev you by way of Fogerty's 'n' me go 'long. It'd be fun a hossback fer me.

"B'ar hain't pleasant to tackle if you hain't much on 'em, 'n' wild cats is sassy to argy with, but nuther on 'em hain't above ground yit when you talk o' Logchain Bill Gibbs, Twister Groot, 'n' them fellers.

"If you go the way o' Fogerty's the chances is that the Twister or Logchain Bill or some o' the rest o' them 'll be waitin' for you afore you git there.

"It don't make no difference which one on 'em it is, the first thing you know you'll be turnin' somersets out o' your waggon, 'n' mebbe you'll be hangin' on a tree or doubled up in a fence corner, feelin' as if a cycloon had just passed that way 'n' met you.

"'Fore you could git up and look around you twice, they'd hev your horse an' waggon down to the tavern an' the hull thing divided up an' sold. If none of the boys met you 'fore you got to Fogerty's they'd stop you when you did git there, 'n' you'd hef to git out 'n fight.

"If you was alive arter the fight, they'd let you go on your way afoot if you was able, 'n' if you wasn't able they'd lick you agin because you wasn't.

"Twister Groot gits his name 'cause he twisted a four-inch ches'nut saplin' in two wunst as it stood in the woods, 'n' ever since Bill Gibbs pulled the log chain links out straight ez an axe helve, they've called him Logchain Bill.

"Nothin' ever goes by the way o' Fogerty's that don't git licked from the word 'go,' but there haint none on 'em that fools with me much any more. If you go by the way o' Fogerty's 'n' hev time to notice before they slam belix out' you, you'll see that Logchain Bill hain't got but one eye, 'n' that Twister Groot's nose is split like a tree split by lightning, 'n' that Sam Slewton's lower jaw is three inches out o' plum, 'n' that Ike Buncher hain't got but one ear.

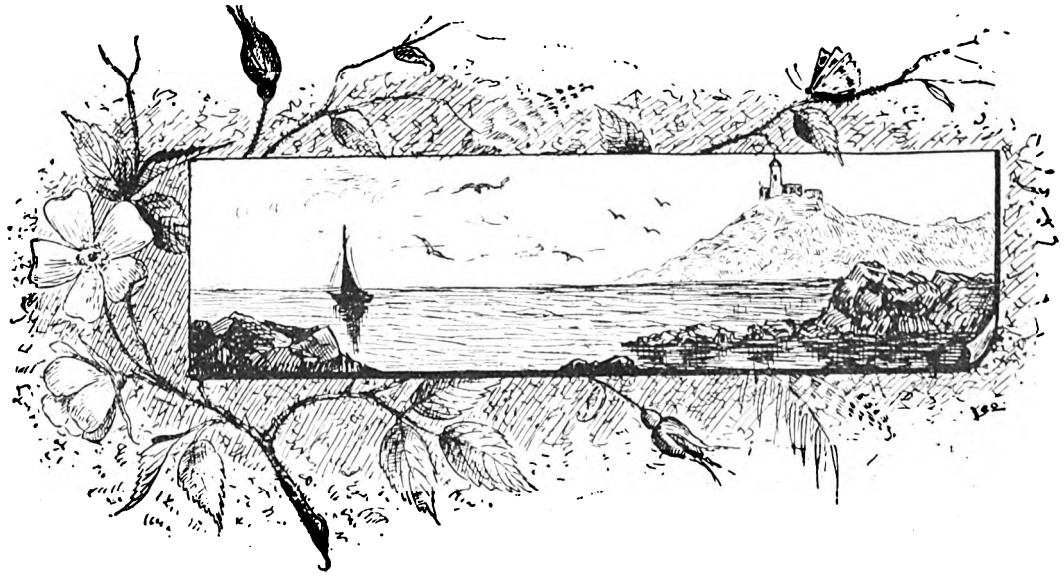
"Them's all little beauty marks that I've give 'em. Cap'n, I've fit the whole passel of 'em half-way from Fogerty's here 'n' back ag'in, 'n' whenever I feel like having some fun with spice in it, I saunter over to Fogerty's 'n' make Logchain Bill or some of 'em stand up 'n' take their medicine.

"Why, wunst—but there's that pesky ol' woman o' mine bellerin' harder'n ever over them geese o' her'n," said the backwoods terror, getting to his feet with surprising alacrity, "an' I'm going in an' settle her right now!"

Just then a little woman, with a hatchet face, looking out from beneath a calico sun-bonnet, appeared at the door. There was no trace of "bellerin'" on her face, but it was full of go. The six-foot bushwhacker looked a trifle sheepish.

"Here, Jack Shapely, you wuthless varmint!" the woman cried. "You mog in here an' peel them taters! An' then you mind the young 'un, for I'm goin' over to the camp with that last trappin' o' coon skins o' yourn!"

The backwoods terror marched into the house as meekly as a lamb, and I drove on, to find Kelly's camp only half a mile distant straight ahead over a very good track.



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A MODEL STORY.

It was a critic in the *Saturday Times* who first drew attention to it. He said:—

"We have nothing but the warmest praise to offer Mr. Edward Stevenson, R.A., on his picture in this year's Academy. It is work such as this which affords the most emphatic denial to the ridiculous sneer of many modern critics that Art has gone to the dogs since the Middle Ages. There is, however, one hint—it is nothing more than a hint—which it seems to us the rising young artist might profit by. Through all his pictures a certain type of feminine beauty predominates unblushingly. Every man of course has a right to his ideal, but Mr. Stevenson, it appears to us, uses his ideal in a way which must jar upon many who would otherwise share our admiration for his works. Saint or sinner, ballet girl or duchess, one and all bear an unmistakable family likeness. The effect to the close observer is disastrous, and although we can hardly call it a blemish, yet it is to be deplored quite as much as mannerisms with an actor. The remedy is simple. We would advise Mr. Stevenson to avail himself of the services of a greater number of models; there must be many good-looking girls who would be only too glad of the opportunity of posing before such an eminent Academician."

Pretty Miss Mildred Cornish read the paragraph through three times. Then she deliberately cut it out with a pair of scissors and put it in her purse.

"A certain type of feminine beauty predominates through all his work, does it?" she said to herself. "I must confess that I had not noticed it myself, but a critic ought to know, and I'm very much obliged for the hint.

"As to the girls who would be only too pleased to pose before him, I have not the least doubt about it. I have not the least doubt that he would be only too pleased to let them—if he were not afraid of me. I expect the critic didn't know that Edward Stevenson was engaged, when he made that remark. I have never heard of such a thing in my life!

"He solemnly declared to me, when I promised to be his wife, that he had never had a model across the threshold of his studio, and that he never would.

"If I thought! Hullo, that's Edward's step—Tuesday? Oh, yes, he's going to take me round to see Jules Murray's studio. I won't mention anything about this to him until afterwards, and then, well——"

When, a moment later, Mr. Stevenson was announced, there was a certain look on the face of pretty Miss Mildred Cornish which would doubtless have caused him some uneasiness had he not been too much taken up with his own thoughts to notice it.

. . . . . .

Jules Murray's studio was one of the prettiest in London. The mantel-piece and a few occasional tables were adorned with beautiful hot-house flowers, the walls were hung with pictures by all the celebrated painters of the day, a rich Persian carpet covered the floor, and heavy curtains of a similar shade hung from brass poles over the windows and door.

Then she deliberately cut it out.

An air of luxury and wealth pervaded the room, in which the faint odour of two capital cigars mingled with the perfume of the flowers and the smell of several canvases on which the paint was still wet.

"There, that's everything, I think," said Jules with a self-satisfied smile. "There's just one little thing I'm doing here, but it's only a study."

He led the way across the room to an easel which stood near the window, and pointed with evident pride to the figure of a graceful girl standing by the side of what would some day be a silent pool.

"It looks rather funny without any head," he said apologetically, "but I have not come across the face yet which quite comes up to my ideal."

"I hope you are going to give the young lady some more clothes," said Miss Cornish, regarding the picture with stern disapproval.

"I hope you are going to give the young lady some more clothes."

Jules Murray glanced at her and laughed good-naturedly.

"They did not wear any superfluous clothing in those days," he said. "Of course, if you——"

"Do you know," interrupted Stevenson, who had been gazing intently at the picture, and had not heard a word of their conversation, "I should never have believed that Madge could have posed so gracefully as that, I——"

Miss Cornish felt her heart give a great thump against her side. Madge! So that was the girl's name!

"I can't imagine how you knew who it was," she said with superb innocence.

"Why, it's exactly like her," Stevenson blurted out. "I could have picked her out among a thousand." Then he stopped suddenly and turned red to the roots of his hair. Until that moment he had not even noticed that there was no head on those fair shoulders, every curve of which he knew so well.

"How do you know it's like her?" persisted Miss Cornish. She smiled, but even the smile could not disguise the intense bitterness of her tone.

"How do I know?" repeated Stevenson slowly. He was trying to gain time. Jules Murray turned away and stuffed a handkerchief into his mouth. "Why—er—because you know I have seen such a number of pictures for which Madge sat as a model. What the dickens are you laughing at, Jules, you ass?"

"Oh, nothing," screamed Jules, who was laughing till the tears ran down his cheeks. Then he noticed the look in Miss Cornish's eyes, and he sobered at once. He saw at a glance how the land lay.

"I beg your pardon," he said, coming to the rescue with considerable presence of mind, "I was only amused at old Stevenson setting up as a connoisseur. If there is one thing more than another about which he knows absolutely nothing, it is lady models. You never sat before a model in your life, did you, Stevenson?"

"You know that as well as I do," said Stevenson shortly. He could see that his friend was on the point of bursting out laughing again, and he could have throttled him with the utmost pleasure.

Miss Cornish looked from one to the other in evident perplexity.

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A moment before she had not the smallest doubt that her lover had deceived her, but Jules' words did more than anything else could have done towards allaying her suspicions.

She held out her hand to her host in her pretty way and thanked him for showing them his pictures.

Then she turned towards the door and Stevenson followed her sheepishly.

Miss Cornish did not refer again to Jules Murray's study of a girl. Only in her heart she vowed she would find out Madge and see whether her face was like the face whose beauty could not be hidden from the sharp eyes of the critic on the staff of the *Saturday Times*.

. . . . . .

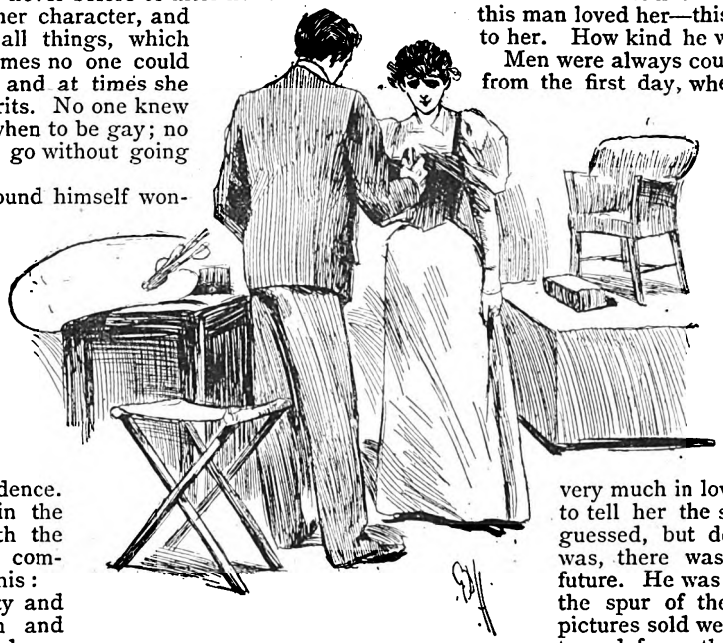
Madge was certainly an excellent model. Stevenson often confessed to himself that he could not get on without her. Whenever there was no work to do, when weeks and weeks passed by without seeing her, he found the days grew unbearably long.

She was delightfully pretty. Stevenson had always had a special weakness for a pretty girl. She would pose with a patience which even Job might have envied. Her figure was perfect; her colouring was perfect, and, above all, she was always punctual to a minute—never before or after her time.

There were two sides to her character, and it was perhaps this, above all things, which men admired in her. At times no one could be more queenly or lady-like, and at times she was in the wildest of wild spirits. No one knew better when to be quiet and when to be gay; no one knew better how far to go without going too far.

Now and then Stevenson found himself wondering whether he did not care for her more than for the cold-blooded beauty he had asked to be his wife. They were totally different, of course. There was no question which had the best style of the two. There was no question which his mother would have chosen for him, or any of his relations for the matter of that, if he had taken them into his confidence. But after all, no one else in the world had much to do with the matter. When it came to comparisons the difference was this:

Mildred Cornish was pretty and haughty, rather standoffish and rich. Madge—he did not know her other name, if she had one—was pretty and jolly, hail-fellow-well-met, and decidedly poor.



He gave it to Madge the next afternoon.

Madge did not know that he was engaged, and he did not intend that she should until he had quite made up his mind. He would wait for a time and see. And so he began by paying her compliments and ended by falling in love.

Then one day he thought he would like to give her a present, just as a mark of his gratitude. Like most other artists he had very bad taste when it came to matters of everyday life. For the life of him he could not make up his mind what to get.

Mildred he knew had the best taste in the world, but he hardly liked to consult her of all people. It really was a difficult point for a man to decide.

Then he went to a jeweller's.

"This was the bracelet the young lady admired so much last time she was here," the man said. Stevenson remembered directly he saw it. It was a diamond serpent which Mildred had asked him to buy as well as she could without putting it in so many words. He had ignored the hint, for even in those days the novelty of his engagement had begun to wear off, and £200 was a considerable sum to spend on a girl.

However it was just the thing for Madge, and he bought it. It was a mean thing to do, but, after all, Mildred would never know.

He gave it to Madge the next afternoon after her sitting. The poor girl was half wild with delight. It was the only piece of jewelry she had ever had in her life except the brooch of priceless value to her which she always wore. It was the only relic she had of her mother—the mother she had never known.

Tears of gratitude sprang to her eyes and sobs choked the words of utterance which surged to her lips.

"I am awfully glad you like it," said Stevenson stupidly. He took half a step forward, as if he must kiss away those tears, and then turned to his easel again with a sigh. He would be loyal to Mildred, whatever happened, until his mind was made up once and for all. Besides, there were several creditors, whose names entered his mind just at that moment.

Madge thanked him again and again. She hardly knew what to say, but her smiles, veiled though they were in tears, were more eloquent than any words. Then she turned towards the little dressing-room and began taking off her long flowing draperies, and putting on her articles of every-day apparel.

She felt the hot tears still trickling down her cheeks. So this man loved her—this man who was all the world to her. How kind he was!

Men were always courteous to her; but Stevenson from the first day, when she had timidly knocked at the studio door, had treated her to all the respect of a sister. No one before had ever ventured to give her a present. She would not have accepted it from anyone else, but from the man whom she loved—yes, who loved her, if she could read aright the sweet language of the eye—how could she refuse a present from him?

As for Stevenson, he stood before his canvas his eyes fixed on the door through which Madge had disappeared. He was certainly very much in love with this girl. He longed to tell her the secret which she had already guessed, but desperately in love though he was, there was still some thought for the future. He was not a man to do anything on the spur of the moment. Perhaps, if his pictures sold well at the Academy—his eyes turned from the door to the brooch which he held in his hand. She had taken it off to show him, and he had forgotten to give it back.

He looked at it for a moment, and then he laid it down reverently on the top of the little red leather case which contained his present.

At that moment he heard a step on the stairs, and the rustle of a lady's skirt.

"Surely, Thomas can't be such an idiot as to show anyone up here like this," he thought to himself, but before he had time to utter a note of warning to Madge, Mildred Cornish stood at his side.

He threw down his brushes and palette, and laughingly held out his hands, which were covered with paint.

"This is an unexpected pleasure," he said. He confessed afterwards that if he had only had a revolver in hand at that moment he would have committed suicide or murder on the spot.

"I hope I am not disturbing you"—this with a suspicious look round the room. "Thomas wanted to show me up in solemn state, but I ran past him, and here I am."

"Yes, here you are," repeated Stevenson gloomily. He felt he must say something, but his tongue was tied, and Madge was listening on the other side of the partition, and the partition was thin. "I'm afraid I haven't got anything

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new to show you," he said. "You must come again another day when some of my pictures have come back from Paris."

"Yes," said Miss Cornish, with another suspicious look round, "I particularly want to compare some of your pictures together."

At that moment Stevenson distinctly heard the rustle of a skirt in the next room. His face turned an ashen grey, and he dared not look at Mildred. Somehow or other he must find some excuse for getting her out of the room. But how?

Miss Cornish was standing in front of his picture. "Is this Madge too?" she asked, turning to him, and pointing with the end of her parasol at the figure of a beautiful girl leaning against the pillar of an ancient temple.

The blood leapt to Stevenson's face and he bent over a box of colours.

"No," he said, hardly above a whisper; "it's much too pretty for her."

Someone dropped a boot in the other room, and he started as if he had been shot. He fancied he heard something like a sob. He looked at Mildred, but apparently she had not heard. In another minute Madge would be dressed and then——

"I thought this girl Madge was very pretty. Is she?"

"It's a matter of taste entirely."

"Do *you* think she is pretty?"

"Yes—in her way you know."

"You know her then?"

Stevenson caught his under lip savagely in his teeth.

"I have seen her if that's what you mean."

"Have you ever painted her?"

"*Mildred!*"

"What?"

"You know what I have promised you—you know——"

"Know what?"

"You know that for your sake I have imperilled my prospects by denying myself the advantages of drawing from life."

His voice was so low that it was almost inaudible.

Mildred took her purse from her pocket and drew out a crumpled paragraph.

"Do you see what the critic in the *Saturday Times* says?"

Stevenson took the little scrap of paper, glanced through it quickly, and then handed it back to her with a little shrug.

"Yes, I have seen that," he said. "What about it?"

"Oh, nothing. But it's rather strange that there should always be a certain type of feminine beauty predominating through all your pictures."

"Strange," he repeated, as if he only half understood her meaning. Then he seized her hands in his and looked down into her beautiful eyes with a depth of passion which might have been prompted either by love or by hate.

"Strange," he said again. "Mildred, what do you mean? Strange! Strange! that you should be my one ideal. Strange! that you should be the only woman whose beauty lingers in my mind. Strange! that I should be able to paint no other face but yours. Oh, Mildred, how little do you understand——"

She shrunk back half frightened at his vehemence.

"Is it *my* beauty which predominates in all these pictures," she asked, her eyes wide open in astonishment and the hot tears springing to her eyes. "Oh, Edward, how can you forgive me——"

He took her in his arms and soothed her. If she had hysterics all would be up. He must get her out of the room.

He covered her face with kisses, and then gently removed her arms which were entwined round his neck.

A sudden sound on the other side of the partition made them both start.

"Who is that?" Mildred cried, frightened at the thought of someone coming in and discovering her in tears.

Stevenson hesitated for a minute.

His collar was choking him and he put his hand up and crumpled it.

"It's—it's the man who is going to be my model for Adam in the Garden of Eden," he said with a sudden inspiration. "Perhaps, dear, you had better go. He might be embarrassed if he found I had visitors. Unfortunately I—I forgot to supply him even with the proverbial fig leaf."

The girl held out her hand with sudden haste, and was evidently about to beat a precipitate retreat.

Stevenson drew a long breath of relief.

If only she would go, all might be well. As Madge had not appeared, it was just within the bounds of possibility that she had heard nothing.

At that moment, by some unlucky chance, his eyes fell on the tell-tale brooch and the little morocco case. Instinctively he snatched them up and tried to hide them in his hand.

The two went out of the room together.

The girl saw the movement and mistook his purpose.

"Oh, Edward, is that for me? This is heaping coals of fire on my head."

She held out her hands. He hesitated for one fatal moment, and then gave them to her.

"I thought you would like it," he said.

She opened the case and her eyes feasted on the glistening diamonds she had longed for. She hardly looked at the brooch. It was a plain little golden arrow with a centre of pearls.

"I don't know whether you would care for the brooch," Stevenson said. He was half-frightened at his own voice. "It is an old family heirloom."

She hardly raised her eyes from the bracelet.

"What a funny little thing," she said. "Of course I shall like it."

"Chuck it away if you don't. Perhaps it is hardly worthy of you." Stevenson realised that he could easily replace the bracelet—this little brooch never.

There was a sob behind him. He turned round and found himself face to face with Madge.

"Hullo, Madge, you here?" he said with a rattle in his throat. "May I introduce you to my future wife, Miss Cornish?"

Miss Cornish held out her hand. Her face was white as death. She seemed for the moment unable to decide how to act. At length she bent towards Madge, and whispered in soft but firm words, which were uttered only by a supreme effort on her part.

"Come, Madge."

The girl stared at her for a moment with a wild look in her eyes.

Then she threw her arms impulsively round the other's neck and the two went out of the room together and left the artist standing there.

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When a notice of Miss Mildred Cornish's marriage appeared in the papers some twelve months later, the bridegroom's name was not Stevenson, and as for Madge she is not married yet, and I think never will be.

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THE FOUR PINS.

THE Count Bielski, a nobleman of Poland, was a very ambitious man. His public utterances had displeased the government. He was arrested, condemned to imprisonment for life, and confined in a dungeon many feet underground.

He had no light, and never could tell when it was day or night. He had no one to speak to, for no one was allowed to see him except the keeper of the prison, and he was not permitted to speak to the prisoner. He had no work of any sort to perform.

Days, weeks, months passed on, and he was still in his dungeon. He was never brought to trial, and the unfortunate man was most miserable. He thought he would lose his senses, for his reason began to give way.

Feeling all over his blouse one day he found four pins, and he actually wept for joy.

Yet what could they be to him?

He took them from his blouse and threw them on the floor of his dungeon, and then he went down on his hands and knees and felt all over the floor until he found them.

This he continued to do day after day, week after week, month after month, until the months rolled into years. But they were no longer weary years.

He would defeat the purpose of his jailors, who fondly hoped to make him insane.

He would live now until he became an aged man, cheered by the companionship of his four pins. And then, when he had become too old to move about his narrow dungeon, he would be content to lie down with his four silent friends and die.

In his dreams these pins would often assume familiar shapes. Their heads would take the likeness of his friends and his relations.

They would talk and laugh with him. How happy these dream moments were to the condemned!

There was his dear old mother's face. How she beamed upon him!

And there was his beloved wife and his two rosy-cheeked children—they kissed their chubby hands to their father!

His heart seemed bursting with a new strange joy. He was lost for a time to the sorrow of his condition. He was living a new life in the new world these four common pins had opened before him.

One night he had a fearful dream. He dreamed he had lost his pins. Oh, horror of horrors!

The perspiration broke out in great drops upon his face, arms, and breast.

Thus he found himself, when, with a hoarse cry, he awoke.

He realised quickly that it was only a dream. His beloved companions were found in their accustomed place. What a sense of relief now filled his heart as he again betook himself to slumber!

Ten years had passed, and the prisoner and his pins were inseparable. His keeper, who never yet had spoken to him, was now regarded with a new interest. He feared that this man—hated as one of his oppressors—had discovered his occupation, and that he would endeavour to deprive him of this solace.

Carefully now he guarded his precious pins so that no one should see them, those pins more precious to him in his sorrow than all the wealth of the world could be.

One day he lost all his pins. He had scattered them, he thought, as before, but now they eluded his grasp. He carefully felt over every inch of the floor of his dungeon. Again and again he repeated his search until he grew weary of the task, but not one pin could he find.

As he lay angry and despairing on the stone floor, he was aroused by the noise of the keeper removing the chains and bolts from the door.

Presently he entered, bearing with him the prisoner's scant supply of bread and water. By the dim light of the torch which he carried the prisoner fancied he could discern a mocking smile upon his face.

He had stolen his pins.

He was now rejoicing at his discomfiture. He must have discovered them while the prisoner slept.

Hate now filled the soul of the condemned.

His occupation had been stolen from him, but a new thought at once engaged his mind, diffusing through him a kind of mad joy.

He would devise a means of torture to kill his keeper. He knew that this man—the satellite of an offensive government—despised him.

He would be revenged.

For a long time he gloated over his contemplated plan. How long he knew not.

Then suddenly a light shone before him through the bars of his cell.

It came from the torch borne by the keeper, who had returned. Placing his torch in a crevice in the wall, he walked to the opposite corner of the dungeon from that in which the prisoner crouched, and turning his back toward him began to fasten a chain to the wall.

Ha! he was then to be chained to the wall; his blood boiled at this new indignity.

He wished to attack the keeper at once, but he had no weapon.

His eyes fell upon his hands. They were long and sinewy. He had once been a strong man, but long confinement and lack of nourishment had weakened him.

The keeper was undoubtedly a strong man. All this while he remained with his back to the prisoner.

It was plain he regarded him with contempt and did not fear an attack. He even hummed a fragment of an insulting song as he stood in his strength and consciousness of freedom near the door.

Cautiously, slowly—like a cat approaching a mouse—the condemned moves upon his victim.

Rage lends him strength.

With one bound he is on the keeper's shoulders. His long, bony hands meet like a vice upon his throat.

Then a terrible struggle begins—these two, keeper and prisoner, in that prison cell.

The keeper tries to shake him off. He is a strong man, but he feels he has met his match.

Then the keeper beats him fiercely upon the head and face with a bolt of iron. The blood flows down his face, but he does not relax his hold.

They roll upon the ground—the condemned uppermost. The keeper has managed to secure his dagger. He stabs the prisoner once in the breast.

Then the dagger falls from his hand; his eyes and tongue protrude, his face is a mixture of purple and red—blood trickles from his nostrils. He is dead.

With a maniacal cry of delight, the prisoner staggers to his feet, blood streaming down his breast and head, over his rough prison clothes.

He attempts to reach the door, but his strength fails him completely. He is mortally hurt.

With a scream he falls lifeless across the threshold, striking his head with awful force upon the hard stone floor of the cell.

But what of the pins?

The prisoner had been in the habit, before lying down to sleep, of fastening the four pins in the left cuff of his blouse, as he so often did before.

The fear of detection so operated on his mind that one night, in a fit of somnambulism, he had put the pins side by side in the edge of the garment, and there they were afterwards found and commented upon by the authorities of the prison.

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LA MARGUERITE. FINEST and FASTEST STEAMER in the WORLD. SPEED, 25 MILES AN HOUR.

"Certainly a glass of water at the stem or sternpost would have done the round to Boulogne and Back, and not much be spilt of it."—FAIRPLAY, June 29th, 1894.

BOULOGNE and BACK DAILY (Tuesdays only excepted), by LA MARGUERITE.

PARIS and BACK, Saturday to Monday for 21s., other days 26s. return, By LA MARGUERITE.

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SIX HOURS ASHORE AT MARGATE for 5s. 6d. by LA MARGUERITE.

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Leaving	Week days.	Sundays.
FENCHURCH STREET (by Special Train to Tilbury Pier) ..	8.38 ..	8.55
TILBURY (Gravesend)	9.30 ..	10. 0
	Noon.	p.m.
Margate .....About	12. 0 ..	12.30
Arriving.	p.m.	
Boulogne ..... ,,	2.30 ..	3. 0
Returning.	p.m.	p.m.
Boulogne ..... ,,	3.30 ..	3.30
Margate ..... ,,	6 0 ..	6. 0
TILBURY (Special Train awaits Steamer) ..... ,,	8.45 ..	8.45

Arriving at Fenchurch Street Station (City) 9.35 p.m.

All passengers disembark at Tilbury and travel by train to Fenchurch Street. Connection with Southend will be duly announced.

MARGATE, RAMSGATE, and Back, by ROYAL SOVEREIGN, DAILY, at 9.30 a.m. (except Fridays, on which day LA MARGUERITE will run as usual), from Old Swan Pier, London Bridge, calling at S. Woolwich and Tilbury. Train Fenchurch-street Station 10.58 a.m. in connection. Tender steamer Greenwich 9.2› Blackwell 9.35 a.m. Passengers can return by LA MARGUERITE.

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Dear Sir,—It may interest you to know that we had practical illustration of the efficacy of your "Minnow" Life Belts last evening. We were struck by a heavy squall and upset whilst racing, but having, in accordance with our club rules, life belts on, in this case of your make, we suffered nothing but a little inconvenience, such as naturally arises from getting wet, and this even was partial, as your belts floated us so high, that, we were practically dry from a little above the waist up.

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Beware of Imitations injurious and worthless.

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	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
21	3 1 6	8 1 4	3 12 0	4 9 4
25	3 4 10	8 16 4	3 16 0	5 0 4
30	3 10 4	10 0 4	4 0 0	6 0 4
35	3 17 6	11 9 4	4 12 0	6 17 4
40	4 6 4	13 6 4	5 0 0	8 6 4
45	5 1 10	15 13 8	6 0 0	9 13 8
49	6 12 10	18 3 4	7 16 0	10 7 4

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EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 292.—Vol. XI. FOR WEEK ENDING AUGUST 4, 1894. [Price One Penny.

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CAN'T SCRATCH THE HEAD, AND WON'T FALL OUT.

THEY COST YOU EXACTLY SAME PRICE AS OLD SORT.

EACH STORE AND WAREHOUSE KNOWS ALL ABOUT THEM.

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THIS SKETCH illustrates the latest improvements that have been made in the Ladies' Half-Guinea Costume, which now consists of the Wide Bell Skirt and improved Blouse Bodice. It is well made throughout, no slop work whatever being allowed. The Bodice is pleated back and front, has full fashionable sleeves, bound seams, and belt; the saddle and sleeves are well lined, and it can be worn inside or outside the skirt, which measures 40 ins. long. The lower part of the skirt, and the cuffs, collar, and saddle of bodice are trimmed with rows of narrow Black Russia Braid, the whole thus forming one of the neatest and most serviceable costumes ever introduced for Ladies' wear.

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Please mention this paper.

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permanently, root and branch, without injury to the skin. Particulars on receipt of stamped directed envelope.

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Prices, £4 to £30. Easy Terms from 10s. per Month. Large cash Discount. Cycles bought, sold, and exchanged. Tuition Free in our London and Liverpool Schools. Non-purchasers, perfect riding, 10s.6d.

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ECZEMA

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1/6 invested at your Chemist or Store in a bottle of "Anteczema" will at once prove to you how easily and pleasantly it can be cured.

Valuable Book on the Skin free, from

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Knits STOCKINGS (ribbed or plain) GLOVES and CLOTHING in WOOL, SILK, or COTTON. INSTRUCTIONS FREE. Lists 2d. per post. TRIUMPHANT AWARD at PARIS. The only WINNER in the WORLD of 4 GOLD MEDALS and 22 other Honours.

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TO LADIES

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GENERALLY IN A FEW HOURS.

No case hopeless, failure is simply impossible, as Mrs. Snow, of Denmark Hill, Camberwell, writes:—

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The most powerful and effective on earth. For the most obstinate cases. Will not injure the most delicate. Price 7s. 6d. (Strongest, 11s. per bottle); post free, 6d. extra. HERBAL INSTITUTE, 1, Hackney Road (opposite Shoreditch Church), London, N.E. Send at once stamped directed envelope for particulars and proofs. I will forfeit £100 for every testimonial that is not genuine, and they can be seen at any time.

To Tobacconists Commencing.

£20

See Illus. Guide. 259 pp. 3d. "How to open a Cigar Stores from £20 to £1,000." "TOBACCONISTS' CO.," 186, Euston Road, London. Manager — H. Myers. Estab. 1866. *N.B.*—Shopfitters and Show Case Makers for all trades. ESTIMATES FREE.

MELVILLE'S NEW UPRIGHT GRAND PIANOFORTE

26 GUINEAS (Net Cash Price).

This Piano is confidently recommended as the very best instrument ever produced at the money. For beauty and resonance of sound, for delicacy and brilliancy of touch, for exquisite modulation and the perfection of workmanship it cannot be excelled. It has all the latest improvements, including entire Iron Frame (suspended), Harmonic Bar, Best Check Action, Double Covered Machine Hammers, Bushed Keys, &c., Marqueterie or Chased Gilt Embossed Panels and Gilded Bracket Trusses. Supplied in Walnut, Rosewood, or Ebonised, and the net cash price is 26 Guineas. Inspection and trial is invited.

MELVILLE, 61, Charing Cross Road, London.

All communications respecting Advertisements should be sent to the Advertisement Department, 2, RED LION COURT, FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.

SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 292.—Vol. XI. *FOR THE WEEK ENDING AUGUST 4, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

A BRIGANDS' BALL.

MY DEAR FRIENDS,—You remember, do you not, the Countess Eteinnette de Repey—the young one, of course, not the old one—my black-eyed demon? When I say "my," it is a form of speech, for she is not mine. You, he, I, we all know her. We have all sighed for her; but none of you has had the happiness that I have had, of being in the dead of night with her in her own carriage. It is true that her maid was there also; but, nevertheless, it was a great happiness. And yet I would willingly have deprived myself of it.

We were at her country house at Kerchvar. It was already very late in the evening when she suddenly remembered that there was a ball on the following night at the Casino of Arad, and that she positively promised to be there. She ordered her carriage, and as I was her only guest, she begged me to accompany her.

"My dear Baron, will you come with me?"

What could I answer?

"My dear Countess, the night is very dark, we shall be upset, we shall break some limb, and how can we dance after that? We have the three Kœras to pass, the bridge over one of them is not firm, and there is every chance of our being drowned. The forest near Szalouta is a nest of brigands. How can I defend you all alone? And then, what is the necessity of going this evening? We can start to-morrow morning after we have had our tea; your superb dapple-greys will put us down at Arad in the afternoon, and we shall have plenty of time to think about your toilet."

That is word for word what I said to her; but I spoke in vain. The more I tried to dissuade her the more firmly she held out. She did not want to drive post-haste; she wished to rest after the journey; she did not care to jump from her carriage, worn out and heated, into the ball-room. Then, too, she thought that there was nothing more beautiful than the stars, the frogs, and heaven knows what else. Her whim must be gratified, though the world should come to an end.

I could choose; I might either accompany her or remain in the château alone. I went with her, and as a compensation she granted me the favour of sitting opposite her in the carriage. The journey was a charming one. The Countess loaded me with favours. First of all she placed a muff box on my knees, to which she soon added her muff; then she burdened me with some other packages, and finally went off to sleep. It was in vain that I spoke; she did not answer. Nevertheless, she condescended to ask me a series of questions about her work-box, her satchel, her basket, and made inquiries as to whether I was not seated on her hat-box. Upon being reassured, she went off to sleep again. Her maid moaned about her headache. I, in my turn, made believe to sleep.

Suddenly a more violent jolt than any of the others woke us all up. The carriage seemed to have half upset. The Countess, who was still drowsy, asked what had happened. The footman got down from the box and came to the carriage-door.

"Excellency, we have lost our way."

"Well, what does it matter? Is that a reason for stopping? If there is a good road before us, we shall arrive in the end."

"Yes, but——"

"What do you mean by 'yes, but'? The road must surely lead somewhere."

"That is true; yet I fear it does not lead to a good place."

"You are crazy! Is there such a thing as a bad place in the world? Where are we?"

"In the Szalouta Forest."

"The forest is not interminable. You can get out of it in two hours, whether you go lengthways or breadthways."

"But the coachman fears——"

"The coachman, in his contract, did not reserve the right to fear."

"He fears an accident to your Excellency."

"That is not his affair."

"Or for the horses."

"That is no concern of his, either."

"The forest is infested with brigands, or poor boys, as they are called in Hungary."

"The coachman is a goose. Is he not a poor boy also?"

"He means the poor boys who steal horses."

I thought it proper to take part in the conversation.

"My dear Countess, there is no reason for jesting. You see, it was hardly worth while to start in order to sleep in the depths of the forest. You may have your horses stolen, or your life taken. If I, at least, only had my revolver!"

"To have that stolen, too?"

And thereupon the little demon opened the carriage door, and, before I could prevent her, alighted.

"What a magnificent night. How delicious the forest smells. How the fire-flies sparkle! Just look, Baron!"

"Look! Why you can't see three steps before you!"

"Yes, yes, you can. Don't you see a light down there among the trees?"

I turned cold! We had fallen into a den of thieves! From the top of his box the coachman answered, in a voice stifled with fear:

"My dear Baron, will you come with me?"

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Clinging in despair to my arm.

"Excellency, it is the *czarda* which keeps its guests." (Proverbial expression for saying: a tavern from which no one ever escapes.)

"If it keeps its guests, it is just what we need. Let us go there."

I was in despair.

"Countess," said I, "in the name of heaven, what do you mean to do? This is a rendezvous for robbers, where we shall all have our throats cut; a den, the landlord of which lives in constant communication with all the bandits of the country, and where they assassinate persons every night!"

The wicked creature only laughed at me. She told me that we read of such things, but they did not really exist. She added that she would go to another inn if we could find one for her, but as there was only that one she had no choice. And she ordered the coachman to follow with the carriage, declaring that she would walk on ahead and serve as our guide.

All objections and supplications were useless. We were obliged to follow her toward the inn with all our luggage, for she threatened, if we were frightened, to go alone. Truly, she was afraid of nothing.

As we came near the house our ears were suddenly struck by strains of merry music, which reached us through half open windows.

Heavens! the inn was indeed full of brigands.

"Well," said the countess, gaily, "we were going to a ball, and here we find one. We cannot escape from fate."

While she was speaking she darted toward the door. For a moment I was impelled to turn on my heel, to leave her there in the lurch and to make good my own escape. But that would not have been proper. Besides, I could never have rid myself of her maid, who was clinging in despair to my arm. The poor woman was half dead with fright, and followed her mistress with trembling steps. Through the open window we heard the noise of the dance and the frantic shouts of the men as they rushed about the room. But the Countess was not alarmed; she opened the door boldly and walked in.

The room, long and wide, was whitewashed. In the first moment of emotion I thought there must be at least fifty men in it, dancing and rushing around. Later, on counting them, I saw that there were nine, including the inn-keeper and three *tsiganes* who composed the orchestra. But the five others were quite enough. They were all tall, strong fellows. Their pipes, which were stuck through the ribbon of their hats, almost touched the main beam in the ceiling. Their shoulders were formidable. Their five rifles were placed against the wall in a corner.

We were in a pretty wasps' nest!

When the wretches saw us, they were so surprised at our audacity that they ceased dancing. The Countess said to them, with her conquering smile:

"Excuse us, my good friends, if we disturb your amusement. We have lost our way, and as we cannot continue our journey to-night, we have come here to seek refuge."

One fellow, straight as the letter I, and finely formed, broke away from the group, twisted his moustaches, took off his hat with a swaggering gesture, brought his heels together, bowed to the Countess, and told her that her appearance did not disturb him; that, on the contrary, it made him very happy; that he was master of the premises for the moment, and that his name was Joszi Feketé (a famous Hungarian brigand). He then asked the Countess who she was.

Before I could pull her by the sleeve, to caution her to conceal her name, she had already answered:

"I am the Countess Repey. I live at Kerchvar, near here.

"Oh! I have the honour of knowing you. I was acquainted with the old Count, also. He fired his double-barrelled gun at me one day, and missed me."

A charming acquaintance!

The Countess sat down on a bench, and the bandit placed himself beside her. As for me, no one asked me to sit down.

"And where are you going this way, in the middle of the night?"

I made a sign to her not to tell.

"To the ball at the Arad Casino."

Farewell our jewels!

"Then it is very fortunate that you have lost your way. Your excellencies have no need to continue your journey. It so happens that we are just giving a ball, and I hope you will accept an invitation. Our *tsiganes* are good musicians: it is the troop of Szalouta. They play splendid *czardas*. Hey, gipsy, play us an air from the 'Beautiful Woman,' and do not let your eyes wander from your violin."

The rascal did not even ask permission. As soon as the musicians had struck up the *czardas*, he threw his dolman over his shoulder, took the countess by the wrist and drew her into the middle of the room. Another bandit threw himself on Cesarine, who was frightened to death and half-fainting. Ah! she had no need to seek dancers, for she passed from hand to hand so quickly that her foot hardly ever touched the ground.

The Countess showed what she knew. She danced with as much ardour and as much fire as if she were on the waxed floor of the Arad Casino. I had never seen her more fascinating and beautiful. Up to that time the Hungarian dance had never seemed to me, at the best, anything but strange. No one before this brigand had ever made me understand what it was.

He began by dancing round his partner with a lofty mien, affecting to be very proud of her, looking at her from head to foot, over his shoulder, mingling his cries with the music. When he was weary of this diversion, he guided her to the middle of the room, and it became the lady's turn to dance round her partner. She faced him, whirling around discreetly, with a modest reserve like that of a butterfly hovering about every flower without resting on any. I can say without exaggeration that her feet did not seem to touch the ground.

The fellow, with a coquettish gesture, bent toward the Countess as if he meant to kiss her, but he stopped, stamping his foot. The enchantress threw her head back proudly, flew off the tips of her toes, and pirouetted to the very end of the room; but the two dancers never took their eyes off each other. Finally, the brigand turned away impatiently, manifesting his anger by dancing furiously before the *tsiganes;* then, suddenly wheeling round, he seized his partner and made her fly round him like a whirlwind.

Catching for her with his pocket knife the most appetising morsels.

In the midst of the intoxication of this dance I was uneasy about one thing, and that was lest the wild fellow in his fervour should make some unseemly demonstration toward the Countess. As you may well believe, the temptation was strong.

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She was entirely in his power, and for a man on whose head a price had long been set, one crime more or less was of small account. At the first impropriety I was resolved to seize one of the guns in the corner and blow out his brains. On my honour, I was firmly resolved to do it.

Happily there was no need of going so far. The dance ended peacefully with the three traditional turns, and the chief of the brigands led his partner to her seat after having kissed her hand very respectfully. He then stepped up to me, and slapping me very insolently on the shoulder, said:

"And you, my little old chap, don't you dance?"

Just think of his calling me his little old chap!

"Thanks, I do not know how to dance."

"All right," said he, and returned to the Countess.

"You must excuse us, Excellency. We were not prepared to receive such illustrious guests. Pray accept heartily of what we can offer you. It is little, but it is good."

He alluded to the supper.

The banquet was exceptional. I can well describe it as such. The brigands placed a large dish full of stewed veal upon the long table. There was no sign of a plate. They ate with their fingers, holding in one hand a piece of bread, and fishing out with the other a slice of meat from the tureen on the point of a knife.

The Countess ate as though she had been fasting for three days. The brigand chief devoted himself to catching for her with his pocket-knife the most appetising morsels, all of which were floating about in a gravy of red pepper, and placing them on her bread. She declared that the dish was savoury.

The bandit presumed to remark that I did not eat.

"Eat, little old chap; this dish will fatten you. It is stolen goods!"

Just as I had expected.

"I thank you," I replied, "I could not eat; it is too peppery for me."

"All right," said he, and once more left me alone.

There was no use of even thinking of a glass; the wine was served in wooden cans. According to the customs of the peasantry, Joszi Feketé drank first, and, after having wiped his mouth on the loose sleeve of his shirt, presented the can to the Countess. She drank. Oh, my friends, what an extraordinary woman!

The vagabond then turned toward me and offered me a drink.

"Drink, little old chap" (always the same epithet), "or really you will fall asleep."

"Thank you, I cannot drink. I am following a homœopathic treatment."

"Oh, oh!" cried he, laughing. "I, too, am following that treatment, and, as wine made me ill yesterday, I am curing myself with wine to-day."

I was perfectly convinced that once drunk they would fall on us. The five emptied a cask among them, and yet, when they rose from the table, not one of them staggered.

While the others were giving supper to the musicians, their chief came to me again.

"My little old chap, you do not eat, you do not drink, you do not dance. How do you amuse yourself? Are you fond of cards?" And at the same time he drew a pack from his pocket.

"Ah!" thought I, "Now he wants to know how much money I have with me."

"I don't understand any game of cards," I replied.

"I will teach you one in a moment. It is very easy. See! I place one card here, another there; you cover one, I the other, and the first of us who draws a court-card wins."

He went on explaining to me from point to point a kind of lansquenet, as if I had not lost two estates at that game! I was obliged, however, to relearn it from him. What could I do? Sit down and play with him. I had in my pocket a certain amount of copper coin, which I decided to risk, and which I spread out on the table.

"What's that? You do not intend to play with coppers here?"

And he took from his pocket a handful of Austrian zweizigers and ducats. I also had some zweizigers in my pocket. I placed one of them, tremblingly, on a card. It was a court card, and I won. The thief paid. For nothing in the world would I have dared to pocket that money, so I left it on the table. I won twice, thrice, and each time I left my winnings on the table. The fourth, fifth, sixth time it was still I whom Fortune favoured. I began to feel excessively warm. My position was dreadful: playing cards with a brigand and winning his money steadily. The seventh time I won again. I had a whole string of sweizigers spread out before me. The cold perspiration ran down my brow. Why had I not the same luck at Pozoni during the sitting of the Diet? I continued to leave my winnings upon the table, while I silently murmured: "Heaven grant that I may lose this money!"

Vain prayer; for the eighth time I won again. This time I certainly thought I was marked for death. The wretch said to me, laughingly: "You are probably one of the Countess's unhappy lovers, for you win outrageously, my little old chap."

He dared to laugh at me! At the ninth turn I was trembling in every limb. I won again. The robber struck a fierce blow on the table, and still laughing, said:

"Listen, little old chap; if you go on at this rate, I shall lose a province in an hour."

He gathered up what remained of his money on the table, and rose. I offered to return him the sum that I had won, but he eyed me from head to foot with the haughtiness of a hidalgo.

"For what do you take me? Put up that money, or I will pitch you out of doors with your zweizigers."

Then I took the whole lot and threw it to the *tsiganes*.

It was only when it was too late that I understood that I had just committed a foolish act; for I had myself declared my own wealth.

The *tsiganes* surrounded me, begging me to let them play the tune I liked the best. I got rid of them by sending them to the Countess. The madcap soon made her choice. With her siren's voice she began the popular air:

"My home is in the desert
In winter and in summer."

She sang so well, and with such irresistible charm that I fancied myself in my box at the Pesth Casino, and set to work to applaud her. The brigand applauded also, and was kind enough, in his turn, to regale us with a tune. He drew out a flute and played some rustic melody. What it was I do not remember.

"It is your time, my little old chap. Sing us something."

This demand embarrassed me. How could I sing when I was in a state of mortal anguish?

"I do not know how to sing," I replied.

Generally the Countess laughed at me if I happened unconsciously to hum a few bars from some opera, in my frightful peacock voice. But this time, speaking to me in French, she begged me to sing, if I did not wish, by my refusal, to expose us all to some insult.

This request was all that was wanting to deprive me of the remainder of my confidence. What could I do? With trembling heart and choking voice I began to sing laboriously. For a moment the Countess listened to me with great composure, but in attacking the verse—

"With thee alone I can be happy,"

I made an effort to raise my voice, when it broke so ludicrously that she burst out laughing. The whole band followed suit; so much so that at the end I did as the others, although I had not the slightest wish to imitate them.

The dance began again. The Countess was indefatigable. She whirled about until daylight. When the sun smote the window-panes she thanked the brigand for the pleasure he had given her, and begged him to have her carriage prepared, so that she might continue her journey.

Now, surely, our last hour had come!

Joszi Feketé went out, woke up the coachman and the footman, had the horses harnessed, and came back to tell us that everything was ready. Then I felt sure that he intended to assassinate us on the road.

I got back into the carriage with more fear than I had got out of it. The most suspicious thing to me was that I had not been asked for my pocket-book.

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The bandit chief mounted his horse and accompanied us as far as the high road, keeping always by the carriage door. On arriving there he showed us our way, took off his hat, wished us much pleasure, and disappeared.

I did not feel safe until we had reached Zernid. Then only I reproached the Countess and told her that, if my presence had not restrained the rascals, this adventure might have had the most frightful ending for her.

She listened to my observations patiently, and by way of reply asked

"*Apropos*, dear Baron, are you not sleepy?"

"No," I answered curtly.

"Then sing me the end of that tune that you could not finish last night."

"In that case I am sleepy."

All along the road I made myself happy by dreaming of the favours that the Countess would have to lavish on me to buy my silence about this escapade. However, we had scarcely arrived at Arad and she had not yet crossed the passage-way from the hotel door to her room before she had already related the whole story to three persons. When we entered the ballroom, everyone knew of it.

He was such a good dancer.

That did not prevent her from being the queen of the ball, as she had counted on being, or else why should she have come, seeing that she did not dance once? To those who invited her she replied that she was tired. I should think so! She had danced eighteen *czardas* from midnight to morning. I, who had not moved, could scarcely keep on my legs.

I rushed to the gaming-rooms, saying to myself: "Now that Fortune has come to you, press her to your heart." At one table they were playing lansquenet.

"Away with you!" I cried. "I have a wonderful run of luck to-day at this game!' Yes, I was in for a thousand florins. Fortune only pursues me when she sees that she terrifies me.

Six months later, I took up a newspaper one day and read in it that the famous brigand Joszi Feketé, condemned to death by a court-martial, had been executed.

I carried this interesting paper to the Countess and showed her the news.

"Ah!" she said, resting the paper in her lap, when she had finished reading the account, "he was such a good dancer!"

A STORY ON A TABLE CLOTH.

It was rather dark in the hall-way when Julian Jones went upstairs to his new quarters on the fourth floor.

Someone else was on the stairs. He discerned a woman's form in the niche near the second floor, and the glimmering of a hand holding back skirts for him to pass. There was a faint breath of exquisite perfume about her.

"Excuse me," he said. Just then the light flared out in the lower hall. He made out a soft, oval face and a dainty figure as he passed. Julian was a big fellow, with features of strength rather than of beauty, but for all that he was a "sensitive," whose impressions of people were as sure as a dog's instinct about his master. The young woman's "atmosphere" was agreeable. It followed him to his room.

He lighted the gas and looked round. It was a goodish den for a literary worker. The carpet of pale greens and olives was almost new. The windows had lace curtains, and a fair out-look.

He sat down and tilted back his chair. A curious plot for a story had come into his mind. It seemed to start out of that chance encounter on the stairs, yet he scarcely realised it then, so subtle is the action of the brain.

His heart began to beat quickly. He had done a good deal of patient work in the past, with indifferent success; but such impromptu mental activity was new. He took it as a good omen. He had a strain of what we call superstition in his nature. A strange dream had impressed him with the belief that with his change of quarters something was to happen—for the better.

The bright, unique ideas came pouring into his mind like a flood. They clamoured for expression. He found a pencil in his pocket, and looked round for paper. He had not a scrap. His trunks would not come till the morning. If he stirred from the room to hunt up a stationer, the aroma of the story would be sure to escape. He thought desperately of his cuffs, his shirt-front, and execrated the motley wall paper. Had it been plain it should have done duty as a tablet.

He sprang from his chair. The covering of the square table in the corner was of white oil-cloth—imitation "marble." He sat down and marked it off in spaces. The pencil glided over it smoothly.

He wrote quickly and without effort. He knew he had never done anything like this before. Some one seemed to be dictating at his elbow. He had heard and read of such cases. Now he was the subject.

He wrote column after column, till the cloth was covered. He leaned back and surveyed it. He knew the thing was unique and exquisitely wrought out. It was a love story, with that dainty creature on the dim stairway flitting through it. Julian's eyes grew misty. He looked at his watch. The three hours he had been writing seemed but five minutes.

It was early yet, not eleven o'clock. He locked the door, and went out into the street. He had a vague idea of getting paper from some hotel clerk. He could not feel easy until his story was in manuscript.

He turned into the street. The thunder of the traffic was in his ears. A cab was dashing recklessly along. The subtle fascination of the story was yet upon him. In the midst of it he was conscious of a sudden shock, a pain crossing the sweetness, making horrible discord, then all became blank.

He was pulled from under the feet of the horse. The blood flowed from a wound made by the hoof.

No address could be found on him and he was carried to a hospital. He had been severely but not fatally injured.

Brain fever set in, but an excellent constitution was in his favour. In his seasons of delirium the marble table-cloth haunted him. Sometimes it hung over him like an awning, with the letters like a thousand eyes staring at him. Then they changed into Chinese hieroglyphics, and the young woman on the stairs was wrinkling her lovely brow in vain endeavours to decipher them. Again the cloth was waving like a banner from the roof of the *Daily Fizzler*.

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Through careful nursing he came out of the tangle at length, and began to recall just what had happened. His story, which was to have inaugurated a new era, what had become of it? Four weeks he had been lying there, they told him.

In that time the room would be let to a new tenant, and his story scrubbed off the cloth by some wooden-headed chambermaid. He fretted and fumed over it. His omen of good luck had been demolished by a sledge hammer.

"Don't you want to look over these papers?" queried the pretty, cheerful nurse, placing a pile before him. "You need to catch up with the times that have rolled on while you lay here."

Julian tossed them over half savagely, and came presently upon something that made his heart thump. His story was looking him in the face from the columns of the *Exaggerator*. It was entitled, "Into His Kingdom." The letters seemed to wink and blink at him knowingly.

He read it through. There had been scarcely any alteration. Somebody had got ahead of the chambermaid and copied it, selling it as his or her own production. He should never be able to prove its authorship. He groaned in spirit.

Presently he came upon a copy of the *Daily Fizzler*, three weeks old. There he found the story, headed by a sensational paragraph, which was evidently its first appearance, the other paper being a copy.

Julian was half amused, half annoyed over the conjectures about the author. The paragraph set forth the production found on the oil-cloth as the last effort of an unfortunate son of genius. Driven to extremity, without a penny even to buy paper, he had fixed his last ideas upon the only white surface he could command, and then he had gone out into the night and committed suicide. Could he have staved off despair twenty-four hours longer the ice would have been broken.

Julian breathed more freely. The copyist, then, had not palmed off the production as his or her own. He could yet claim it without dispute.

As soon as he was on his feet, he called on the editor of the *Daily Fizzler*, who knew him by sight, and had prophesied success for him some day.

"It seems I have been figuring in the *Fizzler* lately as an impecunious suicide," said Julian bluntly.

The editor laid down his pen.

"Explain," he said.

Julian told the story.

"Like another man, you awake to find yourself famous," said the editor, offering him his hand. "That story has been copied all over the country. It is a gem of its kind."

"I'm not so sure that I shall ever do so well again," said Julian.

"What is done once can be done again. You will now command a hearing."

"How did you get hold of it?"

"It was sent in by —— by ——" consulting a memorandum—"by Miss Cora Wheeler, 142, —— Street."

"Why, I wrote the story in that house!"

"She sent a note stating the facts, and Bolton—you know him—touched them up a trifle. None of us suspected you. The landlady believed your name was Jones, but, on second thoughts, she confessed it might be Smith."

"I only had a word with her when I engaged the room."

"I may as well pay you to-day," said the editor as he made out a cheque.

A glance showed Julian it was drawn for £20. He was in luck after all, it seemed.

Then he drove in a cab to Charing Cross Road and rang the bell at 142, —— Street. How much had happened since he first went up those steps, less than six weeks ago!

The girl who opened the door looked at him blankly when he asked for Miss Wheeler, and showed him into a small reception room while she took his card.

He was presently asked to step upstairs to the third floor.

The door was half-open, showing a prettily furnished interior. He tapped gently. There was a rustling behind a dark green portiere, and a young woman stepped out from behind it, and greeted him with "Good morning." She was the one he had met on the stairs in the gloom, he could swear.

"You are Miss Cora Wheeler?"

She bowed.

"And I am Julian Jones. I wrote the story on the oilcloth. I am told it found its way into print through you. I have come to thank you."

Miss Wheeler was as breathless as Julian. She motioned him to a chair and sat down. The facts he had presented rapidly grouped themselves at once logically in her mind.

"Then you did not commit suicide," she said with a mirthful glance at his muscular frame, adding, "I never thought you did."

"I suppose I came pretty near 'shuffling off,'" he said, and he repeated his story.

"I expected something of the sort had happened," said Miss Wheeler, "though there were all sorts of conjectures. The landlady called me up to read what you had written. She thought it might denote, denote——"

"Insanity."

"It enchanted me. I write a little myself, you see. I sent it to the *Fizzler*. It was copied everywhere. You are a genius."

"With the right sort of inspiration," corrected Julian

It looks now as if the pair would go into partnership.

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A BROKEN IDYLL.

FROM the rocky shore of St. Catherine, in the island of Jersey, one can see perfectly, when it is fine, the coast of France. It is even possible to distinguish the steeples of churches, the forms of houses, and to hear the soft, far-off echo of a chiming bell. From the little Channel island many a young boy and girl has gazed out over the sea to the land of fashion and greatness, and perchance sighed like the young eagle chained to the rock who longs to burst his bonds and soar away.

But none had ever looked thither with a fiercer longing than the boy who sat perched on the stone wall near the lighthouse one still summer night.

He was not alone.

By his side knelt a little girl who held her hat in her hand, and let what air there was play gently with her curls. She could not have been more than ten years of age; but even at that early period of existence the spirit of coquetry was rife in her. It was manifest by the way in which she crept gradually closer to the boy's side, and slid her head upon his shoulder to look up at him with the most appealing of blue eyes.

The lad was sunburnt and somewhat freckled, tall and sturdy, with a keen, dark eye, and close-cut hair. He looked about fifteen.

"To think that over there is the great world—Paris, which is more beautiful than London, and full of picture galleries, magnificent buildings, and great theatres! Here on the island we do not know what it is to live; there are only the cattle and the farm, the picnics and tourists in summer, and the terrible long winter. There is never anything new but the faces of the visitors, and they are often rude and noisy. If my parents think to see me live and die upon the little farm yonder, they are greatly mistaken. No, I must see the world—live in the world!"

There was rebellion in the face and tone of the lad as he spoke the words. His companion laid her cheek caressingly against his rough, brown face.

"Poor Louis!" she whispered. "Where will you go? If you go to Paris I am afraid you will not come back; and grandmother says that it is only rich people who should live in Paris."

The lad's cheek flushed.

"Rich people!" he repeated bitterly. "Listen, Marie; one may not always be poor. There are things which bring money—for instance, if one can paint pictures, write books, or play in big theatres, one is no longer unknown and poor."

The child looked suddenly at him with eyes full of a dawning intelligence, and slowly nodded.

"Yes, you are very clever," she said. "No one at the College in St. Heliers declaimed more beautifully. Oh, how proud I was when they applauded you at the prize-giving! But I would rather you did not go away, because grandmother is so old and cross, and no one is good to me but you."

"Poor child," he murmured, stroking her curls. "But you must be brave and good. Listen, Marie: it is for your own sake, as much as my own, that I must go away. You will not forget me, dearest, and I shall come back to find you a beautiful woman. Then it will not be the little white farmhouse with the green shutters that I shall take you home to, but a fine house in a great city which I shall have won for you."

"I had rather it were the farmhouse if you did not have to go away," she sobbed clinging to him. "For I am so lonely, and grandmother is so hard to please."

Then he talked to her gently, telling her all the dreams of a hopeful and ambitious youth; and as she listened the vision of wealth and greatness took hold of her—she being an imaginative child—and the life of the island seemed poor and mean in comparison.

They were both of French parents, but had been bred on the island. The girl was an orphan, and lived alone with her grandmother, a terrible old shrew, rapidly going blind. The lad's parents took pity on her, and had her often at the farm, but she cared little for them, they being rough, simple folk. She only loved with the ardour of her childish nature the tall, headstrong lad, who was the despair of both father and mother.

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It was just another such night ten years later. The gate of the little farmhouse at St. Catherine's was swung open, and a young man, pale and travel-stained, came slowly up the path to the porch where monsieur and madame awaited him. In another moment madame's arms were round his neck, and she was crying on his shoulder.

"Poor boy!" she ejaculated, "so you have come home after all?"

The young man cast a searching glance round, then clutched madame almost fiercely by the arm.

"Where is she?" he demanded sternly. "I do not see her!"

Madame's fat, red face paled, and she looked confused.

"Ah! how shall I tell him?" she murmured, wringing her hands.

"Speak—if you love me, speak!" her son reiterated passionately. "It is not possible that she is dead?"

He uttered the last words in a low, hushed tone, as if it were a thought almost too terrible to be spoken aloud, and clutched at the porch with a momentary overpowering faintness.

"Do not think of her, my son," madame replied vehemently. "After all our goodness in taking her in after the grandmother's death, too, it is infamous! The little wretch! She has left us!"

"When? Where? Have no steps been taken to find her?"

There was a sharp ring of pain in the words which smote madame's ear.

"It is useless," she said, laying her hand gently on her son's arm. "She did not go alone. There has been a tourist sketching about here all the summer. We have found that they took passage together on Sunday night from St. Heliers to Southampton. The whole affair had evidently been prearranged."

Her son clutched wildly at the porch for support, and passed his hand over his eyes.

"Why do you mock me?" he cried. "Tell me it is all a jest—but it is a cruel one. Ah, mother mine, surely you would not deceive me? Tell me that I have been dreaming! But I am not dreaming now—oh, no, not now. Do not keep her from me; it is such a long time since I saw her. And I—I love her so! Do not torture me. I cannot bear it."

"Would I deceive my dear son?" murmured madame, sobbing, and seeking to draw him within doors.

In the parlour he sank into a chair and seemed dead to all around him.

Once only he roused himself. His eye fell on a sprig of purple heather which lay in a tiny coral basket on the mantleshelf.

It was her's. He remembered it well—remembered the day when he had bought and given it to her, the Sabbath evening when that very sprig of heather had been gathered and put there.

He lifted his hand suddenly and dashed them to the ground. His mother glanced round nervously at the crash, and saw him treading the heather under foot. One word escaped his lips:

"Broken!" he muttered, as if in answer to an interrogation.

And in his pocket lay a letter, which now he scarcely remembered in the pain of the moment, and of which he had as yet breathed no word. But it was the reward of nearly ten years' hard fight with an adverse world, that had very nearly beaten him once or twice, and now seemed disposed to smile upon him after blighting his happiness for ever. It was an engagement at the Théâtre Francais, at a salary which, though not munificent, would have made both monsieur and madame open their eyes.

But the dream of youth had ended—the fond illusion with which he had buoyed himself to fight and win; it could only return as an agony of remembrance.

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Another ten years later, and a summer evening at St. Catherine's. A man walked swiftly towards the lighthouse, with bent head, as if full of thought. He was barely thirty-five, yet might have passed for over forty, so hardly had time and labour dealt with him. There was also about his face a stern cynicism, which made the great world who had chosen to make him what he was fear as well as praise him.

Suddenly he started. On the wall overlooking the sea sat a woman, so richly dressed and striking in appearance that one might well wonder what had brought her there.

She turned her head, and their eyes met. A hot flush swept over his face, and he bit his lip hard, as if to control some emotion. She, on the contrary, remained quite pale and perfectly composed.

"How do you do?" she said, extending her hand. "I see the recognition is mutual. I thought you were too great a personage to have time or inclination to visit St. Catherine's now."

He did not offer to take her hand; indeed, it seemed as if he had not seen it.

"And you—what brought you here?"

The query was somewhat stern.

"I? Oh, I am staying at St. Heliers," she answered carelessly—"with my husband," she added, with just a shade of triumph in her tone. "I am married now; and I had a fancy to see the old place once again, so I got him to put me down here, and he is going to call for me in about an hour's time. I do not know how long I have been here, or where he has driven to. But he can't be much longer."

"Are you happy?"

There was a rude abruptness in the words that startled her.

She turned away and laughed.

"As happy as most women. I have plenty of money, and a husband who lets me do pretty much as I please. I am quite a fashionable beauty, and the men rave about me. You may be interested to hear that, in the event of my husband's losing any more money on the Stock Exchange, I am seriously thinking of going on the stage. A good many people have advised me to do it. What do you think?"

He did not know whether she was jesting or not.

"Art has always been too dear and sacred a subject with me to be even thought or spoken of lightly," he answered coldly. "It is my life, my soul, the mistress of my existence who has never played me false," he added a little bitterly. "With the stage beauty I have nothing to do."

He was turning away, when she stopped him with an appealing gesture.

"Listen, Louis," she said; "do not condemn me utterly. If you had never wanted to be great, you would have grown up on the farm yonder, and I should have married you. We should have been happy after the fashion of simple people. It may not be in me to love much, but I loved you—I have never loved anyone else."

He looked at her swiftly.

"Yes, you ran away!"

There was a scornful incredulity in the words.

"Listen," she said imperiously. "Yes, I ran away because life was intolerable to me at St. Catherine's. I was young and"—she hesitated—"beautiful, I suppose—at least the stranger told me so; and I, like yourself, was ambitious. After all you had said to me, I could not live the little life of the farm. And you might never become great or rich, or come back to me, I thought, and so I took the Fates into my own hands and went. We cannot see the future."

"Have you never regretted it?"

"In a way, yes; but we must accept the inevitable. I have married a fashionable artist and a rich gentleman; he adores me, and I"—she shrugged her shoulders—"I tolerate him. If I had children I might have loved them, but I have none. I am quite alone, and there is only the memory of the past to remind me that I ever had a heart."

The unconscious pathos of her words touched him. He pitied her, the woman who was without his great consoler, Art. It is not given to all to enter its inner chamber and taste the rapture of that mystic union. Art is a chary lover, admitting only the true and tried. Many woo and long, in truth; few enjoy.

"Before we met," he said slowly, looking at her with a strange longing, thinking for a moment that the blue eyes of the child-sweetheart gazed into his once more, "I had often hard and bitter thoughts of you. Perhaps I hardly comprehend how fatal a tempter is beauty, or how cruel poverty to an ambitious girl. It was too much that I expected of you, for women are not like men, who work and move in the world; their province is to sit at home and wait. Some women might have done so—a duller, plainer woman, who loved more and thought less, probably would; you could not. But you have done a cruel thing—you have destroyed my faith in woman, you have broken my heart.

"As I have loved and thought of you, it is not possible for me to love and think of any other woman while I live. All the love that there is in me to give has passed away. When Destiny shut the gates of that home I might have had, it opened to me the temple of Fame in recompense, and, for the voices of the children who might have called me father, substituted the shouts of the multitude.

"My wife is a goddess whom I worship reverently and sincerely; but at times"—he shivered as he spoke; perhaps it was the breath of the sea which at that moment blew chill upon him—"the clasp of her arms is somewhat cold, and instead of the incense of her temple, one longs for the warm touch of living lips and the soft arms of animate flesh. It is but a weakness of mortals. But I see someone coming—doubtless it is your husband. Good-bye. Do not quite forget one who has so loved you. The bitterness, the regret are useless now. I have but one wish for you, that Heaven may grant you happiness, if it be possible."

She held out both hands to him.

He raised his hat and turned away.

"Think that I am your little sweetheart once again!" she cried, the tears of genuine feeling shining in her blue eyes; forget what I am and you are now, and all that has come between us. Kiss me once as you used to kiss me long ago; call me *chérie* and *bien-aimée*, and let me remember our last meeting till I die!"

It seemed as if she had suddenly cast from her the artificiality which her life had made habitual to her, and was again for a brief moment the little clinging child.

At that moment the sound of a far-off bell from the French coast fell on their ears. It was the knell of their early dream which, like the soft mist lying and spreading over the sea, had gradually faded to return no more.

For a moment he hesitated. Then his face softened, and he took her in his arms and held her to him, calling her fondly all the old pet names she had been used to hear from his lips.

But he kissed her not as the lover had done, but rather as one would kiss a dead child that had been greatly loved in life.

As he turned his steps landwards, he met at a turning of the wall the stranger he had seen approaching from afar, and looked at him curiously. Instinct told him this was Marie's husband.

The stranger returned the gaze carelessly, and threw away a half-finished cigar. He was a big man, somewhat florid in complexion, with curling hair and sleepy blue eyes, and looked as if he were well satisfied with himself and the world in general. He also looked as if he fared sumptuously every day and it did not always agree with him. But withal he is a good husband as husbands go, Louis said to himself, watching him give his arm to his wife and place a shawl round her shoulders.

"A bit chilly, isn't it?" he was saying. "I can't think what possessed you to come here. You had much better have gone on with me."

"I had a fancy to come," Marie answered somewhat wearily. "It is a beautiful place after all. You used to think so once," she added, looking at him a little wistfully.

Her husband laughed.

"We all think something beautiful once or twice in our lives," he said lightly, "and discover that it is but commonplace after all. No, my dear; it was not St. Catherine's I admired, which is a slow place; not even so picturesque as other parts of the island. It was the belle of St. Catherine's,

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and it is many years since she put St. Catherine behind her Indeed, I thought you had almost forgotten the place, until you expressed a wish to spend a week or two at St. Heliers this summer. By-the-bye, what has become of that old farmer and his wife with whom you used to live? Are they still alive, I wonder? Surly old fellow; and madame's tongue was rather sharp at times—eh, my dear?"

He laid his hand caressingly on his wife's shoulder for a moment. She shivered and imperceptibly drew away.

"Do not speak of them; they were stupid people," she said almost irritably. "I do not wish to see either of them again."

"Nor any of the people belonging to your old life?" he queried carelessly. "It could not have been a very happy life, and you seemed glad enough to leave it. When we have altered our circumstances for the better, we do not care about remembering that we have not always been as we are now. No, there could have been nothing to regret in leaving St. Catherine's."

She cast a momentary glance backwards at the sea, and longed with all the intensity of which she was capable that it were possible for her to be a child once more, and live her life again. Yet she was a woman that her world envied, and she knew it. Suddenly, she remembered that Louis had wished her happiness, and smiled a little bitterly.

As he passed through the wicket-gate and entered the farmhouse, Louis saw monsieur and madame rise to meet him. They were old now, and time and labour had bowed their once upright forms and whitened their hair. And though no word was uttered, he knew that it was the daily sorrow of the old man's life that his son would not succeed to the farm after him.

"My son," said madame, as he took the chair into which, strangely enough, he had fallen on that memorable night ten years ago, "is it not time that you thought of taking a wife? Consider, you are now a great man, and can choose among whom you will. We are old, your father and I, and there is none to come after us but you. We would wish to see our grandchildren before we die."

"Do not speak to me of marriage," her son replied wearily; "never speak to me of that again, if you love me, my mother; it is impossible."

Then he shaded his eyes with his hand, and, looking through the casement window into the garden, saw a picture of what might have been. It was himself, brown, sturdy, and marked with the labour of the soil, returning from his daily toil, and Marie, beautiful as he had seen her that evening by the sea, stood at the gate to meet him, clad in the simple dress of the peasant farmer's wife. And as he approached, brown, sturdy children rushed to greet him. He felt the clinging of their chubby arms round his neck, their soft cheeks pressed against his.

A strange choking rose in his throat. He turned his head hastily away, and his eye fell upon that vacant space on the mantel-shelf left empty by the basket and heather he had dashed from it ten years ago. It came to him that even as that was empty, so must the place of wife and children remain for him all his life.

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"Hullo, Marie, where are you? I must have fallen asleep; and see, it is quite dark. We must hasten home, or grandmother will scold you. I have dreamt such strange things."

The lad stretched himself and rubbed his eyes as he spoke. The little girl looked up at him wonderingly.

"You have slept a long time," she said, in rather a frightened voice. "I tried to wake you once or twice, but I could not. And every now and then you gave such a start, and cried out as if you had been hurt, but I could not hear what you said. Did you have a very bad dream, Louis? Tell me all about it."

"No, not a bad dream," he answered thoughtfully; "on the contrary, a very good one. But I cannot tell you now, little one; some day when you do not ask me I will tell you."

She looked disappointed.

"But"—he threw his arm round her as he spoke, and looked steadily into her eyes—"I shall not go away and leave you alone with grandmother, my dear; you need never be afraid of that any more. And our home shall be the farmhouse yonder, as you wished."

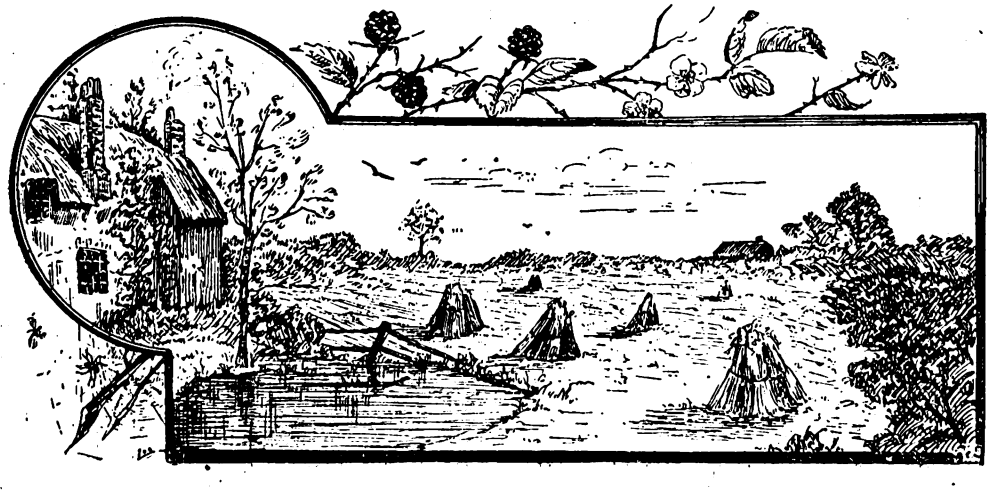
"And you will not go to Paris, after all?"

"No, dear; perhaps grandmother is right, and only rich people should go there. I will be content where Heaven has placed me."

"But the dream, Louis—the dream?"

He did not tell her that dream till years after, when she was his wife and the mother of his children—when she had almost forgotten that summer evening.

But *he* never forgot.



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THE SWIMMING-MASTER.

AT Milan, not long ago, lived two families, who shall be known in these pages as T. and C. They entertained the same feeling toward each other that the Capulets and Montagues did for one another, some centuries back. Now, as then, there was a daughter of the house of C., and, on the other side, a fine youth to carry down the name of T. Of course, these young people followed in the steps of their prototypes, and loved each other with a truly Romeo-and-Juliet ardour.

The family feud did not in any way affect the young lady and her swain, unless, indeed, to augment their fervour. They loved each other. How often at the Biffi concerts an interchange of glances had conveyed this information from one to the other; and at the races too, where they frequently met, they had managed to tell each other that henceforth they lived for one another only. It is as difficult to conceal love as it is a cough; hence, almost before they realised it, their secret was known to all their acquaintances, and, incidently, to their parents. It seemed for a time as if the world must come to an end. Then Monsieur C., of the cathedral, a friend to both of these illustrious families, tried to throw oil on the troubled waters. He did not succeed.

In vain the young pair threw themselves, in orthodox fashion, at the feet of their parents, to implore the not unusual pardon, and obtain at the same time the consent to their marriage, which, as they were both minors, the law compelled them to obtain. The old people were inexorable, absolutely unyielding. Meanwhile, June, with all its summer warmth, arrived. No better excuse was needed now for the ascendants to separate, so to speak, the descendants. The lover apparently submitted to his fate with resignation, for he got his traps together, and started over the St. Gothard for Switzerland, as he was ordered to do. The fair one, in her turn, followed her mamma, now very much on the alert, to the seaside.

All Milan was excited at this tame ending of the affair, and exclaimed in chorus: "Well, well! and only a little while ago they were so wrapped up in each other that it seemed as if they could not exist apart, and now, just see with what indifference they have accepted the situation! Serious love is, indeed, out of fashion, something to read about, maybe; but not to live up to, in this day—oh, no!"

The next scene found mother and daughter by the sea, at a fashionable resort, where, needless to add, they were the most brilliant stars in its bright firmament. The heroine of this little tale already seemed to have passed from the joy of love to that of the sea; a not unnatural transition, perhaps, for is there not a relationship between the two, since the mother of Love is the daughter of the Sea?

The soft roses of beauty returned to her fresh young cheeks, and she appeared no longer to even remember her absent lover. Indeed, she had apparently quite changed her purpose, and, instead of the school of matrimony, had undoubtedly dedicated herself to that of swimming. The lovely Milanese seemed now only bent on rivalling the graces of the ancient naiads.

The clever mother, meanwhile, looked on approvingly, thinking: "These gymnastics will drive all the nonsense out of her head, and, anyway, I should much prefer to see Ida a good swimmer than the daughter-in-law of that disagreeable old Count T., who has neither my ambition nor my quarterings."

Consequently, the marchioness put the young lady under the special care of the old swimming teacher, the white-bearded Andrea. But, curiously enough, Ida did not learn to swim, notwithstanding her frequent exercise in this art. As long as she kept near the shore she got on very well, but once out a little way she would sink, and the chances are that, if old Andrea had not stayed close by all the time, she would have made acquaintance with the bottom of the Mediterranean at the beginning of the season.

One day the marchioness sat near the shore, under a leafy acacia. The young marchioness, altogether adorable in her abbreviated bathing-costume, was swimming about with unusual audacity, and Papa Andrea, his white beard floating on the surface, held her up with one arm. A wave half-lifted her from the water—a second turned her completely round—a third passed over her—a fourth buried her from sight. Beside herself with terror, the mother gave a scream which brought half the bathing colony to her side in an instant, while she cried out: "My daughter is drowning! My life, all that I possess, to any one who will save her! Help, help!"

Before she had finished speaking, Andrea had dived under the water; the old man seemed in an instant to have recovered his strength. With their hearts in their mouths, those on shore stood perfectly still; not a sound was heard, save the distracting sobs of this modern Niobe, and the infinite echo of the sonorous ocean. Four hundred eyes were fixed in one direction, at the point where first the young girl, and then the swimming-master, had disappeared into a watery abyss.

Another moment of suspense, and then the submerged pair rose to the surface again. They were clasped in an almost frantic embrace. Evidently they were breasting the waves with the superhuman strength of two people brought back from the very gates of death. Andrea held the white-faced girl tightly about the waist, while with his free arm he struck out for shore.

A shout of joy greeted them, turning suddenly into one of indescribable surprise, however, as they came nearer land. When they were a few rods only from the beach, the surprise there became mute astonishment. Andrea, the old man, had undergone a wonderful metamorphosis. The waves of the blue Mediterranean had sprinkled his face with the sweet waters of eternal youth. In fact, one wave had carried away his white beard, and a second his wig; his hair was now black and curly. This old man, unexpectedly grown young, was holding the pretty young marchioness closely, almost desperately, to his heart—a clasp, in short, which bespoke the lover rather than the life-preserver.

They reached the shore. The summer colony understood at a glance, then, how and why old Andrea had become young Count T., and a salvo of applause echoed in every heart, even by the staunchest upholders of implacable escutcheons, greeted him.

Two hours later—the young marchioness having meanwhile completely recovered from the shock—a conversation between the Marchioness C. and young Count T. was drawing to a close something after this fashion:

"I do not wish to judge your conduct," the marchioness was saying, "but you must accept its consequences, Count. I tell you, therefore, that no man in the world, save her husband, shall have the right to boast that he embraced my daughter in the presence of two hundred people—no, not even if it were to save her from certain death. Hence the rest is understood, and notwithstanding that your coat of arms is very inferior to mine in its number of quarterings, my daughter can accept no other suitor than yourself, provided always that you are in a position to marry her."

"Dear marchioness, I have at length attained my majority. I am of age, and at liberty therefore to marry without my parents' consent. It is not even necessary for me to consult anyone in the matter. I am sure of my mother's property, anyway; for that was left to me unconditionally, and it is enough for us."

At this stage of the proceedings I deem further details useless. Suffice it to say that the swimming school was broken up, and the betrothed returned to Milan, where, before the end of July, the banns were published.

So I close, with best wishes to the swimming-master and his bride.

To prevent unnecessary labour, and consequent disappointment, to any readers of this paper, who in the past have forwarded original stories for insertion, we would take this opportunity of saying that our arrangements for the provision of matter for "Short Stories" are complete for some time to come.

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His Troublesome Charge.

DAR KEWOOD was the grandest old country seat—its owner, Philip Darke, called it farm—in the whole world.

It stretched out as far as the eye could reach, in verdant meadows, and gentle productive hills, picturesque valleys, and heavily-timbered levels.

Through the most secluded part of the timber a deep trout stream meandered aimlessly between banks fringed with ferns and flowers for a couple of miles, then lost its identity in the restless, cliff-girt ocean beyond.

The well-appointed stables, all neatly painted red and white, and containing some of the best horseflesh in the country, even Phil Darke's enemies admitted, were well separated from the dwellings by orchards of peach and pear, apple and cherry, and plenteous patches of fruit-bushes.

For the dwellings themselves—they were all commodiously built, painted cool, clear white, even cooler looking by contrast with the green shutters; they were well surrounded by balconies and verandahs upon which all the windows opened, after the southern style.

Standing in one of these open door-windows now—one lying between the softly-carpeted and richly appointed drawing-room and the low verandah surrounding it—stood a stylish woman of thirty or so, with a beautiful but rather selfish-looking dark face.

She wore a magnificent *negligé* of creamy silk and lace; many diamonds and rubies flashed upon her white hands, but there was a look of intolerance in her haughty eyes.

Those eyes were following an unconscious pair carelessly wending their way homewards across the spring-kissed fields—only a girl and a dog. The former tall and slight, the latter a great, handsome shaggy collie.

They were on very good terms with each other, for occasionally the girl would bend down, and the dog would bound up, then there would be a clear, ringing laugh, a thrill of whistles, and a series of joyous barks.

Mrs. Devereaux frowned impatiently while they drew nearer and became merrier in their gambols.

She was wondering if this girl might not interfere with the financial future of her own children—a boy of twelve and a girl of eight—whose voices came buoyantly up from the stables, where their Shetland ponies were installed.

Mrs. Devereaux was the widowed sister of Philip Darke. Early in life she had married a wealthy broker, and ever since her life had been spent in a whirl of social fashions and worldly ambitions, until now the fortune her husband had left was well nigh exhausted.

Had it not been for their wealthy and lavishly generous bachelor uncle, she would have felt very much concerned over her children's future.

Even as it was, she did sometimes. What if he should ever marry? He was not beyond the possibility of it, surely, at forty-four? Still, she hadn't much fear of that.

Phil had always been such an odd fellow, and one love affair early in life had ended disastrously; then he swore he would never have another, and he never had thus far, although it was not the fault of his female acquaintances.

What, though, if he should leave his fortune, or most of it, or Darkewood, to this wild young thing whose guardian he had been ever since she was a tiny mite of three or four?

For all his lazy philosophy, he had a warm, generous heart. He might have grown to love this girl through association; after all, she was the daughter of his hapless early love—the orphaned child of the woman for whose sake he had turned from all other women in disdain.

From her death-bed she had sent her child to Philip Darke, charging him to care for her as if she had been his own.

The selfishness of her charge had always been a theme for scorn on Mrs. Devereaux's part; but Philip had accepted it—whether with pleasure or pain, no one ever knew. For all his indifferent exterior, he was a man of iron will, and no one should ever again see him moved like a girl.

He sauntered lazily into the cool, tree-shaded drawing-room, even while the frown still rested upon his handsome worldly sister's brow

She did not hear him on the deep pile of the carpet until he reached her side and threw one arm round her waist.

Then she gave vent to a little shocked exclamation, not at this act, but at the act of the girl she was keenly watching.

"Gracious! She has vaulted the fence almost without an effort."

Philip smiled under his big brown moustache, and a lazy amusement crept into his dark eyes.

"Nest? Oh, she's an athlete," he responded, watching the slight dark figure, coming whistling up the lane. "She can send her mare, Duchess of Leinster, over any fence or ditch that I can take with Prince Madblood, I assure you. Not only that, but she's the captain of a ladies' boat club and the tennis club."

Mrs. Devereaux looked at him in dumb horror a moment. Then:

"And you look on smiling at all this—nay, talk as if you admired her for it!" she exclaimed at last. "You have brought her up like a great over-grown tom-boy, instead of a lady-like, intelligent girl, fitted for some use in the world. She ought to be going to school instead of jumping ditches with horses and leaping fences with dogs like a stable-boy."

A quick dark flush mounted to Philip's broad, high brow.

"But she does go to school," he said, resentfully, "in the village—a very good school; but there isn't any now—it's holiday time."

Mrs. Devereaux shrugged her shoulders.

"A village school—bah! She should be going away to some finishing school, some academy, where she could learn to behave herself decently and earn her livelihood. She has no fortune, I believe—her mother simply left her a name. You should certainly educate her to earn her own living, to be independent of your charity in her womanhood at least, Philip.

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She is almost a woman—seventeen. Why, I was married t that age!"

The amusement in his eyes had fled, giving place to a thoughtful, troubled look.

Was he wronging Ernestine Villard by letting her receive an education and be happy in her own way?

Would she blame him, wish to be independent of him, in her womanhood?

It shocked and pained him to think that womanhood was so near at hand, that other girls married often at her present age.

He had enjoyed the tomboyism and daring and frank carelessness of her girlhood quite as much as she had—he had been her tutor in many an athletic feat.

And he had found her such a gay, glad, apt pupil, such an ever-interesting companion.

He had taught her many things that would have shocked his haughty sister, more even than her expert riding and fence leaping—among them to shoot on the wing with a pretty little rifle he had given her, or a revolver, and to play cards many an evening—just for fun—and skilfully enough to many a time relieve him of pocket-money.

Yes, he saw it now; this was wrong, all wrong.

Ernestine would soon be a woman, and, though he never meant that she should earn her own living, on any account, she would have to go out into the world and mingle with other women.

If she felt lost and out of place among them; if she could not equal them in refinement, knowledge, accomplishments, would she not blame her guardian, and justly?

The thought haunted him all day and unpleasantly.

When Nest asked him to join her in a ride to the beach, he answered her shortly, so shortly that she looked at him in amazement.

Had she displeased him? How? Well, she couldn't go riding now; and tears of pain and resentment blinded her eyes while she hunted up fishing-tackle, took the eager collie into the secluded May woods, where dwelt the timid trout under shadow of tangled undergrowth.

Mrs. Devereaux had been at Darkewood but two days when she became so terribly bored with loneliness, that she spoke to Philip about asking some people down from town.

"Oh, Phil! Phil! do you want to get rid of me?"

He carelessly assured her that she was welcome to ask whoever she wanted whenever she wanted them; but there was no one for whose coming he especially cared; he had been a hermit so long, etc.

So she asked a number of society people—people supposed to be wealthy, cultured, and all that was desirable; yet Philip Darke had never been so bored in all his life.

How languid and inane all the women were, painted, fashionable dolls, who were shocked at the hoidenism of Nest, because it required physical daring. Their daring was all moral, they flirted scandalously, married and single, and the men——

Bah! there was nothing manly about them. They were mere followers of the pretty butterflies of fashion; all, except one.

Gerald Graham was not a man to be despised by man or woman; there was something so frank, so noble, and manly about him that he was instead one to be admired even by his enemies, a handsome young fellow of thirty, with lots of brains, lots of daring, physical and moral, and plenty of money.

After a week at Darkewood, during which Mrs. Devereaux dressed and smiled ravishingly for his benefit, while he attentively studied her *bête noire*, the young hoiden, and while Philip went moodily about his farm feeling lost and onely, Gerald Graham became Nest's shadow.

A gay cavalier in all her rides, a companion in her walks, he boated with her, fished with her, talked with her until he fell madly in love with the unconsciously beautiful young tomboy, who interested him as no society woman had ever done or ever could.

Jealousy made Mrs. Devereaux very bitter of tongue. She never lost a chance to taunt Nest with her dependence, or scoff at her daring, and put misconstruction upon her most generous and disinterested act.

Nest was by nature quick of temper, hot, and passionate of blood. She controlled herself as long as she could—as long as self-respect and respect for Phil, dear old Phil, who had somehow grown so moody and out of place under his sister's taunts—would let her.

She sought her guardian, and found him in the library one day.

His head was bowed on his hands, and when he lifted his face, the eyes were haggard with painful thought.

Gerald Graham had just left him, and what had he said to bring that look upon the face she had learned to look upon as the noblest, and best, and kindest on earth?

She had come to speak of her own troubles—to tell him she must go away to earn her own living, that she could bear this dependence on him, with which she was so often taunted by his sister, no longer; but she forgot them in the sight of his.

"Oh, Guardy Phil, what is it?" she cried, going on her knees before him, her voice and face tremulous with pity. "Are you ill?"

"No, little one," he answered, with a slow, weary smile, "not physically; mentally, I don't know. The thought of parting with my *bon camarade* is hardly productive of pleasure. Ernestine"—the smile vanished, his voice became sterner—"perhaps you know, but he said you didn't! Gerald Graham has just asked my consent to woo you—as his wife, child. What shall I say to him?"

Her face flushed, then blanched, and flushed again.

"Tell him?" she repeated; then bitterly, "Tell him that I thank him for the honour he would confer upon me, but——Oh, Phil! Phil!"—and she shrunk shivering to the floor and burst into a storm of sobs, her face pressed to her palms—"do you want to get rid of me? You are cruel too."

A moment he looked at her in silence, then a slow, almost fearful light crept into his eyes.

He touched the bowed head with a reverence and devotion he had never given to any cultured or queenly dame of fashion.

"Nest," he said softly, gently drawing her to his breast, "I've been learning my own heart while surrounded by all these people for the last five or six weeks. I've seen you falling in love with young Graham"—she started, but he went on—"and in my mind I've forced myself to see my life as it must be without you, sweet. You know the dead old trunk of a tree on the edge of the woods? I know my life would be like that without the beautiful verdure of your dear presence round it."

"But I don't love Gerald Graham, except as a friend, a good noble man, and a good rider, a good shot," she protested.

And the haggard eyes broke into light of wonder and incredulity.

Then—well, suffice it to say that less than a month later his troublesome charge became Philip Darke's beloved wife, his *bon camarade* for life.

It was a hard hit for Graham, but he had never been encouraged by Nest, who had unconsciously lost her heart to her guardian long before.

The Duchess of Leinster still keeps pace with Prince Madblood, and the ditches are as deep, and the fences as steep as ever, and Ernestine's husband more her lover than he was of yore; and the bright-eyed, impulsive, dashing, and lovable little lady of Darkewood does not regret it.

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THE MAN MY SISTER MARRIED.

CHAPTER XIII.

ABOUT the tiny thing, and yellow from being long laid away, a faint odour of violets lingered; in one corner was the embroidered "L"—my own work.

"Will you not tell me just how it all happened?" he asked tenderly. "Let me help you as I did before. Oh, Letty, do I not deserve your confidence?"

"Oh, I cannot, I cannot!" I moaned.

"I am cruel to ask it," he said quickly; "you are so pale and troubled now. Get up from the floor, you poor child, and let me take you home. I ordered the horses a half-hour ago."

"I hate to tell you all," I said steadily, "because it makes me out a sly and spying thing; but my silly pride about that dies at this moment. *I won't* get off the floor, for a mean person like me ought to grovel. I want to tell somebody, for, truly, I know more than I can bear. I think, sometimes, I shall go crazy. I cannot sleep any more. If I find out other secrets of dead people I shall ask to be shut up in an asylum, for fear I shall take to killing, too. If I could give someone my ghosts I should be happy; and, you know, when you tell a thing that haunts you it often goes away. But why should I give you my horrors?"

"Because I have lived so long among them that they don't worry me," he said drearily.

"If I thought you would never mention it to me, and treat me as a good girl, not a prying, ungrateful demon, if only for a little while—a month, perhaps—I could bear to tell all."

"A month is a short time," he smiled; "I can promise that."

Then I told him all, even why I went there. Once or twice he moved uneasily and sighed, but he did not say a word.

"Please do not crouch on the floor any more," he said, when I had finished; "if there is anyone to do that, I should."

I got up on my feet and took his hand. "Never think any more, Mr. Scott, I shudder when you are near me," I said, and, before I knew what I was doing, I put his hand to my lips. He turned hastily and went to the window. I saw that his face was ghastly pale, his eyes misty with tears. We had talked so long it was quite dark outside, and the fragrance of the flowers, damp and sweet, swept across our faces.

"Sometime," he said slowly, "Margaret shall tell you all that story, after the probation."

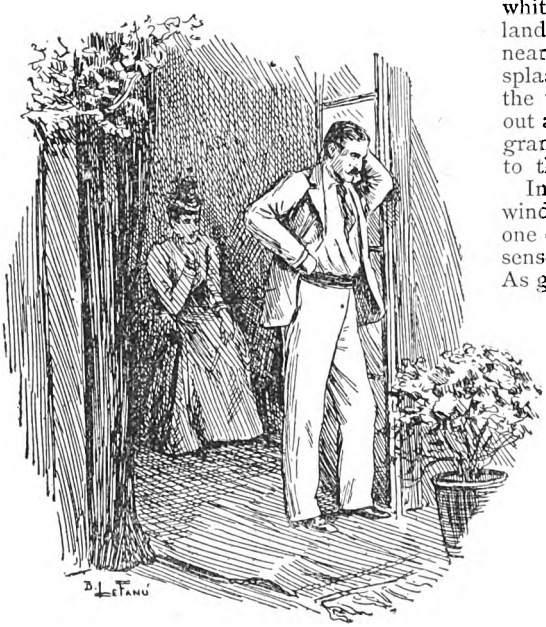
I was glad that I had not said a word of Yara or those letters, only of the hotel and what I saw there.

"I hate it all," I said miserably.

"Do any of us think of it without agony?" he cried bitterly, then he suddenly checked himself. "Go brush your pretty curls, Letty, and have dinner with me. It is too late for yours at home. Let me try for that month of probation to make you see a John Scott other than the ruffian you think. You are hurt and sad over this affair with the Italian. You will be lonely without your lessons. Let me see if I cannot make your life brighter. My love for your sister Katherine makes you dear to me."

"If you speak of her I shall never like you," I cried. "Indeed, I cannot bear it."

"I will never speak of her, then, to you," he said, looking at me searchingly; "and yet, about that—her—you are not like yourself. I never can read you, Letty."



He turned hastily and went to the window.

Strange as it may seem, his friendship, after that, took all my troubles, even my ghosts, away. I think it was because I had never had such a friend before. He came every day to take Aunt Marg and me driving or to sail in his yacht. He brought me books, and taught me to love the authors he cared for most. He praised my singing, and I found myself satisfied with my listeners as never before.

Without reading a line, I hid those two hateful letters and soon forgot I had them. I noticed I grew particular about my gowns and dissatisfied with my looks. I avoided Justina, and heard with delight that Dean Gregory had gone away, and Yara had limped across the beach a week after my new friendship began. I was not very strong that month, and that may be the reason I was so easy to lead and so grateful for kindness and courtesy.

One night in that month, July, there came a terrible storm; the wind roared across the Gulf; the sea raged in fury, thundering along the sand, and the flying spray stretched out great white arms to the shivering homes on the land, those houses on stilts, forlornly set near the beach. Often the water splashed against my window, and I heard the waves beneath the house rush in and out and break against the porch, and all grandfather's rose-bushes were covered to their tops in water, and many died.

In the morning, sullen and grey, the wind still howled and the sea roared, and one could not hear another sound! Every sense was stunned by nature's warfare. As grandfather and I were trying to bring order out of the chaos of his rose-bushes, John rode by and stopped to tell me that he was going fifteen miles along the beach to see after some of his property which he thought the storm might have injured.

How handsome he looked, on his big black horse! My mind went back to Justina's story. He had held me, a tiny baby, close to his heart and rode with me long weary miles. Did I cry and wail as babies do in such misery as mine? I must have done so, but I knew he was not impatient or cross. I fancied the tender pity in his beautiful eyes as he bent over me—the helpless sigh from his lips. At any rate, he had held me to his heart then, if he never would again.

"Letty, you have been staring straight at me for five minutes," he said uncomfortably, "and you have not said a word." I turned rosy red and began playing with the tassels on a very pretty blue gown I had made myself and put on, knowing that he would ride down some time during the day.

"I was thinking," I stammered. "Is it not dangerous to ride on the beach now?"

"You, a little sea-loving maid, a mariner's grandchild, to ask! You had better go finish your sleep, and quit dreaming in daylight. Did you know that I came down and tried to reason with that obstinate barnacle, your grandfather, who, as usual, flung his thirty years' experience here in my face?"

"You were worried about the sea, too," I said triumphantly, and watched him ride away. All that day I felt queer and uncanny. The wind still raged and the sea grew more threatening. I thought of the ships far out, and the sailors. I fancied the green, curling surf, peopled with poor drowned men, and how in far, sandy tide-inlets, they would lie unburied, lost to all who loved them. What an army they are too, followed with more miserable shadows of wrecked

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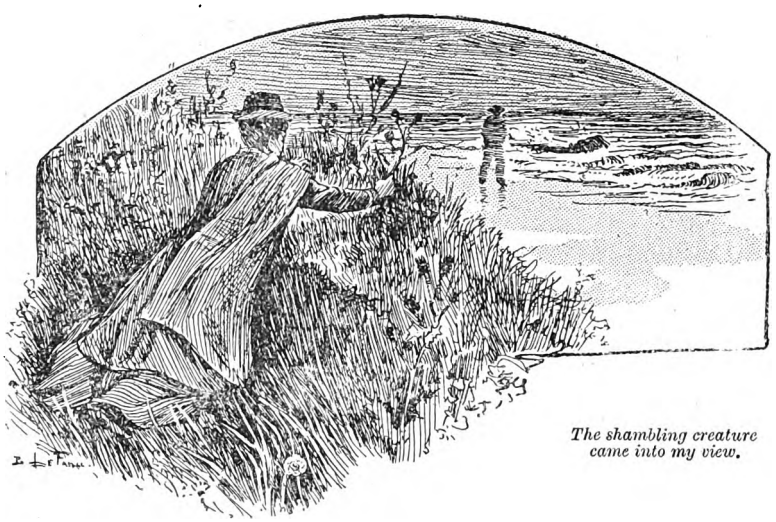
homes and hearts than all who went to wars, watched out of sight and recorded in a country's annals.

At last, forgetting all but my strange presentiments, I set out for Justina's cottage to get her to read the cards. There is no truth in it, I thought, as I went along, "but it is a comfort to know the red ones turn up and mean good fortunes. If spades should run, I don't think I could stand it."

When I reached her cottage, I found it locked: every window and the two doors. Even when she goes away she never fastens her door. Dear me, there is nothing in her house to tempt even a fellow-Mexican! I fancied I heard a faint cry when I tried the front door a second time, but the storm made such a noise, I might have been mistaken.

But as I stood there the queer feeling came back, and an unconquerable impulse to go into that house. I am not a coward—anyone can see that—so I went round to the back and forced a window. Do you know, I felt that Justina needed me, and yet they say she has no unusual powers, and is only a fraud!



The shambling creature came into my view.

The house was black and still, the curtains down; no one in the kitchen; in the front room I stumbled over something on the floor that sent me off my feet, shuddering with fear and horror. Trembling, and avoiding that thing, I went to the matchbox. I lit a candle. There, beside the table, sat Justina, bound hand and foot, and gagged—a horrible sight, with her black, swollen face and starting eyes. I set her free, cutting the tight cords that had scarred her flesh; then I dashed water in her face.

"Yara," she gasped, "he is gone to kill the man, Chica love."

To kill the man I loved! A great sob rose in my throat. "Justina," I cried, "listen—keep your senses. Be calm. Tell me, when did he start? Yara, when did he come?"

"This afternoon, he sit here and drink. I guess his dark thoughts. I watch him, and creep out—creep ever so softly to my Chica. I knew he meant to kill; but he caught me, dragged me here, left me this way. Oh, I have called my baby for hours; she came, my Chica! Oh, I lied about the trance! I did not do that. It was a fraud. The Colonel told him to tell you all about your sister. He hates the man you love. He wanted you to stab his heart. I am a wicked woman. You will have no masses said for Justina. Oh, say you will, Chica! let me die in peace—in peace." She raised herself from her seat, and clung convulsively to my knees.

Justina, bound hand and foot, and gagged.

"I will," I said, freeing myself, and then I went toward the door. "If that good man is killed, Justina, my heart will break. What can I do?"

"Yara went along the beach. He is lame," she gasped; "you are so quick, run along, get ahead, and warn Mr. Scott. Oh, Chica, have masses said for my soul, my wicked soul!"

I drew my cloak about me and started across the sand; then up to the street, where I ran like a mad woman. The fog, wet and grey, stung my face, as the wind hurled it along laden with sand, and the spray, as it dashed over the street, wet me and clung to me with dripping clots of foam. I saw faces at the windows as I passed; they must have wondered what it was, a spectre or a woman.

At last, a speck in the grey distance, I saw a limping figure, and I knew I was in time. Then, when I was far ahead, I turned down to the beach, for night was coming on and I might miss John in the darkness. I crouched behind a low sand-hill, where I might watch either way, and, as I waited the shambling creature came into my view, pushing steadily on to seek his prey. I thought he saw me, and, mad with fear, I ran back among the hills. I crept forward after that, starting at every water-rotted log. I thought every moment I might fall over him, lying hid and waiting.

Just where a deep creek crept in across the sand to the shore I saw a black object, and it moved. That was he, waiting there; he dared not run the risk of death in that deep inlet with its rushing tide, nor to wet the revolver he carried for his work. I went back a little way; the water ran so far into the land I dared not go to the end to cross. I must be near the assassin to do any good. I stepped into the water, with a little shiver of dread. I dared not think what a terrible current there was rushing back to the beach after each big wave, nor what frightful sea-monster might have been hurled in by a breaker, nor of that watching, hideous thing so near.

When the water reached my waist it lifted me off my feet, clinging to my wet garments like an octopus, giant-armed, reaching for its prey. I struggled ahead, but the force drew me to the wild sea where, at the mouth of the creek, great breakers fought a terrible battle with the out-going waves

To this maelstrom I floated helpless.

"I will reach land," I panted; "the sea shall not drown me. They say that never a Lombard lies there. They always died ashore, and they were all seafaring folks too. I, the last of the line, I will not drown."

Then as my strength failed, and I was near giving up the cruel struggle, a big wave seized me, whirled me about, and tossed me, light as thistle, down upon the sand. Staggering under my water-weighed garments, I ran ahead into the darkness, in the path I knew he must come. Hark, above the storm I heard the thud of a

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"Letty!" he cried, and forced the horse up beside me.

horse's hoofs on the hard sand. He would ride me down, and go on unheeding.

"John," I cried, and the wind took up my cry, and carried it far from me with mocking delight. A great, dripping, panting thing came upon me, then swerved, as I stood there helpless.

"John," I called, "will you not hear? There must be some mercy in heaven!"

"Letty!" he cried, and forced the horse up beside me. "Letty! here! and I—I thought a dead woman called me."

"When I have risked my life to save you," I sobbed, "you thrust her memory between us."

He leaped from his horse and caught me in his arms. "Risked your life to save me, my darling, my best beloved!" and it did not seem his voice at all with all that fire in it. "My darling!" I heard him say that, and to a living woman, not a dead one. He flung off my dripping cape and wrapped his coat about me, while I told him in a few gasping words of that dreadful creature waiting there.

"It would have been kinder to let me die," he said; "shame on me for that speech. Oh, I am grateful to you, but," with his old laugh, "what shall I do with you? Poor little shivering thing. You will get your death. I don't know a house near here."

"Take me home, John, back across the land, not near that—that awful thing."

"But how? Dare you ride behind me? Don can carry two. He is wise and gentle, though he looks so fierce. Don, will you carry the brave little maid who saved your master's worthless life?"

He mounted the great plunging creature, then reached down his hands to me, the rein across his arm. How easily he lifted me clear from the ground, and calmed the frightened horse. I clung to him as the sea swept up against us and the wind roared in our faces. I could hold him there in the darkness and feel that I loved him. I wished I might never see the morrow, only to die that night, and never wake to know he did not care for me.

At last we turned again to the beach, and there, ahead, shone the light from our little cottage, a yellow gleam in the night; never so dear, so welcome to me before, for I felt my senses leaving me, and I wanted him to think me brave and strong. I felt that he lifted me down, and held me to his heart.

"I think I can walk," I faltered.

"I carried you years before, when you were a tiny baby. That gives me the right now, little heroine."

And then I did not know any more.

CHAPTER XIV.

I REMEMBER someone laid me on my bed, and Aunt Marg and Liz wept over me; then a delicious feeling of warmth and comfort came upon me; yet I seemed frozen to my heart; afterwards a sharp pain like the stab from a knife came in my breast, and I cried out in agony. Soon I could not think rationally, the room was whirling round, and I could see nothing distinctly. Once I recognised Aunt Marg, and asked her if someone had gone to Justina's, and she answered that John had.

"He never forgets to do a kindess," I cried. Then I forgot again, and seemed out on the sea-swept beach, facing the storm. It was very dark, and out of the shadows great queer things came and gibed at me, and long arms stretched themselves out to drag me into some horror I could not fathom. Many times Antonio came creeping by the bed, his wild eyes glittering, a long keen knife in his hand. Then Captain Dana, misty and pale, appeared and poured a white powder into wine. I screamed, "Do the dead come back to do murder, to be revenged on the living?"

Sometimes I was running along the sand, trying to overtake the shambling figure, but he was always just ahead. I could see him, but never gain on him; he would turn and leer at me, and wave his hand mockingly. Often I went to that lonely hut, and there sat Justina, with staring eyes and purple face, and she would curse me and say, "Chica, this is your work. You sent Yara here, and he has killed me."

Oh, those frightful dreams of the sea, when I struggled in the water, and great sea monsters came and dragged me down; wound slimy clutching arms about me and held me fast. They said afterwards I struggled terribly then, and only John could hold me.

One day, however, the weight seemed lifted off my chest, and my head was clear, but I was too weak to lift my hand.

"Is she better?" said John's voice; and Aunt Marg, who must have been sitting by me, rose and answered there was hope. He came to me, lifted my hand in his warm palm, and held it.

"John," said Aunt Marg—and how far away her voice sounded!—"I think that you love our little Violet."

"Margaret," he cried brokenly, "don't talk to me of love. If she were dearer to me than my life I would never tell her so. It would be a crime to link her fate with mine after my past. No good could come of such a union. My best love was given to Katherine—is hers yet; I would not cheat this child with a mockery of affection. Some day she will meet someone near her age, and be happy with him. She is my sister, and I will be her brother my life long."

Oh, how I struggled! At last my heavy lids opened, and the words came. "Only a little while, John; if you do not love me, I shall die."

I said I would not live, but I did. I came back to health by slow steps—long days of weakness, then a greed for food, and a fierce distaste for my bed and the narrow confines of my room. How beautiful those autumn days were to me! for I had been shut up nearly two months. When I could go downstairs, how good they all were! John sent flowers daily, and my room was a garden.

I could lie on a sofa and look on the blue sea, the flying clouds, the tiny white sails in the distance, and be glad of just living. After all, the sunlight and free air are better than cold unknown death, our land dearer than the unexplored country. I was very penitent with Justina, but she, good soul, never remembered my unkindness. She would come and kiss my hand and cry over me.

"The angels did not get Chica," she would say; "old Justina's prayers were heard by the blessed saints!" She seemed as if she had entered into a compact with the blessed saints to outwit the angels and to rejoice in it. I was too weak to try to tease her. I only said, "I thought the angels were not particularly anxious to have me I have not been a shining light on earth."

Aunt Marg was very sweet and good during the days of my convalescence. She even tried to gather the gossip of the neighbourhood that she might entertain me. She made me the prettiest blue wrapper, and used to brush my hair, cut

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short now, and curling in little rings all over my head, and tell me I was better looking than ever.

"As if I cared," I said, mournfully one day, when she was sitting beside me; and indeed I hardly ever looked in the glass now. "You never mentioned that Mexican, Aunt Marg, in your news; where is he?"

"He was drowned, dear. He must have waited by the creek until very late, and not knowing the beach, wandered too close to the sea. They found him on the sand when the waves went down; no one identified him, and he was buried among the unknown dead."

"I am glad he died thus," I said; "I am so weary of other—other deaths," I finished evasively; then I thought of her goodness, and how my speech must have hurt her. "Aunt Marg," I cried, penitently, "if you had ever showed you cared so much for me, how I should have loved you! But you always held me at arm's length."

"I have been afraid," she stammered, "of my own unworthiness of innocent love, and of attaching myself to one who might hurt me cruelly. My life has made me bitter, Letty."

I looked at her sweet face framed in its snowy hair. "You could not be bitter if you tried, Aunt Marg; tell me, was I very crazy when I was ill."

"You talked most of the time very wildly."

"Of what?"

"Sea-monsters, wicked men, your Mexican protegé, and other things," she answered.

"Did I scream and fight them?"

"Sometimes."

"Who held me?"

"John."

"Me! In my nightgown!" I said wickedly. "No wonder you blush!" But I did not, I had not the grace to. "I should think that his dear Katherine's memory would have made taking care of me very trying to him."

"Katherine was your sister, dear."

"Only half, I'm glad to say," I answered, thumping my pillow. "Now, Liz said I told everything when I was out of my head, and as I don't know all of that story, and John said you should tell me, you ought to, straight away; and before you begin, I assure you I know a great deal about Katherine, and I am very sorry she was any relation of mine."

"I have sometimes thought," said Aunt Marg, folding her thin white hands and looking out on the sea, "that the possession of such beauty as Katherine had makes a woman heartless. She is so surrounded by flattery all her life, she fails to gain any of the finer attributes of womanly goodness forced on plainer women or born in them.

"It was so with your father, Paul Lombard. He could win hearts so easily, he cared little for them afterward. When he came to San Antonio, where I lived with my invalid father and my sister Mary, I hated him. It's odd to say that to you, dear, but I must tell my story in my own way. Yet he won my father, he was so handsome, so reckless and merry, and my sister grew to love him; and though I strove with all my might to prevent it, they were married at my father's death-bed. Mary was so used to me—she always leaned on a stronger will—I had not the heart to leave her, and I went to Galveston with her and her husband. I will say of Paul that he forgave the past and was always kind to me.

"Katherine was about fifteen then, but marvellously matured in mind and body. Girls of southern blood become women so early. She was very wild and headstrong, and quarrelled with your grandfather all the time. I loved her in a short time, she was so brilliant and merry, and I was a quiet, sober sort of a girl. I never had any childhood. She was engaged to Dean Gregory then, and I used to carry notes for them, and wait on Katherine like a slave. Dean had to be secret in his courtship, for his mother did not like Katherine, and would never hear of her marrying her son. Her husband was mining in Mexico most of the time, and we thought Dean went there to be with him; afterward I knew differently.

"They always thought Doctor Scott would leave Dean some of his property; but just before the Doctor died there was a story about Dean and a quadroon girl, and the doctor, being a northern man, looked on such things with horror, so Dean was left out of the will. Dean always blamed John, but John never even knew about it. When Katherine found Dean would have no money she grew cold to him, though I think she cared a great deal for him; and one day she married John Scott, and I did not even know a thing about it, when she and I were such friends. He was madly in love with her.

"When rumours of the war came, John made up his mind to go to Mexico. Texas was in a fever, every man against his neighbour, and John had promised his father on his death-bed never to fight against the north. Mrs. Scott was a Southerner, and that tied John's hands from going into the Federal Army. He could not fight against his own kin, he was so young. In the midst of such imposing forces, he did the wisest thing; he left the country.

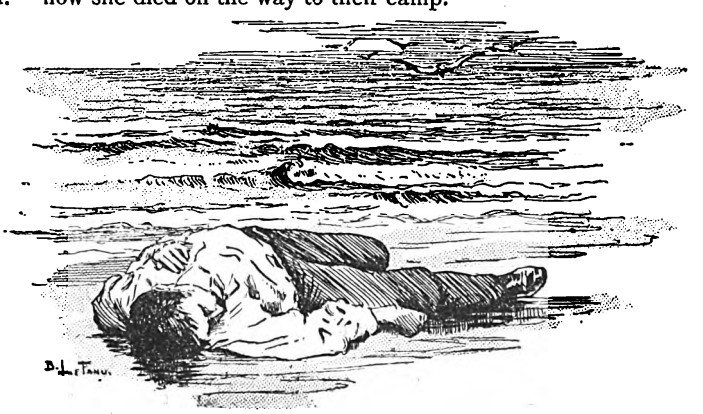
"Doctor Scott owned a great deal of property in Mexico, and John went there. When your father heard of his going, he wanted to join the party, and that led to others going. You know the rest; all that Yara told you was true. Justina confessed everything when you were ill. From what I know now, I am sure Katherine wrote to Dean after her marriage. She still cared for him, and she never loved John. When she made that wicked plan for Dean to take her away, she never dreamed of the terrible results. No woman could be so wicked, so utterly heartless.

"That day the trouble came, we were camped by a little stream bordered by mesquite trees; and as our horses were footsore we made quite a stay. We saw some Mexicans along our route, but no Indians, so we were at ease about danger; afterwards I knew those men belonged to Xarras' band. Even some of our servants were his men, and they all ran away when they were most needed.

"I wonder sometimes why I, of all the others, was saved. It was so curious, too; for all the reason I went to walk that day was because I was angry at the journey, at Katherine's rudeness to me, at my sister Mary's husband for taking her and her young baby on such a fool's errand. I remember I put you to sleep and made Mary comfortable—she was never strong, and the long journey wearied her sadly—and then I went away from the camp to fight my battle alone.

"I was calmer when I turned back; resolved, no matter what hardships came, to be true to Mary and stay by her; when my thoughts were rudely broken by the sound of shots, and then women's cries—such terrible ones! I crept close to the camp, and there, crossing the stream, were eight men on horseback rudely disguised as Indians. I knew them, every-one. I never forget faces, and all those men I had spoken with on our way; two of our servants were among them.

"Your father ran out at the first shot. It was meant to alarm the watcher. Antonio, the man you pitied, killed your father as he ran out of his tent, and, as he fell forward on his face, turned and shot him again in the back. Mary, with you, a three months' old baby, in her arms, ran to her husband, and one man seized her, flung you on the ground, and thrust her into a waggon. Mercifully she had fainted. I know now she died on the way to their camp.



They found him on the sand when the waves went down.

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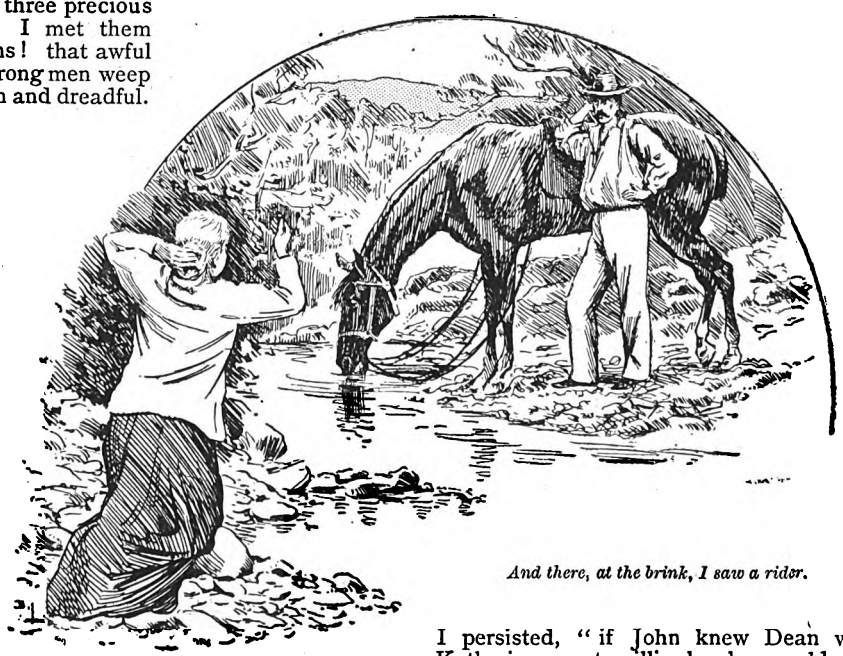
"I saw Katherine mount a horse, not one look of pity on her beautiful face; and then she and Xarras rode ahead, while the rest of the women, bound and gagged, were loaded into a waggon to which four of our horses were harnessed, and then they all crossed the river, disappearing at a gallop. When I think of that scene—the brutality of those men to helpless women, the horrors afterward—I could almost wish I might give them the poisoned cup myself.

"You may have judged Captain Dana harshly, but his wife and daughter were there, and he never saw them again. I have been blamed for not coming forward; called a coward; accused of collusion with Katherine; of every cruel thing, by those men in their agony. They know now, when my life has been one long martyrdom, that I was innocent of wrong. I dared not move, and then I thought of you, helpless and so dear to me. If a wild animal came, and there were many of them in that country, what a horrible fate would come to you! It might be hours before the men came back. I could save you, and I did.

"When the Mexicans had disappeared across the plain in a cloud of dust, I crept from my hiding place, seized you, and with the strength of desperation ran in the direction our men had gone.

"It was three hours, three precious hours to them, before I met them returning. Oh, heavens! that awful scene! I never saw strong men weep before, nor look so stern and dreadful. As I finished my story, one young man, not married a month, bared his arm and cut a great cross in the quivering flesh; holding up his dripping knife, he made all those men swear a fearful oath of extermination, and it was carried out. He never lived for his vengeance, but died in a madhouse, after a year of hopeless search; but one man hunted every assassin down, one man's courage and patience never failed.



And there, at the brink, I saw a rider.

"They rode on at a gallop, the dogs after them, and I toiled back to the camp with you. All that terrible night you wept and wailed, and I could do nothing for you. I was alone in that dreary place, where only a dead man lay face downward as he fell; for there was none to care for the dead, when the living were in such need. Alone in that desert land, the trees rustled like ghostly assassins, the very moonlight shadows drove me mad, with fear of creeping men returning to make their work more sure, to kill the witness of it all.

"In the grey dawn, the dogs, limping and weary, came back. and your father's Gordon setter lay down by him, and once in a while would rise and howl, a dreary dreadful cry that quivered along the empty distance, bringing ghastly echoes back to mock us. I knew my brain was giving way. I could not think. I only cried: 'Margaret, the child will die if you do not keep calm, if you have not reason.'

"I went to the river, bathed my face, and flung handfuls of water over my burning forehead. And there, at the brink, I saw a rider, and I had no strength to fly, even if he were an enemy. Oh, heavens! I did not know him at first. That awful mad-eyed, haggard face; the bloodless lips; the terrible look! His tired steed drank greedily at the stream, and then the rider's dazed eyes saw me.

"'John, I am not a ghost,' I cried; 'why do you look at me so, as if you saw some horror? I am Margaret.'

"Then he answered with a groan of agony, 'Margaret, your hair is as white as snow.'"

"Aunt Marg," I sobbed, "tell me no more. Tell me no more. Oh, my miserable life! My treachery to you! I cannot, cannot bear it. I, too, could kill. There was justice in those murders. And think of my treatment to you, my coldness, and my want of gratitude! Oh, can you ever forget and forgive?"

"My dear, I love you; I always did, even when I feared you might be like her, and then I dared not care for you." She took my head upon her breast, tenderly smoothing my burning face. "It has been too much for you, my dear, but this is the end. Ah, that I could have told you years before, but I had to keep my oath of silence. John came back to take me to San Antonio, and on the way we met Justina, and through her you lived.

"For a year I was crazy, in an asylum, dear, and you can understand what a scene that was, to turn a strong-headed, clear-brained woman as I was into a maniac. When I recovered I learned that the search had been unsuccessful, though John had spent thousands and hired an army of men in the pursuit. Then, when they reproached him, as men will at such times, for taking them to such a spot, he swore to devote his life to that pursuit and bring every Mexican to justice, and he kept his oath.

"Yara told those men at first of Katherine's complicity, but John was never informed. They feared he might cease his ardour or turn his hatred only to one man, and forsake their cause. No Mexican told that Xarras was Dean Gregory, for they were faithful to him and must have loved him. All those poor women found happy release in death, and we have learned their sufferings were short. Two took their own lives. I cannot speak any more, Letty; it is too dreadful."

"But Aunt Marg," I persisted, "if John knew Dean was Xarras, and that Katherine went willingly, he would still keep his oath to murder."

"I fear he would."

I lifted my face and kissed her, a long silent kiss.

Two hours afterwards grandfather came in. I had been thinking all that time how to escape from the tangled path and be out in the sunlight again.

"I want you to go to Dean Gregory, grandfather—he is here—and tell him I must see him."

"It's hard to be led by a third generation," he grumbled, "but 'wisdom from babes,' I s'pose; but I tell ye frankly, Letty, I hate him."

"Not more than I do," I answered; and that very evening Liz, looking cross and worried, came to tell me Dean Gregory was at the door, waiting to see me.

(To be continued next week.)

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LADS AND LASSES AT SCHOOL.

WHEN I was a lad at school. How long ago is that? Men whose beards are getting full of the sort of frost that does not thaw in the spring may love to gossip about the past, but they do not love to *think* of it *when alone.* Oh, the infinite pathos, penitence and heartbreak of that appealing line in Cardinal Newman's "Lead, Kindly Light,"—"*Remember not past years.*" Like spilled water, memory spreads unpleasantly when let go.

What I want to recall now is whether my school-days were my happiest, healthiest days. The facts show clear through the mists, and the answer is, No. The writer came of a sound stock, and was well cared for, yet his greatest pains and most frequent and dangerous illnesses were when he was a lad at school. I do not affirm this to be the rule with boys, but it was so, without especial reason, with me.

And here is another man who says: "All my life, even as a lad at school, I suffered from illness. I had dizziness, violent headaches, nausea, and saw spots floating before my eyes. Sometimes I vomited a greenish-yellow fatty matter, and again was qualmish and sick without vomiting. While in my teens and up to manhood I had bilious attacks *every week*, more or less severe. At times I felt fairly well, and then would be taken with cold shivers, and obliged to go to bed. During each attack my appetite left me, and I could touch no food whatever. Often would I come home from my work and sit down to my dinner without taking a mouthful.

"As time went on, although I was muscularly stronger, I felt a great strain on my nervous system, oppression and soreness in the head, and pain and heat behind the eyes. I felt tired and low-spirited, and got but little rest at night."

The writer's next sentence should stand by itself, like a monument. [The printer will please set it in italics.]

"*In this way I continued better and worse for over thirty-four years, and what I suffered none can imagine.*"

Let the reader try to round up that statement in his mind and see how large a fact it is, and what a lesson it teaches.

The witness proceeds: "I underwent every sort of medical treatment and took every medicine that I heard of, but they all left me in a short time as bad as ever.

"In May, 1890, a cousin of mine, Joseph Pyke, of York, West Australia, paid us a visit and mentioned what Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup had done for him when similarly afflicted in Australia. For a time I refused to try it, but being at my wits' end, I got a bottle from Mr. Frank May's store in Friar Street, and began using it. The contents of that single bottle relieved me, and I kept on with the medicine in faith and hope.

"Soon all my ailments vanished, and from that time to this I have been in good health, for which my thanks are due to Mother Seigel. Her remedy it is that has built me up, and made me stronger and more energetic than I have been for many, many years. Had I known of it earlier how much misery I might have avoided. I have worked for Messrs. Huntley and Palmer, Biscuit Manufacturers, Reading, for 39 years, and am still in their employ.—Yours truly, (Signed) Charles Pyke, 16, York Place, Chatham Street, Reading. October 25th, 1892."

What now are we to conclude from Mr. Pyke's experience? You see, of course, the meaning of it; that disease does its most damaging work among the young. The great majority of the human race die in childhood. The fittest, that is, the strongest, survive, just as Darwin says. We fellows with the frosty beards were able to fight through, and beat the diseases, the drugs, and the doctors. The weaklings fell and were buried. Next, parents don't watch the ills of their children with half an eye. Age and maturity are blind and selfish. It is the chicks that need care and protection. If our friend at Reading had met with Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup in boyhood—but, alas! it was not in existence then. It is to be had *now*, however, and if there are many pained and suffering children, who is to blame? Answer us that.

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Margate .. ,,	6. 0 ..	6. 0
TILBURY (Special Train awaits Steamer) .. ,,	8.45 ..	8.45

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YARMOUTH and LOWESTOFT, from Old Swan Pier, at 9.10 a.m., by KOH-I-NOOR to HARWICH, thence by Palace Steamer VICTORIA.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 293.—Vol. XI. FOR WEEK ENDING AUGUST 11, 1894. [Price One Penny.

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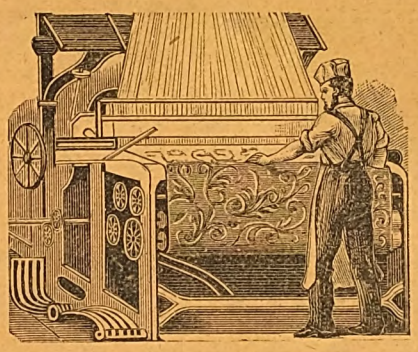

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 293.—Vol. XI. *FOR THE WEEK ENDING AUGUST 11, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

Zuma

TOWARD the middle of the seventeenth century the animosity of the Peruvian Indians against the Spaniards still existed in all its energy; traditions only too faithful preserved among this oppressed and down-trodden people the frightful remembrance of the cruelty of their conquerors. They were conquered, but not submissive.

At this time a Viceroy, more cruel than any of his predecessors, filled the measure of their hate. His secretary, a hard and avaricious man, hated even more than his master, suddenly died, and it was universally believed that he had been poisoned by the Indians. It was well known that they were acquainted with the most deadly poisons, and more than once they had been convicted of using them, but neither torture nor death could make them confess their guilt.

In the meanwhile the Viceroy was recalled, and in his place the Count de Cinchon was appointed. The Count, gifted with the most amiable qualities, and with every virtue that could conciliate the mind and win the heart, had just married a young and charming wife.

The Countess was anxious to accompany her husband, but, fearing the hate and perfidy of the Indians, he decided to leave her in Spain. The thought of her husband's exposure to such peril, however, determined the Countess to follow him to the New World. She took with her several ladies, who were to compose her Court at Lima. Among them was her dearest friend, Donna Beatrice.

The Indians, delighted to be rid of their Viceroy, were no better disposed toward his successor; he was a Spaniard, and consequently they expected from him only injustice, greed, and tyranny. In vain they were told that the Count de Cinchon was humane and just; they repeated, "He is a Spaniard." This word to them said all that the most energetic hate could express. It was evident that the conquerors had failed to impress upon the natives the sublime moral of religion; they had been induced to practise a few external observations, but in their hearts they cherished all of their old superstitions and their idolatry.

The Spaniards little suspected the secret vengeance which the Indians in their misery, cherished. They had been forced to give up to their oppressors their gold and precious stones, but they still retained their greatest treasures, in the wonderful antidotes against poison which Providence had given them, and above all, in the bark of the quinquinna tree, of the properties of which they alone knew the secret, and which they had engaged by the most solemn oaths, frequently renewed, never to reveal.

Since the early days of slavery, the Indians had preserved a kind of interior government; they appointed chiefs, whose duty it was to assemble their people from time to time in some wild place, inaccessible to Europeans, where each renewed his own vows of secrecy and hate of the Spaniards. The Indians outside the city had far more freedom than those engaged on the public works, or those in the service of the Viceroy's palace; and they never failed to attend the midnight assemblies, which they regarded as their sole resource against tyranny.

Their principal chief (for there were several) was Ximeo, a man naturally noble and generous; but, from continual brooding over the wrongs of his people, his heart had closed to every sweet and tender emotion. Ximeo had one son, named Mirvan, who had inherited his father's nobility of mind, as well as his hatred of the Spaniards; he had married Zuma, the belle of the environs of Lima, and they had one child, a boy two years old.

Another chief, Azan, was second only to Ximeo in his influence over the Indians. Azan was cruel and vindictive; no virtue tempered the fury with which he always seemed animated. These two chiefs had a most illustrious origin, and were descended from the royal race of Incas.

A few days after the arrival of the new Viceroy, Ximeo appointed for the following night a meeting on the hill of the "tree of health," as they designated the quinquinna tree, and when they were all assembled he said, "Friends, a new tyrant is to reign over us, unhappy Children of the Sun, who are

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forced to envelop ourselves in darkness in order to renew the oaths of a just vengeance. Let us repeat around the 'tree of health' the terrible formula which engages us for ever to conceal our secrets."

In a loud, firm tone Ximeo then cried: "We swear never to reveal to the Europeans the divine virtues of this sacred tree, the sole treasure which is left us! Woe to the faithless and perjured Indian who, seduced by fear or weakness, would reveal this secret to the destroyer of his gods, of his sovereigns, and of his country! Woe to the coward who would give this precious possession to the barbarians who have enslaved us, who have enslaved our lands, and who have shed the blood of our fathers, after making them suffer unheard of tortures! Let them keep the gold which they covet, but let us preserve this gift from heaven!

"If a traitor be found among us, let us swear to pursue him, and to destroy him, though he be our father, our brother, our son! Let us swear if he be married, to pursue his wife and children, if they have not already denounced him, and to sacrifice them that his race may become extinct. Friends, do you all renew these oaths which your forefathers made, and which you have pronounced so often?"

"Yes, yes!" shouted the Indians. "We swear to keep these secrets with inviolable fidelity, and to suffer, if necessary, the most frightful torments and death, rather than reveal them."

The Vice-Queen, on her arrival at the gate of Lima, was met by a crowd of young Indian girls, carrying baskets of flowers. Zuma was their leader, and the Countess was so struck with her beauty, her grace, and the lovely expression of her face, that, a few days later, the young Indian was appointed to the service of the palace, and later to that of the Countess's person. This favour seemed most imprudent to Donna Beatrice, whose love for the Vice-Queen made her listen only too willingly to the stories of the perfidy of the Indians. She not only believed all that was told her, but in her anxiety she conceived the greatest aversion to Zuma, which became stronger when it was found impossible to prejudice the Countess against her.

The Vice-Queen daily grew more fond of the object of so much calumny and injustice. Zuma, on her side, had the tenderest affection for the Vice-Queen, but, in order to avoid disagreeable scenes, she kept in her own rooms unless the Countess required her presence.

In the meantime the Viceroy spared nothing in his endeavour to win the confidence of the Indians; but they had seen many viceroys in the beginning of their reigns display the same amiability and justice, so that the real goodness of the Count made no impression. It was looked upon as duplicity, or as weakness caused by the terror which the secretary's sudden death had inspired.

The Countess had been in Lima four months, when her health began to fail. At first it was attributed to the heat of the climate, but her sufferings increased daily, so that the greatest anxiety was felt; then she was suddenly seized with a violent fever. Every known remedy was used without effect. The distress of Donna Beatrice knew no bounds; she questioned the physician who had accompanied them from Spain, and he, feeling his skill baffled, spoke mysteriously, and implied some extraordinary cause. His manner, his reticence, gave Beatrice the horrible idea that her friend was dying of a slow poison. From that moment she knew no repose.

Though she carefully concealed her suspicions from the Countess, and even from the Count, it was impossible to do so from the two ladies-in-waiting, who strengthened them. But who could have committed this awful crime? No other than Zuma; Zuma, who entered the apartments of the Vice-Queen at all hours. But after having been treated with so much kindness and affection by the Countess, how could she commit such an atrocity? Zuma was "hypocritical, vain, ambitious," said the envious. In short, she was an Indian, and familiar with the darkest crimes.

During all these agitations, Zuma thought only of the Vice-Queen, whom she loved with the sincerity of a pure and grateful heart. She was deeply grieved that, although she knew of an infallible cure for the fever which was consuming her mistress, it was impossible to give it to her. Zuma knew only too well the terrible oaths by which the Indians had bound themselves never to reveal the secret. If only her own life had depended upon her speaking, she would not have hesitated for a moment; but this revelation would devote her husband and her child to certain death. Moreover, Ximeo, in order to assure himself of her discretion, had taken her little one as a hostage and placed him in the hands of the cruel Azan.

In the meanwhile the invalid grew worse; the fever, which had somewhat abated for a while, returned with renewed violence, and the physician admitted that he feared the Countess would not be able to resist the disease. Consternation was universal in the palace. The Vice-Queen, fully aware of her condition, showed the greatest courage and piety. She received the Sacrament, bade her friends farewell, and commended to her husband the happiness of the Indians, especially that of her dear Zuma. These duties performed, she calmly awaited death. Zuma, whose health had failed sensibly during the past three months, on witnessing the pathetic scene, was overcome, and that very evening was taken with the same disease of which the Countess was dying—the tierce fever.

Alarmed at her condition, Mirvan, with the consent of the Indians, secretly carried to his wife the precious powder which was to cure her; but only one dose, which he was to renew each day. Zuma received in the morning the first, which she was to take in the evening.

When she was alone, she looked at the powder; her tears flowed, and, raising her eyes to heaven, "Great God," she cried, "it is Thou who inspirest me! I can save her only by sacrificing myself; my part is taken. I will not reveal the secret; besides, they will not suspect such devotion, and they will attribute the recovery of my dear mistress to the medicines of the physician. I shall expose neither Mirvan nor my son, and I shall not have betrayed our oaths. I shall die, but she will live. Of what importance is the life of poor Zuma? How much more precious that of this child of heaven, the generous benefactress of the poor slave! Have I not just now heard her failing voice pray for the cruel Indians who leave her to die? Oh, my dearest mistress! Amid the shadows of death thou hast not forgotten thy faithful Zuma. I have heard thee pronounce her name and bless it. Yes, I swear by the sacred light of the sun, I swear to save thee!"

Zuma then carefully wrapped up the precious quinquinna powder, placed it in her bosom, and considered the means by which she might enter the cabinet where the medicines of the countess were kept. She had no idea of the horrible suspicions formed against her, nor that precautions had been taken to keep her, as well as all the other Indians, from this room. She believed that, since the Vice-Queen's illness, the Spanish ladies reserved to themselves exclusively the service of the interior, through zeal and jealousy, or by one of those customs which they called etiquette. She decided to go into this cabinet in the evening, when she would find only one attendant, who would probably be asleep; in the contrary case, she would say that her anxiety forced her to come to make inquiries of the invalid's state. At the same time, wishing to find out if it would be possible to enter without passing through the apartment of the countess, she descended into a long corridor, which she carefully examined; she saw that a little door opened into this corridor, just as she had imagined, and that the key was in the lock. She made up her mind to enter in the night on this side, and then she returned to her room.

All of Zuma's movements were carefully watched, and Donna Beatrice was told that in the morning Mirvan had visited his wife, leaving her apartment under great excitement—that later, Zuma had descended the stairs, and going through the corridor, had carefully examined the doors, stopping finally at the cabinet; then she had hastily returned to her room. Beatrice instantly divined that Zuma intended to slip into the cabinet in the evening. The women-in-waiting were ordered to watch the moment when the young Indian left her chamber, to leave the cabinet empty and the key in the door. Then Beatrice went to inform the Viceroy. Without adopting her suspicions, he was, nevertheless, very much agitated, and

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agreed to conceal himself with her to watch further developments.

During the evening, Beatrice was told that Zuma was stealthily coming down the staircase in the dim light. The watchers quickly concealed themselves. Presently, they heard the door of the cabinet softly open and Zuma appeared. She was pale and trembling, walking slowly and with great effort. She first listened at the door which opened into the apartment of the Countess. All was quiet. Then Zuma approached the table on which stood a glass containing the medicine of the Countess; into this she emptied the quinquinna powder. Immediately the horrified Viceroy sprang from the cabinet, crying, "Wretch, what have you done? What have you put into that glass?"

At this appearance, and upon hearing this question in such a frightful voice, the terror-stricken Zuma fell, saying, "I am lost!" She had fainted. They carried her to her room. The Count and Donna Beatrice decided that they would conceal the intended crime from the Vice-Queen. "She would ask pardon for this monster," said Count de Cinchon, "and nothing on earth would make me grant it. An example is necessary, and I will make it."

The report was instantly spread through the palace and the city that Zuma was accused of having attempted to poison the Vice-Queen. That same evening she was taken to prison.

Mirvan on hearing the report went to find Azan. "You have my son in your power," said he. "At least promise me that, if we guard the secret faithfully, you will, after our death, give up the child to my father."

"I swear it," replied Azan, "but be assured that the least indiscretion will cost him his life."

"We shall know how to die," said Mirvan.

He then left the fierce Indian, and voluntarily gave himself up as a prisoner. He had at once divined Zuma's intention, but he could justify her only by giving up their child to the rage of the fierce Azan. He resolved, therefore, to die with his unhappy wife.

At daybreak the council assembled to examine and judge the prisoners. The doors of the great hall were opened, and it was announced to the Indians that they were permitted to enter. They came in great numbers with their secret chiefs, Ximeo, Azan, and Thamir. Mirvan and Zuma were led in, both of them loaded with chains. Zuma, on seeing Mirvan, cried out: "Oh, he is not guilty! He had no share in what I did. He was entirely ignorant of my purpose."

Into this she emptied powder.

"Stop, Zuma," interrupted her husband. "Thy death is certain. Canst thou think of preserving my life? I am not accused, but I share thy fate. Zuma, let us die with courage, and our child will live."

Zuma comprehended the true sense of these words and said nothing.

The examination began. Zuma would not deny the act which both Beatrice and the Viceroy had witnessed. She was asked from whom she had received the powder which she put into the draught.

"She received it from me," said Mirvan.

Zuma denied this, affirming anew that her husband was ignorant of her intention.

"And what was your intention?" they demanded.

"It was not to poison the Vice-Queen."

"Why then did you use the powder? Did you believe that you were using a salutary remedy?"

At this question Zuma trembled. Her eyes met those of the savage Azan, whose threatening glance filled her heart with terror. In imagination she saw him murdering her child.

"No, no!" said she with a vacant look. "No, I cannot say that it was a salutary remedy."

"It was poison then? You confess it?"

"I confess nothing."

Then Ximeo came forward and placed himself between the husband and wife, saying: "Let them put me in the chains also; I will die with my children."

"Oh, my father, live for our little one!" exclaimed Mirvan and Zuma together.

But Ximeo persisted.

The judges had received orders not to use torture nor to seek accomplices. They removed Ximeo, and led the unfortunate pair back to prison. The physician of the Countess was examined; he declared that the Vice-Queen's malady had resisted the most powerful remedies, that it was attended by the most extraordinary symptoms, so that he could not avoid having suspicions; that the action of Zuma, leaving no doubt of the atrocity of her design, had confirmed his opinion that this wicked slave had been giving the Countess a slow poison; and that, later, finding herself excluded from the service of the chamber, and fearing that the youth of the Vice-Queen and the care with which she was guarded would triumph over a slow poison, she had endeavoured to consummate her crime by a strong dose. At this evidence the judges shuddered with horror, and at once condemned the prisoners to be burned at the stake that very day at noon.

They were brought back into the hall to hear their sentence. Mirvan showed a heroic firmness. Zuma threw herself at his feet, saying, "I am thy destroyer! That is my only grief. Oh! forgive me!"

"Stop!" he replied. "Accuse only the cruelty of our judges! Console thyself, Zuma. The tyrants who condemn us deliver us from a frightful yoke. In a few hours we shall no longer be their slaves."

These words moved even the hard heart of Azan. "Mirvan!" he cried, "have no fear for thy son; he shall be dearer to me than if he were my own."

It was nine o'clock in the morning; orders were given to prepare the stakes. The Vice-Queen was dying; the physician informed the Viceroy that it was impossible for the Countess to endure a third attack of fever. The Count, in the depths of despair, could not think of mercy.

The Count, unwilling to remain in Lima during the execution, rode out to a country house a few miles from the city, intending to return in the evening.

The unhappy Ximeo in vain revolved in his mind a thousand projects to save Mirvan and Zuma. He wished to consult with his friends, but during the whole morning the Indians were so strictly watched that there was not even a possibility of conversing in secret with Azan or Thamir. Soon a proclamation ordered all the Indians who were in Lima to attend the execution. They were unarmed. The Spanish guard was doubled, and surrounded the pile; besides, two hundred soldiers were to escort the unfortunate victims. There was nothing but submission, and Ximeo, past hope, prayed for courage to throw himself into the burning pile with his children.

While the whole excited city was waiting for this frightful spectacle, the Vice-Queen was weaker and more miserable than ever. The agitation of those around her had been extreme since six o'clock, and she was at last struck by it; she saw clearly that Beatrice was concealing something from her. Beatrice often left the room to gain composure, and during one of these periods of absence the countess insisted

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She fell into the arms of the priest.

upon an explanation, until one of the women-in-waiting gave an account of everything, adding that Zuma and Mirvan, far from denying their guilt, had gloried in it.

The surprise of the Countess was only equalled by the horror with which the frightful recital inspired her. "O, Infinite Mercy!" she cried, "I invoke Thee with more confidence than ever."

She at once ordered an open litter to be prepared. The women wrapped her in a long muslin robe, and, notwithstanding the tears and expostulations of the Spanish ladies and of Beatrice, who had hastened to her, the Countess was laid on the litter and carried by four slaves. A fifth held over her a large parasol. Lying thus, her face covered with a white veil, she gave the order to convey her to the place of execution.

Twelve o'clock sounded. The doors of the prison were opened, and Mirvan and Zuma came out, loaded with chains. Zuma, scarcely able to sustain herself, leaned on the arm of a priest, and was attended by two soldiers. An immense crowd pressed forward to see her. In this multitude she saw Azan holding her little child in his arms. At this sight she uttered a despairing cry, a mother's cry, which resounded in the depths of every heart, and, summoning all her strength, she extricated herself from the priest and the soldiers, and, darting towards Azan, she embraced her son.

"Zuma," said Azan softly, "be strong, courageous. Remember that your death will be a vengeance, and that it makes our secret still more inviolable."

"No vengeance!" replied Zuma bitterly "Oh! if I could only have saved the Vice-Queen!"

She could say no more; the soldiers again surrounded her, and again they took up the line of march.

It was only three hundred paces to the place of execution. A mournful trumpet announced the approach of the victims; the top of the pile, which was formed of resinous wood, was set on fire.

At this sight Zuma trembled with horror; the remembrance of her husband and child gave place to stupor; she thought only of the near destruction; she saw only inevitable death under the most frightful aspect; strength left her, her frozen blood no longer circulated in her veins; her face turned a deadly pallor, and, without losing consciousness, she fell into the arms of the priest, who, notwithstanding her vague protestations, continually exhorted her to repent.

"Zuma," said Mirvan, "our death will not be painful. Look at those whirls of smoke. We shall be stifled in a moment."

"Oh," replied Zuma, in a smothered voice, "I see only fire, only those awful flames!"

However, they were advancing, and each step that brought Zuma nearer to her last moment increased her unconquerable terror. Now they saw distinctly the Indians, sullen and terror-stricken, ranged round the pile, and bearing in sign of mourning great branches of cypress. The guard of Spanish soldiers surrounded the Indians.

Suddenly in the distance cries were heard. A horseman appeared riding at full speed, and shouted, "Stop the execution! the Vice-Queen commands it! She follows me!"

All waited. Zuma, with hands and eyes uplifted, prayed for strength, but her mind, weakened by terror, could feel no hope. At last the litter of the Vice-Queen was seen. Her bearer, urged by her, quickened their steps; they soon reached the unhappy pair. The Spanish guard hastened to range themselves around the Vice-Queen, The Indians approached and formed a half-circle opposite her, then the Countess, raising her veil, revealed a countenance pale and languid, but full of a more than earthly sweetness.

"I have not the happy privilege of granting pardon," said she, "but I am sure of obtaining it from the goodness of the Viceroy. While waiting, I take under my protection these two unfortunate ones. Let their irons be broken. Let them extinguish this frightful pile, which never should have been kindled had I known of it earlier."

At these words all the Indians, throwing down their cypress-branches, made the air ring with cries of "Long live the Vice-Queen!" Ximeo rushed from the crowd, exclaiming, "Yes! she shall live!"

Zuma fell on her knees. "All powerful God! finish Thy work!" she prayed.

The Vice-Queen invited Mirvan and Zuma to attend her.

She returned to the palace, followed by the immense crowd, who enthusiastically blessed her for her mercy and goodness.

To receive from her the life-giving medicine.

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As soon as they arrived at the palace, the Vice-Queen was laid on her bed, and she ordered Mirvan and Zuma to place themselves on either side. Fatigue and emotion had so exhausted her strength that she believed herself to be dying. She extended one hand to Mirvan and the other to Zuma, who received them kneeling, and bathed them with tears. Beatrice, unable to endure so harrowing a sight, begged that the Indians might be removed and guarded in the next apartment.

"No, no," said the Countess, "I answer for them, and I answer before the Supreme Arbiter who will judge us all! Leave them here. They are going to open the gates of Heaven for me."

"Great God!" said Beatrice. "To see you in the arms of these monsters who have poisoned you!"

"Where could I be better at this moment?" replied the Vice-Queen. "I should feel in the arms of friendship only vain regrets, but these trembling hands which I press in mine, strengthen my courage; the sight alone of the unfortunates fills my heart with a calm sense of security."

"Oh! my benefactress!" said Zuma, "if heaven betray my last hope, they will see if the unhappy Zuma loved you! No, I shall not be able to survive you!"

At these words, Beatrice exclaimed, "Detestable hypocrisy!"

"Do not insult them," interrupted the Countess. "They repent; see their tears flow! Zuma," she added, "you, whose lovely face indicates a heavenly mind, you, whom I have loved so well—could I cherish the slightest resentment against you? I look upon you both as the instruments of my eternal happiness. I pardon you with all my heart! May you be able to turn to religion with the same sincerity. I have sent a courier for my husband, who will, I know, confirm me in my position."

Zuma, almost beside herself, was about to speak, perhaps to reveal a part of the secret which weighed upon her more than when she had only her own life to protect, when an extraordinary uproar was heard in the court of the palace. An instant later, the Countess distinguished the voice of her husband. She ordered the door of her apartment to be opened, crying, "Pardon, pardon for the criminals."

"They are your deliverers," said the Viceroy, as he entered. Everyone was transfixed with astonishment. The Viceroy held in his arms a young child. Zuma uttered a cry of joy. It was her little son. The Count laid the child in her arms and threw himself at her feet. Ximeo followed him, and addressing Mirvan, said, "My son, thou canst speak, by the consent of all our people. The secret is revealed. We have all taken the powder in the presence of the Viceroy, and he has taken some himself before bringing it here."

At these words, Zuma pressed her child to her heart, returning thanks to Heaven. Mirvan embraced his father; the Countess asked a thousand questions. The Viceroy rapidly related all that the Indians had revealed to him.

"Great God!" cried the Vice-Queen, throwing her arms round Zuma, "this angelic creature, who was sacrificing herself for me, they were going to burn alive! When she was doing an action as sublime as touching, they were accusing her of an unparalleled crime!"

"The terrors of this heroic pair for their child's life," added the viceroy, "made them, with invincible firmness, endure shame, ignominy, and the prospect of a frightful death."

"Ah!" said Zuma, "the Vice-Queen did more. She believed us monsters of ingratitude and wickedness, and yet she protected and delivered us!"

"She is to receive, as well as you, the reward of so many virtues: you are to cure her. Here are two doses of the beneficent powder, one for the Vice-Queen and one for Zuma."

While speaking, the Viceroy himself mixed the quinine with water in two cups. Zuma drank the first, and the Countess asked to receive from her the life-giving medicine.

The Vice-Queen, already revived by joy and hope, received with delight the embraces of her husband, of Beatrice, and of the happy Zuma; she lavished the sweetest caresses upon Zuma's child, and promised from that hour to be his second mother.

Beatrice and all the Spanish ladies surrounded Zuma. Beatrice passionately kissed her hand, that beneficent hand which she had accused of committing an awful crime.

In the midst of the enthusiasm the Viceroy led Mirvan and Zuma to a balcony which overlooked the broad street filled with Indians and Spaniards. "Behold," said he, pointing to Mirvan and Zuma, "the victims of gratitude and of the sanctity of oaths! Indians! their sublime virtues, and those of the Vice-Queen alone, could release yourselves from the cruel vow made through vengeance. You have done so. You have become the benefactors of the old world. To make you happy is not only for us hereafter a duty of humanity, but one of gratitude: it shall be fulfilled. Indians, all of you in this memorable assembly—Indians, you are free; such sentiments make you worthy to become the equals of your conquerors. Enjoy this glory. It is virtue that gives you liberty. Love your sovereign; be faithful to him. Lands shall be distributed among you. Make the 'tree of health' flourish there, and in cultivating it remember that it is to you the whole world will owe this gift of the Creator."

Zuma held in her hand a branch of the "tree of health."

This address excited enthusiasm, and the Viceroy, desiring to end the day with the triumph of Zuma, caused her to be magnificently dressed, and placed in a palanquin, with all the court ladies in attendance, and the Vice-Queen's guard of honour to accompany her. A mounted herald preceded the cortége, crying, "Behold Zuma, the wife of the virtuous Mirvan, and the deliverer of the Vice-Queen!"

Zuma, reclining on cushions of cloth-of-gold, with her child beside her, held in her hand a branch of the "tree of health."

In this manner she passed through the principal streets of Lima, amid the acclamations of the people.

When she returned to the palace, after an affecting interview with the Vice-Queen, she was conducted to a beautiful apartment, newly prepared for her and her husband, with attendants to serve them; for from thenceforth they were to be treated as the most intimate, the dearest friends of the Countess.

In the evening, the city was illuminated, and in the gardens tables sumptuously laden were prepared for the Indians.

The fever left the Vice-Queen almost immediately, and at the end of eight days she was rapidly recovering health.

In the very place where the fatal pile had been laid, the Viceroy raised an obelisk of white marble, on which was inscribed in letters of gold:

TO ZUMA,
THE FRIEND AND DELIVERER OF THE VICE-QUEEN,
AND THE BENEFACTOR
OF THE OLD WORLD.

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THE ASSASSIN.

A STORY FROM THE FRENCH.

"DOUBTLESS," said the old man, shaking his head, and closing his eyes that tears had dimmed—"doubtless you find it strange that I am sad, dull, with an air of taking an interest in nothing? I who have everything to make a man of my age happy: a comfortable income, a pretty house in the outskirts of the village, and behind the house a beautiful garden where I can cultivate at will roses and other flowers.

"There still remain to me old friends who would ask nothing better than to dine with me once a week, to empty with me at dessert a bottle of the wine of Anjou, and who would be gay and joyous as the refrains of those grand old songs that one sings no more!

"It would be a good and tranquil life, sweet and regular, with delicate menus and mutual interests which we could discuss slowly, lingeringly, in order not to finish with them too quickly.

"But, sir, a life like this is not for me; peace, happiness, the beauties of my grounds, the sight of people smiling about my table, breaks my heart, and it is two years now that I have slept badly and alone in my comfortable bed!"

"Yes, I know; they told me of your sorrow—your wife's death, so long ago."

He drew his hand hurriedly across his wet eyes.

"They told you that," he said; "but they did not tell you all. You know that my wife is dead—true; but not that it was I who killed her."

"Killed her!"

I drew back quickly.

He did not, or possibly feigned not, to see this movement of recoil.

"Alas, yes! Not only that I am a widower, but I am also an assassin. Listen!

"Though old, both of us, we loved each other so dearly, Benedicite and I, you would have laughed to see us. Young people of to-day do not comprehend this prolonged tenderness, which is discouraged neither by deep wrinkles nor whitening hair.

"Having grown old together, we thought not of having aged, the slow coming of our decline escaping us precisely because of our mutual attention, as one sees not the putting forth of a branch from a stem from which one turns not the eyes.

"And this accord of our aging together continued to keep us blind to the ravages of time, she in me and I in her, till the moment when the night itself fell, as one is blinded by long association and habit to the decay of ancient furniture that we love.

"We loved each other, a couple of sexagenarians, with the ardour and simplicity of the sixteen years of other days, our long marriage but seeming to continue the happiness of the betrothal hours.

"As we had always retained from our youth the habit of early rising, one might daily encounter us before seven o'clock wandering through the fields or walking beside the river under the drooping willows, a little apart, but holding each other's hands and with that swinging movement of the arm that has the appearance of rocking a cradle. Benedicite escaping at times to run a little skipping leap that denied her rheumatism, to cull the marguerites that grew by the wayside, and which she had always loved so much. It was thus we were ridiculous, but happy, for I did not perceive all there was of childishness and madness in our superannuated joys.

"Then suddenly Benedicite fell ill. It was serious from the first, declared the doctor, giving a name to the malady that I do not wish to recall. My astonishment equalled my despair. A malady that was serious—that was death! I was so content with life I had never even thought of dying. Moreover, we were too young, Benedicite and I.

"But behold this cruel mischance, that recalled me to the reality, that obliged me to think of pain, sorrow, of a lonely old age, of separations, of the cemetery. What! Such a thing as this could be? Benedicite would die, and I would continue to live!

"I did not wish to believe in the possibility of such a disaster; I would not believe in it, and with smiles, as sincere as tender, encouraged to coming convalescence my dear wife—a little too pale, perhaps, though always so, even as a young girl—stretched in her easy chair by the window, through which the sun she loved streamed and gave so much pleasure to her heart.

"But soon there happened a frightful thing. Benedicite's illness became complicated with sharp, intolerable sufferings. To see her writhing in convulsive agony, to hear her rattling under a hand that strangled her—ah, it was more than I was able to bear!

"The doctor had given her a soothing potion, which, taken by the spoonful, hour by hour, quieted these torments; a dangerous drug, however, a deadly poison, mortal for whoever drank it in larger doses, and specified in his directions to be used with the utmost caution.

"I shook with nervous tremours whenever, implored by Benedicite, I carried to her lips the brimming spoon that she emptied eagerly in her longing for sleep and ease.

"But day after day the malady grew worse.

"'Your wife is lost,' said the doctor, when one evening I followed him to the door to question him without her hearing me; 'she is already sinking.'

"Benedicite lost! Benedicite sinking! The bare thought of my solitude in this world when she had gone made me stagger and clutch the doctor for support. No hope! The doctor left, and I threw myself despairingly upon the sofa in our little sitting-room, trying to gather my thoughts.

"Then, mad with terror, I ran to the telegraph office and wired for a specialist from Paris. When I returned Benedicite was in her last moments.

"Thus was no illusion left me. It was true—it was certain, Benedicite was going to die—to die in two hours—in one hour—before the clock could sound again, and I, tortured, powerless, heart-broken, could only watch her toss and turn and stiffen herself on that bed of pain which groaned and bent beneath her.

Suddenly she raised herself erect and gazed at me with a haggard look.

"'I can bear it no longer!' she cried. 'I can bear it no longer, this suffering I endure. I am dying, you know that; and I wish to die, to die at once! Give it to me, I beseech you, give it to me—I am the same as dead! Give it all to me, I beseech you!'

"And she designated with her shaking fingers, her dim eyes, all her poor tormented body bending eagerly forward—the little bottle that contained the deadly fluid that once had given her ease.

"What would you have done, you, I ask you, had you been in my place? She was racked with torture, she was dying—the doctor had said it. I could bear no longer to see her suffer thus.

"I yielded to her will, and, all trembling, lifted the phial to the eager lips, which glued themselves to it firmly, and drank and drank—till the phial was drained to the dregs. Benedicite fell back upon her pillow, a long shudder ran through her frame, and I held between my own her hands, still warm, but little by little growing colder.

"Two hours later, as I watched beside my dead, I heard a carriage stop at the door.

"'Master,' said the servant, 'the Paris doctor.'

"He entered. He looked at the body, examined it critically, turned and returned, and sounded it here and there. Then he asked me questions concerning the treatment during illness. I told him all I knew and gave him the little emptied phial. He took it, raised it to his nose, smelt it carefully.

"'All of this?' said he—'all of this at a dose?'

"I rose, stumbling to my feet; a frightful thought had flashed into my mind.

"'All. Benedicite exacted it,' murmured I, bending my head.

"'And you yielded. Fool! An operation should have been performed, a simple and easy one. Had you waited I should have saved this woman!'"

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A MILK-WHITE beach of coral sand, on which were strewn thousands of exquisite shells and strange sponge forms. In front, dancing blue waters of a Southern sea, stretching away into infinite space and ruffled into flashing white caps by the strong breath of the trade wind. As a background to the beach stood a dense grove of cocoanut palms, stateliest and most graceful of trees. The myriad slender tips of their huge leaves rustled in the warm wind like the sharp patter of raindrops in a heavy shower.

Down where the white trunks shot, tall and slender, to the dim arches of the living roof all was in dark, cool shadow, flecked now and then by dancing points of golden sunlight. Mingled with the salt breath of the sea was a faint odour from spathes of corn-coloured blossoms high up among the leaf-crowns.

Beneath these hung clusters of fruit in all stages of development, from the size of a marble to that of a football. On the ground lay scores of the great, brown, ripened cocoanuts, of so little value in that tropic land that no one cared to pick them up. They were protected by rough three-cornered husks so thick as to more than double their actual size.

On one of them, turned on end, sat a boy wearing a broad-brimmed, high-crowned hat of palmetto braid. He was clad in a white cotton shirt and brown linen trousers turned up at the bottom. His feet were bare, and his legs, hands and face were as brown as an Indian's. He presented an ideal picture of youthful strength, and that perfect health only to be acquired through out-of-door sunshine.

His face, generally bright and happy, was clouded as he sat, with elbows on his knees, resting his chin in his hands, and gazing out over the glinting waters. The object on which his eyes were fixed was a small schooner moored a hundred yards from shore.

A boy wearing a broad-brimmed, high-crowned hat.

She was not more than thirty feet over all in length, but was broad of beam and solidly built.

The month was March and the beach was that of one of those low-cut fertile Florida quays that form the southernmost limit of United States territory.

The boy was John Albury, commonly called "Grit" to distinguish him from the many other John Alburys of that region.

The schooner was the *Polyanthus*, formerly owned by Grit's father, who had been lost at sea the autumn before in a boat belonging to a neighbour.

For many years, while he was a widower, Mr. Albury had only occupied his home on the quay at long intervals, spending most of his time with his boy and girl, Grit and Matey, on board the *Polyanthus*, wrecking, sponging, fishing, while waiting for his cocoanut grove to come into bearing and, as he finally hoped, yield him an income.

This life proved a very happy one for all three, and it was a sad day for the children when it was ended by the appearance of a step-mother, who, coming from inland on the mainland, had no knowledge of, nor love for, boats on the water. She was not unkind, but she instituted a new order of things, strongly resented by the sailor boy and girl. Mr. Albury was persuaded to clear the land and put in a crop. Grit weeded tomatoes, and hated them; Matey was made to sew and do housework—while both children were taught to read and write.

Now they had very little of the sailing that they so dearly loved, and for which they longed; for Mrs. Albury could see no good in boats. She even advised her husband to sell the dear old *Polyanthus*, and ship his crops by the regular Quay West trading schooner; but this, to Grit's great satisfaction, he steadily refused to do, though he so far yielded to his wife's prejudices as to spend most of his time on shore while the *Poly* swung idly at her moorings.

When the father was lost at sea in the dreadful hurricane that nearly swept away their home as well, Mrs. Albury's aversion to boats became so bitter that she declared she would sell the *Polyanthus* to the first person who would offer £10 for her.

"But, mother! £10 is a ridiculous price for a fine boat like

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the *Poly*," urged Grit. "She can make that in a single month."

"She never has since I have known anything about her," replied Mrs Albury.

"No, for she hasn't had a chance. You let me take her and I'll show you how much she can make."

"And get drowned like your poor father, and leave only me and Matey to look after the place. No, indeed! You are too valuable to waste that way. I need you ashore, and so do the tomatoes. They'll bring in more money than any boat that was ever built, you see if they don't. I shouldn't be in the least surprised if we make £40 off the crop this year, and twice that sum after we get all the land cleared and planted."

"But boats can make as much as that, mother, and more, too. Why, at a wreck——"

"Nonsense, there aren't any wrecks nowadays, and if there were, what could a boy like you do at one? No; you stick to tomatoes. They're safe and sure, and I'll put temptation out of your way by selling that boat the very first chance I get. You'll thank me for it in the end, see if you don't."

Now the fatal day had nearly arrived. A man in Quay West had sent word that he was coming to look at the *Polyanthus*, and would probably buy her. He might appear at any moment and that was the reason why Grit Albury sat gazing sadly at the dear boat on that glorious March afternoon, instead of gathering the last of the tomatoes that were expected to realise £40.

As the boy slowly rose to return to his work, there came a sound of flying feet and Matey's voice was heard, calling in joyous tones:

"Grit! Oh, Grit! Mother wants you to catch her some fish, and says I can go with you."

The lad only answered, "All right, sister, come along"; but a sudden resolution, that he did not put into words, flashed into his mind. Two minutes later a single skilful throw of a cast-net into the shoal of sardines, always swarming near the coast, had provided a sufficiency of bait, and a light skiff was dancing merrily over the blue waters.

"Why, Grit! Where are you going?" demanded Matey as the skiff was headed directly for the *Polyanthus*.

"Put it in writing, and have it witnessed, Cap'n."

"Out to the reef, after fish," was the answer that came back.

"But, Grit——"

"Never mind the 'buts' now, little girl. That's where we're a going, and we're going in the schooner too. Mother said fish, but so far as I heard she didn't say what kind of fish, such as Spanish mackerel, king fish, yellow-tails, or drum. You know that we can't find those off the reef any more'n we can get out to where they are in a skiff. Besides, sister, it's our very last chance for a sail in the old *Poly*. She's going to be sold, or rather given away, to-morrow, and I don't suppose we'll ever see her again, or own another boat."

Of course this was convincing, for Matey not only dearly loved to sail, but was firm in her belief that whatever Grit said or did was right. Thus an hour later saw the little schooner, after a glorious run across the broad Hawk Channel, anchored just inside the great coral reef that borders the Gulf Stream for more than 200 miles, and on which huge breakers were dashing themselves into showers of glistening spray.

The fishing was superb, and so absorbing that the sun was sinking into its bed of crimson and gold ere either Grit or Matey thought of starting for home. When at length they were ready to go and attempted to get up the anchor all their strength on the windlass failed to move it. It was quite dark before Grit abandoned the attempt to recover their anchor. "Never mind, Matey. It won't hurt us to stay here all night, and as soon as it grows light again I'll dive down there and see what is the matter. "I'm not going to cut the cable and lose that brand new anchor unless I have to."

So they cooked a supper of fish and made themselves so comfortable in the snug little cabin that they rather rejoiced in their adventure than otherwise. So soundly did they sleep that night, that not until he was flung from his locker on to the cabin floor did Grit awaken to the fact that the *Poly* was pitching madly and that a gale was shrieking through her taut rigging.

Calling to Matey the boy sprang on deck, where he was well-nigh beaten down by the furious squall of wind and rain that just then hurled itself against the schooner.

There was an instant of quivering strain. Then something gave way, and Grit knew what had happened. The tense cable had parted, and they were helplessly drifting at the mercy of the storm. For a moment even Grit's stout heart quailed. He could see nothing save the ghost-like forms of leaping breakers that seemed to crowd about him from all sides. He could not even tell from which direction the squall was blowing. Matey had joined him in the cockpit with as full an understanding of the situation as his own.

No words passed between them, for none could have been heard above the shriek of wind and the roar of waters. They seemed to be driving with frightful speed, and as the brother and sister stood hand in hand, waiting their fate, they expected that each moment would see their craft dashed in pieces on the cruel reef.

Minutes passed and still they swept on. Suddenly Grit uttered a great cry of relief that was almost a sob.

"We've passed the breakers! We're clear of the reef! We're out in the Gulf! We're safe, Matey!" he shouted.

To anyone but a sailor it would have seemed that they were anything but safe, out in the open sea, driving through inky darkness, and with the worst squall of the season howling furiously about them; but Matey was a sailor. She knew, and deep down in her heart arose a fervent prayer of thanksgiving.

The next change of scene was most surprising. Daylight had come, and the sun was rising. Before a gentle breeze, with all sail set, the *Polyanthus* was approaching a great steamer that had struck on an outlying spur of the reef during the blinding bewilderment of the recent gale.

"I do believe it's a wreck!" Matey had exclaimed rapturously, when her sharp eyes first discovered the stranded ship.

"Oh, if it only should be!" cried Grit, who could hardly believe that so great a good fortune had befallen them. Then with anxious, beating hearts the young sailors had shaken out their reefs, and laid a course toward the lights that marked the dimly-looming hulk.

"Great Scott!" cried the captain of the stranded steamer, as he caught sight of the schooner's sails. "Here's a reef wrecker already. I believe these fellows live at sea, and can smell a wreck a hundred miles!"

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"Hello, there!" he shouted, a few minutes later, as the schooner drew near. "Take a line, but don't you dare come on board. I'm not in humour to give up my ship to you pirates yet. So stay where you are and I'll come to you."

"Don't you want your cargo lightened, sir, or anchor carried?" inquired Grit anxiously as the captain slid down a rope and stood on the *Poly's* deck.

"No, I'm not in a hurry to break out my hold, and I want to try something else before hedging," answered the captain. "Who is the captain of this craft?"

"I am, sir."

"You?" cried the other, regarding the lad incredulously. "Well, then, where is the crew?"

"There, sir," replied Grit, pointing to Matey.

"Well, I'm blest!" gasped the captain. "A boy and a girl! Even the babes in arms turn wreckers on this coast. However," he added, "perhaps you'll do as well as an older. Can you dive?"

"Of course I can, sir," answered Grit promptly.

"Are you afraid of sharks?"

"I should think not," was the contemptuous answer.

"Well, my men are, and I can't even swim, much less dive," continued the captain, "but I want a diver to go down and tell me just how my ship lies. I have a plan that I am anxious to try, if things are as I think. If you'll help me carry it out, I'll give you £100 for an hour's work, provided we get this ship off within that time. Is it a bargain?"

"Put it in writing and have it witnessed, Cap'n," replied the cautious Grit, "and I'll sign the paper. It only holds for one hour though. Then, if you're not afloat we'll make a new bargain, and if she's to be lightened, I'm to be wreckmaster and take charge, 'cause mine is the first schooner here. Is that agreed?"

"Yes, that's right," smiled the captain grimly. "I reckon you've taken part in wrecks before?"

"A few," laughed Grit.

By the time the paper was made out and handed to Matey for safe-keeping, Grit was ready to perform his share of the bargain. He dived from the bows of the schooner and was gone nearly a minute. Then he came up for breath, and almost immediately dived again.

Sat nearly distracted.

He repeated this operation four times without saying what he had discovered. Meanwhile the passengers and crew of the steamer crowded her rail, and leaning far over, watched his operations with breathless interest.

Finally the young diver clambered on board and related to the captain that his ship had struck, well forward, on a narrow ledge with deep water on both sides, and that she was afloat, with the exception of a space ten feet long near her bow.

"That is just about what I gathered from soundings," replied the captain. "Now I want you to go down again, taking a lead line with you, and find some good-sized hole or crevice as near the bottom of the ledge as you can get. Leave the lead to mark the spot where you came up."

Grit wondered at this strange order, but did as directed, and after several descents into the clear waters finally discovered a deep fissure nearly twenty feet beneath the surface.

"Is the hole large enough to hold this?" asked the captain when the young wrecker again came on board the schooner. As he spoke the former held out a square tin canister, to which was attached a reel of slender copper wire.

"Yes, sir," replied the boy. "It's big enough to hold me."

"Very good. Now, if you will go down once more, taking this can with you, and thrust it as far as possible into the hole, I will not ask you to go into the water again."

Grit cast a curious glance at the captain's face to see if he could detect any indication of madness, but the only signs he discovered were of perfect intelligence and an indomitable will. Still, as the boy again stepped over the side ready to descend into the crystal depths, and the canister was handed to him, his suspicion of the captain's sanity was revived by the latter's instructions.

"Take care of this can as you would of your own life," he said earnestly. "Don't let it hit against anything, and place it gently as far in the crevice as you can reach. It holds your life and fortune, as well as mine."

These words were so strange, and the whole business was so different from the usual proceedings in connection with a wrecked ship, that even as Grit worked at his novel task, far beneath the surface, the one thought that filled his mind was: "He is as crazy as crazy can be." However, he carried out his instructions, and when he regained the schooner's deck found it occupied by all the passengers of the stranded steamer.

"Take them off on a five minutes' cruise," ordered the captain, as with his own hands he cast off the lines holding the schooner. Then he swung himself up the steamer's side and disappeared in his own cabin.

At the end of five minutes the *Polyanthus* was nearly a quarter of a mile away, and her young skipper, who was trying to answer a hundred questions at once from the bewildered passengers, was also wondering what he would do next. All at once it was noticed that the propeller of the great ship was working furiously backwards.

Then came the most surprising thing that has ever happened in all the annals of wrecking on the Florida reefs. There was a heavy vibratory explosion, accompanied by a muffled roar. To those who happened to be looking toward the ship at that moment, she seemed to be lifted bodily from the water.

The next instant she was enveloped and hidden from view in a vast fountain-like column of foam. Directly afterwards the ship re-appeared, floating as steadily as ever in her life on the great billows of the mysterious submarine disturbance, and running rapidly backwards.

Late that afternoon the schooner *Polyanthus* again picked up her moorings off the glistening coral beach.

Mrs. Albury was wild with anxiety over Grit and Matey. A man had come from Quay West for the *Polyanthus*, with a view to purchasing her, but finding her absent, and being pressed for time, had gone away again. He had, moreover, left behind him a letter from the Northern commission house to which Mrs. Albury had sent her tomatoes, stating that the shipment had been spoiled, so that instead of being entitled to returns, she found she was indebted for freight charges.

As the poor woman sat quite overwhelmed by her misfortunes there came an exulting shout outside, and the next moment Grit and Matey rushed in, alive and well.

"Hurrah, mother!" cried the former, as he wildly waved a slip of paper above his head. "We've got your fish, and only stayed out a little longer to give the old '*Poly*' a chance to earn this £100, just to show you what she was good for."

"What on earth do you children mean?" exclaimed Mrs. Albury slowly, as she took the New York draft for £100 from Grit's hands to examine it. "How could a mere boy and a still younger girl like you two wreck a big steamer and get her off!"

"Ma," replied Grit, with a mischievous twinkle in his eyes, "I don't exactly understand how we did it; but I think we blew her up with dynamite."

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A MATRIMONIAL GAME OF CHESS.

OLD Mr. Archer was a devoted chess player, and an expert at that. He held chess to be the only game fit for a gentleman. There were few of his acquaintances who could cope with him, and but one among them who could match him fairly. That was James Bittles, his lawyer. It was a close contest between the two—first one ahead, and then the other. Bittles stood high in his profession, but he mainly won and retained Archer's confidence by his ability as a chess-player. He was barely forty, and Archer maintained that by the time he reached sixty he would surpass all others.

Archer had a daughter—his only child. Her father had married late in life, and ten years after the birth of the girl, her mother had died. Letty had a place in his heart next to chess itself. A bright, lively and pretty girl was Letty Archer, and she would be a heiress to something over £100,000.

Her father feared she would become the prey to a fortune-hunter, and endeavoured to avert it by the provision of his will. He neglected to execute his testament, however, until Letty was nearly twenty years old, and unmarried still. It was none too soon, for the week after he died suddenly of an apoplectic fit.

When the will was opened, it was found that Bittles was named sole executor, and constituted guardian of Letty until she was twenty-one, and trustee of all the estate, real and personal. The conditions of the trust were, that if Letty married with the consent of Bittles, the trustee was to turn over to her all the property on the day of the wedding, and as long as she remained unmarried after twenty-one ; but if she married without his consent, she was to receive only five hundred a year, and the residue of the estate, beyond that necessary to secure this payment, was to be conveyed to a third party, or her heirs. This third party was described as :

"Catherine Sinclair, daughter of Gordon Sinclair, if she be still single ; or, if she be married, then to the said Catherine Sinclair by whatever name she may be now known, to her and to her heirs for ever."

A further provision was that in case the said Catherine Sinclair, by whatever name she might be known, was dead and had left an heir or heirs, the property over and above the reserved amount in the contingency mentioned was given, devised, and bequeathed to him, her, or them.

Who Catherine Sinclair or her father was Letty could not tell, nor could the lawyer, but it was suggested that it was an early flame of Archer's. Some thought that the possible legatee was mythical, and brought forward to scare Letty from making an imprudent match. But the power of Bittles in the matter was as absolute as pen and ink could make it.

Bittles proved himself to be a vigilant guardian and a careful trustee—guarding his ward against adventurers, and managing the estate with prudence and vigour. Everything went well until about ten months after Archer's death. Then the current of affairs rippled a little.

Letty and Bittles both fell in love—Letty with Carter Cooke, a rich young man of good family, and Bittles, in spite of himself, with Letty, who did not care a snap for him, looking upon the middle-aged bachelor as a venerable person, and bestowing her heart upon his younger rival. Love is like the measles, and if we be attacked with it in middle age the disorder assumes an aggravated form. Bittles had a very severe attack indeed.

Letty might well be excused for reciprocating the feelings of Carter Cooke. The young man was not only by birth but by culture and associations a gentleman, with no censurable habits, and with polished manner. He had a well-proportioned figure, a pleasing face, and was well liked in fashionable circles in London, where he spent about half the year ; and though not by any means as rich as Letty would be, was possessed of a handsome competence.

Bittles pronounced him to be a fortune-hunter, and frowned upon his suit, really because it interfered with the one he wished to make. Letty was not of an age to reflect on the serious consequences of her guardian's disapproval, and had she been, her cheerful temper would have led her to optimism. Then Carter Cooke was a skilful chess-player, and Letty, who had been taught by her father, was about as expert as he, which strengthened the bond between them.

The wooing went on in spite of the frowns of Bittles, and the latter began to show the bitterness of defeat. This was seen when the young lover, with Letty's consent, made a formal proposal to the guardian for the hand of his ward.

"No, sir; decidedly no!" replied Bittles. "I have nothing against you personally, Mr. Cooke. Your respectability is undoubted ; but I do not consider you—nor will anyone else—a match for Miss Archer in fortune.

"I have examined the statement your solicitor laid before me, and find that you have barely a thousand a year, while the property of my ward yields many times that amount, most of it in property that is rising in value. I should be false to my duty if I approved of the match under such circumstances."

"Very good, sir," retorted Cooke. "Far be it from me to say that disappointed pretensions of your own prompt your refusal. I will admit that it is a mere sense of duty, if that admission pleases you. But I am authorised by Letty to say that when she arrives at the age of twenty-one, should your consent to our marriage be refused, we will marry without it. That will be the next move on the board, Mr. Bittles."

"You are playing a costly game, sir."

"Not at all, sir. At all events, I shall call on the bishop to capture your queen," replied Cooke good-humouredly, and bowed himself out of the room with mock courtesy.

When Letty heard of this positive refusal, in spite of her avowed contempt for money she was disposed to be downcast. But Carter whispered to her a secret—a proverbially dangerous thing to do to a woman—and Letty, after a look of astonishment, burst into a ripple of silvery laughter.

"Oh, you dear delightful boy!" she exclaimed. "Who would have thought of it?"

And Letty renewed her laughter, for the secret seemed to her the most comical thing in the world.

Bittles did not at all desire to exact the penalty, but he did very much desire to break the disagreeable connection. But, how? Letty went into society under the chaperonage of Mrs. Burroughs, Bittles' own sister, a well-to-do widow, who was four years his senior, and liked the mild kind of dissipation which she enjoyed by virtue of her office.

At her dances, tea parties, and the opera, or wherever Letty went, Carter Cooke was sure to be ; and Letty suffered him to assume the right of prospective ownership in a way that drove all other suitors from the field.

Letty made no secret of her feelings, and wore her engagement ring openly. Mrs. Borroughs, who liked Cooke, tacitly aided and abetted. It soon became known that Bittles frowned on Cooke, and folks were curious to learn how the affair would end ; as though in such a case, with two wilful young people, it could end in any way but one. Bittles was duly informed of this open courtship, and the lectures he bestowed upon Letty in consequence only increased his ward's dislike of himself, until it deepened into positive aversion.

Bittles trusted to time and the chances. He did not believe that Letty, when the pinch came, would sacrifice so large a portion of her property for a mere girlish love, which might be destroyed at any time by a lover's quarrel ; nor that Cooke, whom he had brought himself to believe had mercenary motives, would care to take her with so much less money.

Fifteen hundred a year of her husband's and five hundred of her own to one of Letty's expensive habits meant almost exclusive rural residence ; and he knew that Letty did not like living in the country, except during the time of flowers and sunshine. Bittles waited, therefore, not without reasonable hope.

He had calculated on an ally in his sister, and, to insure her co-operation, told her of his hopes and fears. She laughed at him.

"James," she said, "this is the most absurd thing possible. She is about half your age. You have staid, bachelor habits,

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and Letty, though she's a good girl, is fond of life and society. She'd drive you mad in six months, and put you in the grave in less than a year. If you must make an exhibition of yourself, matrimonially, choose some rich widow of thirty to forty, who would suit you better."

"Hang rich widows!"

"Quite polite and complimentary, considering that I am a widow with a comfortable income. You had better give it up. I have sounded Letty to the depths, and know that she loves young Cooke; and he is—putting the question of fortune on one side—a capital match for her. I would have preferred her to have made a richer marriage, but they will have enough between them."

"No, they'll not; for I will never give my consent. I'll take her from you—lock her up, if need be——"

"You are a lawyer and know better, James. You may refuse your consent, though everyone will penetrate your motives, and laugh at you; but, as to the locking up—they do such things in plays and novels, not in real life."

"She is under my control until she is twenty-one."

"Oh, yes—doubtless: that is nominally—for three months more. Then she'll marry in spite of you. If you strip her of all but £500 a year you'll incur general reproach, and gain no satisfaction in the long run. The best you can do is to keep off the wedding for a short time. Give in. If you were ten years younger I might strain a point to help you—not as it is."

As the Irish peasant girl says. "She was as stiff as he was stout," and Bittles fell back on his move of the forfeiture, which he thought would deter both parties for some time, and in the meanwhile no one could tell what chance quarrel, a newer face, or the whims of a woman might do.

Just then fate seemed to come to the assistance of the guardian-lover. It assumed the shape of a new suitor, or something like it, and, to the delight of Bittles, it was Major Bolling.

"Fire fight fire," thought Bittles.

Major Phil Bolling was considerably older than Carter Cooke. The major was of the old school, popular with the ladies, to whom he showed a respect almost reverential, and he was very much attracted by Letty Archer, and she liked to chat with him, and draw out his old-fashioned courtesy. They moved in the same set, and met frequently.

Carter Cooke was at this time called to Paris on business, and the major slid into his place, in spite of his years, and displayed attentiveness that led people to suspect that he had pretensions. To the surprise of Mrs. Borroughs, this grew into an almost confidential intimacy. Cooke seemed to have been forgotten in his absence, and Bittles chuckled. The gallant ex-officer showed himself to be under a spell, and expressed his admiration in the most positive terms.

Letty and the major got along famously, and his adulation apparently quite supplied the absence of Cooke. This was supplemented by the attentions of her guardian, who became kind and bland again.

Letty's twenty-first birthday came round, and Mrs. Burroughs' stately mansion was thrown open in honour of the event. The major was specially invited; so was Carter Cooke, who had returned from Paris and had been visiting his place at Highover, where he had been superintending repairs and alterations. Bittles was there, of course, gorgeously arrayed in honour of the occasion.

About noon Letty was missing, and the absence of the major was noted. Cooke had not yet come. Letty was not to be found in the house; but one of the servants had noticed that she and the major had gone out together, entered a carriage in waiting not far off, and been driven away. It was surely most extraordinary, and Bittles grew excited over the fact. It was probably some girlish freak, to result in some surprise, and so it proved.

At one o'clock a number of carriages drove up before the door. From the foremost of these descended the major, who handed out Letty, who was followed by Cooke. From the other carriages there alighted a number of "the set." It was quite a little procession that filed in, the major at the head, as proud and self-appreciating as a drum-major at the head of a street parade.

"Well, here you are," said Bittles. "I really began to fear, major, that you and my ward had eloped."

"Nothing of the kind, I assuh you," replied the other. "I was me'ly the best man on this joyous occasion. I have the honah to introduce to you Mr. and Mrs. Cahtah Cooke."

"Married!" cried Bittles, aghast.

"Yes, sir," responded Cooke. "My bishop, in the shape of a surpliced clergyman, has enabled me to capture your queen," and he drew Letty's arm within his own.

"Very well, sir. Miss Archer is of age and has a right; but, as she has married without my consent, she has thrown away a large fortune for a beggarly five hundred a year. I shall search for the heirs of Catherine Sinclair to-morrow. You have taken the queen? I cry check to the queen, sir."

"Excuse me, sir," retorted Cooke, "but you utterly mistake the situation on the board. Mrs. Cooke will have a larger allowance of pin money. I shall make it a thousand, with an unlimited command of a cheque-book which your action has made equal to a heavy drain."

"My action! Pooh!—stuff!"

"No, no, sir! You need not hunt far to-morrow. My cousin here, Major Bolling, who is the genealogist to both families, can show you that Catherine Sinclair, daughter of Gordon Sinclair, married with the fourth Carter Cooke, of Highover, and unfortunately died three years since, four years after her husband. She left one heir, a son, the fifth Carter Cooke, whom I have the honour to present to you as the husband of your ward, and the happiest man on earth. Mr. Bittles—checkmate."

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THE MAN MY SISTER MARRIED.

CHAPTER XV.

"I AM at a loss to understand the meaning of your message," said the colonel, stiffly, standing by the table, glowering at me. "You are fond of dramatic effects. I suppose you intend some sort of a scene?"

"Not unless you make it," I answered, coolly, as Liz went out and slammed the door as a token of her disapproval.

"No witchcraft," he continued hatefully, as he took a chair and looked into my face in that insolent way of his.

"No, Justina gave your gold piece to the church. Yara, the man you sent to murder John Scott, is dead. Your cousin bears a charmed life, you see. I want to talk to you about Xarras."

I noticed then he was looking haggard and old. I wondered if his inky hair and moustache were not dyed. I heard afterwards that he was a spendthrift and gambler, and broken in fortune, had come to America to seek aid from the very man he had wronged. He did receive some money, but not what he hoped, and then his only desire was to be revenged on John.

"I thought Yara told you about him in that trance," sneered the colonel.

"He tried to, but was so eager to show me Xarras was in Mexico; I was sure he was not, so I went up to the attic in the Scott house."

"And you found nothing?" said the colonel, smiling confidently.

"Well, only two letters in the pocket of a faded grey coat."

He sprang to his feet with a curse. The rushing tide of memory brought him back to the day he must have put them there, and he realised what their contents were. He turned on me with a torrent of ugly epithets.

"You can say all you want to," I said, quietly, "the only thing I care about is to have you go away, so that John will not be a thing like you."

"You'd better look into his past then. Bah! He has no intention of marrying you. I should think you would remember what you were."

"I want you first to give me some proof of Katherine's death, someone abroad to whom I can write; then you must leave Galveston immediately, otherwise I shall tell John you are Xarras."

"He will not believe you."

"My Aunt Margaret knew you, and I have the letters. She only spared you because Katherine was guilty, and she did not want him to have a crime on his soul."

He made a contemptible insinuation about Aunt Marg and John, and I jumped to my feet: "Don't dare to slander her, or I cannot keep my secret. I will not endure any more. I have given you your choice; the future rests with you."

He smiled, and threw a card on the table. "Write to that address in Havre, France. You will learn there of Katherine's death and burial. I give it to you because, little fiend as you are, I like you. Why are you so anxious to know about her?"

"I mean to marry John," I said, "and her hateful memory shall not come between us."

"My blessing on you," he laughed. "I think you are even cleverer than your sister."

He left Galveston the next day, and years afterwards I thought, in a wrinkled and tremulous old man at Monte Carlo, at a *rouge-et-noir* table, clasping his winnings with yellow, shaking hands, I recognised Dean Gregory. We looked at each other, but neither spoke, for I dared not tell the man with me, and Dean bore me no goodwill. That was the last of him.

Clasping his winnings with yellow, shaking hands.

I wrote to Havre, and in due time received a number of official-looking documents, certifying that a woman, named Katherine Dean, died at a certain street and number, and giving her age and general description. Aunt Marg said she had heard Katherine took Dean's first name when they went away together, so she was sure from the description, allowing for the changes of time and a lawless life, the dead woman was my sister.

I have not mentioned John all this time because I was angry. When he knew I was better, he went away from Galveston, and all we knew of him was from Bruce, who brought me flowers daily. I did not get strong very fast, and the doctor said I had some trouble weighing on my mind. I did not tell him nor any of them what it was, but I did not want to get well, life was so dreary to me.

One week Aunt Marg was odd and silent, like she used to be. She had nothing to say, and went about in one of her dreamy spells. Late one afternoon, she asked me for the letters I had found in the trunk. I petted and loved her a good deal, for I tried to make up for those wasted years. I told her they were at the bottom of a pile of sheets in the linen closet; that I had not read a line of them, I dared not, I thought a curse was on them.

"It may be a blessing," she said, absently. She came back to me with them in her hand and her bonnet on, with her long crêpe veil. Any other woman than her I would have thought wore that veil because it looked so well over her white hair. "Some day, my dear," she said, as she kissed me and stood there stroking my hair, "I want you to think of this time and remember how well I loved you." She did no. explain her words, but went swiftly away.

I watched her going towards the town. I played a little on the piano, but my fingers were too weak. I tried reading, but I could not fix my thoughts; and then I cried a little. I did not like to see myself in the mirror, I had grown so thin and pale. My eyes were too big for my face, and my gowns had to be taken in. I heard Liz tell Bruce she thought I was going into consumption.

I remember I had on a new gown that day, a soft pearl and white like a sea-gull, or a foggy day along the beach when the waves are all white with foam. I had white ribbons on it that made me think of a baby's coffin lined with satin, so dainty and pure. It was a gruesome sort of a fancy that pleased me. I wandered to the window and then my heart gave a great leap; there at our gate, talking to my Aunt Margaret, who was looking pale and strange, stood Mr. John Scott. I ran and picked a bunch of violets out of the vase and pinned them in my breast. I had not forgotten my vanity, even if I was plain and thin. I heard the gate click and his step on the path, and then the door opened and he staggered in. He had a queer dazed look, his face was ghastly, his eyes blazing and wild.

"I don't even know that you are Letty," he cried, with a strange, mad laugh; "my world has all gone wrong; I fled because I loved you more than her. My God, I fled because of that!" Then he broke into a sob that was half a groan, and clenched his fists. "Did you read those letters?" he went on, tearing them from his pocket and throwing them at me. "All these years I shrined her as a saint. Read them now."

"No, not one word; she was my sister."

He fell into a chair by the table and hid his face on his outstretched arms. After a little I went to him. "John," I

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said faintly, "she is dead and I am alive. Is it kind to treat me thus? Forget and forgive. We know that she is dead."

"But he is not," he cried fiercely. "You have sent him away, Margaret says, but you only stayed my hand for a little while."

"You have no right to touch him. Katherine was most to blame. How can you avenge a wrong to her when there was none? The vendetta of those other men I can pardon. They had the right. One of those Mexicans living was a reproach, almost a dishonour to them, after that day. But you," then I went to him and laid my hand on his shoulder, "have you not done all you could to make restitution? If you must be a murderer, begin with me; only a little more of my misery and I can be released."

"What do you mean?" he said coldly.

"I never knew what love was till you taught me, John," I went on, bravely; "that was not friendship, all that month, not the affection of brother and sister, but lover's love. I have been dying for you. I cannot explain it, but somehow you became a part of my life, and without you I will not live. I am not calm and good like other women, like Aunt Marg. All the pent-up affection of my starved life I gave to you. I am even without shame in telling you of it. I am so hopeless, John."

"Have you thought of my life? What I have been? Do you think any blessing would come to us? I hunted every man of those Mexicans down to his death. What would the world call me; how would it judge me?"

"You can reason so calmly, you do not care for me," I said bitterly; then a mad idea came to me, nor will I conceal what I did. He was sitting there with averted face. He had not looked at me, and I stood a full moment and watched him. Then, possessed by my worst spirit, I went to him and covered his eyes with one hand. I put my other arm round his neck, and stooped and kissed him full on the mouth. "You shall love me so well," I said, "that you will not argue but risk all, dare fate and all the world, to care for me."

He caught both my hands.

Had he not called me "darling" that night on the beach? I had the right anyway. He turned swiftly and caught me in his arms. Aunt Marg's bird, as if he felt a sudden change in the temperature of the room from storm to sunshine, began to sing merrily. I lifted my head from John's breast and looked into his eyes.

"Is there any memory between us, John; any shadow of the past?" I inquired of him anxiously.

"I will have no past; I have loved for the first time," he cried.

"I woke you as the Prince woke the Princess," I laughed.

> "I'd sleep another hundred years,
> Oh, love, for such another kiss,"

he quoted, and I stared in astonishment at John repeating love poetry. I took those two letters and flung them in the grate. "They are gone, and that ends all mysteries," I said. "I have confessed until I am weary of it. My mind is like a clean piece of paper. Let's play we were wandering in space until to-day, and just found our souls. I wish I were not so ghostly-looking."

"I think you prettier than ever," he smiled.

"Then you must really and truly care for me," I said, "for this very morning Liz said no one would ever think I had any good looks at all."

He caught both my hands. "Dearest, I love you," he said, and from that moment I never doubted him. Of course, grandfather had to come in then, and he grinned as he looked at us.

"I allus thought you two liked each other," he said, "but it took a powerful long time to find it out."

He was very merry at the tea-table with the usual jokes about my cooking and domestic failings, but I silenced him by saying John had a living conscience now, not he.

"Wal, I ain't too willing to give it to him," said grandfather, almost lovingly, and for that speech I forgave all his teasing. I have made that old cynic love me, and I am proud of myself every time I think of it.

"A colt 'thout speerit don't make no kind o' hoss," grandfather said, when I gently refreshed his memory about calling me skittish. I have never nonplussed him yet.

That moonlight night John sent for his horses and drove me out on the beach. What an enchanted world it was; the glorious silver sky, the plashing of the breakers, the tiny curl of foam splashing the horses' feet and the dark blue sea, gentle in motion as the breathing of a happy sleeper. At that creek where I nearly lost my life John turned to me. It was only a thread of silver now creeping along the sand, but I remembered and shuddered, and, of course, he had to thank me, as lovers do, for saving his dear life.

"I was only thinking about my property," I laughed; "do you know you called me 'darling' that night, for all your marble calm. I read those words in a book once, they fit you so well."

"I have loved you from that day in New Orleans," he said, solemnly. "I fought a long battle with myself, and wherefore? Oh, it was bitterly hard to play father confessor to you."

"About Jim, too," I said, for I was in one of my contrary moods. "I only wanted to marry him because I was tired of home, and I thought, some day, when you were dead, we could live in the big house and the garden would be mine."

"Poor little Eve. I am lucky you did not get Justina to charm me, so that I would wither away and let you get the property sooner."

"Justina says she knew I would marry you, and that was why she told me once the big house would be mine."

"Justina has more staircase wit than any woman I ever saw," laughed John.

"What is staircase wit?"

"The things you remember that you might have said when it is too late. Oh, my pet, what little creatures of to-day we are, at best! Look at the eternal sea, the countless stars, the night that never fails, the days that always dawn. In the great drama of nature and time, how infinitely small are human lives; less than the sands on the shore. A breath, and we are gone; our tragedies are closely followed by a comedy. We love, we forget, and why not? Is it not best to grasp all the happiness we can in passing, our journey is so short?"

"Is it not better that the dead be forgotten," I said, "than that they should harass the living? To give love to those who can feel it rather than to waste it in tears? The blessings to a poor home is better than a costly monument. Oh, dearest, let us live in to-day. If the ghosts of great dead men came back to earth, who among our great men could live? I am weary of the past. I want the present."

"You are such a deep and old philosopher, you make me feel frivolous, and yet I am near forty."

"The best of that is," I laughed, "that I shall never be a frump to you. Women grow old so much faster than men, and that is why boy and girl marriages are often unhappy. I shall keep my good looks and youth when you are too old to care for anything but gruel and a warm hearth."

We drove home to the mansion, where Bruce took the horses, and John and I walked in the rose garden.

"Come, walk in the rose garden, your own enchanted land. Let me fill your arms with flowers and your pretty head with poetry. I will fling away twenty years of my life to be young and a lover."

How much I loved him words cannot express—my other soul. Had we never met, I believe I should have gone unloving

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to my grave. In the morning, trouble began again—it seemed I never could walk save in tangled paths. He came to bid me "good-bye." He would not believe that Katherine was dead until he had been to Havre. There should be no mistake, he said fiercely.

"You are going to find Dean Gregory," I cried, "and you will come back a murderer."

He talked gently and kindly to me, and then promised all I wished him to, his face so white and haggard that, had I not been in one of my worst moods, it would have stricken me to my wicked heart. I even watched him go away without calling after him that I was sorry, but two days later I wrote a most pitiful and penitent letter, which he answered so nobly and forgivingly that I cried myself to sleep for two nights.

Justina was a great comfort during the long weeks of his absence. She read the cards to me every day, and there were always red ones that meant good luck, hearts and diamonds, instead of clubs that are sorrows, and spades that mean death. No dark man travelling in the King of Spades interfered, so my heart grew lighter. I wrote once that I did not believe in Justina's fortune-telling, but a person who never changes his mind is a fool.

My days were somewhat enlivened by preparing my trousseau, all John's gift, and when grandfather had scolded him about it, John said it was a Mexican custom to provide a bride's trousseau, as it is.

When Mrs. Scott came home she sent for me and told me John had said I was to be her daughter now; that she had always loved me, even in my naughty days; and she was so glad that he would be happy. She would not believe God meant his life to be all shadow. Every time I went to the great house she decked me with some of her girlish finery, long laid away quaint jewels, and soft laces, and all manner of pretty things.

"Katherine never let me love her," she said one day, "but you are such a sweet and lovable child, I begin to feel you are my own, as dear to me as my little daughter that died in her childhood."

She read the cards to me every day.

Once she showed me a miniature of that child, and cried over it as mothers do over dead babies, even when near a half-century has passed.

One morning that I shall never forget, I got a telegram: "I will be with you to-night. All is well.—JOHN." And then my waiting was forgotten in the joy of that near meeting.

CHAPTER XVI.

WHEN John came I was at the great house with his mother, waiting on the steps. He kissed her first, and then, taking my hand, led me into the library.

"She is dead, dear," he said. "When I knew that I went no farther than Havre. I did not let myself think of Dean at all. Will you believe me?"

"I never doubted you," I cried, "only I was so miserable when you went away, I had to be hateful."

"And now all the past is passed. See!" He drew aside the plush curtain, and where Katherine's portrait had been, was now a marine scene, a wreck drifting before a storm, a wild frothing sea, and low hanging, black sky. A picture one would not wish to gaze on often, especially we folks, who live so near the sea, and know its cruelty and disasters. I understood why he desired no pleasant scene. He did not wish to look even where the beautiful face had been.

"I have forgotten that I ever lived," he said, passionately. "I only know the life of to-day, and that I love you. Kiss me and let me claim my wife."

I put out my arms and he held me close to his heart. "Shall we be married to-morrow?" he pleaded, his lips close to mine. "I almost fear to trust the future; life has been so cruel to me."

"Any time you will. I was so miserable when you were gone, time dragged so. And John, I even went back to Justina, back to my old sinful ways; but she told me by the cards you would come home safe and soon—and haven't you?"

"We'll employ her hereafter for a family sybil, a familiar witch of Endor right in the house; and you know even King Solomon did not disdain witchcraft, and no one would expect more wisdom from you than from him. Are the gowns all finished? I know your dainty soul; and are they to your liking?"

I described each one and he did not seem bored at all. He drew me over to the sofa and looked at me fondly.

"You are as plump and pretty as ever, and that is not flattering to me. You never pined a bit."

"You told me long ago I was vulgarly fat; besides, I had to fill out my new finery. Give a woman dressmaking and an unlimited purse, and she will not pine very much."

"Is it those quaint gowns you wear and look so lovely in, 'broidered with silver in odd devices, with bodices, and queer sleeves, and all those little frills you affect, that makes you look like a picture?" he laughingly inquired.

"The idea of your noticing!"

"I know every gown you wear, every lace, pin, and ribbon. I could pick out your particular hat among a thousand. See, I brought you a big diamond ring. Is it rich enough for you? It looks so pretty on your little brown hand. You will travel in diamonds now, according to Justina."

"She meant good luck," I laughed, admiring my new ring.

"You are such a child," he muttered, half sadly.

"That can be remedied in time, John. I wonder if you will like my wedding gown—dead white, soft silk, and lined every inch with silk; I am so extravagant, but it does rustle so beautifully. It is like a shroud, Justina said."

I laid my cheek against his sleeve. How handsome he looked with that smile on his lips, the love light in his beautiful eyes.

Just then Mrs. Scott called us to dinner, and after that John and I wandered in the rose garden, and I promised to be his wife the next day. It almost seemed as if we were defying fate and all the ghosts of the past to be happy.

My wedding day! How odd it is to wake in one's own little white room, and think that never again will the past days come back. That one's very identity is gone. Letty Lombard on the morrow would have vanished from the earth. The moonlight would sift through the tiny window on my empty bed, over the pillow where my head would never rest again.

Then I wondered who would sleep there in the years to come, when the cottage would have passed into other hands. Would some young maid's story be half written there, her innocent dreams and vanities, her thoughts of a lover, her joy at his coming? Would he take her away, and she, like me, whisper farewell to her girlhood, dreading the future, yet by dear love guided to her fate as a wife and mother? I wrote as I finished dressing, "Violet Scott" on a bit of paper, then burned it guiltily with a match.

My last day at home was such a curious one. It seemed

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as though somebody was dead, the house was so quiet, and Liz going about her work on tiptoe. She gave me a few lectures on how to behave in the big house, especially "never to set foot in the kitchen. I must never sile my han's." Aunt Marg and I had some long happy talks, and I loved her better than ever before.

When we drove to the great house, I held her hand all the way. I could hardly realise that I was about to act the star part in that supreme drama in a woman's life. In fact I wanted to run away. I had the carriage window down, and let the cool air off the sea blow across my burning face and lift my hair. I felt as I had done when, possessed by my devouring curiosity, I had taken too much champagne just to see how it felt.

The mansion wore a gala air, with its lighted windows and flowers everywhere. Bruce opened the carriage door with tremendous solemnity, and Mrs. Scott led me to her room to put on my veil. Across the hall was a beautiful chamber, all newly decked in blue and gilt.

"This is your room, dear," she said, leading me there. "You are to stay a week at home before you go to Mexico."

But I would not look at the fine place or anything. I ran away.

"I believe I am almost sick of this getting married," I said miserably. "It makes me think I must be old and solemn all my life."

She pinned my veil, while her maid, a pretty quadroon, helped me put on my long gloves. After Mrs. Scott went down to greet the minister, Aunt Marg came to cry over me, and bid the Letty Lombard—her charge and a doubtful blessing for nearly nineteen years—"good-bye." She was very white and sad, and not until afterward did I realise why she was so strange.

"It is so hard, so bitterly hard," she sobbed.

"But I will be near you always," I said, "and I know I shall be better than I am now; one gets so grown up and womanly after marriage."

She smiled tearfully, going softly out, and who should creep in then but Justina. How she admired me! told the maid I was her baby, her Chica; she had saved my life; and then, as she turned to leave me, she put out her hands in a frightened way, and that queer, blurred look came into her eyes. She ran away from me, and Liz dragged her down the back stairs, where I heard her moaning and muttering her prayers.

I stood in the hall, scared and miserable. A presentiment of misfortune came to me; how or when it would fall I could not think; but the dim corners of the room seemed peopled with eerie shadows, as if the ghosts of those murdered men came back to mock my happiness. Someone touched my shoulder, and I turned with a scared cry. It was only John; and how relieved I was!

"I was thinking of horrible things—ghosts," I stammered. "Oh, John, forgive me for saying that," as I saw his face sadden; "but this place is so big and strange to me."

"Your besetting sin, Justina, has been giving you her blessing," he said, sternly. "If it were not for that day when I met her, long ago, and gave you, a helpless baby to her care, you should never see Justina again."

"Indeed!" I said hotly.

He took my hands then and laughed in my face. "Do you hear the matrimonial shackles clank, dearest? Oh, you sweet, wilful Letty! Am I doing right to link your young life with mine?"

"To a silly thing like me," I said, "but don't be too masterful, John, or you will learn what a temper I have. And I have tried so hard. There is your mother. Must we go down?"

As we went down the stairs, a hush came over me, a solemn feeling, as if I was standing by a coffin, my dead girl's-life. I noticed the people in the room, grandfather, Aunt Marg, Mrs. Scott, and the minister, the servants peeping in at the door, and the odour of flowers massed in profusion. I saw the lace curtain wave to and fro in the light breeze that blew across the perfumed garden and brought the breath of roses to me. Far off the splashing of the sea chimed with the low solemnly spoken words that made us man and wife.

He drew aside the plush curtain.

Was that my voice, faint and far away, saying "I will"? Could I never undo what I had done? unsay those words?

I lifted my eyes as the minister blessed us, and I saw Justina crossing herself with that blurred look in her eyes. When we rose from our knees, John kissed me and whispered, "My wife!" I was not Letty Lombard any more. Aunt Marg and Mrs. Scott called me by my new name, and grandfather, especially, took much pride in it, and I had to hug him and rumple his hair to show him marriage had not changed my ways.

I went up to that blue room and took off my wedding veil. How odd I looked in the big mirror, so young and shy, so childish with my short hair, even in my long gown. John came in and stood smiling at me.

"Come out into the garden, Letty. Can I find you a wrap? It is cool in the night air. I told your maid to put your things here. You will find me handy in waiting on you."

He found the wrap, and we went out into the garden, and, somehow, I wished that I had never known Jim, or wandered with him there. It was late when we turned back to the house, where I saw grandfather make his farewells, and Aunt Marg with her bonnet on.

"It seems as if I ought to go with them," I said, laying my cheek against his sleeve. As we stepped into the porch, I heard the rattle of wheels on the carriage drive to the house.

"Why, Margaret insisted on walking," John muttered, "yet that must be the carriage."

"She never changes her mind," I said, half fearfully; a sudden chill passed over me and I shivered. At that moment a bell pealed through the house, and I saw Bruce go along the hall, and as he went he shut the parlour door. We stood and listened, as people will at anything unusual happening. There was loud talking at the door, Bruce expostulating; then John, looking white and worried, went suddenly and opened the parlour door. He had scarcely reached the threshold when Bruce, ashy with terror, pushed him back forcibly into the room, crying in agonised tones:

"Fo' de good Lawd's sake, Mars John, don't yo' come out heah!"

(*To be continued next week.*)

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THE MYSTERY OF A STOVE.

THERE were five of us in the party—six, counting Tom, the guide, and we were out on the Rockies, shooting. After two days' hard climbing, which we endured with exemplary fortitude, we arrived at the little valley high up in the mountains, which was our destination.

"Jest you all go over into the cabin there and make yourselves comf'ble, while I 'tend to getting the stuff unpacked," said Tom; "there ain't no one there. My pardner, he's down below."

"The cabin appears to be two cabins," said the Colonel, as we approached it.

"That is for economy in ridge-poles," said the doctor; "sleeping apartments on one side and kitchen on the other. In the space between, you keep your stores."

We entered the right-hand section of the twin cabin, which proved to be the kitchen side. There was not much furniture—a table of hewn logs, a chair of bent saplings, and a rough bench.

However, we did not notice such furniture as there was, for each member of the party, as he stepped over the high threshold, had his attention instantly attracted by the stove, and a brief roundelay of ejaculations went along the group.

"Well, that's somewhat strange," said the stockbroker.

"H'm," said the professor, in a mysterious tone, and rubbed his chin.

The stove was a plain, small cooking-range, rather old and rusty. The strange thing about it was its position. Its abbreviated legs stood upon large cedar posts, which were planted in the floor and were over four feet in height. This brought the stove up in mid-air, so that the top was about on a level with the face of the Colonel, and he was six foot two.

We formed in a circle about the stove and stared at it. We felt the posts—they were firm and solid, showing that the mysterious arrangement was a permanent, not a temporary one. Then we all bent our necks and opened our mouths to look up at the hole in the roof through which the stove-pipe vanished.

Suddenly the stockbroker burst into a laugh. "Oh, I understand it now," said he.

"Understand what?" said the Colonel sharply.

"Why Tom has his stove hoisted up so high from the floor."

"So do I," said the doctor; "but I suspect that my explanation is not the same that anyone else would offer."

"Well, I will bet that I am all right," said the stockbroker, "and put up the money."

"I am in this," said the lawyer; "I have a clear idea about that stove, and will back it."

"Count me in too," said the Colonel.

The stockbroker drew a small yellow coin out of his pocket and dropped it on the table.

"He has the stove up there," he said, "to get a better draught. In this rarefied mountain air there is only a small amount of oxygen to the cubic inch, and combustion is more difficult to secure than in the lower latitudes.

"I have heard that if you get high enough up you can't cook an egg—that is, I mean, water won't boil—or something like that," he continued, thrown into sudden confusion by the discovery that the professor's eye was fixed upon him with a sarcastic glance.

"Is that supposed to be science?" demanded the professor.

"Well," said the stockbroker doggedly, "never mind the reasons. Experience is probably good enough for Tom. He finds that he gets a better draught for his stove by having it up in mid-air, so he has it there."

"The right explanation," began the professor, "is the simplest. My idea is that ——"

"Excuse me," interrupted the stockbroker, tapping the table; "are you in this pool?"

The professor made a deposit and proceeded:

"Have you noticed that our host is a very tall man? Like most men of his height, he hates to bend. If the stove were near the floor, he would have to stoop down low when he cooked a rasher of bacon. Now he can stand up and do it with ease. Your draught theory is no good; the longer the pipe, if it is straight, the better the fire will burn."

"Professor," remarked the Colonel, "I regret to have to tell you that your money is gone. Tom told me on the way up that his partner did all the cooking, and he is a man of rather short stature."

The Colonel then paid his compliments to the pool, and continued: "Now, my idea is that the stove heats the room better there than on the floor. It is only a cooking-stove, but when the winter is cold, it makes this room comfortable. Being up in the middle of the space, it heats it all equally well, which it could not do if it were down below."

The doctor greeted this theory with a loud laugh. "Colonel," he said, "you are wild—right off the mark. Hot air rises, of course, and the only way to disseminate it is to have your stove as low as possible."

"I think," said the Colonel, "that I could appreciate your argument better if you would put your money in the pool."

"The pool is mine," said the doctor, as he deposited his coin; "you will all adopt my idea the moment you hear it, and Tom, who will be here in a minute, will bear me out. This room is very small; it has but little floor space and none of it goes to waste. Now, if he had put the stove down where we expected to find it, Tom could not have made use of the area underneath as you see he has done.

"On all sides of the supporting posts you will notice there are hooks, on which he hangs his pans. Underneath there is a space for pots and cooking utensils of various sorts. What could be more convenient? Under your ordinary stove there is room only for a poker and a few cockroaches."

The lawyer, who had been listening to the opinions offered by the others, now stepped forward and dropped a coin on the table. He then rendered his decision as follows:

"It appears that none of you have noticed the forest of hooks in the roof just over the eaves. They are not in use at present, but they are there for some purpose. I imagine that during the winter huge pieces of venison and bear's meat dangle over the stove and are dried for later use. Now if the stove were on the floor it would be too far from the roof to be of any service in this way."

"Here comes old Tom!" shouted the Colonel, who had stepped to the open door while the lawyer was speaking.

The old trapper put down the various articles of baggage with which his arms were loaded, and came into the kitchen cabin where we all stood. He glanced at the group and then at the stilted stove in our midst.

"I see you air all admirin' my stove," said he, "and I'll bet you've been a-wondering why it is up so high."

"Yes, we have," said the professor; "how did you know it?"

"People most allus generally jest as soon as they come into the place begin to ask me about it—that's how I knowed."

"Well, why is it up so high?" demanded the stockbroker impatiently, with a side glance at the well-developed pool on the table.

"The reason's simple enough," said Tom, with a grin that showed his bicuspids; "you see we had to pack all this stuff up here from down below on donkeys. Originally there was four j'ints of that stove pipe, but the cording wasn't drawed tight enough on the donkeys that was carrying them, and two of 'em slipped out and rolled down the mountain. When we got here and found that there wasn't but two pieces left, I reckoned that I would have to kinder h'ist the stove to make it fit the pipe; so I jest in and h'isted her. And thar she is yet. Say, what is all this here money on the table for?"

There was a deep silence, which lasted so long that Tom ventured to repeat his question about the money.

"It is a pool," said the doctor sadly, "and, as near as I can make out, it belongs to you."

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	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
21	3 1 6	8 1 4	3 12 0	4 9 4
25	3 4 10	8 16 4	3 16 0	5 0 4
30	3 10 4	10 0 4	4 0 0	6 0 4
35	3 17 6	11 9 4	4 12 0	6 17 4
40	4 6 4	13 6 4	5 0 0	8 6 4
45	5 1 10	15 13 8	6 0 0	9 13 8
49	6 12 10	18 3 4	7 16 0	10 7 4

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 294.—Vol. XI. FOR WEEK ENDING AUGUST 18, 1894. [Price One Penny.

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For the BREAKFAST, LUNCHEON, TEA, and SUPPER TABLE.

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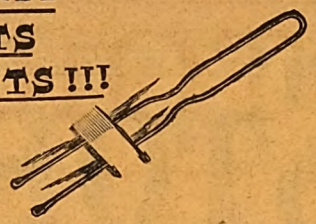

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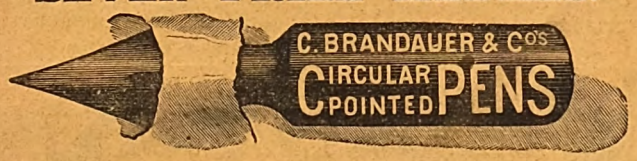

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Established 1868. Once Tried, Always Used.

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THE PEARSON POTTERY CO.,
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A beautiful Dinner Service of 50 pieces is guaranteed **Worth the Guinea alone,** consequently a Charming China Tea Service, and a useful Collection of Crockery, are given **FOR NOTHING.**

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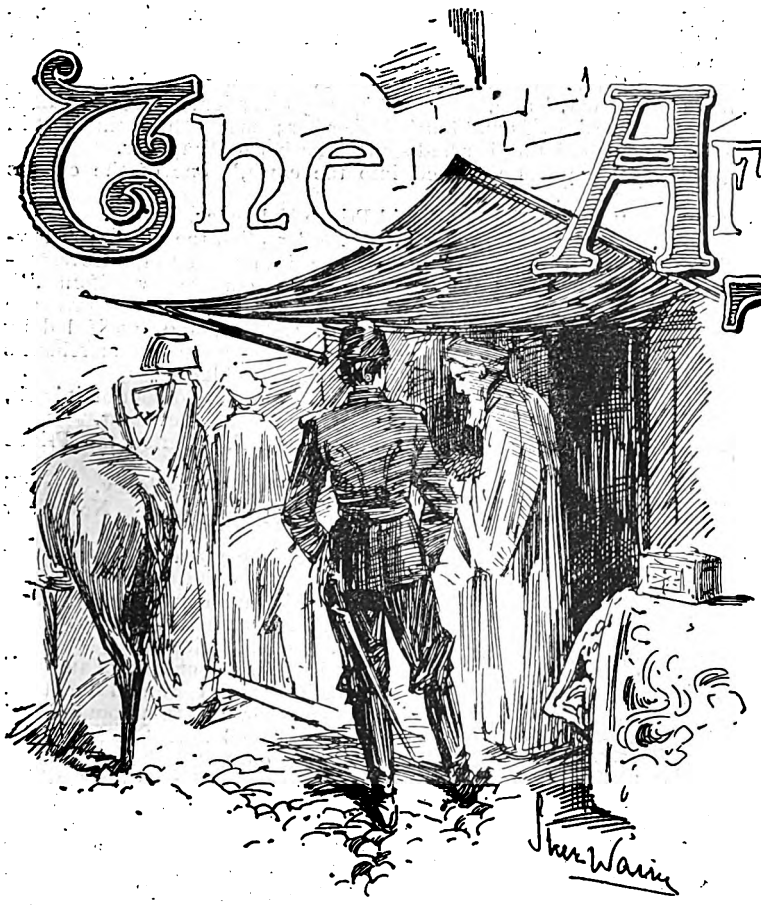
SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 294.—Vol. XI. *FOR THE WEEK ENDING AUGUST 18, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

The Afghan's Turquoise



SAMARCAND possesses in perfection the peculiarities of the Oriental cities so well described in the marvellous stories of the Thousand and One Nights. It is an aggregation of low buildings enclosed in whitewashed walls, its bazaars teeming with specimens of all that Asia can offer of different types and colours of the human race, from milk-white through clear yellow and saffron to ebon black.

The merchandise there displayed is as diverse as the people—simple calabashes, fashioned out of the shell of the cocoa-nut, coming from the Indian Ocean; vases of enamelled silver from the Caucasus; primitive bridles of half-tanned leather thongs; gorgeous saddles and caparisons, covered with turquoises set in unalloyed gold; and clothes of Russian make, side by side with Oriental stuffs woven in marvellous colours that delight the eye.

In the midst of the bright scene was a group of Russian officers, mounted on the lithe-limbed ponies of the steppes—beautiful beasts, full of intelligence, though only half tamed as yet. As the officers passed through the bazaar, they stopped here and there to examine, sometimes to purchase some article that struck their fancy—a chibouk, with a long, jasmine wood stem, wound with gold and bright-hued silk; shoes, gay with multi-coloured mosaics of Morocco, or strangely figured dressing-gowns from Bokhara.

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One of these officers stopped at the little show-case in which a merchant displayed his most precious wares, and examined a necklace formed of large beads of ambergris and musk, with a great turquoise, cut in the form of a pyramid, hung at its apex. The stone was of a magnificent blue—the blue of the sky after a shower, so pure, so soft, that the sight of it was a caress to the eye.

"How much?" asked the officer, indicating the necklace.

"Five hundred English pounds, not a penny less," replied the shopman, a Persian merchant, attired in an elegant gown of violet silk, embroidered with gold and silver thread.

"Come, come; no joking. You ask too much," said the officer, who had adopted the invariable Eastern custom of haggling over any and all bargains.

"You need not take it," said the Persian; "in fact, I could not sell it to you now. Perhaps in five days I may be able to let you have it. I promised to keep it that long. The person from whom I had it stipulated that time in which to buy it back."

"Indeed!" said the officer, descending from his horse to examine the ornament more closely; "and who is this person?"

"A woman, and a very beautiful one. She belongs to the harem of an Afghan emir, who has gone to Cabul and is expected back any day now. She was obliged to pawn the stone, finding herself out of money."

"A beautiful Afghan, eh?" broke in one of the other officers from his saddle; "we must see her. It might be possible to profit by the absence of the emir. What do you say, gentlemen?"

"I do not know where she lives," said the Persian, suddenly becoming very grave.

"Are you lying to us, you old rascal?" laughed the officer. "But come, we are blocking the wheels of trade, and all because of a turquoise and a woman. Come, Prince Voldemar, let us go on."

"Wait a moment," replied the officer to whom these words were addressed—he who had dismounted to examine the

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turquoise; "I shall come to-morrow, alone," he added in the merchant's ear; "meanwhile, put this necklace aside and show it to no one. If the lady of whom you speak does not come, I shall buy it. The inscription pleases me: 'That which is past is a dream—that which remains, a desire.'"

"I shall obey your Highness," replied the Persian, as he received the ornament from the officer's white-gloved hands, and deposited it in an Indian coffer of green ivory, crusted with silver.

The officers departed at a gallop, amused at the fright of the peasants who fled before them, pressing themselves against the walls and shop fronts. Soon they emerged from the narrow street of the bazaar into a square surrounded by covered galleries, in the middle of which stood a basin of marble, green with age, in which played a little fountain of limpid water. The fountain was shaded by a roof sustained by slender columns of blue-enamelled porcelain, about which were twined dragons and serpents in relief.

"Where shall we go now?" asked one of the officers, turning towards the others. "We must find something to do."

"Easier said than done," returned one of his companions; "there is absolutely nothing to do in this dog's country. If the powers that be would only find us a little fighting to do, it would be a very welcome diversion."

Astonishing young women danced before him.

"Yes, if we could kill a few Afghans once in a while, it would keep our livers in order. But no, we must simply sit down and wait."

While his companions railed at their fate, Prince Voldemar remained silent and pre-occupied, though he showed no less ennui than they in the pure and commanding lineaments of his handsome face. He had come to Asia a year before to lead an active military life; but, save a few skirmishes with Bokharan marauders, who were not even brigands, he had found nothing but the enervating existence of the Orient, in which life seems one long waiting for something that never comes.

Having a large revenue at his disposal, he had for a time amused himself by furnishing his house after the fashions of Central Asia. He had a Sartian salon, a Mongolian salon, an Indian work-cabinet where it was impossible to do anything but dream, a Russian dining-room, furnished with heavy wooden furniture, painted and varnished in the ancient Muscovite style. His house was crowded to the ceiling with bibelots. He gave his companions entertainments after the fashion of the country; astonishing young women danced before him and gazed languishingly at him from beneath their Sartian veils, but not one of them had the fortune to fix his attention.

A general brought out his daughter, a pretty little blonde, from the convent at Smolna. She married within the year—the favoured one being an adroit aide-de-camp of the General—and devoted herself to her duties as a young wife and soon as a young mother. The animation she had brought to her father's dinners and receptions, and the riding excursions into the country, ceased almost immediately after the wedding. Again the old question, "What shall we do to be amused?" presented itself. The young men drank and gambled, but Prince Voldemar, who cared neither for wine nor cards, relapsed into a state of inertia little better than melancholy.

Seated now by the fountain, gazing blankly at the tiny thread of water that shot up in its midst, he vaguely heard its gentle plash mingling with the complaints of his companions.

Suddenly a shadow fell on the sun-whitened square. The Prince raised his head and sought the object that could cause this purpling shadow. He beheld a grey horse, trotting quickly along, covered with a cloth of green and rose colour embroidered with silver, the bridle and head-stall starred with facets of onyx, on which were engraved verses from the Koran; at its breast shone an enormous stone of citron colour in a silver setting and a fringe of little balls of onyx, green, cream-coloured, red, and orange, embellished in rich trappings. At the side of the superb beast ran an Afghan servant, and gracefully installed in the red velvet saddle was a woman. She was carefully veiled from head to foot, her blue and gold garment falling in graceful folds about her. The horse traversed the square at a sharp trot and in the twinkling of an eye the vision disappeared.

"Who is that woman?" the officers wondered; "we must find out," and, delighted at any diversion, they turned their horses' heads and hurried after her; but the brief time lost in contemplating her had sufficed for her to disappear.

"She has vanished into the earth," one of the officers declared.

"Or into the sky," said Prince Voldemar.

"Always poetical, Prince," replied the officer; "however, it is dinner time and we are invited to the Governor-General's. We have just time to change our uniforms."

A few days later Prince Voldemar had his favourite mare, Smaragda (Emerald), saddled, and, as if led by the hand of fate, he returned to the Persian merchant's shop and asked for the turquoise necklace.

"The lady returned and bought it back, Excellency," replied the merchant.

"Confound the luck!" cried the Prince angrily.

"Console yourself, Excellency, I shall find another to please you. Now, how would this——"

The Prince glanced abstractedly at the stones the merchant spread before him in an onyx vase, pouring them out of a sack of rose-coloured silk, broidered with gold.

"There is not one so beautiful," he said, "and I wanted the other. Do you know who this woman is?"

"No, Excellency. She came here mounted on a grey horse, covered with a green and rose cloth, which I admired greatly, such as are made only at Homs, in Syria. She told me that her father had bought it for her on his return from a pilgrimage to Mecca."

"What's that you say?" cried the Prince. "It must be the same woman. Had she an Afghan with her?"

"Yes, Excellency; she was closely veiled, but as she counted the gold she gave me, she raised a corner of her veil, and I saw her superb eyes and a complexion like the petal of a white rose."

"I will give you two hundred roubles if you will find this woman and the turquoise for me."

"Excellency, how should I find them? I stay always in my shop, and I did not see which way she went. The city is large, and the houses are mysterious behind their walls. But I can commend to you a Jew who comes to buy merchandise in the bazaar to sell to the porters of the houses. He may be able to give you some information. Perhaps he knows this unknown. But be guarded, Excellency; if she be the wife of an Afghan, it will be dangerous to pursue this adventure. The Afghans have an evil name—and they are jealous."

"I fear no Afghans. Send me this Jew this evening," replied the Prince, remounting his horse.

In vain he rode slowly through the streets about the square, peering at the houses; no young Afghan woman appeared at any of the narrow windows. Only one daughter of India showed her wrinkled face on a high terrace, surrounded by a

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lattice on which clambered a sweet-smelling jasmine. Prince Voldemar looked at her and called—which was quite enough to frighten her away. It was midday, and the burning sun had driven the hardiest within doors. The Prince, weary of his quest, determined to return to his house, feeling that he must cut a ridiculous figure as the only living being in this city of the Sleeping Beauty of the Wood.

He followed the narrow streets that led to his habitation; at the sound of his horse's hoofs the servants ran out and opened the gate, which gave entrance to a vine-covered gallery. The Prince stroked his horse's neck and entered the Sartian salon, which was lighted by a cupola of yellow glass, in discs like the bottoms of bottles. A table set in the Russian style awaited him; his great, white hound rose lazily from its couch on a tiger skin and leaned its head upon his knee for a caress.

The Prince ate quickly, and slipped on an Asiatic costume composed of trousers and a khalat of light Bokharan silk. Then he stretched himself out on a divan, and gave himself up to dreams of the turquoise and the mysterious beauty. The hours dragged slowly along; the servants were still, awaiting the commands of their master. The Prince fell into that condition of semi-somnolence that the Orientals call kieff, in which existence is suspended—one is half-asleep and half-awake, one knows that one lives and yet scarce lives. The Asiatic delights in this condition. The European endures it, but, at bottom, it wearies him and seems almost like some melancholy nightmare.

A breath of fresh air stirred the orange, citron, and pomegranate trees in the garden, and came in through the wide, arched door of the Sartian salon. The profound silence was broken only by the gentle song of a bird peculiar to China and Central Asia—a bird whose song seems pervaded with melancholy; it commences in a high key, which sinks by slow gradations to the bass notes, and forms a kind of despairing wail, which affects the hearer as an inexpressible sorrow.

At six o'clock the hound rose with a deep growl. A djighit appeared at the door: "A Jew craves talk with your Highness; he dares to say he is expected. Shall he be thrust into the street?"

"No; let him come in," replied the Prince quickly.

The Jew entered a few moments later. He advanced with low obeisance and stood respectfully a few paces from the Prince, glancing timidly from the Prince to the hound, which was showing its enormous white fangs.

"Highness, am I so blessed as to be of service to you?" he said, laying one hand on his skinny chest. He was clothed in a gown of lavender silk, worn by usage and faded by the sun. The two hooped earrings that hung beneath his turban trembled in his abjectness and timidity.

"The Persian has doubtless told you what I desire," said the Prince; "find me this woman and the turquoise. Can you do it?"

"Can I?" replied the Jew: "I could find you a needle lost in the sands at the ocean's shore; I could find it for you and I would bring it to you, by Moses and Aaron I swear it. Do you want the turquoise first or the woman?"

"Well—if I want the turquoise first?"

"Very good—I will steal it. What would I not do for so magnanimous a Prince, who deigns to make use of a poor Jew?"

"Can you do it—no lies, now!"

"May I never celebrate the Sabbath next week if I do not succeed," replied the Jew; "and, in the first place, I will venture to suggest to your Highness that, having the turquoise first, the pretext is provided for attracting the lady. As to returning the turquoise, that is your affair; but you can keep them both—the turquoise and the woman—if it please your Highness to do so."

"As to that, we shall see," responded the Prince; "I know the stone, and it pleases me. I do not know the woman—she remains to be seen."

"Then I crave permission to leave your Highness. This night, by two o'clock, you shall have the stone. One of my colleagues has entrance to many houses of the city, and this one should be of their number," and the Jew, renewing his obeisances, retired from the room.

The Prince remained for a moment in deep thought.

"I will return the turquoise," he said at last, "for it is only by robbery that this Jew can procure it—at least, if she will not give it to me."

It was only eleven o'clock when Prince Voldemar returned home from a reception at the Governor-General's house, but he found awaiting him the Jew, who offered him a carved sandal-wood box, in which lay the necklace and the turquoise.

"She lives in the street of the Sartians," said the Jew, without waiting for the Prince to recover from his surprise; "the second house from the Square of the Fountain."

"Let us go there, then—you shall show me the house—for I have no desire to sleep on such a brilliant moonlit night."

"Follow me, Excellency. But, pray, do not forget that at two hours before dawn I must pay the price of the theft to an old Hindoo woman who serves as laundress in the household of the Afghan lady, whose name is Adaita. The Hindoo is afraid the robbery will be discovered, and at daybreak she joins a caravan on its way to Cabul."

"How much do you want?" demanded the Prince.

"Two hundred English pounds for her and three hundred for me. It is very little, Excellency."

The Prince said not a word, but entered his bed-chamber. There he threw aside the fold of the many-coloured tapestries and disclosed the little iron door of a small safe built into the wall. Opening the safe he drew forth a handful of gold, which he thrust into his pocket, and then counted out five hundred pounds. Closing this secret repository and replacing the hangings so that they offered no suggestion of concealing an opening, he returned to the Sartian salon and paid the sum due to the Jew, who outdid himself in bows and thanks.

A few minutes later the Prince, mounted on a black Persian horse, and the Jew, astride of a modest ass, made their way, side by side, along the deserted streets of the sleeping city. The moon alone lit up the irregularly paved streets and the staring white walls of the houses.

They soon arrived before a house with an arched entrance of faience in mosaic. Within this arch, between two pillars of green marble, stood a heavy wooden door in which was a small iron-barred window. The Jew tapped lightly on the bars of the window and immediately a brown face appeared, mutely interrogating them.

"Djelana," said the Jew, "here are the two hundred pounds; you can leave with the caravan at dawn."

Djelana mumbled her thanks as she clutched the gold in her skinny hands.

"Is your mistress sleeping?" demanded the Prince.

"No, she is on the terrace. Listen and you will hear her guzla and her song."

A strange melody floated gently towards them from the garden, and they heard a sweet voice singing an Afghan love song, a passionate lament for the absent. The Prince frowned as he caught the meaning of the song—he was jealous already.

"I wish to see her," he declared briefly to the Hindoo woman. "You may go, but leave the gate open and I will enter. You need have no fears for yourself."

The Hindoo woman held out her brown hand. The Prince dropped half a dozen gold pieces into it.

"Enter," said she, "but let me escape," and passing quickly between the horse and the ass, she disappeared round the corner of the street.

"Excellency," said the Jew, spurring up his beast, "may good luck attend you. I have performed what you required of me; I can be of no further service to you. In fact, my ass need bray but once to arouse the neighbourhood.

"Go, you cowardly knave!" muttered the Prince, and making his horse enter the court of the house, he tied it to a ring in the wall and closed the door securely behind him to prevent a surprise. After an instant's search he found a little flight of blue faience steps leading up to the terrace, whence still came the sounds of the guzla. Ascending these steps, he found himself on the terrace, which was covered with white Indian cloths and lit by the moon, which glittered on his silver epaulets and aiguilets.

With a cry of terror, a young woman rose hurriedly from

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The turquoise, which she took as if in a dream.

couch at the end of the terrace. The officer bowed respectfully before her.

"You need have no fear of me," he said: "permit me to approach you—I shall not advance one step without your permission."

The young woman stared at him with terror in her great dark eyes. She was dressed in a garment of light gauze, which enveloped her supple figure like a transparent cloud. Her arms, bare to the shoulder, were extended before her in a gesture of alarm. Her black tresses fell in heavy waves to her little feet, which were shod in slippers of orange velvet.

The Prince sank upon one knee and laid his hand upon his heart and upon his forehead after the Oriental custom.

"What seek you; what do you want? Allah, Allah, what is this man?"

"What I seek," replied the Prince, "is your love. Since I saw you, some days ago, I have suffered much. Before I had seen you I loved you. I am he who wished to acquire your turquoise at no matter what price. I have it—here it is."

"What! Why—how?" stammered Adaita.

"I had it stolen from you, and I bought it to return it to you. Will you receive it again?"

Adaita evidently feared to advance, so the Prince rose and handed her the turquoise, which she took as if in a dream.

"Unhappy man," said she, "I am married. If my husband should return he would kill us both. Why did you come here? The Afghan women are not for you Russians. Save yourself while there is yet time."

"What is life to me without you?" replied the Prince. "I shall remain."

"Oh, what can you be thinking of? I am lost! Do you see that ruddy line in the east? It is the coming dawn, and my servants will soon be astir. Go, I implore you. My husband has left six Afghans at home; they will murder you. And what is this?—your horse in the courtyard! Come quickly, and fly!"

Terror lent wings to her feet; she flew down the stairs, followed by the Prince, and unfastened the horse with her little jewelled hands.

"Save yourself; go, I implore you!" she cried, and she ran to the gate and flung it open.

The Prince leaped into the saddle.

"I go," he said, "but not without you," and giving her no time for reflection he lifted her before him on the saddle and set out at a gallop for his own house.

That morning, at sunrise, to the consternation of the servants of the Afghan's house, they found the gates of the court-yard open and their mistress gone—disappeared utterly. The Afghan servitor, whose duty it was to accompany the lady on her excursions about the city, signalled to his companions to be silent. Bending over the pavement, he sought for traces of the flight. Here and there, in the interstices between the stones, the sand retained the imprint of a horse's iron-shod hoofs. He emerged from the courtyard and continued his search, never missing the slightest sign. That evening he returned.

"I know where she is," he said; "let us wait for the master's coming."

Meanwhile the Prince was trying to tame the wild dove he had caught. He overwhelmed her with attention and caresses. She ensconced herself in a corner of the divan in the Sartian salon, and would listen to nothing. The Prince gave out that he was ill and would see no one, in order not to be disturbed. To be loved by her, to feel her arms creeping about his neck, to rest her head upon his breast, and kiss her long, silky hair—the Prince would have given his life to experience that sensation of soft delight. He passed the whole day on his knees before his idol; he kissed her feet, but she drew them back affrighted.

"Let me go home," she said; "give me my liberty. I am accursed to be loved by a Christian. I am afraid—I am afraid," and she hid her face in her hands, which he tried to draw away, imploring her to have pity on him. He wept, he sobbed at her feet. His love grew only the stronger, and he neither slept nor ate.

"I am alone and miserable," he cried. "I shall die without your love. Have pity on me! You will soon love me."

Night fell, and the Persian lanterns were lit, and cast a ruddy glow on the rugs and divans. Adaita was tired, languid, worn by the struggle against this handsome young man, who burned her with his breath, clasped her with his nervous hands. He drew her, trembling, toward him.

The Prince's head, with its crisp curls, bent toward her, he kissed her long and passionately, and they were both sinking in a dream of love, when they were startled by a sudden knock on the door.

"Your Highness," said the voice of a djighit, "an Afghan wishes to speak with you. He comes from the Governor-General, and says he cannot wait."

The Prince did not reply at once. He covered Adaita with kisses.

"Your Highness! your Highness!" cried the djighit.

"Yes, I am coming," replied the Prince, gently letting Adaita sink back upon the sofa; "I shall return immediately, my darling, my adored one," he whispered.

He entered his work-cabinet and saw an Afghan whom he did not know.

"What do you want?" he demanded.

The Afghan handed him a note:

"What is this the Emir tells me, my dear Prince?" (the Governor wrote).

'I shall return immediately.'

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"A woman carried off—at your house? Give her up at once and rid me of this scandal."

"I am waiting," said the Emir, "to kill her. You will understand, Prince, that my wife, having spent a whole day here, is no longer worthy of a true Mohammedan."

The Prince looked at the Emir—a superb warrior, bronzed, with brilliant black eyes and a proud and energetic air; he wore a robe of white cloth embroidered with gold, his green turban was made of costly cashmere and an arsenal of arms, studded with emeralds, rubies and sapphires, thrust in his sash.

"Do you think I shall give her up to you that you may assassinate her? You are mad," replied the Prince, anger and jealousy getting the better of him.

"Then it is you whom I shall kill!" cried the Afghan, drawing his scimitar.

His soul winged its way into the infinite, while his limp body rolled at the feet of the fair Afghan.

The Prince had barely time to spring to a trophy of arms on the wall and seize a yatagan. But the Afghan scimitar, more prompt, fell upon his left arm, making an ugly gash.

"Ah, you would strike me unarmed!" cried the Prince; "now, defend yourself, I shall give no quarter."

The Afghan cast a glance about him and his eye fell on a low table of nacre in the middle of the room, covered with rare bibelots. The Prince saw that it was in the way and with one hand tossed it into the garden. At the crash of its fall a number of djighits rushed into the room and were about to throw themselves upon the Afghan.

"Go! Leave me with this man!" cried the Prince; "I command you."

The djighits retired.

The Afghan took up his stand in the corner of the salon, facing the garden door. He was in the shadow, while the moon threw a white light on the marble pavement of the terrace and the arches about the garden, against which the Prince's figure made a black silhouette.

The combat began with a few passes, in which each tried the other's mettle, the Afghan's scimitar always meeting a firm guard in the Prince's yatagan. Then both drew back to resume the combat with new fury. The Afghan stooped and sought to bring the Prince down by wounding him in the leg. The latter divined this intention let him succeed and, at the same time, drove his weapon into the Afghan's chest till the blood spurted. But, in spite of this wound, the Afghan hurled himself on the Prince and gave him a deep cut in the side; but, in the darkness, he did not see the point of the yatagan concealed in the shadow of the Prince's body, and fell upon it with all his weight. The combat was at an end.

Prince Voldemar, himself dripping with blood, called his djighits.

"Deliver up this body to the Emir's suite," he directed, "and dress my wounds quickly and wash away this blood."

Half an hour later he re-entered the salon where Adaita awaited him. An immense vase of roses filled the room with perfume. The Prince selected a flower and offered it to the young woman. A drop of blood fell from his forehead upon the rose.

"What is that?" cried the startled Adaita.

"It is nothing—a mere scratch on my forehead. A caress from you will cure it," and, sinking upon the divan, he rested his head on the young woman's shoulder.

"Ah, how happy I am," he murmured, with a deep sigh; "you are mine at last, mine alone—my soul, my star, my adored one."

He drew toward him the charming, anxious face of Adaita and exhaled his last breath in a supreme kiss. His soul winged its way into the infinite, while his limp body rolled at the feet of the fair Afghan.

When the djighits entered the Sartian salon in the morning, they found only the corpse of Prince Voldemar, already cold in death. Adaita had disappeared. In spite of all inquiries she was never found. It was thought that she joined one of the caravans then passing through Samarcand on their way to Mecca, and, as a veiled woman is sacred to all Moslems, she was not recognised.

THIS HOUSE TO LET.

"YES," said old Mrs. Pounce, nodding her orange-coloured cap-strings, "they put me in—the House Agency did—to take care of the house, with a bright-painted 'To Let' stuck up in front of the area windows, and coal and house rent free. Which I don't deny, my dear, is an object to a lone female like me, with neither chick nor child, and my own way to make in the world, with fine laundressing out of the question on account of rheumatism in the finger-joints.

"'You seem like a respectable person, Mrs. Pounce, that has seen better days?' was what the house agent said, when he handed me over the keys. 'I think we may trust you to take good care of our doorsteps and windows, show applicants over the house, and answer all questions.'

"'You may so, sir,' says I, with a curtsey; 'there's many houses I've had charge of, and never a fault has been found yet. And this shan't be the first one,' says I.

"'We've a large business,' says Mr. Eagle, 'and if you give satisfaction, Mrs. Pounce,' says he, as civil spoken as possible, 'it's likely you'll never be without a roof to your head.'

"Well, my dear, of all nice houses—and I've seen a many in my day—this was the nicest. Stone front, with a bay window and snug garden planted with box borders, hot and cold water throughout, a little conservatory with an arched glass roof at the rear, and the hall floor covered with real painted tiles, which made you think you were walking on pictures; walls painted with Cupids and Venuses and garlands of flowers. Neighbourhood most desirable; drainage and sewerage perfect; and churches conveniently near.

"Excuse me, my dear, if it sounds like an advertisement, but Mr. Eagle wrote it down for me, and I never rested until I'd committed it to memory, so I could speak it off easy like,

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without any stops or hitches. And this I will say, as can't be said of all advertisements, there wasn't a word in the agent's description but what the house bore out.

"And the board hadn't been up twenty-four hours before there was a rush to look at the house. Young married couples as wanted to give up apartments, old married folks as wasn't suited with their homes; boarding-house keepers as made believe they was private families, and private families as wanted to take a few select boarders. But the rent was up tolerably high, and most of 'em dropped off, after I'd named the sum.

"'Never mind, Mrs. Pounce, never mind,' says Mr. Eagle, rubbing his hands. 'It's a house that there'll be no difficulty in letting, without any reduction of rent. Just wait,' says he, 'till the spring sets in.'

"But one day in trots an old gentleman, with gold spectacles and 'business' writ in every wrinkle of his forehead.

"'This house to let, ma'am?' says he.

"'Yes, sir,' says I.

"'Can I look at it?' says he.

"'Certainly, sir,' says I.

"I began as smooth as oil about the hot and cold water, the marble-floored bath-room and the tiles, when all of a sudden he puts up two hands in a warning sort of a way.

"'That'll do, ma'am,' says he, 'that'll do. I've eyes, and can see for myself.'

"'Certainly, sir,' says I; but I don't deny as I was took aback by that queer, dictatorial way of his.

"'Any ghosts about the place, ma'am?' asked he.

"'Sir?' says I.

"'Ghosts,' says he, out loud and sharp. 'Mysterious footsteps—lurking shadows—clanking chains at midnight?'

"'Mercy, no, sir,' says I, beginning to feel my flesh creep all over.

"'Rats?' says he.

"'Certainly not,' says I; 'with solid cemented cellar floor, and patent wood blocks.'

"'Beetles?' says he.

"'Look for yourself, sir,' says I, bridling up a little.

"'I like the house,' says he, after he had gone sniffing about the drain pipes, and peered into the coal cellar and wine vault, and sounded the copper boiler with his knuckles, just for all the world as if he was in the plumbing business. 'You may tell the agent I'll take it, if he and I can come to terms about the rent. When shall you see him?'

"'Most likely this afternoon, sir,' says I.

"'I'll drop in at his office to-morrow at nine,' says he. 'I'm going to be married,' says he, as composed as if he were saying that he was going to take a blue pill. 'The house will suit my wife's ideas. She thinks we are going to board,' says he, with an odd sort of a chuckle in his throat, 'and she's not a bit pleased with the idea. It'll be a pleasant surprise for her,' says he.

"Well, no sooner had he gone than in comes a stout, middle-aged lady in a black dress, rows of curls on either side of her face, and cheeks as red as any cabbage roses.

"'I've just come from Mr. Eagle's office,' says she; 'he has given me the refusal of this house, in case it suits me.'

"'I don't know, ma'am,' says I, 'but what it's let already.'

"'Let already!' says she, with a sort of scream. 'But that's impossible! Have not I told you that I've the refusal of it? Show me the premises at once.'

"Well, I was in a pretty puzzle, as you may believe; but I went all over the house with the curly lady, and she declared that it met her fancy exactly.

"'Possession on the 1st of May, I suppose?' says she.

"'Yes, ma'am,' says I, 'if——.'

"'There's no "if" in the question,' says she, as short as pie-crust. 'You may take down the "To Let," my good woman.'

"I curtseys very low, but I says to myself, 'not if I know it, ma'am, without orders from the agent himself.'

"Away went the lady with the curly hair and rose-red cheeks, and I was just putting on my hat to run round to the House Agency, when in comes Mr. Eagle himself, all smiles.

"'Well, Mrs. Pounce,' says he, 'so the house is let.'

"'To my thinking, sir,' says I, 'it's let twice over.'

"Then I up and told him about my old gentleman.

"'Dear me,' says he, 'this is very perplexing. At what time was this personage here?'

"'The clock struck twelve, sir,' says I, 'just as he went away.'

"Mr. Eagle hit himself a blow over the forehead like a play-actor.

"'Confusion worse confounded!' says he. 'It was twelve precisely when my customer left the office. We can't split the house in two, can we? Well, we must tell your old gentleman just how it happened. I dare say he will be reasonable about it.'

"But he wasn't reasonable, Mr. Eagle told me afterward; he never saw any one in such a rage.

"'I've taken the house,' says he, 'and I'll have it, cost what it may. Do you say that the rent is two hundred pounds? I'll give you two hundred and fifty down; if my claim and that of this lady are equally good, the question of price must settle it.'

"Well, we supposed, me and Mr. Eagle, as that was the end of the matter. But not a bit of it. The lady came that same afternoon with an upholster and a tape measure to see about the carpets. 'Two hundred and fifty pounds indeed!' says she, with a toss of her curls. 'It will take more than a paltry two hundred and fifty pounds to unsettle my plans. I'll give three hundred sooner than I'll lose the house.'

"When my old gentleman hears this, he grinds his teeth in a manner as was frightful to hear.

"'It's my house,' says he, 'and I will have it! Three hundred and fifty pounds, Eagle!'

"'Come,' says Mr. Eagle, 'matters are getting lively. The house agent business is looking up.'

"But you should have heard what a whistle he gave when I told him, the very next day that the curly lady had authorised me to offer four hundred.

"'I'll not stand this any longer,' said Mr. Eagle, jumping up and sending the papers flying all over the office table. 'I've a conscience, if fate has made a house agent of me. Tell her to come round this afternoon and sign the lease. Four hundred pounds is twice what we asked, and we asked twice what the property was worth to begin with.'

"So the curly-headed lady had her own way, after all. The bald-headed old gentleman stamped about in a pretty rage when he heard as the house was let.

"'I'll sue the Agency,' says he; 'I'll have the house if it costs me all I'm worth.'

"'Oh, hush, sir,' says I, all in a tremble. 'Here comes Miss Wix now.'

"'Who?' says he.

"'Miss Wix,' says I. 'The lady who has taken the house.'

"I got behind the door, fully expecting a scene, after what had come and gone. But, to my surprise, she gave a little shriek and flew into his arms.

"'Dear Josiah!' says she.

"'Dear Barbara!' says he.

"'I was looking for a desirable residence for you, my own angel,' says he.

"'You duck!' says she.

"'And thought this would exactly suit you,' says he.

"'Oh,' said she, 'it does, and I've taken it at four hundred pounds a year. It seems a good deal of money to pay, but I've been driven to it by a horrid old cormorant who was determined to have the house at any price. However——'

"'Barbara,' says the old gentleman, with a little gasping sound in his throat, as if he was swallowing a lump, 'that horrid old cormorant was I!'

"'You don't mean——' says she.

"'That we have been bidding against each other,' says the old gentleman. 'Yes, we have.'

"'And I was going to give you a pleasant surprise,' says she, pulling out her handkerchief.

"'It is a surprise,' says he. 'But as for the pleasure of it——. Never mind, Barbara. Let's go in and measure for the carpets and curtains.'"

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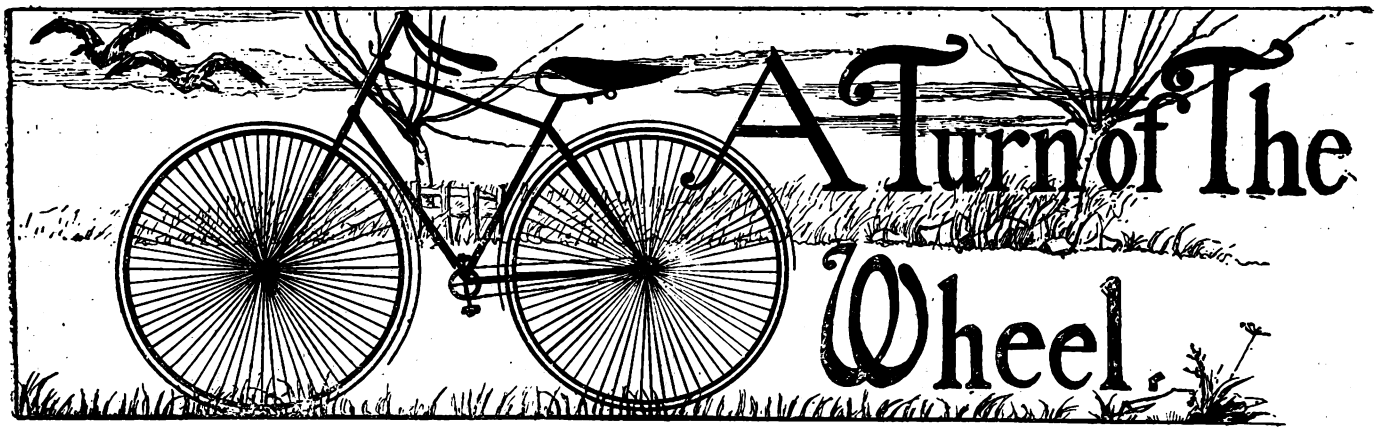

A Turn of The Wheel.

A FEW years ago a bicycle rider was no common thing in Provence. Brian Blair was perhaps the first who came wheeling by the golden fields and vineyards like a mounted Mercury.

"Qu' c'est qu' ca?" the peasants asked each other, staring after the glittering wonder. One look at the strange chariot, and one longer at the handsome, clean-shaven youth whose shapely legs propelled the wheels so deftly and swiftly. He was pleasant to look upon, for his eyes were brown and merry, his smiles came quickly, and he knew enough French to toss a gay salutation here and there.

"Pardieu!" he cried, impatiently pushing back a broad-brimmed peasant's hat, for he had exchanged his own blue polo by the way. "When one is in France one must exclaim in French. I suppose I must ask these Provencals what they say when it gets so confoundedly hot. Heavens, how hungry I am getting! I could eat black bread and cheese even. What a treat it would be to sit down under those hop-vines, and—by Jove, what a pretty girl!"

In the arched doorway of a little stone cottage, a young girl stood—a figure off an old Watteau fan—young, fair, smiling. It was Fanchon Thibault, who had the unconscious trick of posing like a basque statuette in her flowered chintz skirt and fresh muslin draperies, with a white kerchief tucked round her pretty neck; some frills of Swiss needlework half hiding her round arms, and a most becoming cap coquettishly perched above her braids of soft brown hair.

Of course Brian stared, and that was his undoing, for bump went his machine against a large stone; and just when he might have wished most to make an impression he took a terrible header into the road, and a cloud of dust enveloped his prostrate form.

Brian remembered afterwards the vision of a fair and lovely face bending over him and a little hand wiping something wet out of his eyes. Could it have been blood! He did not know, nor did he trouble to think, and in a moment it had all gone from him like a dream.

The first thing that came back to his memory was a cool little room with white walls, against which an ebony crucifix hung in bold relief. Brian turned his head, and a soft step glided to his bedside.

"What has happened to me?" he asked, raising himself on his elbow with a painful sense of weakness.

"You have been ill—very ill," was the gentle reply, in clear and beautiful French. "Lie down, please. The doctor says you are not to raise your head for several days." Brian turned inquiringly, and saw his Watteau shepherdess.

"Oh, I remember," he said, sinking back on the pillow with a prolonged sigh. "It was you who upset me."

"I, monsieur!" she cried, in startled tones.

"I was looking at you," Brian replied. "You were standing in the doorway, and I was thinking how pretty you were, when my wheel caught, and over I went. So you see, it was your fault, mademoiselle."

"Yes, but—" she began, blushing prettily.

"Fanchon!" called a low even voice from the next room. "Nanon wants you down-stairs, my child."

"Yes, uncle," she said quickly, and Brian suddenly found her place by his side taken by an old man in priestly robes, who looked at him with stern disapproval.

"You are not to talk," said the newcomer curtly. "You are very ill. Besides, you must not say such things to my niece. She is going to join the Sisterhood of the Blessed Virgin, and I cannot have you putting wrong notions into her head. A sick man should be better employed."

Brian had nothing to say. He was weak, and the stern hard face of the priest awed him. "What a pity!" he thought, with a sudden fierce rebellious feeling he could not understand. "Such a pretty girl—such a wonderfully pretty girl to be shut up in a convent!"

"You are an Englishman, I believe?" the priest said suddenly.

"Yes; I am from London," Brian replied, and wondered at the peculiar look that swept over the priest's thin, worn face. "Do you think I'd better send any word to my people?"

There was no reply, and when he turned his head Père Thibault had gone.

There were some dull days after that—days when he looked in vain for a glimpse of Fanchon, when his heart beat strangely as he heard her singing below in the garden. Père Thibault and an old household witch they called Nanon came in and out and sat with him between the doctor's visits, till Brian had a wicked desire to throw his boots at the old priest's head, and take a shy at Nanon's black silk cap, which was invariably crooked.

"This is beastly," he said, tossing himself impatiently on his rumpled pillow. "I wonder how much longer I am to be kept here."

A knock at the door interrupted this amiable soliloquy. "There comes that Macbethian witch with my dinner," he reflected. "Come in." The door opened, but it was Fanchon who carried the tray.

"Oh," cried Brian eagerly, his face quite radiant, "I am so glad to see you! Do sit down and talk to me. I am dying of *ennui*. Nanon is so stupid, and your uncle is so pious, that they drive me frantic between them."

Fanchon smiled sedately as she set the little tray down.

"I hope you are feeling better, monsieur," she said.

"Since you came——. Yes," he replied. "No, no. Don't go——, please, don't. Sit down here. Where did you get those violets you are wearing? Just give me a smell of them. Oh, you don't know how I lie here and long for the green fields and the birds and the flowers! You love flowers, don't you?"

Fanchon took the bunch of violets from her breast, and held them out to him.

"Don't tell Père Thibault that I gave them to you," she said, with a provoking little *moue*. "He wouldn't allow it."

Brian seized the flowers, and pressed them to his lips.

"You are very good," he said, as gratefully as though she had saved his life.

"Very bad, I'm afraid," she said, sighing. "When my uncle comes home he will be very cross at Nanon for letting me bring you your dinner."

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"Where has he gone?"

"He has gone to Mère Brissac. She is dying, poor soul! God save her!" And Fanchon crossed herself devoutly.

"And what is Nanon doing?"

"Poor Nanon! She has the toothache. Oh, it is frightful!"

"I did not know she had any teeth left to ache," Brian observed. "Well, that's a blessing in disguise—that toothache. No, you must sit down. I won't eat a mouthful if you don't."

"Oh, you are bad!" said Fanchon, yielding with a little laugh, and they were soon chatting gaily there together. Brian heard all about the chickens and the pigeons, the bees and the rabbits, the flower garden and the vineyards, and all the time he was falling more deeply and hopelessly in love with this charming Provencal.

"Is it really true, mademoiselle," he asked, at last, "that you are destined for the Church?"

A cloud drifted over the bright, lovely face, and Fanchon's eyes fell.

"My uncle says so, monsieur," she replied.

"But you don't want to be a nun?" Brian urged eagerly, almost trembling with suppressed emotion.

"It is not what we wish that is best for us. My uncle says the world is very wicked, and that I shall be far happier if ——"

"Bosh!" cried Brian savagely. "I beg your pardon, mademoiselle; but you are too young and too fair to bury yourself in a convent. The world must go on, and why may you not share the lot of other women? You were born to make some man happy with your love. There is no lot in the world that would suit you so well as that of a happy wife and mother."

"You must not say such things to me, monsieur," she cried, in agitated tones. "You must not; it is very wrong."

"But I will say so," said Brian, seizing the little hand that rested on the bed beside him. "If you will let me, I will say more. I have seen you only a few times; but I know I could love you. Nay, Fanchon, I do love you! Hear me. I am rich. Let me make you my wife, and give up —— "

"Never!" burst forth a stern voice that made Fanchon spring up in terror, and the next moment the irate form of Père Thibault was standing between them. "Shame upon you, Fanchon!" he passionately cried, his blazing eyes fixed upon the girl's trembling form. "You—the bride of the Church! You listen to words of love from a man you have not known a fortnight, and he was one of that accursed race that murdered your father! And you," he went on, holding out one thin hand that trembled with rage as he turned upon Brian, "you repay me thus for taking you into my house, and nursing you back from the doors of death. Begone, disobedient girl! Get down on your knees and pray for forgiveness. Silence! Not a single word! Go!"

Poor Fanchon stole away, trembling with fear, and perhaps Père Thibault expected Brian to fall on his knees then and there, praying for mercy; but he did not. Fanchon had no sooner left the room than he sprang out of bed and confronted the angry priest.

"Hear me, Père Thibault," he said, in a voice that was strong and clear with excitement; "it is my turn to speak; I love your niece, and wish to marry her."

"That you never shall," cried the priest vehemently. "She shall marry no man, and you least of all. Was it not the cursed war in the Crimea in which the English stirred on the French to fight that robbed me of my brother Ambrose, my only brother, whom I nursed in these arms as a mother nurses her babe?

"Yes. You killed him there amongst you, and now you wish to take from me his only child! But you shall not. I swore once that no Englishman should ever cross my threshold; but the devil sent you. You found a shelter in my house only to abuse the kindness that aided you. Out with you, I say! Begone at once, monster ingrate!"

Brian shrugged his shoulders. He went downstairs, groping his way, surprised at his own feebleness. Fanchon was standing in the shaded doorway, and he saw that she had been weeping.

"Oh," she cried in alarm, "you are not able to go about!"

"Oh, yes," he said lightly, "I am quite well; but thou," he added, dropping into the tender second person, "thou art unhappy, little one. I have gotten thee into a sad scrape, I am afraid."

She did not reply, for her tears suddenly welled up again, and she could not speak. Brian was like other men, and the sight of a woman weeping—especially this one—was quite too much for him. He put his arms round her, and drew her head down on his shoulder.

"Dost thou love me, little darling?" he whispered. "My heart is thine, Fanchon. No one can take it from thee if thou carest to keep it."

"No, no!" she cried hurriedly, withdrawing herself from his embrace. "Hush! I must not listen to thee. Thou must go away. I will never forget thee—never—never; but——" She burst into tears, and then, flinging herself upon his breast, she sobbed, "God forgive me, but I do love thee!"

Brian's arms clasped the little form to his heart. "Come with me, Fanchon," he cried joyously. "Be my wife. I have a home where thou shalt be welcome."

"No, no!" she said, again withdrawing from his embrace. "My uncle is old and lonely. He loved my father as he loved his own soul. My father was killed in your war, and my uncle can never forgive you."

"But what had I to do with that?" exclaimed Brian impatiently.

"You are an Englishman. My uncle will never, never forgive you. You must go away and forget me."

"I'll be hanged if I will!" said Brian, in vigorous English.

"What sayest thou?" Fanchon asked gently.

"I said I wouldn't."

"But I can never marry thee. First of all, I am wedded to the Church, and then I will never disobey my uncle. Provencals who disobey live accursed. Thou must go, and thou must never return."

This one idea she repeated again and again, till Brian slowly realised that he could not persuade her; yet he lingered on the cottage steps. The sun was setting, and a mellow light fell on the grass near them, which was studded with white star-eyed flowers.

On the ground lay Brian's jacket, which he had tossed there indifferently as he stood and talked to Fanchon.

"Do not make me any more unhappy than I am," she said, at length. "You are not able to go far, I know, but the inn is just below, and there you can stay till you are stronger."

"You seem deter-

In the arched doorway of a little stone cottage a young girl stood.

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mined to get rid of me," Brian said jealously. "I am going—since you wish it. I dare say you will soon forget me."

"Dost thou think so unkindly of me?" she said in gentle reproof. "Did I not say I would never forget thee?"

"Didst thou mean it?" he asked, looking up into her eyes. "If thou wilt promise me that, there may be some hope yet."

"I promise you," she said softly.

"You will not marry anyone else, Fanchon?"

"No—never."

He took her hand in his, and, bending over her, kissed her. Then, with a resolute step, he turned and went away. Poor Fanchon's heart was at her lips as she saw him mount his bicycle and wheel away.

"If he should fall again," and then she resumed her womanly occupation of crying.

A week passed by. Père Thibault had said nothing further to Fanchon about her conduct toward the detested Englishman, but Sister Agnes came back and forth at the cottage, and Fanchon knew that she was being disposed of, and hat made her cry the more.

"Dry thy tears, child," said Sister Agnes. "Thy sorrows will be soon at an end. In the holy Church there is no grief. To-morrow I will take thee to a haven of rest."

"But I don't want to be a nun!" Fanchon burst forth. "I don't want to leave this world and shut myself up in a convent. I hate it! I detest the dark corridors and the gloomy cells—and everything! I love the fields and the birds and the flowers. I don't want to leave them."

At this outbreak of passion Sister Agnes's face became grave. "Unhappy child!" she said sternly. "Thy heart is full of a less holy joy than the love of nature's beauties. Pray to God for purity. Seek not the idols of this world."

"I do not ask for much," said Fanchon, in a low, broken voice. "I ask only for what God meant every woman to have You cannot crush such thoughts out of my heart, and if I may not be his wife I shall die!"

As she spoke her voice trembled, and she entreatingly stretched out her arms. The nun opened her lips to utter a pious rebuke, but they closed again in silence, for someone came down the garden-walk to the little summer-house, and the hop-vines parted before a strong, manly hand.

"Fanchon, my darling," said Brian Blair. "I have come back to thee!"

The nun turned away, for in a moment they were in each other's arms, and Père Thibault was coming rapidly towards them with a strange gentleman by his side — strange, yet oddly like the tall old priest, on whose face shone a look that Sister Agnes had never seen there before.

"Fanchon!" he said, in a clear, ringing voice, "embrace thy lover and God bless you both. He has brought back thy father and my brother Ambrose. He was not killed in the war, but taken prisoner, and kept for a long time in Russia. See, he is there!"

"Dry thy tears, child," said Sister Agnes.

"I found thy father in Paris."

The bewildered girl turned from Brian to embrace her father.

"Tell me," she whispered; "I do not understand."

"I found thy father in Paris," said Brian, holding her hand tightly in his own. "It was the merest chance. He had a shop there, and the name was the same as yours. I asked questions, and learned that he had been in the Crimean War, was taken prisoner, and shot in the head by a sentinel while attempting to escape. This bullet affected his reason. For ten years his mind was gone. Then a great surgeon extracted the ball, and his reason was restored. He returned home, but his brother was gone from his old home, his wife was dead, and he could find no trace of any of his family. After searching for years, he gave up all hope, and settled down in Paris, where I found him."

"God bless you for it," said Fanchon softly, and she kissed her new-found father with tenderest joy. The old priest wiped his moist eyes on his cassock sleeve.

"Sister Agnes," he said, in an altered tone, "I am afraid you have lost your young proselyte. Fanchon's father is willing she should marry, and—I have nothing to say against it now."

The Sister stooped and kissed Fanchon's forehead. "I hope you will be happy," she whispered, and then left them to their joy.

"Do you think you can be happy?" said Brian, looking down into her eyes.

"I am," Fanchon replied, nestling against his side.

A few days afterwards, at the close of the matin service, Père Thibault married them, and Brian brought away his bride with many blessings.

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"NIG."

"DON'T be afraid, sir; you will not miss the train. I've taken travellers to the train for five years, and I have never made them miss the train. Do you hear, sir? Never."

"However——."

"Oh, don't look at your watch. There is one thing that you don't know which you ought to know, but which your watch will not tell you. That is, that the train is always fifteen minutes late. I never knew it to be in time."

But it was one of those rare days when the train was exactly in time, and I was left.

I now had to wait three long hours in a lonely village in one of the cantons of Switzerland. It was hemmed in by two dismal-looking mountains, the tops of which were covered with snow.

How was I to pass these three hours? I invoked the help of the bystanders. There was another general response: "Go and see the whirlpool. There is nothing to equal it in the country." And where was the whirlpool? "Upon the mountain to the right, about half-way up; but the road is very bad." They advised me to take a guide, and there below, in that little white cottage with the green blinds, I could find the best guide in the country, an honest man, Father Simon.

I went and knocked on the door of the cottage. An old woman came and opened it.

"Father Simon?"

"It is his house—but is it to go to the whirlpool?"

"Yes; it is to go there."

"Ah, well! Father Simon has already been there this morning. He is tired, and does not wish to go again. But don't be alarmed. There is someone to take his place. There is Nig."

"Send for Nig."

"But you must know beforehand Nig is not a person."

"Not a person?"

"No, it is our dog. He will show you very well—as well as my man. He is used to it."

"How used to it?"

"You see that for years and years Father Simon has taken Nig with him, so he has learned all the roads, and now he can make the trips alone. He has often taken travellers, and we have always been complimented by them. As for his intelligence, have no fear. He has as much as you or I."

"But is it not necessary to speak?"

"If it were to show you the monuments, yes, for then it would be necessary to give you the history and the dates; but this time there is nothing to see but the beauties of Nature. Take Nig. Besides, it will be cheaper. It is three francs for my man; with Nig it is but thirty sous; and Nig will show you as much for thirty sous as my man will for three francs."

"Very well; where is Nig?"

"He is asleep by the fire. He has already taken some people this morning to the whirlpool. Shall I call him?"

"Yes, call him."

"Nig! Nig!"

He came with a bound through the window. He was a homely enough little black animal. His long hair was curly and twisted into knots. He did not look like very much on the outside, but he carried himself with a certain air of gravity, of decision, and of importance. He immediately looked me over closely, precisely; casting his eyes from my head to my feet with an air that said very plainly: "It is a traveller, and he wishes to go to the whirlpool."

To lose one train was enough for one day, and I did not care to expose myself to that misfortune a second time, so I explained to this honest woman that I had but three hours to make the trip.

"Oh, I know that perfectly well. You can take the train at four o'clock. Do not fear; Nig will bring you back in time. Go, Nig! Start, my boy; all ready!"

But Nig did not appear to be at all disposed to start. He remained immovable, watching his mistress with apparent anxiety.

"Ah! I am so foolish!" said the old woman. "I had forgotten the sugar." She went and brought four pieces of sugar from the closet and gave them to me.

"See! this is why he would not start. You have now got the pieces of sugar. See! Nig, the gentleman has the sugar. Now. Go! my boy. To the whirlpool! To the whirlpool! To the whirlpool!" She repeated these words, speaking very slowly and distinctly.

Nig answered the words of his mistress with little nods of his head, which quickened at the last with a show of impatience, as if to say, "Yes, yes; I know. The gentleman has some pieces of sugar, and we go to the whirlpool. I understand. Do you take me for a numskull?" And without waiting to hear the third "To the whirlpool" of Madame Simon, Nig turned round on his paws, came and raised his face to mine with a look as if showing me the way, and said, as plainly as it is permitted to a dog to speak to man:

"Let us go. Come, you!"

I followed him obediently. We went down the road, he ahead and I behind. We were obliged to cross the entire village. Some children who were playing in the road recognised my guide.

"Here, Nig! Good-day, Nig!"

They wished to play with the dog, but he turned away his head with an air of a dog who had no time to amuse himself—of a dog who had to make his living and was earning thirty sous. One of the children said to the other:

"Let him be. He is taking that gentleman to the whirlpool. Good-day, Mister!"

The rest all laughed, and repeated after him:

"Good-day, Mister!"

I smiled reluctantly. I felt embarrassed—even a little humiliated. He was, for the time being, my master. He knew where we went, and I did not. I was anxious to get out of the village, to find myself alone with him, and face to face with the beauties of Nature.

The beauties of Nature, so far, were a frightful road, dusty and burning under a leaden sun. The dog travelled on with a quick step that tired me to keep up with him. I tried to moderate his ardour. "Nig, my boy, not so fast!" Nig dropped his ears, evidently not wishing to hear his fellow-traveller, and when I attempted to seat myself by the side of a tree, he exhibited signs of impatience. He barked in a little, sharp voice, and looked at me in a very ferocious way.

Evidently it was not the proper thing to stop there. Nig pawed the ground so sharply and vigorously that I arose to follow him. He instantly became quiet, and began to trot gaily ahead of me. I understood him, and he was contented.

Some minutes afterward we came to a beautiful pathway, flowery, shady, full of the perfume of roses and filled with the murmur of the springs. Nig had already entered the wood, and had disappeared at a gallop. I followed him, a little out of breath.

I had not gone a dozen paces when I found Nig, who waited for me, head in the air, and eyes sparkling. Where he stopped was a grassy arbour, made musical by the song of a rippling brook. There I saw an old bench, and the eyes of Nig turned impatiently from me to the bench. I had begun to understand the language of dogs:

"Now," said he to me, "behold a place to rest. It is pleasant here, and cool. You were foolish to wish to rest in the open wood. Now sit down. I will permit you to do so for a short while."

I stopped and seated myself. I lighted a cigar. I made a motion to offer one to Nig. Perhaps he smoked, but I thought that he would prefer a morsel of sugar. He caught it very adroitly, and cracked it with his great white teeth. Then he lay down and slept at my feet. He was evidently in the habit of taking a nap in this lovely spot.

He slept about ten minutes. I had by this time become accustomed to the whole thing. Nig had inspired me with perfect confidence. I was resolved to obey him blindly. He arose, casting his eyes from side to side, which meant, "Let

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us start, my friend"; and now behold us, like two comrades, travelling slowly along under the trees. The dog enjoyed the charm, the silence, and the beauty of the surroundings.

Before this, while we had been exposed to the fierce sun, he had travelled with quick, short steps, to escape the dust and the heat; but now, refreshed and rested, he walked for the pleasure of walking under the green shade of the trees.

A road now appeared toward the left; a short hesitation on the part of Nig. He reflected. Then he passed on and continued his route straight before him, but not without a certain lack of confidence in his manner, and now I see him stop. Ah! he was almost cheated that time. He is coming back, and now we take the new road to the left. At the end of a dozen paces he brings me into a sort of circle, and then, with his nose in the air, invites me to contemplate a very respectable wall of rough rocks, forming a rude amphitheatre.

When Nig thought I had inspected this place enough he turned about, and we went back again to the other road. Nig had evidently forgotten to show me the Circle of Rocks—a light enough fault in a dog, but which he had quickly rectified.

The route now became very steep, very dangerous, and difficult. I advanced more slowly and with infinite precautions. The dog sprang lightly from rock to rock, but he did not abandon me. He waited for me, watching my steps carefully with the most touching solicitude. At last I began to hear a boiling and roaring noise. Nig made a great demonstration. "Courage!" said he. "Courage! We have arrived. Now you will see the whirlpool."

It was indeed a whirlpool. The stream was modest enough, and the falls equally modest, but the water leaped from rock to rock, crossing and recrossing, and fell sparkling into a great basin of rock, around the edge of which the water fumed and whirled.

I should certainly never have been really consoled for my laborious tramp by seeing such an ordinary scene if it had not been for my companion, the brave Nig, who was to me much more interesting and remarkable than the whirlpool. On each side of this stream was a little Swiss *châlet*, or dairy, attended each by a little Swiss maiden, one a brunette, the other a blonde.

Each was dressed in the national costume, and was awaiting anxiously my arrival. It seemed to me that the blonde had the prettier eyes, and I had taken three or four steps in that direction when Nig, barking loudly and furiously, absolutely prevented my advance in that direction. Had he a preference for the little brunette? I changed my direction, and all went well.

The dog, appeased as if by enchantment, went ahead to a seat at the table in front of the *châlet* of his young friend. I asked for a glass of milk. The girl went into the house, and Nig followed behind. By a half-opened window I soon saw the bright, shining eyes of my dog. The little wretch! He was being served before me! It is he who is always first. I could see him there now with his great basin of milk.

After a while he appeared, with great white globules of milk dripping from his moustache, and condescended to wait for me while I drank my fill. I gave him a piece of sugar, and we both appeared to be well satisfied with ourselves and with each other.

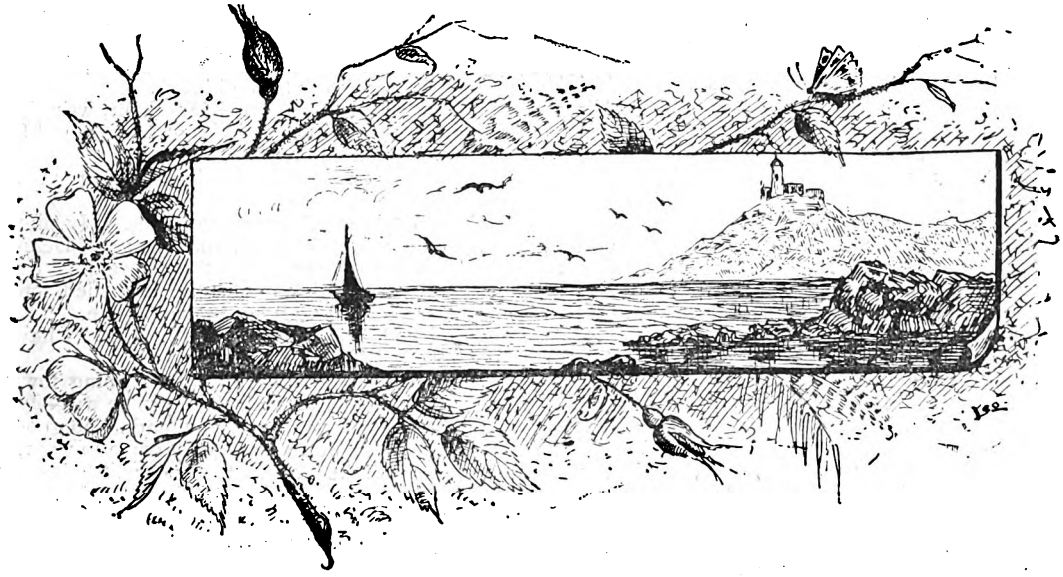
Nig began to show signs of anxiety. I read now in his eyes as in a book. He wished to start. I paid my bill and rose; then I started for the road which had brought us up the mountain. I saw Nig had gone and planted himself squarely at the entrance to another road. He cast upon me a serious look, even severe; but I had made such progress during the two hours that the eloquent silence of the animal had become familiar to me.

"What sort of opinion must you have of me?" said Nig. "Do you think I will travel twice over the same road? No, no; I am too good a guide for that. I know my business. We will return by another route."

We descended by this other road, which was still prettier than the first. Nig was very lively now, and often turned toward me with a little triumphant air. We recrossed the village to the platform of the station, and were met by three or four other dogs, who wanted to gossip with my comrade, but Nig growled, and refused their advances.

"You see well enough what I have got to do. I must conduct the gentleman to the train." It was only when I was in the waiting-room that he would consent to leave me, after having cracked gaily the last two pieces of sugar; and this is how I translated his parting glance:

"Now we are five minutes ahead of time. It is not I who would let you miss the train. I wish you good-day, sir; good-day."



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THE MAN MY SISTER MARRIED.

CHAPTER XVII.

"You never saw me show fear yet, Bruce," said John quietly. He pushed the old man aside, stepped out, then turned and came back into the room, a queer, dazed look on his face. I followed his eyes, and there, on the threshold of the door, was a woman.

She was clothed in a tawdry shawl, a dirty, draggled gown, and over her battered hat she wore a thick veil. She was tall and straight, with a proud bearing, despite her poverty-stricken apparel.

With a quick gesture, she flung off her veil, disclosing a pallid haggard face, wrinkled and shrunken, shadowed by that dreadful destroyer, consumption.

But the eyes; those great dark eyes! I knew her then! She was my sister Katherine. An icy hand clutched my heart, and with a wild grasping at the empty air, I sank into a low chair behind the *portière*. The room went whirling round, and for a moment I heard a crashing like the sea, and yet I knew there was a dreadful silence in the room.

Then she herself spoke, and I seemed to come back from far away, and to be forced to listen. Her voice was hoarse and low. Words came with difficulty, as if to speak gave her pain, and there was a querulous tone in all she said, such as a sick person uses.

"I seem to have interrupted a family gathering. Grandfather and Aunt Marg here! You were not so friendly twenty years ago. John, as young looking as ever, so little changed, and me—what a wreck I am, and poor; why, I've almost starved! Then someone sent me money, someone of my past, perhaps Dean, it does not matter, and I dragged myself home. I've come like Lazarus, to feed from the crumbs of the rich man's table. You might want a cup of cold water in the next world, John. There is murder enough on your conscience, as there is on mine, for that matter. I know I don't deserve anything, but you can't let me die of hunger."

Still no sound from those waiting people. How ghastly still the room was! No one dared to speak. For the first time in his brave life, John's courage failed him. He sank into a chair, covering his face with his hands. It all seemed like a terrible nightmare to me. I tried to rise. I would go to him and comfort his misery, and then it flashed over me what Katherine's presence meant to me.

She flung off her veil.

"I haven't got long to live," she went on recklessly. "Consumption's got a hold on me; been dying by inches. Even after the past, John, you haven't the heart to drive me out to die like a dog."

Then Mrs. Scott spoke: "It is impossible for you to stay here in this house," she said icily; "even in Galveston, where people think you dead."

"If it's Dean you are thinking of," Katherine cried eagerly, "you need not fear. I have not seen him for years. Don't know where he is; maybe he sent me the money to come here; some spite work; but the few months left me, Mrs. Scott, I'll be so good, you needn't dread me."

"I have suffered enough through you," said Mrs. Scott bitterly; "you wrecked my son's life, sent him a wanderer from his home for years; made him an outlaw; on your head is all the guilt of that awful past. I would not breathe the same air you do, nor have you one hour under my roof."

"She must see she cannot stay in this house," said Aunt Marg, "there are plenty of places outside. When she understands pleading is hopeless, she will have sense enough to go away quietly."

"Not until he says so," cried Katherine; "not for you, Margaret Collier, with your soft, purring ways. What are you but the accomplice of assassins, the only witness? You cannot judge me now. Oh, for a shelter and kindness! I deserve none, I know that; but I will not cumber the ground long. I am a living dead woman. If there was any pity, but there is none; a good woman like you, Mrs. Scott, and a narrow one like Margaret Collier, will never forgive. You keep us down. You drive us to the gutter—to suicide!"

"You deserve no pity, for you had none that day. I saw you then," said Margaret fiercely. "I saw my sister dragged away, and you uttered no petition for her; you left her baby to lie there to die. You saw your own father shot without a tear. You are not a woman, but a monster, a moral leper, and if you died at the door you should be thrust out of the house. Is it right, is it just, that you live to bring sorrow and dishonour, when those good women died?"

"Be silent, Margaret," said John steadily. He rose to his feet, and for a moment struggled with himself, as though fierce, burning words came which he would check. How noble he looked then, and I was glad. I had not thought he would be unmanly, even to her; I felt that he would be gentle. He had that chivalrous courtesy for the suffering and weak that all gentlemen have. I realised the meaning of that word then.

"I—I can hardly trust myself to speak," John faltered, passing his hand over his eyes; "it is so hard; oh, my God, it is so hard! But you are suffering, ill, in want. I have plenty—you shall be cared for." He had never looked at her once. She moved a step nearer him.

"You will not drive me out, John."

He shuddered and stepped back. "You must go away, otherwise I shall invoke the law for my mother's sake, for my——" Then he stopped, and turned so ghastly pale I thought he would fall. He staggered back to his chair with a bitter groan—he had almost said, "my wife." To him, too, that awful sentence had come. What were we to each other now?

"I wonder you do not use your strength," she hissed; "but, John, you used to be so kind, so generous, I thought you might forgive when you saw the wreck I am. In that past I never dreamed the consequences of that awful day. I could not check them; as well stop the fierce flight of a herd of stampeded cattle as reason with those drunken Mexican brutes. I was so young then. It happened so quickly. They said you cared for me all the long years that my portrait hung in your room. It is there, still, I know it." She ran across to the library.

"What can we do?" cried Mrs Scott, wringing her hands.

"Send for the police," said Aunt Marg; and I realised how cruel a good woman can be.

Katherine came feebly back, catching at the door for support.

"You love some other woman, John. My picture is taken away; only a wreck there, like me; yet Dean told me you had been true to my memory all these years. I used to boast of it. I wish I hadn't come back; had died long ago," she went on, tremulously, all her bravado gone. "I was wicked, I am punished—ill, suffering, and broken. I haven't a place to lay my head."

"Katherine," said my grandfather, going toward her—and what a pathetically brave little figure he was—"I never liked you, nor believed you, and you hadn't no goodwill to me in your proud days; but, now you are come to want, are sick and homeless, I'll take you to that poor little house you used to despise. Come home with me." He went to her and drew her arm through his. "I am very sorry, John, that any of my blood should be like her; your misery is not greater than mine. None of your money must do for her. I have enough and plenty, and from this moment she shall never cross your path."

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When they were gone, Aunt Marg, a set, angry look upon her face, turned to Mrs. Scott. "I cannot go home now," she said, "where that woman is."

"Then stay with me," answered Mrs. Scott; "and Letty—oh, my poor child, my Letty!"

I pushed by them and went to John; kneeling by his side, I put his arm about my neck. How dreadful he looked, with that white face, those staring wide eyes that did not seem his at all, a deep wrinkle between his brows I never saw there before.

"You will believe I knew," he gasped; "but they said she was dead. I saw a grave. It was his vile work. If I had married, thinking that woman, Katherine, was dead and there were children, he could upset any will of mine. It was a deep-laid plot, but he could not wait for his vengeance, and you made me spare him. Letty, if you think that I deceived you, that—I—I knew her to be alive, I shall go mad."

"I do not—and, John," I cried miserably, "what am I now? You said, 'if I had married.' Am I not your wife? I cannot reason any more."

"You are my wife," he said, clasping me in his arms; "they shall not part us. I will take you to Mexico. My yacht is ready. We can sail to-night. We will!" He lifted me to my feet and stood there defiant and eager, a reckless look on his face—all that will of his, so strong and steadfast, fixed on our departure. But there was one to win him to his better self, that quiet little woman, his mother.

"If you say it is right, John, I will," I whispered.

"It is not right, my child," said Mrs. Scott. "Oh, John, when you were so brave and true, my good son, would you begin your life with her with a sin? Let the law free you, and then you can come together again."

"And drag that story through the courts," he answered roughly. "Do you know what that means—all the past coming to light, and from the lips of such a woman as that? Those men, wronged by her, are living yet, and she will accuse them of murder. I have no right to give her that chance. Did I not wrong those men enough? In her anger she would stop at nothing, at no accusation. Such are the weapons of her kind. Where might the story end? Her very presence would set a thousand tongues talking; a dead woman come to life—and such a one! I will not reason with you nor anyone. Margaret you shall not speak. I will have my say, and Letty is willing. Our lives are in our own hands."

"And other lives," sobbed Mrs. Scott. "Oh, John, I have lived too long!"

"Come with me, Letty," pleaded Aunt Margaret, clasping my hand. "If only for to-night, until we can think what is to be done."

"Come where?" I asked rebelliously; "I must not stay in John's house. I am not his wife, and you will not go home."

"There are hotels."

"What would people say? They knew that I was to marry John, and I did. I shall go with him. I never was a good girl, anyhow. I must be a trial to you to the last."

And then Justina hobbled in, that ill-omened soul who read my fate, but could not ward off the shadow she saw over me. She put her wrinkled arms around me and drew me to the sofa.

"Chica come to her old nurse; her mother, Justina." She cooed over me, stroking my burning forehead. "She is so wild-eyed and ill, my pretty, she does not know. Lay your silky curls on old Justina's breast. She love you, oh, so dear, and cared for you—my baby. Will you come to her poor home and let her guard you?"

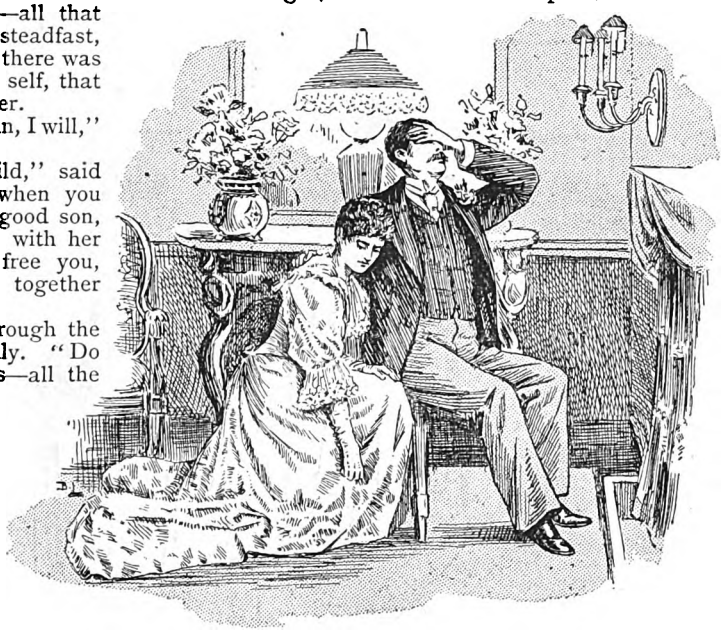
"For to-night," said Aunt Marg hopefully. "John, let me take her there, if only until to-morrow. It will give us time to think."

"She shall not go to that hovel," he cried; "she must stay here."

"I will go," I said; "I am so queer in my head. I can't think, but I love Justina. She saved my baby life. I wish she had not now, or anyone. I wish I had died when you carried me on the big horse, John. If you take me away from her," as he came to me and took my hand, "it will be a crime, John, for I am not myself. I don't know what I am doing. Play I am your baby, Chica, and take me away, Justina; away from making Mrs. Scott and Aunt Marg cry, and from him that I love."

"I smooth your forehead, so, Chica," murmured Justina, "and you always sleep when you little baby. Now your pretty eyes close."

She kept rubbing my forehead, and I ceased to think any more, but I felt, after a time, that someone lifted me gently and placed me in a carriage, and afterwards I saw the dim-lit room in that poor hut on the sand, and the same strong arms were laying me on Justina's bed.



"I shall go mad."

"In my wedding gown," I cried; "Justina said it was a shroud."

"Do not drive me to despair," said his voice, but I had no pity nor tenderness. I lay there and looked at the stars in the black, black sky. Aunt Marg came to bathe my head and fuss over me, and I—I almost hated her. I stretched out my hand to Justina, and she held it tight, crouching by my side. I must have slept even in my misery. I think they gave me some draught, for it was grey morning when I began to realise again. Justina was talking with someone at the door, and Aunt Marg, worn out, slept in the other room by the table.

"You have bought Justina. She is a Mexican," I said, sitting up.

"Well, why not?" said John. He came in with a big fur cloak on his arm and wrapped me in it. "I would buy her if it took my fortune. Now, drink this brandy. You are better; your colour is coming; you will understand by-and-bye; you are dazed yet. You will come with me?"

"My grandfather said you were such a good man. If you say I must go, it is right, I suppose; but I am very tired of all this. If I could die it would be settled. Your mother will be so angry."

"Will you ever be yourself again?" he said with a sob. "Oh, my broken lily, my pretty child! What can you do here? If I leave you, you will be so miserable, and I—I have not the strength to do it."

"May I not bid Margaret good-bye?" I said, and my voice seemed to belong to somebody else; "but she will be angry about my going."

"You cannot bear another scene, dearest. We will come back some day when all is well, and you are my own wife in their sight as well as the world's."

Bruce was waiting outside with the carriage, and I fancied he looked at me with stern disapproval. I think John saw it, for he gave his order to drive to the docks in a sharp voice, and slammed the carriage door.

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"Leave me to myself," I said, and I leaned my head by the window where the soft moist air from the sea blew across my face. I heard the wheels rattle over the planks; then John lifted me out on the wharf. What a curious grey world it was, everything dripping and cold, the masts of the vessels black and shining, the grey water rolling against the piers, and faint and ghostly voices of sailors coming out of the fog, or the rattle of cordage and clank of oars.

A small man, compactly built, wearing a short peajacket, came out of the greyness toward us. I fancied I smelled tobacco, and there was something familiar in the way the figure waved the black pipe with its left hand. Then, suddenly and rudely, my curious mood was shattered by a voice that went to my heart, sent the sluggish blood away from my brain, and made me think again.

"I want a word with my granddaughter, Letty Lombard, Mr. John Scott, afore she goes away with a married man."

CHAPTER XVIII.

"THERE is nothing you can say to Letty that has not already been said," John cried angrily. "My yacht is waiting for us. She has agreed to leave the decision to me. I say that it is right for her to go. No reproach from you will make her change her mind. You would be needlessly cruel."

"Not so cruel as you," said my grandfather sternly; "for you know what you are doing and she don't. I thought you were a good man, John, and all her young days I brought her up to think so; little did I dream it would lead to such trouble as this. You're not fair nor manly, John, taking that child away from her home, and you know it. Letty," and he grasped my arm.

"Letty I once used to think you weren't a good girl, light-thoughted and easy to lead, of no stability nor truth, but as years went on I got to know you. I 'most leaned on you as to a tall young sapling; I grew to love you. Keep to my idea of you and take the better way. Give me comfort of one of my son's children."

"Now, John Scott, plead your case."

"How do I know the better way?" I asked doubtfully, still in that queer dream.

"With me, my love," John whispered close to me.

"The happiest way to you now will be the saddest one in time to come," said my grandfather solemnly. "No woman can outlive a stain on her honour. It crops up in buried letters; in idle tales of old folks like me; it is a haunting ghost that will not stay in its grave; some day a child may ask and know, Letty. It isn't for a few years, but always. I never had no comfort with my wife. She wasn't of my nation nor nature, and your father was diff'rent from the Lombards. Katherine gave me only misery; but I do love you, my bright-eyed girl. God knows I do, the sunshine of my home. Love for human kind woke up in me, after I'd kept from it a quarter of a century. Mebbe you made play of me; taught me to love you, to turn away from me like this. Can you take pleasure, make merry, over the misery of an honest old man? Letty, can any future be bright to you after this appeal of mine?"

"I don't know what to do," I said drearily. I went away from both of them and stood by myself. Half idly, I watched the grey water dashing against the pier; I could not think yet.

"I took Katherine home," continued my grandfather bravely. "Someone must care for her. She is thought dead in Galveston, so I must take her away for fear of people's talk. If I go with her my stay will be short; I am a very old man, used to the beaten track of my days, and a change will be my death. She'd take no comfort from me, for I never liked her, nor she me; but you, Letty, you are not of her past. She don't imagine you even know any of it.

"I told her last night about your being alive, and such a dear girl, and I said you should take her to San Antonio an' be with her to the end. Her father was your father; save me, she is all of your kin. I would not ask Margaret Collier to care for Katherine. It would be terrible for them both, but I do ask her little sister. Make it a duty, a labour of love, Letty, and teach that wicked heart to repent. Smooth that dreadful death-bed, you whose hand is so gentle, whose ways are so womanly and so helpful. Let her learn to bless you as Captain Dana did. The wrong she did you, you never knew.

"Now, John Scott, plead your case if you can. Tell her what the world will say of her. Promise her, if you dare, such care and tenderness that the evil speech of the world will never reach her and break her heart. Promise her to save her from herself when she comes to reason once more, for my girl is a good woman, pure in heart. To such when the awakening comes there is but one way of escape from the torment of conscience—death by one's own hand."

"It is very hard," I muttered. I looked at John; he turned his face away, and I saw his broad chest heave.

"'He can say nothing to you now, Letty, see!" cried my grandfather triumphantly. "John, I pity you. Life hasn't treated you fairly. Mebbe the parting is not for long. It's only good-bye for a little time. Some day I'll write you Katherine is no more on earth to curse us, to make us doubt infinite wisdom, when good people die and are mourned, and she has lived so long. Then you can come back to Letty."

"I want you to understand," John said coldly to me, and he never even looked at me, "that if you leave me here our parting is for ever. I cannot suffer any more. I shall put you out of my life entirely. I can live out my life alone. I have for long years. There is no future for us two if you go with him. The minister married us last night. You are my wife in my eyes. You promised me to love and honour me. Because a dead woman came to life is no reason we should be miserable for ever."

"I am glad that you said honour, John," I faltered, "for I realise that some day I should not honour you. I would reproach you bitterly. That is woman's way, when her heart tells her she is wrong, and she wakes to find herself false to all goodness and purity. If our parting is for all the future, I still say good-bye."

"He will come back to you," said my grandfather hopefully.

"I understand now," said John coldly. "I would not have one word of mine influence you. I dreamed you were an ideal woman, such as men have died for. I thought you a nobler creature than your kind. I find the first flaw of adversity frightens you. You fly to the shelter of narrow doctrine and empty words that mean nothing to love. You thrust

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away duty, forget our love, and talk of caring for a hag who would have left you to die in your helpless babyhood.

"Women cannot love! A few have, and their memories are bright and beautiful, still held in men's hearts; but you and all your kind are the shallow little brooks that babble all day in sunshine, and disappear in drought. I fancy, when the scales were gone from my eyes, I should have hated you, or at best, wearied of you, as men do of narrow women and narrow minds. Good-bye, little girl; that was all a farce last night, a comedy this morning. It is better so."

"How sorely you will repent all this, John," cried my grandfather, "when this dear child is lost to you, and must go on her sad round of duty and labour, without one kind memory of you she loved. There is your yacht, John; I hope you'll sail now and try her no more. I never knew a brave man could be so cruel, so cowardly before. Every word you said struck her like a blow, and yet she has no word of rebuke for you. Her little gentle heart will forgive all, forget all. She is a woman and like all her kind, and I am proud of her for that. She loves you; she wants to honour you, and so she says 'good-bye'; there is no love where there is no respect. I am an old man, and I have learned that, and it's worth living all the years to know."

"I am quite ready to go," said John quietly. He gave some directions to Bruce, then turned to me and held out his hand. "Good-bye, dear; I hope and pray we shall never meet again. It would be best for you. There is no legal tie between us. I will be your brother, as I was, ready to aid you always, but never into my life shall love come again."

"You are my husband," I said steadily. "Ah, I do love. I can love. I gave all my affection to you. I was so starved all my life. It would be so fair, so blessed a thing to go with you; I cannot like Katherine. I almost fear I shall hate her; but something in my heart tells me to do right. I never was good and calm like other women. I was always doing things that grieved people who cared for me. I was wilful and thoughtless, but some lost chord in my nature is touched.

"That you shall not," said Aunt Marg in a passion.

"I want our love to be good, John; that is all the love that endures. You shall not drive me out of your heart. I will haunt you always, a poor little wan-eyed ghost. I will come to you in your dreary hours, at sea—on shore; I will summon you from your dreams; you shall feel my head resting on your heart. If I die, my spirit will call you in its flight. I will keep you and win you back every time you thrust me away. Take my wedding ring—my wife's ring, and I no wife.

"You pity me, John. You are crying. Is it not hardest for me? Some day you will put it on my finger again." I took his hand and laid it against my face. "Will you not, John?" I said, and he, with a sob, stooped and kissed me, then, pushing me away almost rudely, rapidly walked to the end of the pier.

I heard the rattle of cordage, the creak of taut sails, and then, as the fog lifted, in the roseate dawn, we saw the yacht, a great white-winged bird, speeding to the Mexican coast. We drove home in silence, grandfather and I, but as the carriage stopped at the gate I said:

"If Cinderella has lost her Prince, she is not going to sit in ashes; no moping martyr is a brave one; you and I will keep our secret, only you can comfort me once in a while."

"Miss Vi'let," said Bruce hesitatingly, "'tain't none ob my affair, I knows, but I has to tell yo' yo' done mighty proper an' right, an' I know de doctor looking down from Heben say so, an'll bring Mars John back to yo' some day; dem trifflin' wimmin like de fust Mrs. John Scott ain't no comfort to nobody." He drove off rapidly, fearing he had said too much; and Bruce tries at least to keep his place, but being in the family so long, he thinks he has a right to an opinion occasionally.

I crept upstairs to take off my wedding gown, and Liz, her face swollen with crying, helped me. I smoothed the soft silken folds, as I laid it away. "I thought to be so happy, Liz," I said, and only a little ghost of a sob came, but she could not trust herself to speak; she had to go down and slam the kitchen door to ease her feelings.

"Go now and get the tickets, grandfather," I said; "I cannot live here another day in the ashes of my hopes."

He put his hands on my shoulders. "Can you bear it anyway, Letty? That white, set look on your face ain't naterel. You'll break under the burden on you; consumptives is so long a-dying."

"Don't think of that, dear. I would not shorten her life one moment. She needs so long to be better in, and think how little I have done for any of you for all your kindness to me. My day of reckoning has come and I am so happy. I never thought I could do you any good." Before I finished my sentence Aunt Marg came in, and whether her look on seeing me was of relief or regret I could not tell.

"Justina said you had gone with John," she cried.

"I came back. Grandfather showed me my duty."

"What is your duty?"

"To care for—my—sister Katherine," I stammered.

"That you shall not," said Aunt Marg in a passion, her face pallid, her eyes blazing; "you, a white-souled girl, in daily, hourly contact with a woman like her. Captain Lombard, you must be in your dotage to think of such a thing. I have some rights you must respect; Letty shall not go."

"Don't you try to warp your nature, Margaret Collier," said grandfather severely. "You are a good woman, but narrow, and such are often more a power for evil than for good. Seems like I was looking at folks through the big end of a telescope, they're shrinking so."

"I have made up my mind to care for her, Aunt Marg," I pleaded. "You must see there is no one else to go. If it breaks my heart, I will do my duty."

"Talk it over between ye," put in grandfather, hurrying away; he dreaded a family argument, man-like.

"Hearts do not break so easily," cried my aunt, with strange bitterness. "Nor will yours. What is your grief to mine? He has always loved you and will come back, but I have cared for him all my life, and he has never dreamed it. He might have liked me, grown to love me, but Katherine took him away in my girlhood.

"All these long years I have been forced to see his love for an ideal woman—a Katherine that never existed. What I would not do for myself I did for you, Letty—I shattered his idol. You, the little baby I saved, took his love away. You talk of heart-break! Think of me. Don't touch me; I have laid my soul bare to you, and I cannot forget. Go, do your duty, dear. You can forgive her better than I."

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I bowed my head before my Aunt Margaret. I could have worshipped her as a saint. Oh, sorely tried, faithful, fond heart, is there any hereafter that repays your long years of loveless duty, the dreadful fate that made you—the gentlest among women—the witness against those assassins that made your life one long agony and terror? Too late I knew you and your inner life—too late to give you the love and gratitude I felt.

I left Aunt Marg, and went softly up to my room, where Katherine was still asleep. I noticed her waxen hands, her hollow cheeks, hidden by the tangled masses of her grey hair, her beautiful mouth half parted, as if she dreamed of some happy scene in her past. I wondered with a shudder what that past had been. Once I thought a life like that had some roses; all girls do when the glamour of genius in the narrator makes it so; now I realised there were only thorns.

I picked up her ragged garments from the floor, and from my scanty wardrobe brought others for her. She was about my size now. All my pretty gowns were at the big house, and I wanted never to see them again. They belonged to the dead Letty Lombard. The sun was shining on Katherine's face, and I went softly to lower the curtain.

"I am not asleep," she said, opening her great dark eyes. "I've been watching you. I don't like the dark; I always sleep with a light or the curtain up; and how hard it is to breathe when one's lungs are nearly gone. Come here."

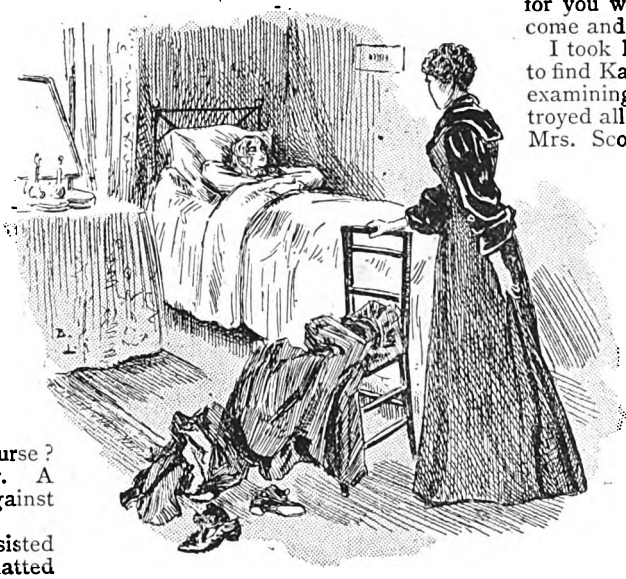
As I sat on the bed she lifted my hand. "It's smaller than mine. You have no rings, either. I used to have such pretty ones—all pawned. What size glove do you wear?"

"Five and a half." She was so odd. Imagine this was the first time she had ever seen me.

"Have you got any lovers?"

"No, I don't like to talk of men," I answered stiffly.

"Oh, that kind," she said pettishly, flinging my hand from her. "What kind of horrible penance has grandfather planned for me to have you for a nurse? Saint Margaret would be better. A young prim is such an offence against nature and youth."



Katherine was still asleep.

I did not speak but quietly assisted her to dress, brushing her matted hair, she often saying some very strange words, when I pulled it out of a tangle. I described Justina to her, and said she was going with us.

"I know Justina," she smiled, as if recalling some pleasant recollection. "What a skeleton I am, and I was so beautiful once. What poor clothes you've got. I looked in the closet last night. I suppose, though, you never wanted fine things. It don't go with the 'prim.'"

Still I did not speak. She was so helpless and weak, it took all my energies to dress her. She grew so exhausted I had to get her brandy twice; then I arranged a chair for her by the window, and Liz, looking very grumpy and cross, brought in her breakfast.

"This curse has come home to roost," said Katherine, "and I never saw her anything but mocking and merry, no matter how she suffered."

"I'd rather see de debbil in de house," muttered Liz, "an' good folks die an' yo' lib."

"Well, I'm nearly dead, if that will console you. Why is it you darkeys keep so young looking? You haven't changed a bit in twenty years."

"Yo' made nuff wrinkles in folkses faces," growled Liz.

"I like an honest hater. You don't bother me, Liz. And now, Miss Prim, get me out some sort of a bonnet, I lost mine on the beach. I lay out there all night, too weak to crawl further, found a bathing machine and stayed there until dark again. Then I got strength enough to get back to town, and hired a carriage to take me to John's house. Queer, you all being there. Your influence possibly. Mrs. Scott used to look down on grandfather. He said John educated you. His mother like you?"

"I—I think so."

"You look pretty when you colour like that. What eyes you've got! Your mother was only pink and white prettiness. You're quite *chic*. Margaret had a fine strong face, pity John had not married her; a solemn ass like him ought to be severely domestic, yet his life has been a regular romance."

I went out and left her trying to eat, but she could hardly touch a morsel. If I had stayed I should have broken down. Justina, quite gorgeously arrayed for travelling, met me in the hall. She was very cold and distant, because, I suppose, I did not go with John.

"If you had any moral sense, how I could love you, Justina," I said.

"Mebbe I'd better not go with Chica," she growled.

"You couldn't leave me, dear; and all your folks live in San Antonio. You must have a hundred cousins there."

"Chica want the money back?" she asked slyly.

"What John paid you? No. I think you deserve that, for you wanted to make me happy. Now come and see Katherine."

I took her upstairs, where I was pained to find Katherine staggering weakly about, examining my boxes. Luckily, I had destroyed all the relics of my girlhood. Then Mrs. Scott came to see me, and was so sweet and kind, I was glad I had taken the better way; to lose the love of good women shuts out the best of life. She told me she would send me things for Katherine's comfort.

"As I grow old I learn forgiveness and charity, dear," she said, "and I will wait in the big house for the coming of its mistress—my Violet. I know she will find her happiness some time."

She clung to me at parting, weeping bitterly; and then, sick at heart at the task before me, in bitter anger at the world that had been so cruel, I went up to my sister's room. She was lying on the bed, a half-emptied glass of brandy beside her, between her lips a cigarette; while Justina, lying at ease on the floor, was rolling another one in her long fingers.

(To be continued next week.)

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Mr. COLLINS [who was 30 years a member of the Royal College of Surgeons of England], will forward free of Charge, full PARTICULARS of a REMEDY, which during an extensive practice, both at home and in the Colonies, he has never known to fail in the most OBSTINATE CASES of OBSTRUCTION and IRREGULARITIES. Send addressed envelope for full particulars, and waste no more time and money on useless Pills and so-called Remedies, &c., which, in the majority of cases, are nothing but PURGATIVES, and cause SICKNESS, PROSTRATION, and PAIN, without having the desired effect.

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Knits STOCKINGS (ribbed or plain) GLOVES and CLOTHING in WOOL, SILK, or COTTON. INSTRUCTIONS FREE. Lists 2d. per post. TRIUMPHANT AWARD at PARIS. The only WINNER in the WORLD of 4 GOLD MEDALS and 22 other Honours.

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Beware of Imitations injurious and worthless.

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TO OBSTINATE CASES, LADIES
TO NEVER FAILS TO AFFORD RELIEF, LADIES
TO GENERALLY IN A FEW HOURS. LADIES
TO No case hopeless, failure is simply impossible, as Mrs. Snow, of Denmark Hill, Camberwell, writes:— LADIES
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TO Full particulars will be gladly forwarded to any lady on receipt of addressed envelope. LADIES
TO Write privately to— LADIES
TO Mrs. S. S. S., LADIES
TO 145, STOCKWELL ROAD, LADIES
TO LONDON, S.W. LADIES

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For the most obstinate cases. Will not injure the most delicate. Price 7s. 6d. (Strongest, 11s per bottle); post free, 6d. extra. HERBAL INSTITUTE, (a, Hackney Road (opposite Shoreditch Church), London, N.E. Send at once stamped directed envelope for particulars and proofs. I will forfeit £100 for every testimonial that is not genuine and they can be seen at any time.

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For the Immediate Production of

BOTANIC BEER.

A Nine-gallon Cask of Alcoholic Beer from a Brewery will cost you 10/6, but Eight Gallons of Beer made from

MASON'S EXTRACT OF HERBS

Can be obtained for 6d., plus a pound or two of Sugar and a little Yeast.

THE FINEST BEVERAGE IN THE WORLD.

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NEWBALL & MASON,

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If unable to obtain it in your neighbourhood, send 9 stamps for sample bottle; or samples of both Wine Essence and Extract of Herbs, post free for 15 stamps.

PALACE STEAMERS. PARIS AND BACK FOR A GUINEA. BOULOGNE AND BACK for 10s. 6d.

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BOULOGNE and BACK DAILY (Tuesdays only excepted), by LA MARGUERITE.

PARIS and BACK, Saturday to Monday for 21s., other days 26s. return, By LA MARGUERITE.

MARGATE and BACK, DAILY (Tuesdays only excepted).

SIX HOURS ASHORE AT MARGATE for 5s. 6d. by LA MARGUERITE.

Passengers can Return by the ROYAL SOVEREIGN at their option.

Cook's Hotel Coupon Tickets may be obtained for all places.

TIMES OF SAILINGS (Weather and other circumstances permitting).

Leaving	Week days.	Sundays.
FENCHURCH STREET (by Special Train to Tilbury Pier) ..	8.38 ..	8.55
TILBURY (Gravesend) ..	9.30 ..	10. 0
	Noon.	p.m.
Margate .. About	12. 0 ..	12.30
Arriving.	p.m.	
Boulogne .. „	2.30 ..	3. 0
Returning.	p.m.	p.m.
Boulogne .. „	3.30 ..	3.30
Margate .. „	6. 0 ..	6. 0
TILBURY (Special Train awaits Steamer) .. „	8.45 ..	8.45

Arriving at Fenchurch Street Station (City) 9.35 p.m.

All passengers disembark at Tilbury and travel by train to Fenchurch Street.

MARGATE, RAMSGATE, and Back, by ROYAL SOVEREIGN, DAILY, at 9.30 a.m. (except Fridays, on which day LA MARGUERITE will run as usual), from Old Swan Pier, London Bridge, calling at S. Woolwich and Tilbury. Train Fenchurch Street Station 10.28 a.m. in connection. Tender steamer Greenwich 9.25, Blackwall 9.35 a.m. Margate Passengers can return by LA MARGUERITE.

YARMOUTH and LOWESTOFT by Palace Steamer VICTORIA, from Harwich DAILY (Fridays excepted), at 3.0 p.m., in connection with the Koh-i-Noor, from Old Swan Pier, at 9.10 a.m. Return tickets available for season except as above.

Offices—33, KING WILLIAM STREET, LONDON BRIDGE, E.C.

VICTORIA STEAMERS. (Weather and other circumstances permitting.)

CLACTON, HARWICH, and Back, YARMOUTH, LOWESTOFT, IPSWICH, and FELIXSTOWE, by KOH-I-NOOR DAILY (Fridays excepted), from Old Swan Pier at 9.10 a.m., calling at S. Woolwich and Tilbury. Train Fenchurch Street 10.15 a.m. in connection. Tender Greenwich 9.25 a.m., Blackwall 9.35 a.m.

ROSHERVILLE GARDENS and GRAVESEND from Old Swan Pier, at 10.0 a.m. and 3.0 p.m. DAILY (except Friday), calling at Greenwich, Blackwall, and S. Woolwich.

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LADIES, GENTLEMEN, and CHILDREN.

The Belt will support three men with their clothes on, can be inflated in a few seconds, and is so constructed that in the event of accidents the wearer is turned in a floating position, with the face well out of the water. It weighs a few ounces only, can be conveniently carried in the pocket, is made of the strongest material, nothing to get out of order, will bear a pressure of 2 to 300 lbs. and withstand any climate. Parents can with perfect confidence allow their children to bathe without fear of danger. Used by yachting and canoeing clubs, fishermen, and bathers all over the world. Worn as an ordinary belt. State size of waist. Cash to accompany all orders. Cheques and P.O.'s to be crossed "Bank of Liverpool."

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New Brighton Sailing Club, June 13, 1894.

Dear Sir,—It may interest you to know that we had practical illustration of the efficacy of your "Minnow" Life Belts last evening. We were struck by a heavy squall and upset whilst racing, but having, in accordance with our club rules, life belts on, in this case of your make, we suffered nothing but a little inconvenience, such as naturally arises from getting wet, and this even was partial, as your belts floated us so high, that, we were practically dry from a little above the waist up.

Yours truly, J. F. JELLICO, "Dever," N.B.S.C.

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W. R. HARGREAVES, Waterloo, near Liverpool.

NEW DEPARTURE IN INSURANCE.

The Independent Order of Foresters

Gives Life Assurance at Rates slightly above actual cost—that is, at less than half the usual charges of Life Assurance Companies. The Premiums are based upon "The Combined Experience Table," which was prepared by a Committee of Eminent Actuaries from the Experience of Seventeen British Life Offices. This Table of EXAMPLES gives the Cost for £400; the Average Premiums of Insurance Companies; the RATES of the I.O.F.; and the SAVING EFFECTED BY JOINING THE ORDER.

Age last Birthday.	The Combined Experience Table Per Year.	£400. Average Cost of £400 in British Assurance Companies Per Year.	I.O.F. Table of Premiums Per Year.	Annual Saving to Members of the I.O.F.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
21	3 1 6	8 1 4	3 12 0	4 9 4
25	3 4 10	8 16 4	3 16 0	5 0 4
30	3 10 4	10 0 4	4 0 0	6 0 4
35	3 17 6	11 9 4	4 12 0	6 17 4
40	4 6 4	13 6 4	5 0 0	8 6 4
45	5 1 10	15 13 8	6 0 0	9 13 8
49	6 12 10	18 3 4	7 16 0	10 7 4

The full sum assured is payable at death. All premium-paying of ordinary members in the I.O.F. ceases at 70 years of age, when one-tenth of the amount assured is paid to them annually, the unexhausted balance being payable at death. The entrance fees are very moderate, a £100 policy costing 17s.; £200, £1 16s. 6d.; £400, £2 3s.; £600, £2 9s. 6d.; £800, £2 16s.; and £1,000, £3 5s. Court Dues (10s. to 12s. per annum) have to be paid by each member.

The Accumulated Funds amount to £160,000, of which £20,000 has been deposited with the British Government. Every claim has been paid within ten days, £328,000 having thus been paid during the last eleven years.

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Where Prospectuses and Forms of Application for Membership may be obtained.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 295.—Vol. XI. FOR WEEK ENDING AUGUST 25, 1894. [Price One Penny.

PLUMTREE'S HOME-POTTED MEATS

For the BREAKFAST, LUNCHEON, TEA, and SUPPER TABLE.

Of all Grocers, &c.; or send 7½d. or 1/3 for Sample Jar to Maker—

PLUMTREE, SOUTHPORT.

It is not claimed that these Camomile Pills will cure all diseases, but they have 100 YEARS' REPUTATION for being UNEQUALLED and, indeed, UNAPPROACHED as a remedy for

NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS

INDIGESTION BILIOUSNESS LIVER COMPLAINTS
SICK HEADACHE DYSPEPSIA A Splendid Tonic and Gentle Aperient.

MILD IN OPERATION, PERFECTLY SAFE, AND FREE FROM INJURIOUS DRUGS.

Sold in Bottles at 1/1½, 2/9, and 11/- each, by all Medicine Vendors throughout the World.

Ask for "NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS," and do not be persuaded to purchase an imitation.

Prepared by NORTON'S LIMITED, 21, Spital Square, London, E.

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Boxes, 1s. 1½d., of all Chemists, or post-free, for 14 stamps from the Proprietors,

M. BEETHAM & SON, Chemists, CHELTENHAM.

IS THE BEST REMEDY EVER DISCOVERED.

It acts like magic in relieving all pain and throbbing, and soon cures the most obstinate corns & bunions. It is especially useful for reducing enlarged Great Toe Joints, which so spoil the symmetry of otherwise beautiful feet. **Thousands have been cured, some of whom had suffered for fifty years without being able to get relief from any other remedy.** (It is a thin plaster, and takes up no room in the boot.) A trial of a Box is earnestly solicited, as immediate relief is sure.

BONNY, CHUBBY CHILDREN.

If you really want your children to be Bonny, Chubby, and Strong, with rosy cheek and pure firm flesh, give them

INFANTINA'S Strengthening SYRUP.

Sold by Chemists at **1s. 1½d.** *per bottle, or, post free, from*

THE INFANTINA COMPANY, *London, S.W.*

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THE BEST AND CHEAPEST STOCK FOR SOUP.

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BOULOGNE and BACK DAILY (Tuesdays excepted), for 10s. 6d. (3rd. rail and fore cabin); 3rd. rail and saloon, 12s. 6d.

Returns available three days, or for season for 2s. excess.

PARIS AND BACK, SATURDAY to MONDAY, for 21s.

Other Days, 26s. return. Return Tickets available third day of issue. Special Train when the numbers warrant it.

MARGATE and BACK, DAILY (Tuesdays excepted).

SIX HOURS ASHORE AT MARGATE for 5s. 6d. by LA MARGUERITE.

From Fenchurch-street Station for Tilbury, weekdays, 8.33 and 8.38; and Sundays, 8.45 and 8.55 a.m.

All passengers disembark at Tilbury on return journey, and travel by train to Fenchurch Street, arriving about 9.50 p.m.

Passengers may obtain tickets beforehand for rail and boat at 33, King William-Street.

Cook's Hotel Coupon Tickets for all places.

MARGATE, RAMSGATE, and Back, by ROYAL SOVEREIGN, DAILY, at 9.30 a.m. (except Fridays, on which day La Marguerite will run as usual from Tilbury), from OLD SWAN PIER (London Bridge), calling at S. Woolwich and Tilbury. Train Fenchurch Street Station 10.28 a.m. in connection. Tender steamer Greenwich 9.25 a.m., Blackwall 9.35 a.m. Margate Passengers can return by La Marguerite, but if they hold London Bridge tickets they must exchange same at Purser's Office on ship for rail tickets, and pay 6d., third-class train.

YARMOUTH and LOWESTOFT by Palace Steamer VICTORIA, from Harwich DAILY (Fridays excepted), at 3.0 p.m., in connection with the Koh-i-Noor, from Old Swan Pier, at 9.10 a.m. Return tickets available for season except as above.

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VICTORIA STEAMERS.—CLACTON, HARWICH, and BACK in the day. YARMOUTH, Lowestoft, Ipswich, and Felixstowe. DAILY (Fridays excepted), when the Lord of the Isles will run to Clacton, by KOH-I-NOOR, from Old Swan Pier at 9.10 a.m., calling at Woolwich (South) and Tilbury. Tender Steamer from Greenwich 9.25, and Blackwall 9.35 a.m. Special Train from Fenchurch-street Station at 9.45 and 10.15 a.m., to meet the Koh-i-Noor at Tilbury.

SALOON STEAMER LORD OF THE ISLES, from OLD SWAN, calling at Greenwich, Blackwall, and S. Woolwich. MONDAYS, WEDNESDAYS, and THURSDAYS, for ROSHERVILLE, GRAVESEND, SOUTHEND, and SHEERNESS, at 11 a.m. FRIDAYS, CLACTON, SOUTHEND, ROSHERVILLE, and GRAVESEND, at 9.10 a.m

SATURDAYS, HUSBANDS' BOAT to MARGATE, and BACK, at 1.30 p.m. Train, Fenchurch-street Station 2.45 p.m., in connection.

SUNDAYS, ROUND NORE LIGHT, ROSHERVILLE, and GRAVESEND, at 2.45 p.m.

ROSHERVILLE GARDENS and GRAVESEND DAILY (Fridays excepted) by MERMAID, 10.0 a.m. and 3.0 p.m, from OLD SWAN PIER, calling at Greenwich, Blackwall, and Woolwich (South).

HAMPTON COURT, RICHMOND, or KINGSTON, from OLD SWAN PIER at 10.0 a.m. DAILY by CARDINAL WOLSEY, calling at all piers.

KEW GARDENS, GREENWICH and BATTERSEA PARKS frequently.

Cheap Through Tickets to and from Stations on District Railway.

Offices—VICTORIA HOUSE, LAURENCE POUNTNEY LANE, E.C.

MASON'S

EXTRACT OF HERBS

For the Immediate Production of

BOTANIC BEER.

A Nine-gallon Cask of Alcoholic Beer from a Brewery will cost you 10/6, but Eight Gallons of Beer made from

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THE FINEST BEVERAGE IN THE WORLD.

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If unable to obtain it in your neighbourhood, send 9 stamps for sample bottle; or samples of both Wine Essence and Extract of Herbs, post free for 15 stamps.

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"'Tis not in mortals to command success, but we'll do more, Sempronius, we'll deserve it."

THE PEARSON POTTERY CO.,

HANLEY,

Are Selling Fast the Most Wonderful Package of Crockery in the World.

100 Pieces

for £1 1s. 0d.

A beautiful Dinner Service of 50 pieces is guaranteed **Worth the Guinea alone,** consequently a Charming China Tea Service, and a useful Collection of Crockery, are given **FOR NOTHING.**

Thousands sold all over the world. Everybody not only satisfied but amazed at the quantity and quality given.

The Secret of the Success.—The PEARSON POTTERY COMPANY are manufacturers, not middlemen, like many other advertisers. The PEARSON POTTERIES have nearly 2,000 feet frontage to the town of Hanley.

Hundreds of these packages are applied for as **Wedding or Birthday Presents.** And what more useful present can be given? Every item is useful.

The Thirty Shilling Bazaar Parcel is selling well. Apply at once.

Send a Post Card for Particulars. You will never regret it. Freedom from breakage guaranteed. All letters to the

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 295.—Vol. XI. *FOR THE WEEK ENDING AUGUST 25, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

The Hand that Murdered

TOIL! Toil! Toil! From the break of dawn till the fall of night; from Sabbath to Sabbath; from December to June, from June to December; nothing but toil. His brush must be always between his fingers, his palette for ever on his hand, and faces and figures and fancies must grow beneath his all too incompetent touch.

But there is a faint glimmer of light ahead through all the inky darkness, to which he struggles bravely on, a glimmer that grows and grows as times passes, now diminishing, now increasing, according to his state of mind. For John Turner makes a brave fight against adversity, and he struggles manfully on through the gloom to the happiness that is the light, the happiness of being always with Marie Deloncle, the young French girl who lives across the way in the tall, solemn house with the broken chimney-pots and the musty green bedraggled curtains at the windows.

Their love has been the love of years, yet it has not grown stagnant, nor have their embraces lost any of their pristine sweetness.

Marie was a tall, well-developed girl, with a supple figure, and a wealth of handsome black hair surmounting a pair of eyes that had again and again appeared in Turner's pictures. She lived with her mother, and worked at a hat warehouse, where her French aptness for trimming brought in a small weekly wage barely enough to keep them free from hunger, and certainly not enough to save up to replace the old musty green curtains with a pair of a brighter colour.

Yet there was a glimmer of happiness ahead for both Marie and her lover. By scraping in one direction and another he had hoarded a few pounds, and kept them in the wall, where nobody knew of them but Marie; and often would he spread out the money before her, and together would they build their castles in Spain, and make life seem brighter than it had done since the last ones had been shattered.

Of an evening she would sit at her window and knit, and look across the way into the room of her lover who toiled at his pictures. And when it became too dark for work he would visit her and her mother and talk of the future.

One day the bright glimmer of light that led him on disappeared of a sudden. All the happiness of his soul was gone in a flash; the plans for the future were broken and gone; the darkness of his soul became intense; and with a great sob he threw himself on his bed and buried his face in his hands.

Marie had deceived him. Mrs. Potter, his landlady, the fellow-lodgers—all the people in the street knew it, and told him of it; and, before he waited to hear her explanation, he saw nothing but misery before him. After a while he roused himself and awaited her coming. But she did not come, nor did he see her at the window; and at nightfall he had not the courage nor strength of mind to seek her out and demand the reason for her neglect.

It was a night of misery—a night of hopes and fears—that he spent tossing about on his bed, maddened with the thought that he had lost her for ever, and the next moment reviling himself for his mad folly in believing the lying tongues of mischief-making scandalmongers.

Next morning he awoke from a short, restless doze, and, without taking any food, crushed his hat on his head and went across the road to her house. He knocked at the door of her room and went in and found her preparing the morning meal. She was not astonished at seeing him, and she went on with her work as if he was not there—in fact, as if she did not know of his existence at all.

Then she spoke, her eyes flashing with a strange light.

"Why did you not come to see me last night?"

Of course, he didn't know why. He had had no reason for breaking his general rule except the rumoured story of her deception, and he felt and looked abashed.

"I waited a long time for you," she went on, in her soft easy voice, moving about the room and laying the cloth. "I sent *mère* to her bed at last, and knew you would not come when the clock struck ten. It was unkind of you."

She looked so sweet, so innocent in her simple cotton gown, and her voice was so pretty that Turner strode over to her side and took her hand.

"Marie, where were you yesterday?"

"Me? Yesterday?"

She raised her eyebrows and assumed a look of childish surprise. "I was at my work. Why do you ask?"

"Because," he said sternly, trying in vain to fix his eyes upon hers as she gazed on the floor, "because I heard that you were seen with a man during the dinner hour. Come now, was that true?"

"And that was why you did not come and see me

"Why did you not come to see me last night?"

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last evening," she answered petulantly. "You could not trust me."

For a moment he was on the verge of relaxing the firm attitude he had taken up and of kissing her and making friends once more. But in her nervous, restless glance he found guilt, and continued,

"You have not yet told me if the rumour was true, Marie. Was it?"

She made a movement as if to release herself, but he strengthened his grasp of her arm so that she flushed with the pain of it.

"I did see my cousin, yes. He is over here in England. That is all."

"And why did you not tell me of this last night?"

"There was no need. Why should you know? He is my cousin."

And with that Turner had to be content, for nothing more would she tell him, and he left the house with a hard, gnawing pain at his heart, and a misery over his soul that he had never known before.

That evening she was at her window, and smiled to him when she raised her head from her work, but that was not often, for she seemed more thoughtful than she had ever been, and his share of her smiles was small. At dusk he went and sat with her, but she was quiet, and did not speak much, nor when he kissed her good night did he feel the responding pressure of her arms nor the kiss upon his lips.

Before the next day was half over he heard again another rumour that corresponded with the first. Marie had been seen by one of her factory hands speaking with a foreign-looking man, who had walked part of the way home with her.

She was not at her accustomed post in the evening until it was almost time for him to stop his work, and then she appeared and called across to him to say that she was too unwell to see him that night.

When he heard what she said, he did not move from the chair on which he was sitting for fully a minute. He had gone quite white, and stared at her with eyes that said nothing, nor meant nothing. She looked frightened, until he rose slowly and disappeared into the shadow of his room, then she closed her window.

Turner sank on his bed. His head throbbed wildly and his eyes burned in his head. He was a strongly imaginative fellow, with a melancholy habit of looking at absolutely the worst side of things that was possible, and as he lay tossing about he thought of the happy days he had spent with Marie, that were all past and gone, of the cutting and contriving to save sufficient money to marry her, all of which was useless to him now, of the thief who had robbed him of her love, who would kiss the lips he had so often kissed, who would hold in his arms the form he had so often embraced. And he groaned aloud in the agony of his thoughts, and bitterly cursed his fate.

Took his seat in the train.

Any ordinary man would have discovered the whereabouts of this French cousin of Marie's and, having brought himself face to face with him, would have ascertained at once how matters stood, and got some satisfaction out of the whole business.

But John Turner was not an ordinary man. His Bohemian life had excited his sensibilities, and although he loved with a wild love and hated with a bitter hatred, his finer feelings told him that if Marie loved another, whoever it might be, he would not stand in the way of her happiness.

This was all very noble, but it is not human; but his highly sensitive nature would not allow him to see it in any other light, so that when morning broke he had resigned himself to his melancholy fate, and had planned out his course of action.

As the dinner-hour approached he left the house and took up a position where he might see Marie come out of her place of business. The time arrived, and with it a Frenchman, who greeted her cordially when her anxious eyes rested upon his. That was enough for Turner. He went back to his dismal lodgings, lone, sad, and broken-hearted.

Taking a sovereign from the place where it had lain so long he went out into the street, and made his way to the nearest railway station. Then he booked for a place twenty miles down in the country, and took his seat in the train. As the houses became fewer and fewer, and the fields and trees more frequent, there crept over his soul a lighter feeling of pleasure—a thrilling delight, a happiness that he had never before known.

It was so many years since he had enjoyed the freshness of God's undefiled country, that he positively yearned for the time to come when he might step out into the broad white roads, and ramble unrestrained through the woods that capped the long low-lying range of downs.

That night, on his return, he bounded up the rickety stairs to his attic as he had never done before, and threw himself on his bed thoroughly fatigued. His whole body was throbbing with the exercise, and the usually sluggish blood coursed rapidly through his veins.

All day long he had driven the thoughts of his false sweetheart out of his mind, he had exercised a will power that refused to come to him while his body lacked vigour. His plans for the future were simple. He would sell up his miserable little home and betake himself to another part of the town; he would make a practice of taking jaunts into the country at least once a week with the money that he had over from the daily expenses; instead of saving it up, he would start life afresh, and the Academy would find room for his productions before another year was out, a state of affairs that hitherto he had only vaguely thought of when he painted only to sell.

Next day he made preparations for his departure, and gave notice to the landlady. In the evening he went over to Marie's rooms to bid her farewell, an undertaking that he would have shirked like a coward while his body lacked vitality. In her room, and talking to her and her mother, was Jacques Maynard, the stranger. Turner had not bargained for this untimely and inconvenient meeting.

He looked from one to the others in turn, then, with an impulse that was not of himself, he went over to the Frenchman and boxed his ears. Turner was a big man, and, as he stood in the twilight, glowering at the Frenchman, who had tremblingly curled himself up in the chair holding up his hands to avoid further blows, he looked a formidable antagonist.

The sight of Marie, flushed and heated, with her dark flashing eyes, and her quivering lips, re-aroused in his heart the passion that he had believed, that he had hoped, was gone for ever. He loved her again with a force that he had never known before, and the jealous rage that filled his heaving breast would have strengthened his arm to any deed.

He was a different man now to the pallid, slaving, bloodless artist, toiling from morning till night at pictures that brought in only a few shillings, and he believed that this new departure of manliness in his nature would retrieve the love that he fancied he had lost.

Madame Deloncle, after the lapse of a few seconds, found strength to give a little scream. This brought the trio to their senses. Turner strode over to Marie's side, and whispered harshly in her ear,

"Do you love him?" pointing to the Frenchman.

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But she was too terrified to answer, for in all her life she had never once seen Turner so mad with rage, so uncontrollably violent as now.

Then, pressing a hot kiss on her lips, he went out into the street.

The rain was falling heavily when he reached the front door, and by the time he reached his room it was striking the patched roof above him smartly. The wind blew in strong gusts, shaking and rattling the windows, while the drops of water drifted in between the cracks, filling the air with a chilly dampness.

Once in his room, he threw himself down in a chair and fell to cursing the man who had stepped in between him and his sweetheart. As thought followed thought, he grew more and still more violent as to the course of action he intended to take up. Until this interloper arrived on the scene he was everything on earth to Marie. And he would yet be so—when the French dog had gone, no matter where.

But go, he certainly should, and the sooner the better. He would throw up all thought of moving now, unless he took Marie with him, and she, he was certain, would acquiesce if only the third party were out of the way.

To-morrow, then, there would be one fiend less on this earth, and he would marry Marie, who should never know that his hands were dyed with the blood of the man who had attempted to filch her love from him. To-morrow, the world would be brighter for him and for her. To-morrow, God's judgment would be meted out upon the cowardly interloper through the hand of his servant. And, revelling in the anticipation of the deed, he got into bed, and fell asleep.

Next morning Mrs. Potter took up his breakfast, and found him lying cold and lifeless in his bed. She let fall the tray from her hands and flew shrieking downstairs and out into the street, and shortly after a couple of policemen took possession of the room and its ghastly occupant.

An inspector came a little later and made notes of the position of the different pieces of furniture in the apartment. Washstand in the back right corner, facing window; foot of bed against wall opposite window, head facing window; easel, close to window, bearing picture of Arab chief in act of falling—half finished; lay figure dressed as Arab chief on floor near bed, right side, as if it had been knocked down; old horse pistol, empty, lying alongside bed, muzzle pointing towards deceased, lying on its left side, hammer towards window, distance from bed three feet, ditto from wall at head of bed four feet three inches; large pool of water near lay figure, smaller pools near washstand and easel, all probably from leaks in the roof.

A lay figure dressed in the garb of an Arab chief.

The inquest was held, and when everything concerning the feud between the deceased and Jacques Maynard and the quarrel on the night before the death, and of Maynard's threat to revenge himself upon Turner, a threat that he made before leaving the presence of Marie, and all this and much more, was known, the coroner passed a verdict of wilful murder by Jacques Maynard, and next day he was arrested and charged before a magistrate.

The case was clear and strong against the Frenchman. Madame Deloncle and her daughter had given evidence at the inquest, and both of them, greatly agitated and frightened at the solemn proceedings answered all questions put to them without daring to hesitate or to speak an untruth.

This state of affairs resulted in much more being known concerning the positions taken up by the deceased and the accused than would otherwise have been the case, for Marie being unacquainted with the English laws, did not dare to shield her cousin by playing upon her knowledge as she would certainly have done had the case been brought before a French court of Justice.

Consequently, every word that fell from her lips wove a fatal net round Maynard. By the magistrate he was convicted and sent for trial.

Marie was brokenhearted. It was only too true by her demeanour that the arrest of Jacques caused her tenfold more misery than the death of her former lover; yet, in spite of her affection for the accused, she fully believed that it was he who had committed the murder, for she was aware of his violent passions and of the facilities which offered themselves for obtaining access to Turner's rooms while he slept.

Maynard she had loved when she lived at Lierve, the little town in the south-west of France; but she had believed when she came to England that she would never see him again. When she met him one day coming along the street the old love was rekindled, and M. Maynard usurped her English lover.

The trial came on. At the end of the first day a young Frenchman from the body of the court, who had been listening to the proceedings, made his way to the counsel for the defence, and conferred for some time with him on a subject that appeared to throw a fresh light on the matter.

The learned counsel asked the judge at the moment of leaving whether he would grant a couple of days' remand until the conclusion of some experiments that would probably be of intense moment in the issue of the case. The respite was given, and the prisoner removed to his cell.

On the third day the young stranger entered the witness box. He proceeded to give a short and concise outline of his connection with the case, which, he explained, did not extend further than a casual hearing of the proceedings in the court a couple of days before. He was, he said, a student, and his chief study was capillary force. He then went on to say:

"I have made a minute examination of the room in which the unfortunate John Turner met with his death, and I have been ably and intelligently assisted in my researches by Inspector Johnstone, to whom I tender my best thanks.

"I found that on reference to the unfinished picture resting on the easel in the deceased's room that it represented an episode in the Soudan War, the principal actor being an Arab chief in the act of falling dead. In his hand was a pistol.

"Lying on the floor near the bed was a lay figure dressed in the garb of an Arab chief, while close by lay a pistol. This pistol beyond a shadow of doubt was originally in the hand of the lay figure.

"Wood, when moistened, expands. In ancient stone and slate quarries wooden wedges were forced between cracks, and soaked with water, with the result that the wood, by expanding, split the solid mass. Capillary force is irresistible.

"You are already aware of the fact that a large pool of water was found near the lay figure, which had fallen from a leak in the roof. The rain had been falling all night through. The stream of water had doubtless run for several hours on to the wooden hand of the figure. The joints of all the fingers are, I find, fashioned to closely resemble the movements of those of the human hand, and beyond all doubt one finger was placed in the trigger-guard and over the trigger.

"The pressure required in firing the pistol would have been readily afforded by the general swelling of the whole hand, as it requires only the slightest movement to release the hammer.

"My theory is, therefore, gentlemen, that the water, falling upon the model's hand, fired the pistol.

"I am willing to conduct a number of experiments to prove that what I say is borne out by fact, but, I think you will agree with me, this is unnecessary."

. . . . . .

Yet, had this inanimate hand not taken John Turner's life, he might even then have been standing, a trembling criminal, in the dock from which Jacques Maynard was now released.

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A JEALOUS GHOST.

—o—

THREE photographs hung over the mantel-piece in the parlour behind the bright shop of the young German apothecary. One was a pretty girl, another an old man, the third a young man. They were framed alike, and no one had ever noticed anything particular about them, until one evening one of the young Schaeffer's compatriots, Professor Schwartz, chanced to come into the room, and, having contemplated the etchings and the water-colours which graced the walls, placed himself before the mantel-piece, and after staring through his blue spectacles for at least fifteen minutes, said solemnly:

"My good friend, Schaeffer, perhaps you will be kind enough to tell me if I am crazy, or if this gentleman is transparent? It appears to me that I can see some shelves and bottles directly through his coat and vest. Is it so?"

"It is so," said Schaeffer, lighting his painted china pipe at the brass student-lamp. "You make no mistake, Doctor Schwartz, I assure you.

"It is some clever trick of photography, I suppose?" asked the doctor.

"It is one of the facts of a tragedy," said young Schaeffer "It is something that haunts me day and night. I should like to speak of it to some one who can keep a secret; a doctor must be able to do that,"

"Especially, if, like me, he is a bachelor," said Doctor Schwartz. "I give my promise to repeat nothing that you tell me."

"We will have a glass of Rhine wine together then," said the druggist: "and while I get the bottle, look at the other photographs—the one to the right is the only girl I ever loved; the other is Doctor Hoffman, of whom I shall have something to say."

"And the transparent gentleman?" asked the doctor.

"I keep that for the story," said young Schaeffer.

Ten minutes later the two faced each other at the table, their glasses between them, and the room full of smoke, and Adolphe Schaeffer began thus:—

"At noon to-day it was exactly five years since a note was handed to me, signed by Doctor Alexander Hoffman, and asking me to call upon him at once. I obeyed the summons promptly, and found him in his shop. He was, as I am, an apothecary.

"He was evidently in deep distress of some kind, and soon told me what it was. He had lost his only son, Theodore, whom he adored, and who was his assistant in his business, and his destined successor.

"Broken down with sorrow, the old man was unable to do all that fell upon him, and hearing that I wanted a position he had summoned me. He desired me to board with him, and offered an excellent salary.

"However, the low ceilinged shop, situated in a narrow street, and having very small flat windows into which the sun could scarcely come, was so gloomy, and the old man in his sorrow so depressing, that I felt as though to accept the offer would be to bury myself alive, and was doing my best to decline it with civility, when a very beautiful girl appeared at the door of the inner room. She had the face of an angel; her hair was golden, and her eyes a beautiful dark-blue; her dress was black. Seeing a stranger she retired; but in that moment I gave her my heart. Love at first sight is a serious fact.

"I concluded that she was the old man's daughter, and the thought of seeing her every day filled me with rapture. I changed the wording of the sentence I had half finished into an acceptance, and established myself in the house as soon as possible.

"If ever sorrow dwelt in man's abode, it rested there. The very walls seemed to mourn for the dead Theodore; the old servant cried her eyes red every day; the father gave miserable glances at the empty place at table when he sat at meals.

"The girl was a very Niobe. Shortly I made the discovery that she was not old Hoffman's daughter, but the child of a friend, whom Mrs. Hoffman had taken to bring up, and that she had been betrothed to Theodore.

"However, this did not put an end to my hopes, but simply postponed them. I knew that young people usually outlived the greatest grief. I was quiet and sympathetic. I made myself useful to old Hoffman, and soon won my way into his heart.

"A year had passed before I received my first smile from Lina Henzel. It was in the little garden, where I had been helping her water the flowers. That was the first, not the last. I took my steps softly, one at a time. Finally, I understood that I might speak, and did so.

"She smiled, and then sobbed:

"'You will not ask me to forget poor Theodore?' she pleaded.

"I reassured her, and she gave me her promise. For awhile we kept our secret, but Doctor Hoffman soon discovered it.

"'Children,' he said one day at breakfast, 'I know what thoughts are in your hearts, and they do not offend me. Theodore has been truly mourned, but he would not wish Lina to live the life of a nun. Besides, if you marry each other, we can all live together until my time comes, and then I will leave you everything. It gives me some hope of domestic comfort in my old age. You, Adolph, will be a second son to me.'

"I thanked him affectionately. I had now begun to love even the dark little house where I had first seen Lina.

"That night, however, bad dreams troubled me, and I awoke unrefreshed, and with a strange foreboding of evil. Dr. Hoffman was away on business, and I had sole charge of the shop. The customers were numerous, and a great doctor himself brought in a very particular prescription. It was while I was making this up that I felt a hand grasp my wrist, as a teacher does that of a younger child whom he assists to form his first letter on a slate.

"But instead of aiding me, this thing that clutched me prevented me from doing what I wished. It was impossible for me to open the jars to extract the contents. At last, terrified and trembling, I flung myself in a chair, and I saw—I swear it—all the proper jars lifted from their places and the prescription correctly made up by some invisible being. The package was also labelled and tied up and then vanished, and the next moment I heard the doctor call me.

"'I must have been asleep, I think,' he said. 'At least my wits were wandering, for I did not see you place this in my hand. Good morning.' He was off.

"'You see you are not wanted here,' said a voice at my ear. 'In fact, consider yourself dismissed.'

"I looked about me; there was no one there. I rushed into the shop. Several customers were waiting, but the moment I attempted to serve anything my wrists were once more imprisoned in that vice-like grasp. I was obliged once more to seat myself.

"Fortunately these people only needed cologne water, soap, and some patent medicines in bottles, and I desired them to help themselves, saying that I was faint, and must take a few minutes to recover myself. They did as I asked, hoped I would feel better shortly, and left me alone.

"With an indescribable terror upon me I hurried into the room, where Lina sat at work.

"'Ah, Adolph, how pale you are!' she said. 'Are you ill?'

"'I do not know. I am afraid so,' I said. 'I am unable to make up the prescriptions.'

"I seated myself near her and took her hand in mine. On

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that instant that iron grasp was upon me; not on my wrist this time, but on my neck; and gasping for breath I was flung violently to the floor.

"'You are not wanted here either,' said the same voice that had before spoken to me. 'You had better go.'

"Although I felt exactly as though human hands had seized me and thrown me down, to Lina it appeared that I had swooned or had vertigo.

"'And you were not yourself, Adolph,' she said; 'for you told me I was not wanted and had better go.'

"'Indeed, I did not speak,' I said.

"'Indeed, you did,' said Lina. 'There was no one else in the room.' Then she began to weep."

There was a pause. Doctor Schwartz seemed to ruminate, Adolph Schaeffer to be lost in reverie. Suddenly he started to his feet and began to pace the room.

"Thus it began," he said; "to give you the details would require hours. Ah, it was horrible! In the presence of Doctor Hoffman it contented itself with making me drop glasses, drop jars, fall down, and do all sorts of mischief, by catching me by the wrists and ankles, or by the coat collar, but if I were alone in the shop there came a repetition of the work of the first day.

"At last, one afternoon a girl entered, and I was about to attempt to wait on her, when suddenly she screamed and rushed out of the place.

"Afterwards she told everyone that she had seen Theodore Hoffman's ghost behind the counter; but as she was only a little servant from the country, she was simply laughed at for her pains.

"However, this gave me an idea. I was fond of photography, and rather expert. One morning I brought my camera into the shop, and, when the invisible being began to make up a prescription he had snatched from my hand, commenced operations.

"The result was the picture about which you asked me. I myself saw nothing, but it was developed upon the plate. The doctor had a likeness of his son Theodore. This was the same man, save that, as you see, he was transparent.

"I hid the picture; I tried to bear my misery as well as I could. I hoped to weary the revengeful ghost; but though at times he allowed me to be myself in the shop, he never permitted me to touch the lips of my betrothed wife.

"She, angry and astonished, grew very cool to me; and at last one night I was awakened by a touch upon my forehead, and, opening my eyes, saw a figure at my bedside—the figure in the photograph.

"'Come, then,' it said in that well-known voice, 'why do you not go?'

"'Why do you wish to ruin my life?' I asked. 'What have I done?'

"'Robbed me of my father's affection, my proper work, and, above all, of Lina's love,' said the spirit. 'However, you cannot keep my treasure; you must go. I have no hatred to you, but this is my place which you usurp. The fight is useless.'

"'I shall fight all the same,' I said.

"The ghost vanished with a laugh.

"Never shall I forget the next day; its events are burned into my soul. The invisible hands scarcely left me; I appeared to work destruction wherever I went. I was made to be offensive and even insolent to the best customers.

"Late at night, the professor and I sat alone in the little parlour where I had been so happy.

"'What has happened to you, Adolph?' he said. 'Why have you changed so?'

"It was a relief to tell him all. He listened gravely.

"'I believe you,' he said. 'I have reason. When I am alone I now constantly see my son standing near me. There is reproach in his eyes. Adolph, you must go.'

"I knew it must be, and bowed my head.

"'And Lina?' I asked.

"'She must not know the reason,' he answered. 'I will quarrel with you and break the match. Privately, I will give you a sum of money to enable you to set up business in England.'

"'I cannot part from Lina,' I said.

"'You must, since Theodore desires it,' said the old man."

There was another pause. Adolph Schaeffer reseated himself at the table and refilled his glass.

"It was as Theodore wished," he said. "My life became unbearable, and I went through the farce of being quarrelled with by Doctor Hoffman and dismissed.

"Theodore had become such a real person to me that I felt like a person who had been about to marry a woman who had thought herself a widow, but to whom her husband suddenly returned.

"The fact that Lina knew nothing of the facts of the case caused me much suffering, but the spectral Theodore would not permit her to be told; he never touched or approached her.

"Later, Dr. Hoffman wrote to me that he assisted him efficiently in the prescription department, and that he frequently saw him, but that Lina never did. Later he wrote me that the shop had gained a reputation for being haunted, and that his patrons had one by one departed.

"'However, I am very well off,' he said, 'and may retire from business. I am very happy in the constant company of my beloved son Theodore.'

"Then for a while there was no more correspondence. One day a letter reached me—it was from Lina.

"'My dear old papa Hoffman is dead,' she said. 'He passed away one night in sleep. He was always kind to me, save in the manner of which you know, in which you suffered equally with myself. But he had hallucinations before he died, and was thought by many to be mad. However, it was only on one point. I mention it, because it explains his unreasonable quarrel with you during an attack of illness which should have awakened sympathy. Be assured that that was the only feeling it aroused in my heart.'"

"Ah," said Dr. Schwartz, "the young lady would be very well pleased to renew the old engagement."

"Perhaps," said Adolph Schaeffer, sighing—"perhaps. But as she, without knowing it, belongs to Theodore Hoffman—who will undoubtedly claim her in the other world—I shall be very careful never to meet her again in this, neither do I believe that Theodore would permit me to do so.

"Everyone has a tragedy in his life—this is mine; but I asked you to keep my secret, because I am engaged to Miss Millwood, a lovely and estimable young lady, to whom I shall try to be a perfect husband, and for whom I have great affection. Of course, she must never hear this story.

"The day before the wedding the portraits of Lina and Theodore will disappear from my walls, and I will strive to banish them from my memory for ever."

The clock struck eleven. Doctor Schwartz started to his feet.

"Adolph Schaeffer, you tell an excellent ghost story," he said. "If I did not know that man goes out as a candle in a puff of wind, I might believe it."

"But how do you know that?" cried Adolph.

"Oh," said Schwartz, "I have dissected many bodies, but never discovered the seat of the soul! Good night."

He marched away, laughing; but the young assistant, who, with his ear to the partition, had been listening most of the time, could never quite make up his mind whether Adolph Schaeffer believed the story that he told or had merely been amusing himself.

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A FOOL'S ADVICE.

THE man who told me this is no longer a young man; he was not young when he confided the tale to me, and that was quite fifteen years ago.

He was a little, lean, dark-complexioned—a truly foreign-looking man, although he was an Englishman. Long years of residence in India had burned him to the colour of mahogany, and the hot, pestiferous winds of the great peninsula seemed to have well-nigh mummified him, so dried and shrivelled did he appear.

For convenience I will call him Doctor Goslett, although that is not his name, you may be sure; nor is it anything like his real name. He had been a surgeon in the Indian army for a long term, having gone out there while still a young man—just after taking his "sheepskin," in fact.

"It was when I had been in India but a few months," he said, in the course of his reminiscences," and was stationed at Raipur, in the Orissa district.

"At that time the 'old stagers' in the army—men who had been in the country for a long term, and knew its ins and outs—were in the habit of chaffing new-comers unmercifully, and making them the butt of all sorts of practical jokes.

"I had been afflicted in the usual manner by the younger officers in my regiment (the —th Lancers), and I presume that I was as much fun as a box of monkeys for them. Being a quick-tempered and not over-wise youth, it was hard for me to keep my passion from getting the better of me; and, once having lost control of it over some trivial 'sell' of which one of the mess made me the victim, I was at once selected as a promising subject for all the stock jokes of the regimental mess-room.

"The man who had first caused me to lose my temper was a certain Lieutenant Mainwarring—Henry Mainwarring—a handsome, dashing fellow, with an inexhaustible fund of good humour, and a man who was seldom, if ever, careless of the feelings of others. His joke was a simple enough little thing, and would not have injured me in the least, had I had the good sense to keep my temper.

"Unfortunately, I did not control myself, and the result was, as I state, I became the butt of half the jokes of the mess. Mainwarring never entered into any of them again, but nevertheless, in my unreasoning anger, I laid the whole trouble at his door. Each time I was made the victim of my comrades' chaff, I grew more bitter against the lieutenant. He had first discovered my vulnerable point, and held me up to the ridicule of the mess, and I could not forget it.

"Goodness knows, the life we led at that little station was so dull that anything was welcome to the young fellows, so that it gave a little spice to their existence. I should have been satisfied to lend myself to their entertainment without feeling ugly over it," and the doctor smiled grimly.

"My confrère, Doctor Fearing, a much older man, told me as much, and often advised me to pay no attention to the harmless chaff of the others. But I couldn't see it. To me their jokes were the deadliest insults, and I believe that I hated Mainwarring as intensely as I should had he done me a premeditated injury.

He was a little, lean, dark-complexioned man.

"The lieutenant really endeavoured to repair the wrong he had unwittingly done me by urging the others to let me alone, and refusing to countenance or take part in any joke in which I was to be victimised; but they were a wild set, and I was too promising a subject for them to wholly give up their sport. Besides, I openly showed my antagonism for Mainwarring, and, as he was the most popular man in the regiment—'Handsome Harry' they called him—my course naturally did not gain me any friends.

"I was passionately fond of botanising, and, being simply assistant-surgeon, had much more time to myself than did the majority of the subalterns. The country about Raipur is, or was, nothing but jungle, and I had every opportunity to follow my chosen study in a field exactly to my taste. In a few months, I obtained a very handsome cabinet of specimens indeed.

"My brother officers told me long and blood-curdling yarns about man-eating tigers and cheetahs which infested the jungle, but I had never seen any sign of the creatures during my rambles, and began to believe their stories to be some of those myths usually trotted out for the benefit of new-comers.

"After a time, I began to be weary of always lugging a gun about with me, and quite frequently went on short trips about the station with no other weapon than my revolver or a short hunting knife. This coming to the notice of the colonel, he took me to task for it at dinner one day.

"'You really ought not to do it, you know,' he said mildly

"He was a mild man always, and seldom made his commands other than requests. 'There are beasts in the jungle that would think nothing of snapping up a full-grown man.'

"'Oh, Goslett wouldn't be averse to a bout with a tiger or leopard, armed or not,' sneered somebody.

"Of course that was enough to 'rile' me, and I spoke up sharply:

"'To a coward danger lurks behind every spear of grass. Don't accuse me of running from my shadow.'

"The colonel turned away with a shrug of his shoulders at this ungracious reply, and doubtless put me down in his own mind for the foolish young cub that I was; but Mainwarring looked up from his position directly opposite me at the table, and said gravely:

"'What the colonel says is only too true, Goslett. My man told me only yesterday that a regular man-eater has been ranging the jungle lately between here and Odorro. It is unsafe for any fellow to venture into the forest without a good weapon to fall back upon.'

"My feelings were still rankling from the sneering remark addressed me but a moment before, and, of course, I selected the well-meaning Mainwarring on whom to vent my spite.

"'I do not doubt, lieutenant, that you have my welfare entirely at heart,' I said, with a sneer. 'But I haven't issued a circular requesting advice on the subject.'

"Some of the men looked up quickly, expecting the lieutenant to take offence at my insolence; but he only laughed good-naturedly.

"'Well,' he said, in what I considered an air of insufferable superiority, 'you'd better take a fool's advice and not go wandering through these jungles as though you were at home on your father's farm.'

"'Thank you,' I responded, boiling over with rage; 'I've been in several places since I left my father's estate, even though I may not have had your experience in India, lieutenant. And if such experiences make a man a coward, I'm glad I've had none!'

"Mainwarring flushed up like fire, and our neighbours ceased eating, and waited breathlessly for what should follow. It was apparent to all, I presume, that I had deliberately insulted the lieutenant—or, at least, tried to do so. But I must admit that Mainwarring was remarkably forbearing, considering the way I had treated him.

"'Experience makes a man less foolhardy sometimes; but it's a hard schoolmaster, as my copy-book used to say,' he returned, after a minute spent in controlling his indignation. 'You'll find a fool's advice—aye, a coward's advice—sometimes worth following.'

"He looked at me meaningly, and I knew that his words were meant as a warning to me that I was going too far; but my heart was bursting with rage against him and against my other comrades, and I stared him squarely in the eye and replied:

"'I consider the advice given me as that of a fool and a coward!' I declared hotly. 'You have rightly named it.'

"There was a babel of voices as I delivered this direct insult

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at 'Handsome Harry' Mainwarring, and several of the fellows about me sprang to their feet. I certainly had done nothing to increase my popularity with the regiment. But the lieutenant waved them all aside, and half rising from his chair and bending his flashing eyes on me, with a sudden fierceness which almost made me quail, demanded:

"'Do I understand Mr. Goslett, that you are ready to answer for that remark?'

"'You may understand just that, sir!' I declared, for I had a certain amount of dogged persistence which would never allow me to back out of anything.

"Then, by Jove, sir, you shall answer for it!' he cried, his face blazing with wrath; and he immediately rose and left the room.

"The younger officers looked at me askance; but I was too mad to pay any attention to them or to care how far the matter went. More than one duel had been fought already that year among officers of the Indian army, for there were not the strict laws against it then that there are at present.

"Soon after, I left the mess-room myself, and taking my stick, went out for one of my lonely walks, ostensibly for specimens, but really to quiet my nerves and think the matter over.

"I was in a scrape, I knew, for Harry Mainwarring was an expert with either sword or pistol, while I could use either with but slight skill. If he challenged me, I should of course have the right to choose my weapons: but which should I choose, and what advantage would I obtain by choosing either?

"Naturally I was in no condition to hunt for specimens, although I had slung my bag over my shoulder on leaving the station; but I tramped on and on for several miles while I thought over the situation in which my abominable temper had placed me.

"I could hope for no mercy from Mainwarring (I did not want any, in fact, for with all my faults I was not a craven); for the lieutenant had been terrifically enraged, and when a man who is slow to wrath once gets angry, stand from under, say I!

"Well, in my state of mind I had taken no thought of the way I had come from the station, and finally I awoke to the fact that I had reached a part of the jungle which was totally unfamiliar to me. I pressed on a bit further in the hope of finding some landmark to guide me, but the deeper I went the more certain became the fact of my non-acquaintance with the place.

"Finally I reached a little glade in the centre of the thick jungle and halted a few moments to try to gain my bearings from the sun; but I was not certain of any point of the compass and was almost at my wit's end.

"While I stood there at the side of the glade wholly undecided as to what course to pursue, I heard a sudden crashing in the jungle in front of me, and in a moment a man burst through the reeds and entered the glade. He stopped at once when he saw me, and to my surprise I recognised Mainwarring himself.

"I could not ask him the way to the station. I remember that I drew myself up haughtily and vouchsafed him no salutation as he freed himself from the reeds and creepers and stepped fully out into the opening. He appeared surprised to see me, too; but in an instant a terrible change came over his features.

"He was armed with a heavy express rifle—a weapon which carried a ball like that of a young cannon. Hardly had he entered the glade and obtained a fair glimpse of me when, with a slight exclamation he unslung the piece, and the next instant it was at his shoulder and I was looking straight into the black barrel of the weapon!

"His eyes seemed to blaze with fierce passion, and for an instant I cowered back, realising that he had me completely at his mercy. I did not stop to think that such a course as I believed him to be following was entirely foreign to the man's nature.

"'Don't move!' he shouted, in a hoarse, strained voice.

"But I did move. I had no idea of standing there and being shot down like a dog, and although I had no other weapon than my heavy stick, my fingers tightened on that, and the next moment the staff flew hurtling through the air at my antagonist.

"At the very instant I made my cast his heavy weapon blazed forth, the echoes of the shot rebounding with a roar like thunder from the deep forest about me.

"I heard the shriek of the bullet as it passed me, and the next instant a terrific roar of fury sounded from my rear, and some heavy body bounded against me and carried me headlong to the earth.

"Like a flash I rolled out from beneath the struggling snarling beast and sprang to my feet. It was a huge tiger-cat, and for the next few moments the earth for some yards round was torn up by the dying struggles of the beast. Mainwarring's bullet had saved my life. He had seen the brute crouching in the reeds behind me, and had nobly rescued me from a fearful death.

"Do I understand, Mr. Goslett, that you are ready to answer for that remark?

"Then I looked for the lieutenant himself. What was my horror to find him lying flat upon his back on the spongy sward, his rifle lying at his side. My aim had been only too true, for his upturned face was covered with blood from a deep cut in his forehead where my stick had struck him!

"I ran to his side at once, but he was unconscious. The wound was a serious one, as my professional instinct told me; but, fortunately, I had some things at hand to assist me in the dressing of his hurt, and as soon as it was as comfortable as the rude appliances could make it, I raised him in my arms and set out for the station.

"Fortunately I had noticed from which direction he had approached the glade, and returning that way I quickly came upon landmarks which I recognised, and after a terribly hard tramp arrived at the quarters.

"Mainwarring was still unconscious, but after Dr. Fearing and I had worked over him some time he came to himself. But he was in sick-bay for weeks, and do what we could we were not able to save the sight of both his eyes. The upper lid of his left optic had been torn by the pointed end of the stick, and in that climate little things lead to great.

"I did not spare myself in recounting the adventure, and you may guess that I was almost completely ostracised by my brother officers, for 'Handsome Harry' had been the pride of the regiment. I deserved it, however; but after a while I was changed to another station, and profiting by my serious lesson, managed to get on much better with my brother officers there.

"Harry sold out and went into indigo planting; but, although his friends of the——th Lancers never forgave me for the injury I had done him, he and I were, ever after, the best of friends, and I count him as such now."

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AN ANCESTOR TO BE PROUD OF.

WHEN the bigotry of the last James compelled his subjects to take up arms against him, Sir John Cochrane was one of the most formidable enemies to his dangerous usurpations, and one of the most prominent actors in Argyle's rebellion. For ages a destructive doom seemed to have hung over the house of Campbell, uniting in a common ruin all who joined their fortunes to the cause of its chief. Sir John Cochrane was no exception.

He was surrounded by the king's troops, and, after a long and desperate resistance, he was taken prisoner and was tried and condemned to die upon the scaffold. He had but a few days to live, and his jailer awaited only the arrival of the death-warrant to lead him to execution. His friends had visited him and exchanged the last farewells—all but one; his daughter Grizel, the pride of his house, his dearest treasure, she alone had not come to receive his last blessing.

Night had fallen on the prison, and the father sat with his head pressed against the cold, damp walls of his cell, longing for a last look of his favourite child, when the door opened and the keeper entered, followed by a young and beautiful girl. Her person was tall and commanding, her eyes dark, bright, and tearless, with a sorrow too deep to be wept away. The unhappy prisoner raised his head.

"My child! My own Grizel!" he exclaimed, as he pressed her to his heart.

"My father! My dear father!" sobbed the miserable maiden.

"Your interview must be short—very short," said the jailer, as he closed the door and left them together.

"Heaven help and comfort thee, my precious child!" said Sir John. "I had feared that I should die without bestowing my blessing on the head of my daughter, and that stung me more than death. But thou art come, my love—thou art come; and the last blessing of thy wretched father——"

"Nay, father, forbear!" she exclaimed; "not thy last blessing—not thy last! My father shall not die!"

"Be calm, be calm, my child!" he said. "Would to heaven that I could comfort thee, my own. There is no hope; within three days thou and all my little ones will be——" fatherless he would have said, but the word died upon his lips.

"Three days," she repeated, raising her head from his breast, but eagerly pressing his hand; "three days! then there is hope—my father shall live. Is not my grandfather the friend of Father Petre, the confessor and master of the king? From him he shall beg the life of his son, and my father shall not die."

"Nay, nay, my Grizel," he returned, "be not deceived; there is no hope. Already my doom is sealed. Already the king has signed the order for my execution, and the messenger of death is now on his way."

"Yet my father shall not—shall not die!" she repeated emphatically, and clasping her hands. "Heaven speed a daughter's purpose," she exclaimed; and, turning to her father, said calmly, "we part now, but we shall meet again."

"What do you mean, my child?" he inquired eagerly, gazing anxiously on her face.

"Ask not now," she replied, "my father, ask not now. Pray for me, and bless me, but not with thy last blessing."

He again pressed her to his heart, and wept upon her neck. In a few moments the jailer entered, and the door was closed between the father and daughter.

On the evening of the second day after this interview, a wayfaring man crossed the drawbridge at Berwick from the north, and, proceeding along Marygate, sat down to rest upon a bench, by the door of an inn on the south side of the street, nearly fronting the spot where what was called the "main guard" then stood. He did not enter the inn, for it was above his apparent condition, being that which Oliver Cromwell had made his headquarters a few years before, and where, at a somewhat earlier period, James VI. of Scotland had taken up his residence, when on his way to England.

The traveller wore a coarse jerkin, fastened round his waist by a leathern girdle, and over it a short cloak of plain material. He was evidently a young man, but his beaver was drawn down so as to almost conceal his features. In one hand he carried a small bundle, and in the other a staff. Having called for a glass of wine, he took a crust of bread from his bundle, and, after resting a short time, rose to depart. Night was coming on, and a storm threatening. The heavens grew dark; the clouds rushed from the sea; sudden gusts of wind moaned through the streets, accompanied by heavy drops of rain, and the face of the Tweed was troubled.

"Heaven help thee if thou intendest to travel far in such a night as this!" said the sentinel at the English gate, as the traveller passed him to cross the bridge.

In a few moments he was upon the wide and desolate moor of Tweedmouth, which for miles presented a desert of furze, fern, and stunted heath, with here and there a copse of thick brushwood. He slowly toiled over the steep hill, braving the storm, which now raged with the wildest fury. The rain fell in torrents, and the wind howled like a legion of famished wolves, hurling its doleful echoes over the heath. Still the stranger pushed onward, until two or three miles from Berwick, when, as if unable to brave the storm, he sought shelter amidst some bushes by the wayside.

Nearly an hour had passed since he sought this imperfect refuge, and the darkness of the night and the storm had increased together, when the sound of a horse's feet was heard hurriedly plashing along the road. The rider bent his head to the blast. Suddenly his horse was grasped by the bridle; the rider raised his head, and the stranger stood before him holding a pistol to his breast. "Dismount!" cried the stranger, sternly.

The horseman, benumbed and fear-stricken, made an effort to reach his arms; but instantly the hand of the robber, quitting the bridle, grasped the breast of the rider, and dragged him to the ground. He fell heavily on his face, and for several minutes was senseless. The stranger seized the leather bag which contained the mail for the north, and, flinging it over his shoulder, rushed across the heath.

Early on the following morning the inhabitants of Berwick were seen hurrying in groups to the spot where the robbery had been committed, but no trace of the robber could be obtained.

Three days passed, and Sir John Cochrane still lived. The mail which contained his death-warrant had been robbed, and before another order for his execution could be given, the intercession of his father, the Earl of Dundonald, with the king's confessor might be successful. Grizel now became the almost constant companion of her father. Nearly a fortnight had passed since the robbery of the mail, and protracted hope in the bosom of the prisoner became more bitter than his first despair. But even that hope, bitter as it was, perished. The intercession of his father had been unsuccessful; and a second time King James signed the death-warrant. Within little more than another day that warrant would reach the prison.

"The will of heaven be done!" groaned the captive.

"Amen!" responded Grizel, with wild vehemence. "Yet my father shall not die!"

Again the rider with the mail had reached the moor of Tweedmouth, and a second time he bore the doom of Sir John Cochrane. He spurred his horse to its utmost speed—he looked cautiously before, behind, and around, and in his right hand he carried a pistol ready to defend himself. The moon shed a ghostly light across the heath. He was turning the angle of a straggling copse when his horse reared at the report of a pistol, the fire of which seemed to flash into its very eyes. At the same moment his own pistol went off, and, his horse again rearing, he was thrown from the saddle. In a moment the robber, with his foot upon the breast of the messenger, was bending over him and brandishing a short dagger, saying—

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"Give me thine arms, or die!"

The heart of the king's servant failed him, and, without venturing a reply, he did as he was commanded.

"Now, go thy way," said the robber sternly, "but leave me thy horse and the mail, lest a worse thing come upon thee."

The man arose, and returned to Berwick, and the robber, mounting the horse, rode rapidly across the heath.

Preparations were making for the execution of Sir John Cochrane, and the officers of the law waited only for the arrival of the mail with the second death warrant, when the news arrived that the mail had again been robbed. For fourteen days the prisoner's life would be prolonged. Putting his arms about his daughter, he said, "It is good. The hand of heaven is in this!"

"Said I not," replied his child, and for the first time she wept, "said I not that my father should not die?"

The fourteen days were not past when the prison door flew open, and the Earl of Dundonald rushed to the arms of his son. His intercession with the confessor had been successful, and, after twice signing the warrant for the execution of Sir John, the king had sealed his pardon.

He hurried with his father from the prison to his own house; his family were clinging around him, shedding tears of joy. Grizel alone was absent. They were marvelling with gratitude at the mysterious providence that had twice intercepted the mail, and saved his life, when a stranger craved an audience. Sir John desired him to be admitted, and the quondam robber entered; he was dressed in a coarse cloak, and coarser jerkin, but his bearing seemed beyond his condition. On entering, he slightly touched his beaver, but did not remove it.

"When you have read these," said he, taking two papers from his bosom, "cast them into the fire."

Sir John glanced them over—started, and became pale. They were his death warrants.

"My deliverer," he exclaimed; "how—how shall I thank thee—how repay the saviour of my life? My father—my children—thank him for me!"

The old earl grasped the hand of the stranger—the children embraced his knees. He pressed his hand to his face and burst into tears.

"By what name," eagerly inquired Sir John, "shall I thank my deliverer?"

The stranger wept aloud, and raising his beaver, the raven tresses of Grizel Cochrane fell over the coarse cloak.

"Gracious heavens!" exclaimed the astonished and enraptured father, "my own child—my own Grizel!"

It is unnecessary to add more. The reader can supply the rest, and we have only to add that Grizel Cochrane, whose heroism we have briefly sketched, was the grandmother of the late Sir John Stewart, of Allendank, in Berwickshire, and the great-grandmother of Mr. Coutts, the celebrated banker. Consequently she was the great-great-great-grandmother of Baroness Burdett-Coutts.

THE HOLE OF SALVATION.

A TRUE STORY OF A WONDERFUL ESCAPE.

FRANCESCO RISO, a fontaniere of Palermo, with eighty-eight other citizens, began the Rebellion of 1860. On the evening of April 3rd they concealed themselves in the Gancia, intending to sally forth at dawn and take possession of the public buildings—the Zecca and Finanze—in that quarter. At the same time, acting in concert, their friends without were to rise and carry other important points in the town. The bell of the Gancia was to be the signal, the tricolour their badge, and their watchword "Viva l'Italia et la Liberta!"

It was a well-laid plan, and should have succeeded. But while the patriots were in hiding, a traitor had gone to Maniscalco, the Director of Police, and revealed the entire plot—time, signal, names, everything. Speedily troops filled the Piazza Marina, cannon were placed fronting the Gancia, guards were stationed at the rear; and so far as the eighty-nine popolani were concerned, the revolution was over before it had begun. In the face of their certain doom, however, they fought like heroes; and, entrenched in the Gancia, maintained themselves almost two hours. Then, many being killed, and Riso himself mortally wounded, the survivors sought such safety as they could.

The majority, against the advice of Gaspare Bivona who was next in authority to Riso, took refuge among the rafters, between the ceiling and roof of the church, where they were soon found. Some sprang down among the soldiers and tried to cut their way through; many were killed, hardly one escaped. Those who surrendered were taken to Porta San Giorgio, a few days later, and shot, among them, old Giovanni, father of Francesco Riso. The latter, mortally wounded, was removed to the hospital, and died there from his injuries.

Meanwhile, Filippo Patti had joined his fate to Bivona's, and their escape is in great part due to the latter's astuteness and steady nerve. First of all, they fled over the roofs to the Campanile, but seeing that the convent was surrounded and safe descent would be impossible, they clambered down to the roof. There, looking through a skylight, they perceived two of on their knees, below, praying. Their rap upon the glass instantly directed toward them two frightened faces, but for some time they could get no answer to their signs, the priests evidently fearing that they were spies.

At last, however, they were told, by signs, of course, that if the window were open, it was possible to climb down, by means of the cornice and woodwork. With a blow of his fist, Bivona broke the glass. The blood spurted out from a severed vein in his wrist, but twisting a handkerchief about it like a vice, he tied the knot with one hand and his teeth, and then managed to swing himself down, followed by Patti.

By the time they were down, the monks had vanished, but were found in one of the side chapels, praying to all the saints for safety. The fugitives made it clear they were not spies, although to be friends—in this crisis—was almost fatal. But they were brothers in misery, and there was no longer any fear of betrayal. From the body of the church they fled to a small room at the opposite end from the high altar, full of chairs, which were stored here when not in use. A lane was hastily opened in the mass, and they crawled in, twisting themselves here, there, anywhere, so as to be out of sight, and as far from the front as possible. Then the monks replaced the wooden files above and in front of them, shut the door and went back to their praying.

It was well they had made haste, for in less than half an hour the soldiers entered. Little of the church escaped search; even among these chairs they plunged and pried with their bayonets, but luckily hit no one, and after several trials went away.

In this cramped and painful confinement, the fugitives remained until the third day. At the close of the second, the Gancia, now supposed to be empty, was locked up, although still strictly guarded without. Half dead from hunger, thirst and cramp, but somewhat reassured by the silence, this small remnant of Francesco Riso's troop emerged from its retirement, and entered the church. The first thing the men saw was the holy water font—as good luck would have it, half full; and they drained it, to the last drop. "Never was

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water more truly blessed," said Bivona; "Aqua benedetta, sicuro!"

Now, in their long hiding among the chairs, he had been considering what better refuge there might be, and had remembered a vault below the church, next the street, which opened by a trap door into a room used as a vestry. Here the conventual dead were laid away, each on his shelf, but otherwise uncoffined; and the probabilities were that no one would seek the living in such companionship. So the semi-dead prized open the ponderous, iron-shod door, and entrusted themselves to those who were dead.

Just below the ceiling of the vault were several small, heavily-barred windows; and, as the sound of life and the fresh spring air came pouring in, the captives were roused to new exertions. They must die of hunger if they stayed; they could no more than die, if discovered, and they decided to take their chances. They were feeble; still they managed to pile the good brothers of the Gancia, one above the other, until, from this standpoint of mortality, they could reach a window.

The first who looked out promptly dodged; sentinels were pacing up and down before the building; and at the corner, where two streets crossed, was stationed a large guard. But, watching their chance as the sentinels passed, they made signs to a woman in an opposite café. They were seen, they were understood, and all were eager to help. Their first, most pressing need was food, and this was conveyed to them most adroitly by a cab-driver, brother to Patti.

As though by chance, he stopped his cab close to the window; again, as by chance, several people stopped in front of the cab, talking busily together; and thus screened, he thrust in at the grating a roll of bread and a short, pointed iron bar. When they had a hole, he hurriedly told them, they must signal; then the people would get up a quarrel to call off the guards and favour the escape.

Patti was overcome at first with weakness and despondency, and wept bitterly. As to Bivona, the greater the peril, the more wiry and tensely strung he became. He cheered up his companion, and, strengthened by the bread, they set to work, aiding the slow chisel with their hands, until, on the fifth day of their imprisonment, the outermost stone lay loose in its socket. They rested a few seconds, then signalled that they were ready.

The street had been quite peaceful up to now, but suddenly two women began to quarrel, their friends joined in, and a great hubbub arose. An officer passing by stopped a moment close to the window, and Bivona heard him say to a friend: "If there was a conspiracy, you may be sure these accursed women would be in it, they are always ready for a row." On he passed, little dreaming that conspiracy was actually there; and Bivona, despite the peril, could not restrain a chuckle.

In almost the same moment, at the crossing where the guard was stationed, several carts, loaded with straw, managed to run into each other. The wildest confusion ensued. The drivers cursed, threatened, came to blows; the bystanders rushed in, and, sympathetically, began to fight; those "accursed women" joined the fray, screaming loudest of all; in fact, as Bivona said, they had "a devil of a time."

Guard and sentinel gathered in haste to separate the combatants and clear the streets; such a throng was not safe, it might lead to insurrection; and while the friends of order were thus laudably engaged at one end of the Gancia, at the other appeared, feet foremost, Filippo Patti! Halfway out of the hole he stuck, and urged Bivona to help him back. "No," said the latter, "return is death to both of us; out you must go, even if in pieces."

With all his might he pushed him, while those without pulled; and in this manner, although badly scarified, Patti reached at last the street.

Then came Bivona, who, being of slender build, and going head first, emerged safely. The women covered them, as they appeared, with their clothes, hustled them behind and through the crowd, across the street, and from one friendly house to another, until they could reach the open country.

So adroitly was the affair managed that the soldiers had not even a suspicion. No sooner, however, were the fugitives safe, than—to quote a Palermitan writer—"there ceased, as if by magic, the confusion of the carts." The drivers recovered their temper as unexpectedly as they had lost it: the bystanders grew amicable and jolly; the horses trotted on; the sentries resumed their march. All was as before, with one exception. In the stone wall of the Gancia—like an eye looking out from its vaults—was a small, irregular opening.

How had it come there? Strange to say, no one knew anything about it! The people gathered around as astonished as the sentinels. "Most holy Virgin! what could they know about it? They had been watching the straw carts. A piece must have fallen out of the wall while they were not looking! Diavolo! Dio Santissimo!" (thus invoking the two strongest authorities) "Nobody had seen anything!"

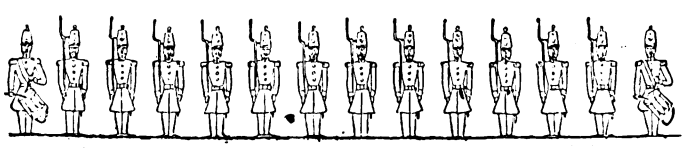
The most rigid cross-questioning and search failed to elicit more than this. There had been an escape; so much was certain; and since Bivona and Patti had not been found before, it was argued, rightly, that they were the fugitives. Bivona's wife and children were treated with much harshness; but as the poor woman said, "We only knew that he was gone; we could only pray that he was safe."

So matters went, until, on the 11th of May, not quite a month from that sad struggle in the Gancia, there landed at Marsala, Garibaldi and his thousand. On the 16th they were at Calatifimi, the 17th at Aleamo, the 18th Partinico. By the 25th they had reached Misilmeri, the 26th Gibilrossa, and the 27th saw their triumphant entry into Palermo. Before November of this year the campaign was ended—Italy was free!

And Bivona! He had joined Garibaldi, of course; and fought with him bravely, as you may suppose. But, after a while, some chronic ailment disabled him for active service, and he was voted a small pension. Small as it was, it soon ceased to be paid; and for the last ten years he struggled hard with illness, poverty, and the care of a large family. This, says Signor Salvo, is the way one's country pays its debts!

Yet something may be urged for poor, debt-oppressed Italy. She "pays thus," often, because she is unable to do otherwise.

And, in spite of his barren pension, Bivona can still say, with all the fire of patriotism that first led him to rebel, "Viva Italia! Viva la Liberta."



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THE MAN MY SISTER MARRIED.

CHAPTER XIX.

GRANDFATHER came with a carriage to take Katherine and Justina to the station, and while Aunt Marg got ready to walk with me, I went down to say good-bye to Liz. The good soul was sitting in the kitchen her apron over her face, sobbing.

"Good-bye," I said. "If I have been horrid to you lately, I am sorry; I have tried to be better than I used to be."

"Yo' allus blessed child; I told Miss Margaret so this mornin', an' ef ebber I scold yo', Miss Vi'let, I eat ebbry word, I do."

"The scoldings were never very bad, Liz; and now you must be doubly kind to Aunt Marg and grandfather; they think so much of you. You were going to lose me anyway, when I was——." But I choked then. I could not say "John's wife."

"Sometimes I think the old house would have been happier, more peaceful, if wilful Letty Lombard had never crossed its threshold."

"Doan yo' tear a pusson's heart all ter pieces, Vi'let, an' yo' know well nuff a house 'thout young folks es jes' a graveyard. De Lawd bless yo' and keep yo'! I'll see yo' married 'fore I die, I suah ob dat, sartin suah."

"Aunt Marg," I said, as we walked across the beach to the town, "I would give him to you if I could."

"He would not be given," she smiled, something like her old self once more; "what a brave child you are, and I begin to think you have chosen the best way. It was the real Letty after all, and we almost missed knowing her. Poor little pilgrim! What a dreary journey lies before you. Don't hope for much from her. I can tell you now, and you will soon see it, her nature will never change; yours will be a thankless task. Thank God, there is between you and your sister Katherine not one trait in common, and there never will be."

We passed the market place.

We parted near the town, and how much more I would have said, how much more loving I would have been, had I dreamed it was my last farewell to Aunt Margaret! How well she read my sister Katherine. There never was any liking between us, nor did she give me any gratitude, but I made her last hours easier, and that repaid me.

Grandfather tried not to cry when he said "Good-bye." He was very cold and distant to Katherine, but he came back the second time to bless me and give me comforting words.

"Let the old sailor blood tell in ye, Letty. The Lombards were a brave lot, no storm or sea ever drove them from their duty." Then he wrung my hand and hobbled off, looking, oh, so old and bowed; for this last trial had been hardest of all his many sorrows to bear.

At last, in San Antonio, in the city of the Alamo! Through quaint narrow streets, paved with cobble-stones, by walled houses with small, shuttered windows and wide porches; by fine old mansions bowered in trees; over bridges, so many of them, crossing the winding little river that kisses many shores and ripples under the home walls and by the gardens, so friendly to the folks there, one might fancy it a household spirit of goodwill.

Then leaving Katherine at the hotel with Justina, I went out to see the man grandfather had told me to find. A telegram had been sent, and he had engaged a house for us, the very one where I lived with Justina five years of my life. He was friendly and kind, but seemed to have a horror of meeting my sister; so I told him there was nothing more he could do, and that he had made everything easy for me. I remembered him instantly as one of the judges at the Hotel Gilbert.

I got a carriage, and then Katherine, Justina, and I drove out to our dwelling-house. We passed the market-place, with its busy throng of Mexicans, with their wares, tables spread out with Mexican dainties, stalls with luscious fruit and vegetables, carts loaded with mesquite and corn-husks, drawn by lean oxen with those great sharp horns, or shambling, queer-jointed horses in rope harnesses; past the cathedral of San Fernando, where Justina crossed herself, muttering prayers; out through tree-bordered, quiet streets to a wide country road, by green fields and ploughed land, past ranches and pastures, past adobe huts, where black-eyed, olive-skinned children played in the sun, where their swarthy mothers gossiped by shady doors, smoking cigarettes, and men lolling by the gates, chatting with neighbourly idlers. A sunshiny, pleasant race, enjoying time as colder-blooded, busy people never do.

"It's odd to say good-bye," muttered Katherine; "that Mexican there does not know I have looked upon him for the last time. He isn't aware I've looked at all. It isn't often one rides in one's own funeral procession, keenly interested in the passing panorama. Adieu, San Antonio, and a certain quaint river-kissed house, where I lived in hiding, in the enemy's very camp, six happy weeks. You knew me then, you Mexican crone. Was I not beautiful?"

"Dios, so beautiful," cried Justina, "and you gave me gold too."

"You never betrayed me, either, and Dean feared you might."

"She was paid," I said crossly; "Justina likes gold."

Justina laughed wickedly. "Chica a wise old child."

I began to respect Justina a little, for she never told Katherine I knew anything of the past, and never a word of John.

"Tell me how I looked that day?" Katherine asked, with feverish eagerness; the saddest thing in her sickness was that clinging to her past.

"I was in the forest, the gnarled old trees planted by the good fathers near the Mission Concepcion," said Justina, crossing herself reverently; "I carried Chica—she was so strong too in her legs, she could walk in a year—and a lady rode up on a big horse; she wore a green habit, a sombrero with a plume and shining stones, such beautiful ones; and her eyes were so big and bright. 'Is that Mary Lombard's child?' she asks; she gave me three shining gold pieces, and I told her 'yes,' and then I knew her to be Chica's sister. My cousin had told me of her, so beautiful! so wicked! I put holy water on her gold, but it brought me no harm, though I feared it. She asked me about Señor Scott, and I told her

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they were all gone into Mexico. Then Chica cried for the horse, and I lifted her up, and she clung so brave to the creature's mane—she was never afraid, my baby. Then the Colonel"——Justina hesitated.

"Oh, Miss Prim knows I ran away with Dean; I told her," Katherine said carelessly.

"The Colonel had no eyes for Chica; he was afraid; so they went away, paying me well." I told you Señor Scott wept big tears because he thought you dead, and you laughed, you were so gay."

"Yes, and now I am so cold, so barely alive, and yet it's unchanged here. It mocks one to come back. Give me my brandy, Prim, I'll shut my eyes." She lay back in the carriage, so exhausted we had to carry her into the house. She was dreadfully light for such a tall woman.

Oh, that dark house, its low-studded rooms, its narrow-shuttered windows, its white walls shining in the sun, its damp, earthy odour, and the shadow of the Mission that shut out our daylight like some tall mountain peak. How, as time went on, that crumbling ruin drew me into its past, of days that were and are no more; of death and decay; of falling walls and ruined arches; of a mossy turret and a ghostly bell that clanged when the wind blew, as if rung by some priestly hand, calling those dusky converts from labour to prayer.

A year of my life I lived in its shadow, such a time as the prisoner of Chillon endured, each hour marked by the light on his prison walls, each night period by the clanking of his chain following his lagged steps.

I would not have complained, in all that weary time, had Katherine been kind, but she met all my advances with an icy wall of indifference. To-day was nothing to her; she lived in her past, talked of her beauty, her power; pictured strange scenes in Europe; people that made her world, and all the gaudy, unreal pleasures of a life such as hers had been, until sometimes, with smarting eyes and burning cheeks, I stole away unseen, trying to keep from shuddering, or showing that disgust I felt that would have made her hate me more.

What dreadful nights I spent trying to ease her pain, lifting her weary head to my breast, holding her in my arms, fanning her, doing all that human power could do to help her, and she, fighting her disease with fierce defiance of death, rising at midnight to sit by the open window, to look at the stars and feel the cool air across her dry lips, or to be carried to the shadow of the Mission, there to lie the long day through and think; ah, what tainted and wicked thoughts!

Not a word of regret or remorse, not a sigh for the future, only a fight against the present. She liked Justina, and I was so glad of that. Even in Katherine's worst days she would chatter Spanish with my nurse, and try to smoke a cigarette, and delight in stories that Justina told of her Mexican cousins and their many love affairs.

She would play *monte* with her and quarrel over her gains; but me she only called Prim, bore with me in a tolerant way, and let me wait on her. She never thanked me or called me sister, and for her sake I had given up my best beloved. Some days the thought of him and Mexico would come to me, and in agony I would go away from the house to the Mission to fight my battle there.

I went under the arched doorway, its façade gorgeous with niched saints, some headless, some niches bare, and some perfect apostle, saved from vandal hand; and, nearest heaven, chubby baby faces smiling from the grim old place. Then into the ruined chapel, its beautiful dome fallen in, domed by high heaven now; its solid marvellous masonry, the product of such patient unskilled labour made perfect by slow degrees; then on to a long corridor, with ruined arched windows lining on either side.

Here there was no floor, and many of the arches were shattered, but how graceful and pleasing they were; and at nights from my window I imagined the slow moving procession of black-robed figures, clouds of incense floating on the fragrant air, soft echoes of Latin hymns borne over the listening fields upward to the sky. I saw dark, solemn faces, prayerfully clasped hands, and bowed, reverent heads. I fancied a shrinking throng of converts listening to the strange words, half comprehending, but wholly awed and pious-minded.

With them I, too, have cried, "Teach me Thy wondrous comfort, O God; give me the stern repression of self of those righteous men—their faith, their steadfast purpose."

Beneath that arched corridor I wandered in mouldy underground cells where those fathers must have slept or kept their lonely vigils. Did they never fear, when they laid down to rest, that some bronze-faced savage would forget their teachings, and, from some word of offence, some unwillingly performed command, would creep, knife in hand, to murder them in their helplessness?

Like the panther and all coward things springing upon slumbering prey, and then fleeing with blood-dripping blade to rouse, with the half-forgotten war-cry, all that dusky throng, to set the red torch and by the blazing light send all those good men to their last account, and leave the smouldering ruins to tell the tale?

And yet, as time went on, that quiet desolate place taught me patience. At first I saw only death and decay, its history was not written, the memory of its good men had vanished like a cloud of dust from the sun-dried road. Its teaching had fallen into barren ground, gone from those savage tribes, not even a tradition left. It gave me no hope for better things. It mocked my sacrifice.

But then, one day, I dreamed, a good deed is never forgotten, it lives in men's lives, it is written strength for the future. One Christ life has lived through all the centuries; men have died for Him, and these Mission fathers gave their learning, their years to Him; the power of faith and love that brought them here outlives those mouldering walls, outlives all time.

To write of a year is only to pen a few brief lines, but to live a year like that is such a dreary period, for like Justina's beads, its days must be counted one at a time. I never left Katherine when she wanted me. I sang to her, played the games she taught me, read to her, and when she was too weak to talk of her past, told her the brightest pictures in mine.

She would listen, her great eyes on the Mission, half-heeding, but if I ceased she would tell me pettishly to go on. I grew to have a horror of the house, almost of her, but Justina comforted me. She was always cheerful and gay, smoking interminable cigarettes, lying in the sun.

I . . . . climb the belfry stairs.

I like to think, as time went on, I never reckoned the days, nor hoped for any release. I only prayed that Katherine would change and be better, but she never did. I grew old and careworn. Justina said I was a girl no longer. I gave my youth to my sister Katherine.

Mrs. Scott sent me things for Katherine every week, dainties she would eat, fruit and flowers from the garden.

"What a good woman she is," Katherine said one day, "and so rare in this life, a good woman who can forgive." She made me dress her in the pretty gowns sent, and arrange her hair a dozen different ways, when she was so weak she could hardly lift her head. Once she said:

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"What a spiritless thing you are, Prim! Margaret made you like herself."

"Chica was so gay once," put in loyal Justina.

"Gay? That Puritan!" sneered Katherine; "I wish you could have seen me before I lost my grip on life."

One morning Justina persuaded a priest to come and see Katherine. She used to go to the Mission Concepcion, where services were held once in a while. Katherine was pleased to see a stranger, but I fancy he found his errand fruitless. They chatted in Spanish quite a while. He was a pleasant-faced old man, with very shrewd eyes. Outside the house he talked with me, saying that she was very near the end. "Justina has told me all about you," he said in such a friendly way that I broke down and told him about my sorrow that Katherine would not change; and then I described the Mission, and what it was to me.

"I go in that little door and climb the belfry stairs, and up there—on the crumbling roof, among the tiny flowers that grow in the crevices, and the harmless creeping things that bask in the sunshine—I talk with some old father. I tell him all my troubles, and, though he says nothing, I go away comforted. I wonder if some good soul does not wander back there to that loved place; it cost them such sacrifice and labour, I should think they could not forget."

He smiled at me very gently. "One cannot gather grapes from thistles," he said, in his soft Spanish; "your sister will not change. You can only soothe her physical sorrows, her mental ones are with God." After kindly, comforting words, he rode away, and left me feeling happier than for many days.

He was our only visitor save the doctor, a gruff-voiced, kind-hearted old man from the city, who always left, declaring Katherine was so insolent that he would not come again, but insisting on looking at my tongue, and giving me directions for my own health.

She had been up all day. She would not lie down, and old Justina and I had carried her to the Mission and back, and then I had taken her in my arms, on our favourite couch by the window, and Justina had quietly sent our messenger, a ragged Mexican, for the doctor. As night came on, and she wanted me to talk, she being too weak to speak, I went on and told her of my childhood.

I pictured the old house by the sea, the shining sand, the foam-crested waves, curling under the sunlight. I showed her myself, a little lonely child, running with flying hair along the shore, gathering shells, and talking to the sea-fairies I loved and thought could hear me. I told her how I flung the tiny

My sister Katherine was dead.

shell creatures into the sea that they might live, and after a storm I always went out to fetch them back, that they need not suffer, when the cruel waves had stranded them.

I told her of happy, innocent days, and then as the darkness came on, and a single star shone over the ruin so near, I told her of the Mission, and all my fancies.

"I almost see those good men," she gasped. Darkness fell on us in that silent room, and I held her close. If sometimes, my tears dropped on her hair, I think she did not notice them, but if a sob choked my words she told me querulously to go on. Outside, Justina chatted with a neighbour in the soft patois of her race, and afterwards she sat on the door-step, and I heard her telling her beads.

Later, the sound of hoofs woke Katherine from a gentle sleep, and she cried sharply: "Who is that?"

"Perhaps the doctor was passing," I said evasively; "he always comes in when he is out this way."

"You sent for him," she cried; "am I so bad?" Even then the death dew was on her forehead, but she pushed me from her. "You would hurry me into my grave." She staggered to the door. "I will not die," she muttered to the doctor, as he stopped there and looked at her with tenderest pity; "I will not go into the dark, I am young, I shall live. The air revives me, I have suffered this way so often." Then that dreadful cough, and she fell forward. He lifted her on to the bed, but in a moment she sprang up with a cry.

"Letty, if they put me there I shall die. Hold me higher on your shoulder; is the window open? How close it is in this little house! Like a coffin. It smells of the grave. It is the grave."

The doctor lit the lamp.

She moved uneasily, clasped my hand, tried to speak; I think she would have said some word of love, I know she would, but only from her lips came one word, "Letty," stifled and far away. She grew so still after that, her head so heavy on my breast. Suddenly all the world was lost to her, who had done so much to add to the burdens of humanity, so few good deeds to come like flowers from her grave.

The doctor and Justina lifted her gently on the bed, my arms were empty, something had gone from my present never to come again. The long year, with all its pain and weariness, its futility of aid to good, its bitter, bitter heartbreak, was blotted from my life; my sister Katherine was dead!

She staggered to the door

(To be concluded next week.)

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ROSE.

JOHN GANT drew himself behind a pillar of the verandah and pulled his slouch hat further over his eyes, as he felt the gaze of a passer by the little country inn, rest curiously upon his disfigured face. He had not yet become accustomed to being stared at.

The fresh spring morning had no charm for him, for he felt that his life was ruined. He looked over at the tiny vine-trellised cottage with a bitter sigh and a rebellious spirit. He had come from the hospital to his old home and for a whole week had been so near to Rose that twenty steps would have carried him to her side; and yet he had kept his room until this, the morning of his departure, fearing by chance to meet her.

He had sent coldly polite notes of thanks for the many gifts of flowers and books which had come to him from her kind hands; and though his heart cried out in bitter protest he resolved that he would never see her again. He would rather die than see her shrink from him in disgust.

Moodily he smoked his cigar and reviewed the past—the long years of toil and study in distant London, his admission to the bar, his first speech before a jury—a speech that had won the plaudits and bright predictions of his colleagues. How full of promise life had seemed! But everything bright had come to an end on the day of the accident.

The explosion of a gun in his own hands had robbed his right eye of its sight, torn his cheek frightfully, and left his mouth so twisted and scarred that he started in horror when he first saw its reflection in the mirror. The publicity of the court would be intolerable to him now. He must work at something away from the eyes of men.

Suddenly a sweet young voice rang out in a merry song, behind the tall hawthorn hedge, and in an instant the man was on his feet.

It was Rose. The desire to see her once more overpowered him. His cigar and resolution were alike forgotten. He ran down the steps and sprang through a gap into a little flower garden, where a slender brown-haired girl on her knees was searching among the wet leaves for violets.

"Good-morning, John," she said, quietly. "See! I have quite a nice little bunch. Papa had his yesterday morning; these are for you. Kneel down here while I pin them on."

And the young fellow knelt at her side and shut his teeth tightly together, while with dew-wet fingers she pinned the fragrant cluster on his coat.

How sweet she was! how dangerously kind and oblivious!

He must not stay; he could not trust himself longer.

They both rose, she blushing a little at her nonsense.

"I have come to bid you good-bye, Rose," he said, almost curtly. "I have sufficiently recovered, I think, to go back to work, and I leave for London within an hour. Rose, I want you to know how deeply grateful I am for your many acts of kindness. I have seemed cold and unappreciative, but I have not been indifferent. Heaven knows I have not! I shrunk so from meeting you; but I believe you will understand it all."

The girl looked at him with an aching heart. Yes, she understood. Oh, the pity of it all! That stalwart figure, so suggestive of power and strength; that noble heart, cherishing only kindness for every living creature; that bright mind, sharpened and cultivated by closest study; that indomitable will, which had overcome all sorts of obstacles and won success at last; all these attributes of a grand character to be shadowed by an external flaw!

She looked at the red scarred face, and could have cried aloud in her anguish for him.

"Rose," he continued, "I had something I meant to tell you soon, but it will never be told now. God bless you, little friend, the thought of you will always be my sweetest pleasure and safeguard."

He wrung her hand in farewell, and turned to go.

"John!"

He wheeled and came back a step.

"What was it you had meant to tell me?"

"I cannot tell you now," he said, desperately; "it would not be right; you do not understand——"

"But I want to know, John," persisted the girl, staring at the violet bed with glowing cheeks.

"Don't torture me, Rose. You must have known that ever since you were a little girl and I carried your books to the old tumble-down school over there, I have worshipped the ground you walked on. I meant to have asked you to be my wife; but now——"

"I know what you would say, John. Listen. Almost since I can remember you have been my champion, my adviser, my hero. I revere your strong pure nature. I have watched with pride your success in the busy world. I shall feel honoured, John, to become the wife of so good and true a man."

"Rose!" ejaculated the young fellow, seizing her hands and looking at her in mingled doubt and delight; "you do not mean it, dear. You do not comprehend what you are saying."

"It is you who fail to comprehend, John. God looks at the heart, not the outward appearance, and a good woman's love is akin to God. I learned long ago to love the sweet unselfish soul within you. And do you suppose that this 'blemish' of the face will change one iota of that affection?

"Oh, John, how little you understand a woman's heart! Wait!" she cried, as he attempted to draw her into his arms.

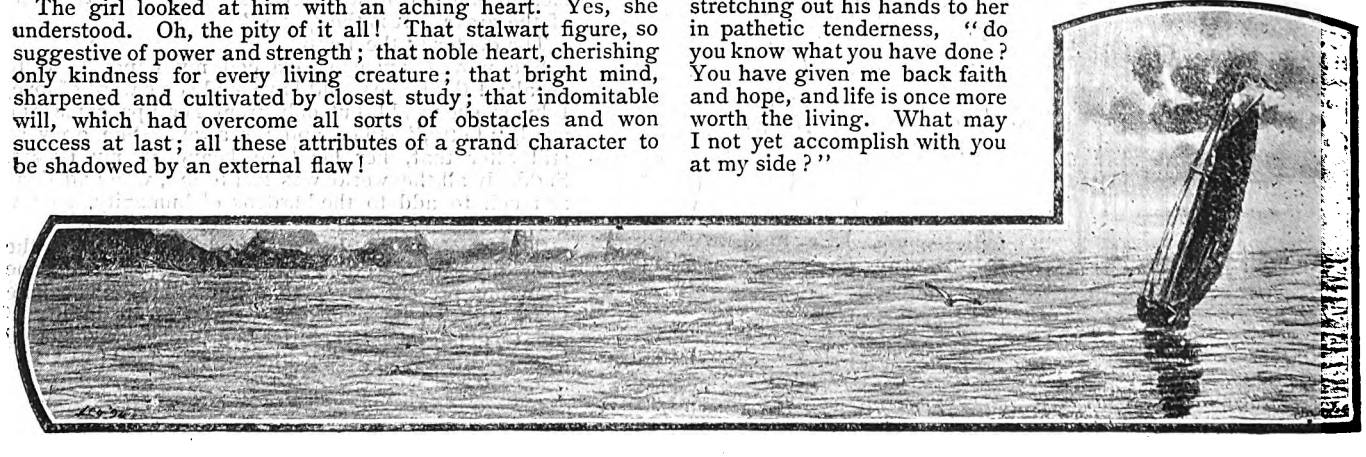
"I am going to say something that will hurt you. You were a very handsome man, and you were very vain. Do you know that personal vanity is one of the weakest of weak things in a man? I deplored it in you, for it was the one flaw in your character.

"Forgive me, John. Your beauty of face is gone for ever, but your beauty of character is untouched, and may be enhanced if you will but bear your affliction in a manly, patient spirit. Where is your faith, John? You taught me long ago to trust in God's wisdom and goodness. Do you not see that he is dealing with you in love, and that all these things will work together for your good?"

"Rose, my love, my little comfort!" cried the man in broken tones.

"Yes, I see, I see! God is good. He has given me youth and health and your best love. I will never doubt Him again. Oh, Rose, the scales have fallen from my eyes and my duty seems clear. How weak I have been! I will not give up my beloved profession, but will rise superior to this morbid sensitiveness which is but a species of the vanity you have spoken of and with God's help, will yet make an honoured name for us both.

"Oh, Rose," he cried, stretching out his hands to her in pathetic tenderness, "do you know what you have done? You have given me back faith and hope, and life is once more worth the living. What may I not yet accomplish with you at my side?"



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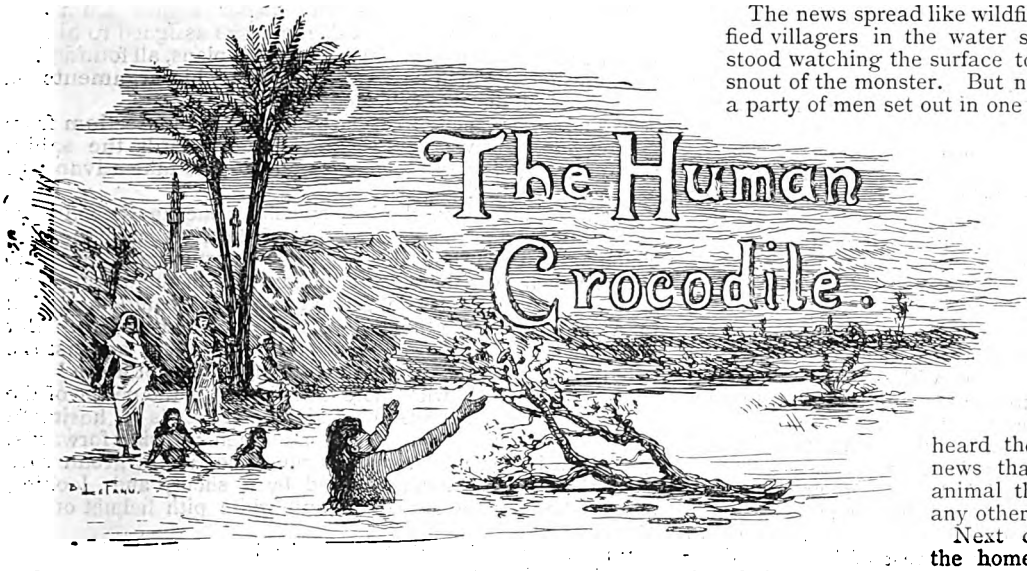

THE power of the big yellow sun that had burned fiercely and relentlessly all day long upon the parched vegetation and lethargic natives round about the town of Kurki, up near the Siwalik Hills, began to wane as he sank unwillingly behind the rugged summits of the Kumaons, shooting his dying rays with unwonted brightness across the wooded landscape.

All day long he had poured his heat down, causing the earth to harden and crack, and the Hindoos to seek shelter as best they could beneath the roofs of their huts. It had been as if the copper-coloured sky were the bottom of a gigantic furnace, and the sun a hole in it.

The sluggish waters of the Ganges moved along inertly, as if the exertion to race were too great; the leaves of the mangoes that shadowed its surface in places remained unmoved the whole day long; an unwary, bright-plumaged bird started to chirp, but he gave it up; a snake rustled quietly in the long grass, then, coiling itself, fell asleep.

Scarcely a sound had broken the silence throughout the day; but as the short twilight overshadowed the broad fields and the jungle, a gentle murmur arose, gradually swelling into a hubbub, as the natives came out of their homes and trooped to the riverside, there to enjoy the tepid waters, and to disport themselves before the inky darkness, indigent to the climate, fell upon the land.

On a slight eminence, on the outskirts of the village, stood the house of a wealthy Hindoo, and from one of the doors several young girls came out and made their way, laughing and talking, to the banks of the Holy River, at some distance from the spot where the people of a lower caste were bathing.

Each girl was clad in a light gauzy robe, and her dusky arms and ankles were encircled with heavy gold rings that clanked and jingled as she walked. One of them, more stately and less given to frivolity than the remainder, led the way. She was Soron, the daughter of the house.

Flinging their garments aside they plunged into the stream, splashing each other, shouting and laughing, almost mad with delight, screaming like children at play.

One, more venturesome than the rest, waded out to the centre of the river, to a floating bough, daring the other girls to follow her, and as they made their way out after her, she threw up her arms with a faint cry of despair and sank beneath the bubbling waters.

Immediately the remainder gave themselves up to wild screams and ran towards the bank. Soron's favourite maid, Mitti, had been seized by a crocodile! There was no hope of saving her now, for the reptile had doubtless finished his horrid feast. But he would have to be caught and killed by the men of the village, otherwise the place would be absolutely unsafe for future bathing purposes; and so the girls hurried back to the home and raised the alarm; but there was an end of Mitti, without a doubt.

The news spread like wildfire, and the disturbed and terrified villagers in the water scrambled for the shores, and stood watching the surface to see if it were broken by the snout of the monster. But nothing at all was seen, and a party of men set out in one of those queer little boats that you see on the Ganges, armed with spears and old muskets and torches, and searched for the crocodile.

They hurled their spears and fired their guns at random into the water, they shouted themselves hoarse, they splashed the water with their paddles. But the women, standing on the banks, saw the glare of their torches as they came back up the stream again, and heard the unsatisfactory and vexing news that there was no sign of the animal they were looking for, or of any other.

Next day a couple of men from the home of Soron were told off by her father to watch the spot where the accident had taken place, which they did, armed with muskets, which they never had occasion to fire, because all through the day not a ripple broke the tranquillity of the stream, except where the branches of the overhanging trees pierced its surface.

At the end of a week confidence returned, and the people—thirsting for a cooling dip at twilight—ventured into the river. And Soron went also with her maids, after her wary father had sent a couple of damsels from the village to bathe in the fatal spot before his daughter went; and nothing further occurred to alarm them until one evening Bandri, who had found the favour her mistress used to bestow on the unfortunate Mitti—anxious to exhibit her pluck—waded out in mid-stream after a glittering bracelet that she saw clinging to a floating branch, and shared the fate of her former companion.

They had all been watching her as she slowly made her way nearer and nearer towards the branch, and then they saw her throw up her arms and disappear when she was within a yard of her goal. When the scare that seized the people abated, and no signs of a crocodile could be discovered by the men who went out in boats to search, Hissar, Soron's father, propounded a theory that there was a pool of some sort or other in mid-stream into which both the unhappy girls must have stepped.

This theory, however, was knocked on the head by the village fakir, who argued that if this were so the bodies would be washed ashore, if not just at that spot, within a reasonable distance.

Hissar, Soron's father, thought it wasn't worth while to hunt about on the off chance of finding the bodies, and after a week or two gave his daughter permission to resume her bathing, provided that she avoided the place where the other girls had gone.

For several nights peace was restored in the place, and the evening sport was resumed without fear of interruption; in fact most of them had forgotten all about the incidents until one night, when Soron's eyes caught sight of a gold bangle encircling the branch of a tree floating over the fatal spot.

She called the attention of her maids to it, and commanded one of them to fetch it for her, as she wanted it. The girl, however, grew frightened and went out on to the bank, followed by her companions, in spite of the threats of their mistress, whose covetousness filled her with a wild desire to obtain what she might have seen was obviously impossible to obtain without the loss of a life.

Wading ashore and seizing her long robe, she tied a stone in the end of it and made her way out again, while the girls watched breathlessly from the banks. Slowly she went towards the coveted treasure, until she was within a couple of yards; then pausing, she swung the gauze, lasso fashion, over her head, and threw it out, intending to catch the twig and drag it towards her.

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Three times she threw, three times she failed; and in a paroxysm of rage, she cast aside her weapon and forced herself through the water, reaching out her hand, and grasping the bauble with a shout of glee. But, as she turned to come back, she fell forward on her face, screaming with fright, and disappeared, a few bubbles floating softly over the spot where, a second before, she had stood in exultant triumph.

Immediately a wild howl rose from the banks. The women sank on the ground, beating their breasts and tearing their hair. None dared venture to break the news to their master, who would have them every one killed, and so they sat and howled until the people from the village came to their aid, only to guess by the absence of Soron what had really happened.

That night, until the first streaks of the breaking dawn tinted the western sky, Hissar hovered about the spot where his daughter had gone, in a boat with half-a-dozen men, alternately firing his gun into the stream, shouting, tearing his hair, and swearing at the cowed villagers.

But, by the time the sun was well up in the heavens, he had returned to his home to find solace in sleep.

The wildest excitement lasted in the village until the next evening, when the arrival of an English hunter supplied them with a fresh source of interest. He was on his way to Saharanpur, some miles to the north-west of Kurki, and he readily accepted the hospitality of the bereaved Hissar, and stopped at his house the night.

He exhibited an immense amount of interest in the story of the mysterious spot in the Ganges, so much, in fact, that he arranged with his carriers to remain a few days in order to do his best towards lifting the veil that shrouded the unhappy occurrences.

"Your theory as regards the pool is more reasonable than that of the crocodile," he said to Hissar. "And for the very simple reason that as we passed along the banks of the stream at Kankhal, some miles down the river, we found the body of a young woman. This may have been your daughter, or one of the other women."

"Alas! sahib!" moaned Hissar, looking very miserable, and trying to suppress the tone of anxiety that he very obviously felt. "And her bangles, her rings, what have you done with those?"

"There were none on her, so far as I remember," said the Englishman.

Hissar looked incredulous, and wondered how he could best get a confession out of his guest, for the sorrow he had exhibited and felt was more for his lost jewels than for his unhappy daughter, whose love of pomp and display had resulted in her habitually wearing ornaments of considerable value.

"There were none on the body, I'm certain of that," continued the Englishman after a long pause, between the puffs of his pipe; "but," another pause, "I think I can get them back for you, or, if not, at least tell you where they have probably gone."

With this more or less reassuring piece of news Hissar became more calm, although he was convinced that the Englishman had appropriated the valuables for his own use, and, therefore, resolved to question the carriers who had come with him.

First of all, the Englishman instructed him to cause the rumour to be spread through the village that nothing more was to be feared from the pool, which he had rendered perfectly harmless, and that the women might bathe with perfect ease in that particular spot if they wished, and that they would be able to secure the luring armlet if it ever appeared again, a statement that produced a calm on the troubled spirits of the ignorant and superstitious Hindoos.

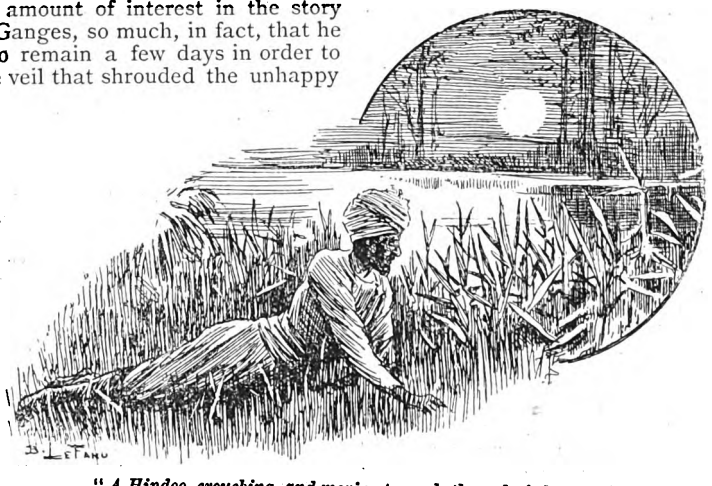
All next day the Englishman found shelter from the sweltering heat in the comfortable quarters assigned to him by Hissar, and arranged and rearranged his plans, all founded on a conclusion at which he arrived by basing his arguments on a terribly frail piece of evidence.

The news that they might bathe in safety and freedom from danger filled the villagers with gratitude towards the sahib, and, as twilight approached, they prepared to take advantage of the opportunity.

Shouting, laughing, playfully splashing one another, a bevy of girls romped in the warm waters of the river near the spot which had proved so fatal to the three unfortunate women who had lost their lives there; and the last rays of the setting sun, shooting across the stream, glinted on a bright bangle attached to a mango branch floating placidly in mid-stream. But although the water flowed gently along, rippling against the pebbly shores, the branch with the bangle did not move!

One young girl, with more confidence in the power of the Englishman than her friends, waded out towards it, hesitated a moment within a few yards, and then pressing forwards, grasped it in her hands, while at the same time a groan rose from the opposite bank followed by a shout, and, looking across she saw the light suit and white pith helmet of the Englishman.

"It was the fact that the twig had appeared on three occasions without floating down the stream that aroused my suspicions as to the truth," said the Englishman that evening as he related his experiences to Hissar. "I knew that there must have been some trick about the thing, and the fact that the body we found was stripped of its valuables, led me to suppose that there was more likelihood of there being a connection between the two circumstances, than that they had been removed by some wandering native on the banks of the river at the place where we found it.



"A Hindoo, crouching, and moving towards the end of the rope."

"I went across to-night half-a-mile down the stream in a boat I borrowed unknown, and I got opposite the spot which has been so fatal to your people. I went there noiselessly, and watched from behind a mango tree, and saw a weighted rope tied to a stake leading into the water.

"The women came into the water, and one of them, as I had wished, made her way towards the branch which I saw floating in mid-stream. I heard a rustling close to my left side, and there appeared the figure of a man, a Hindoo, crouching, and moving towards the end of the rope. The girl came closer and closer to the bait, and the man laid his hand on the rope, gripping it and making ready to pull.

"Then I stepped out and knocked him on the head.

"I made an examination of the rope afterwards, and found that it was weighted, and had a noose at one end, which was evidently laid during the night on the bed of the stream under the branch on which hung the bangle, so that as the women grasped the object, the fellow pulled the rope, which tightened round their ankles, and drew them under water.

"It was a very clever idea, and he must have made a good thing out of the gold bangles, but, no doubt, you will get them back, for he has probably buried them somewhere."

POSTAL RATES.

SHORT STORIES will be sent direct from these offices, post free, to any country within the Postal Union, at the following rates, prepaid:—

One Year	6s. 6d.
Half Year	3s. 3d.
Three Months	1s. 8d.

Printed and Published by C. ARTHUR PEARSON, at "Pearson's Weekly" Buildings, Henrietta Street, London, W.C.

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THE JOHN NOBLE HALF-GUINEA COSTUMES 10/6

NEW FASHIONABLE SHAPE FOR SPRING, 1894.

A complete revolution in the cost of garments for Ladies' wear, being supplied **Direct from the Manufacturer to the Wearer** by means of the Parcel Post, at **less than half ordinary prices.**

Almost every paper in the United Kingdom has bestowed unlimited praise on these remarkable Costumes, which are made from **The John Noble Cheviot Serge** (Regd.), **a fabric of great durability and world-wide fame,** and supplied complete, as illustration, for the ridiculously low price of 10/6 each. Packed in Box and sent carriage paid for 9d. extra. *Colours: Navy, Brown, Grenat, Myrtle, Reseda, Black, or the fashionable shade of Tan.*

THIS SKETCH illustrates the latest improvements that have been made in the Ladies' Half-Guinea Costume, which now consists of the Wide Bell Skirt and improved Blouse Bodice. It is well made throughout, no slop work whatever being allowed. The Bodice is pleated back and front, has full fashionable sleeves, bound seams, and belt; the saddle and sleeves are well lined, and it can be worn inside or outside the skirt, which measures 40 ins. long. The lower part of the skirt, and the cuffs, collar, and saddle of bodice are trimmed with rows of narrow Black Russia Braid, the whole thus forming one of the neatest and most serviceable costumes ever introduced for Ladies' wear.

The sizes kept in stock will fit any figure up to 38 inches round the bust under arms. Larger or special sizes made to order at a cost of 1s. 6d. extra.

☞ *Don't make any mistake. John Noble's price,* 10/6, *is not for the mere Dress Length, but for the Complete Costume made up and ready for immediate use.*

JOHN NOBLE, Ltd., The Warehouse, 11, Piccadilly, MANCHESTER.

A Real Boon to Ladies.

TO LADIES
Especially to those who wish to know of a safe, certain, and speedy remedy for all irregularities and obstructions, a remedy which, under the most trying circumstances and in the most difficult and
OBSTINATE CASES,
NEVER FAILS TO AFFORD
RELIEF,
GENERALLY IN A FEW HOURS.
No case hopeless, failure is simply impossible, as Mrs. Snow, of Denmark Hill, Camberwell, writes:—
"By adopting your treatment my anxiety and misery was over within twenty-four hours, although I had been daily taking pills and other things in vain. Half the quantity you sent proved effective, to my intense joy and surprise.
A sworn guarantee is enclosed with all testimonials and medicine, which is inexpensive, as one bottle at 4s. 6d. (by post, 4s. 9d.) is usually sufficient for any case.
Full particulars will be gladly forwarded to any lady on receipt of addressed envelope.
Write privately to—
Mrs. S. S. S.,
145, STOCKWELL ROAD,
LONDON, S.W.

TOWLE'S PENNYROYAL & STEEL PILLS FOR FEMALES.

QUICKLY CORRECT ALL IRREGULARITIES, REMOVE ALL OBSTRUCTIONS and RELIEVE the distressing SYMPTOMS so prevalent with the sex. Boxes 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. (the latter size contains three times the quantity), of all Chemists, or will be sent anywhere on receipt of 15 or 34 stamps, by the maker,
E. T. TOWLE, Chemist, NOTTINGHAM.
Beware of Imitations injurious and worthless.

HAIR REMOVED

permanently, root and branch, without injury to the skin. Particulars on receipt of stamped directed envelope.
G. S. COLLINS, Imperial Mansions, Oxford Street, London, W.C.

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Prices, £4 to £30. Easy Terms from 10s. per Month. Large cash Discount. Cycles bought, sold, and exchanged. Tuition Free in our London and Liverpool Schools. Non-purchasers, perfect riding, 10s.6d.
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MUCH BETTER THAN STEEL AND PENNYROYAL.

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Please mention this paper.

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The most powerful and effective on earth.

For the most obstinate cases. Will not injure the most delicate. Price 7s. 6d. (Strongest, 11s. per bottle); post free, 6d. extra. HERBAL INSTITUTE, 1a, Hackney Road (opposite Shoreditch Church), London, N.E. Send at once stamped directed envelope for particulars and proofs. I will forfeit £100 for every testimonial that is not genuine, and they can be seen at any time.

To Tobacconists Commencing.

£20

See Illus. Guide. 259 pp. 3d. "How to open a Cigar Stores from £20 to £1,000." "TOBACCONISTS' Co.," 186, Euston Road, London. Manager — H. Myers. Estab. 1866. *N.B.*—Shopfitters and Show Case Makers for all trades. ESTIMATES FREE.

NEW HARRISON SWIFT GOLD MEDAL KNITTER

Knits STOCKINGS (ribbed or plain) GLOVES and CLOTHING in WOOL, SILK, or COTTON. INSTRUCTIONS FREE. Lists 2d. per post. TRIUMPHANT AWARD at PARIS. The only WINNER in the WORLD of 4 GOLD MEDALS and 22 other Honours.
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Works: 48, Upper Brook St., Manchester.

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ECZEMA

OR A SKIN DISEASE OF ANY KIND,
1/6 invested at your Chemist or Store in a bottle of "Anteczema" will at once prove to you how easily and pleasantly it can be cured.
Valuable Book on the Skin free, from
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Mr. COLLINS [who was 30 years a member of the Royal College of Surgeons of England], will forward free of Charge, full PARTICULARS of a REMEDY, which during an extensive practice both at home and in the Colonies, he has never known to fail in the most OBSTINATE CASES of OBSTRUCTION and IRREGULARITIES. Send addressed envelope for full particulars, and waste no more time and money on useless Pills and so-called Remedies, &c., which, in the majority of cases, are nothing but PURGATIVES, and cause SICKNESS, PROSTRATION, and PAIN, without having the desired effect.
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D. COLLINS,
GOTHIC HOUSE, 9, ERSKINE STREET, LIVERPOOL.

BALDNESS CURED in all its forms.

Send stamped addressed envelope for Testimonials, Press Criticism, and valuable Pamphlet, containing Chapters on Baldness, Loss of Hair, Greyness, Superfluous Hair, &c., with Advice Form for Treatment, to Dr. HORN, Hair Specialist, Newport, Isle of Wight.

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26 GUINEAS (Net Cash Price).

This Piano is confidently recommended as the very best instrument ever produced at the money. For beauty and resonance of sound, for delicacy and brilliancy of touch, for exquisite modulation and the perfection of workmanship it cannot be excelled. It has all the latest improvements, including entire Iron Frame (suspended), Harmonic Bar, Best Check Action, Double Covered Machine Hammers, Bushed Keys, &c., Marqueterie or Chased Gilt Embossed Panels and Gilded Bracket Trusses. Supplied in Walnut, Rosewood, or Ebonised, and the net cash price is 26 Guineas. Inspection and trial is invited.

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Gives Life Assurance at Rates slightly above actual cost—that is, at less than half the usual charges of Life Assurance Companies. The Premiums are based upon "The Combined Experience Table," which was prepared by a Committee of Eminent Actuaries from the Experience of Seventeen British Life Offices. This Table of EXAMPLES gives the Cost for £400; the Average Premiums of Insurance Companies; the RATES of the I.O.F.; and the SAVING EFFECTED BY JOINING THE ORDER.

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	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
21	3 1 6	8 1 4	3 12 0	4 9 4
25	3 4 10	8 16 4	3 16 0	5 0 4
30	3 10 4	10 0 4	4 0 0	6 0 4
35	3 17 6	11 9 4	4 12 0	6 17 4
40	4 6 4	13 6 4	5 0 0	8 6 4
45	5 1 10	15 13 8	6 0 0	9 13 8
49	6 12 10	18 3 4	7 16 0	10 7 4

The full sum assured is payable at death. All premium-paying of ordinary members in the I.O.F. ceases at 70 years of age, when one-tenth of the amount assured is paid to them annually, the unexhausted balance being payable at death. The entrance fees are very moderate, a £100 policy costing 17s.; £200, £1 16s. 6d.; £400, £2 3s.; 600, £2 9s. 6d.; £800, £2 16s.; and £1,000, £3 5s. Court Dues (10s. to 12s. per annum) have to be paid by each member.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 296.—Vol. XI. FOR WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 1, 1894. [Price One Penny.

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For the BREAKFAST, LUNCHEON, TEA, and SUPPER TABLE.

Of all Grocers, &c.; or send 7½d. or 1/3 for Sample Jar to Maker—

PLUMTREE, SOUTHPORT.

It is not claimed that these Camomile Pills will cure all diseases, but they have 100 YEARS' REPUTATION for being UNEQUALLED and, indeed, UNAPPROACHED as a remedy for

NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS

INDIGESTION BILIOUSNESS LIVER COMPLAINTS
SICK HEADACHE DYSPEPSIA A Splendid Tonic and Gentle Aperient.

MILD IN OPERATION, PERFECTLY SAFE, AND FREE FROM INJURIOUS DRUGS.

Sold in Bottles at 1/1½, 2/9, and 11/- each, by all Medicine Vendors throughout the World.

Ask for "NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS," and do not be persuaded to purchase an imitation.

Prepared by NORTON'S LIMITED, 21, Spital Square, London, E.

BEETHAM'S
WORLD FAMED
CORN & BUNION PLASTER

Boxes, 1s. 1½d., of all Chemists, or post-free, for 14 stamps from the Proprietors,
M. BEETHAM & SON, Chemists,
CHELTENHAM.

IS THE BEST REMEDY EVER DISCOVERED.

It acts like magic in relieving all pain and throbbing, and soon cures the most obstinate corns & bunions. It is especially useful for reducing enlarged Great Toe Joints, which so spoil the symmetry of otherwise beautiful feet. **Thousands have been cured, some of whom had suffered for fifty years without being able to get relief from any other remedy.** (It is a thin plaster, and takes up no room in the boot.) A trial of a Box is earnestly solicited, as immediate relief is sure.

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IT IS A STARTLING FACT

that **Three Half-Crowns (7/6)** will purchase a beautiful **SERGE DRESS LENGTH** in any of the following colours:—Black, Blue, Brown, Green, Claret, Nut Brown, Chestnut, Mulberry, Ruby, Red, Moss, Olive, Myrtle, Bronze, &c., also several very pretty and effective mixtures.

Full Dress Length (Carriage Paid) FOR **7/6**

Money returned if not approved.

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PREVENTS COLDS AND CHILLS

BOVRIL

THE BEST AND CHEAPEST STOCK FOR SOUP.

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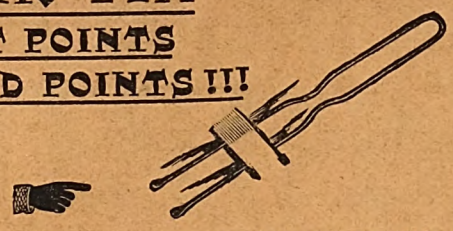
A HAIR PIN
WITHOUT POINTS
HAS GOOD POINTS !!!
SEE THE POINT ?



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CAN'T SCRATCH THE HEAD, AND WON'T FALL OUT.

THEY COST YOU EXACTLY SAME PRICE AS OLD SORT.

EACH STORE AND WAREHOUSE KNOWS ALL ABOUT THEM.

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26 GUINEAS (*Net Cash Price*).

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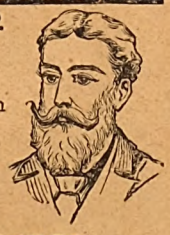
Sufferers from Deafness, Noises, or Discharges in the Ears should obtain this work, or consult E. J. S. by letter or personally. Hours, Monday and Tuesday, 11 to 4 other days 11 to 12 only. Wonderful cases:—A person cured after 40 years' deafness, and one of the age of 90. A gentleman after 17 years' deafness cured. A remarkable case of a lady at Grimsby substantiated by a Clergyman. Addresses on application. All communications as above.

FOR YOUTHFUL APPEARANCE. BEAUTIFUL HAIR

BRODIE'S IMPERIAL HAIR DYES, &c.

(REGISTERED) ONE LIQUID

No. 1 Black
No. 2 Dark Brown
No. 3 Light Brown
No. 4 Golden Brown or Auburn
No. 5 Pure Golden
No. 6 Brodie's Hair Grower and Restorer



Harmless, Perfect, Permanent and Odourless. Clear, no Sediment.

2/6, 3/6, 5/- & 10/6 (SECRETLY PACKED).

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Prices, £4 to £30. Easy Terms from 10s. per Month. Large cash Discount. Cycles bought, sold, and exchanged. Tuition Free in our London and Liverpool Schools. Non-purchasers, perfect riding, 10s.6d. **BRITISH CYCLE MANUFACTURING CO.** LIVERPOOL: 45 EVERTON ROAD. LONDON: 42 HIGH STREET, CAMDEN TOWN, N.W.

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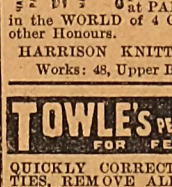
NEW HARRISON SWIFT GOLD MEDAL

KNITTER



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TOWLE'S PENNYROYAL & STEEL PILLS FOR FEMALES.

QUICKLY CORRECT ALL IRREGULARITIES, REMOVE ALL OBSTRUCTIONS and RELIEVE the distressing SYMPTOMS so prevalent with the sex. Boxes 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. (the latter size contains three times the quantity), of all Chemists, or will be sent anywhere on receipt of 15 or 34 stamps, by the maker,

E. T. TOWLE, Chemist, NOTTINGHAM.

Beware of Imitations injurious and worthless.

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LA MARGUERITE. FASTEST STEAMER in the WORLD.

BOULOGNE and BACK DAILY (Tuesdays excepted), for 10s. 6d. (3rd. rail and fore cabin); 3rd. rail and saloon, 12s. 6d.

Returns available three days, or for season for 2s. excess.

PARIS AND BACK, SATURDAY to MONDAY, for 21s.

Other Days, 26s. return. Return Tickets available third day of issue. Special Train when the numbers warrant it.

MARGATE and BACK, DAILY (Tuesdays excepted).

SIX HOURS ASHORE AT MARGATE for 5s. 6d. by LA MARGUERITE.

From Fenchurch-street Station for Tilbury, weekdays, 8.33 and 8.38; and Sundays, 8.45 and 8.55 a.m.

All passengers disembark at Tilbury on return journey, and travel by train to Fenchurch Street, arriving about 9.50 p.m.

Passengers may obtain tickets beforehand for rail and boat at 33, King William-Street.

Cook's Hotel Coupon Tickets for all places.

MARGATE, RAMSGATE, and Back, by ROYAL SOVEREIGN, DAILY, at 9.30 a.m. (except Fridays, on which day La Marguerite will run as usual from Tilbury), from OLD SWAN PIER (London Bridge), calling at S. Woolwich and Tilbury. Train Fenchurch Street Station 10.28 a.m. in connection. Tender steamer Greenwich 9.25 a.m., Blackwall 9.35 a.m. Margate Passengers can return by La Marguerite, but if they hold London Bridge tickets they must exchange same at Purser's Office on ship for rail tickets, and pay 6d., third-class train.

GLEN ROSA will leave RAMSGATE at 11.0 a.m. NEXT SATURDAY and the following Saturday for Margate, Tilbury, Woolwich, Blackwall, Greenwich, and London.

YARMOUTH and LOWESTOFT by Palace Steamer VICTORIA, from Harwich DAILY (Fridays excepted), at 3.0 p.m., in connection with the Koh-i-Noor, from Old Swan Pier, at 9.10 a.m. Return tickets available for season except as above.

Offices—33, KING WILLIAM STREET, LONDON BRIDGE, E.C.

VICTORIA STEAMERS.—SEASON CLOSES END of SEPTEMBER or BEGINNING of OCTOBER. Weather and other circumstances permitting.

CLACTON, HARWICH, and BACK in the Day. YARMOUTH, Lowestoft, Ipswich, and Felixstowe. DAILY (Fridays excepted), when the Lord of the Isles will run to Clacton, by KOH-I-NOOR, from Old Swan Pier at 9.10 a.m., calling at Woolwich (South) and Tilbury. Tender Steamer from Greenwich 9.25, and Blackwall 9.35 a.m. Special Train from Fenchurch-street Station at 9.45 and 10.15 a.m., to meet the Koh-i-Noor at Tilbury.

SALOON STEAMER LORD OF THE ISLES, from OLD SWAN, calling at Greenwich, Blackwall, and S. Woolwich MONDAYS, WEDNESDAYS, and THURSDAYS, for ROSHERVILLE, GRAVESEND, SOUTHEND, and SHEERNESS, at 11 a.m. FRIDAYS, CLACTON, SOUTHEND, ROSHERVILLE, and GRAVESEND, at 9.10 a.m.

SATURDAYS, HUSBANDS' BOAT to MARGATE, and BACK, at 1.30 p.m. Train, Fenchurch-street Station 2.54 p.m., in connection.

SUNDAYS, ROUND NORE LIGHT, ROSHERVILLE, and GRAVESEND, at 2.45 p.m.

ROSHERVILLE GARDENS and GRAVESEND DAILY (Fridays excepted) by MERMAID, 10.0 a.m. and 3.0 p.m, from OLD SWAN PIER, calling at Greenwich, Blackwall, and Woolwich

GRAVESEND REGATTA and ILLUMINATED FETE NEXT WEDNESDAY.

KOH-I-NOOR 9.10 a.m., ROYAL SOVEREIGN 9.30 a.m., as above; MERMAID, 10.0 a.m. and 6.0 p.m.; SALOON STEAMER, 3.0 p.m.; KAISER, 5.0; DUKE OF CAMBRIDGE, 5.15; H. M. STANLEY, 5.30; SHAW, 5.45. All the above vessels will be brilliantly illuminated, and take part in the firework display. Fares: same as usual to Rosherville and Gravesend. Return tickets, including admission to Terrace Pier and Grounds, 2s. 6d. and 3s.

HAMPTON COURT, RICHMOND, or KINGSTON, from OLD SWAN PIER at 10.0 a.m. DAILY by CARDINAL WOLSEY, calling at all piers.

KEW GARDENS, GREENWICH and BATTERSEA PARKS frequently.

Cheap Through Tickets to and from Stations on District Railway.

Offices—VICTORIA HOUSE, LAURENCE POUNTNEY LANE, E.C.

A Real Boon to Ladies.

TO Especially to those who wish to know of a safe, certain, and speedy remedy for all irregularities and obstructions, a remedy which, under the most trying circumstances and in the most difficult and OBSTINATE CASES, NEVER FAILS TO AFFORD RELIEF, GENERALLY IN A FEW HOURS. LADIES

No case hopeless, failure is simply impossible, as Mrs. Snow, of Denmark Hill, Camberwell, writes:—

"By adopting your treatment my anxiety and misery was over within twenty-four hours, although I had been daily taking pills and other things in vain. Half the quantity you sent proved effective, to my intense joy and surprise.

A sworn guarantee is enclosed with all testimonials and medicine, which is inexpensive, as one bottle at 4s. 6d. (by post, 4s. 9d.) is usually sufficient for any case.

Full particulars will be gladly forwarded to any lady on receipt of addressed envelope.

Write privately to—
Mrs. P. S. S.,
145, STOCKWELL ROAD,
LONDON, S.W.

MADAME FRAIN'S FAMOUS MIXTURE.

The most powerful and effective on earth.

For the most obstinate cases. Will not injure the most delicate. Price 7s. 6d. (Strongest, 11s. per bottle); post free, 6d. extra. HERBAL INSTITUTE, 1a, Hackney Road (opposite Shoreditch Church), London, N.E. Send at once stamped directed envelope for particulars and proofs. I will forfeit £100 for every testimonial that is not genuine, and they can be seen at any time.

MUCH BETTER THAN STEEL AND PENNYROYAL.

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THOMAS OTTEY, Chemist, Burton-on-Trent.
Please mention this paper.

If you have

ECZEMA

OR A SKIN DISEASE OF ANY KIND, 1/6 invested at your Chemist or Store in a bottle of "Anteczema" will at once prove to you how easily and pleasantly it can be cured.

Valuable Book on the Skin free, from
THE ANTECZEMA COMPANY,
83, CASTLE ROAD, LONDON, N.W.

A BOON TO LADIES

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Mr. COLLINS (who was 30 years a member of the Royal College of Surgeons of England), will forward free of Charge, full PARTICULARS of a REMEDY, which during an extensive practice both at home and in the Colonies, he has never known to fail in the most OBSTINATE CASES of OBSTRUCTION and IRREGULARITIES. Send addressed envelope for full particulars, and waste no more time and money on useless Pills and so-called Remedies, &c., which, in the majority of cases, are nothing but PURGATIVES, and cause SICKNESS, PROSTRATION, and PAIN, without having the desired effect.

Letters to be addressed—

D. COLLINS,
GOTHIC HOUSE, 9, ERSKINE STREET, LIVERPOOL.

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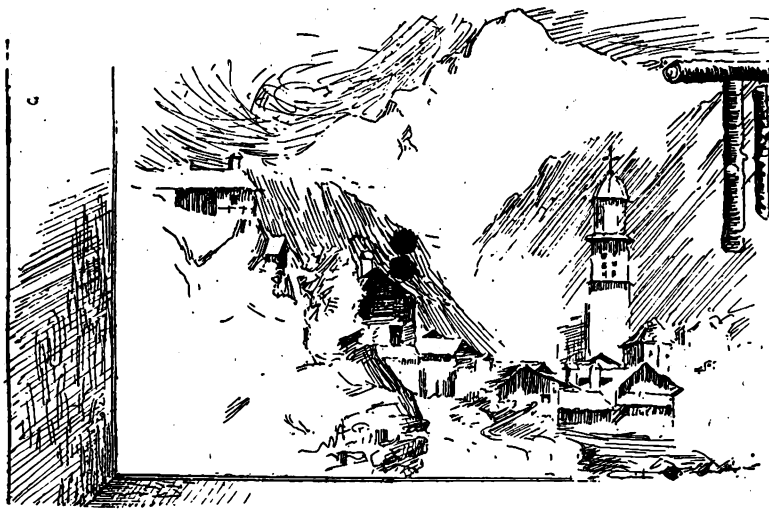
SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 296.—Vol. XI. *FOR THE WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 1, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.



The Final Shot.

PART I.

WE were in garrison at the little town of Marska. You know what the daily life of an officer of a line regiment is; in the morning a company drill and riding; in the afternoon dinner with the commandant or in a Jewish restaurant; in the evening cards and punch—that is the daily routine. In Marska there was not a single family who kept open house, not one marriageable young lady. We passed our time in quarters, and only saw men in uniform.

One civilian, to be sure, was among us. He might have been thirty-five years of age, and yet we looked upon him as an old man. His remarkable attainments assured for him great respect in our eyes; besides, his habitual silence, his haughty nature, and his keen, sarcastic speech, exercised a great influence over our youthful imaginations. His past was surrounded by a certain mysterious vagueness. He appeared to be a Russian, and yet he bore a foreign name.

He had formerly served with the Huzzars, and been fortunate in promotion. No one knew why he had left the service and taken up his abode in that wretched village, where he lived frugally, yet was free with his money. He always went on foot, and invariably wore an old black great coat.

Nevertheless, his house was always open to the officers of our regiment. To be sure, his dinners consisted of only two or three dishes, prepared by an old pensioner-soldier; but there was always plenty of the best wine. No one knew anything of his circumstances, or of his source of income. He possessed some books, principally upon military subjects, and a few novels, which he gladly lent us. He never demanded their return, and, on the other hand, never gave back those which he himself borrowed.

His chief occupation was shooting with the pistol. The walls of his room were honeycombed with bullet holes. A splendid collection of pistols was almost the only thing of value the poor hut in which he lived contained beside the books. His skill with this weapon was truly incredible; and, had he asked it, I believe no one of us would have hesitated a moment in letting him shoot an apple from his head.

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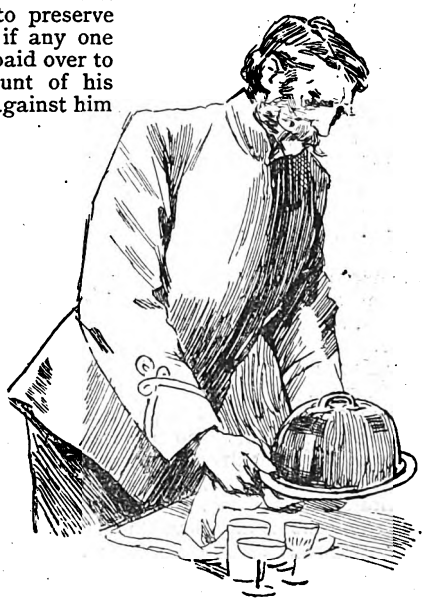
Sometimes the conversation turned upon duelling, and in this case Silvio—so we will call him—inevitably became silent, and gave only the briefest replies to questions put to him. It was evident that the subject was unpleasant to him. We concluded that the recollection of some victim of his deadly skill troubled him.

An unexpected occurrence astonished us all greatly.

One day ten officers of our regiment were at Silvio's house. After dinner, at which, as usual, we drank a great deal of wine, the cards were brought out. Silvio acted as banker. It was his custom at cards to preserve perfect silence, and if any one made a mistake he paid over to the banker the amount of his bet or it was entered against him on the board. This took place without a word. But on this occasion there was a young officer in the party, who had just entered our regiment.



Prepared by an old pensioner soldier.

In play he accidentally made a mistake, which threw him out of the game. Silvio took the chalk and noted the amount as usual. The officer thought an error had been made, and said so. Silvio went on with his dealing in silence. The officer lost his patience and angrily wiped out the score. Silvio

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calmly wrote it over again. Then, incensed beyond measure by the supposed insult and the laughter of his fellow-officers, the man snatched up a candlestick and hurled it at Silvio, who quickly threw his head on one side and let it pass. Then he rose to his feet, white with rage, and, turning his gleaming eyes on the young officer, said:

"Sir, leave this house at once, and thank God that this has happened under my roof."

None of us doubted the consequences of this occurrence, and we already looked upon our new comrade as a dead man. But the next day as we met in the messroom and wondered if the lieutenant were still alive, he came in himself. He had received no message from Silvio. We were astonished. So several days passed.

It appeared that Silvio did not intend to challenge the lieutenant. A superficial explanation was made, and peace again established. Such a course of action at once lowered him in the estimation of the younger officers, but, as the weeks passed, the event was almost forgotten, and Silvio again enjoyed his old influence and respect. But for myself I could not become reconciled.

On Tuesdays and Fridays, the regiment office was filled with officers, collected to receive their letters. Silvio's letters were put in the post bag of our regiment, so that he usually came in on post days. One day a letter was handed him, which he hurriedly tore open. His eyes sparkled while he ran it over.

"Gentlemen," said Silvio, "important business compels me to depart at once; I leave to-night. I hope you will not refuse to dine with me this evening for the last time." He turned to me and added, "I count upon your presence."

It was late when we rose from the table that night, for the wine had flowed more freely than ever. As the guests departed one by one, we bade Silvio good-bye. When I stepped up to shake hands he said to me in a low voice:

"I want to say a few words to you."

I remained behind after the others had departed. We sat down opposite each other, and began to smoke in silence. Silvio appeared troubled. His pale face, his gleaming eyes, and the clouds of smoke which surrounded him, gave him a truly demoniac appearance. Several moments passed, then he broke the silence:

"Perhaps we will never see each other again, and before I go I wish to correct the false opinion you have of me. You thought it strange that I did not demand satisfaction from that drunken lieutenant. You will admit that his life was in my power. If, however, I could have punished him for his insolence without endangering my own life, I would have done so."

I looked at him in astonishment. Such a confession was dumfounding.

"Unhappily I had not the right to place myself in danger. Six years ago a man insulted me, and he still lives.

"Yes, I challenged him," Silvio continued, answering my probable question, "and here is a memento of the duel."

He took down a little red gold-striped cap, in which, about an inch above the vizor, was a bullet hole.

"You are aware that I was with the Huzzars at Stanow. You know my character. I am accustomed to be at the head of everything, and in my younger days this was a passion with me. Duels were of daily occurrence in our regiment, and I had a hand in many, either as principal or second. My comrades adored me, and the heads of my regiment regarded me as an unavoidable evil.

"Just at that time a young man of rich, aristocratic family joined us. Never in my life have I seen such a fellow, so richly endowed by fate and nature. He was young, handsome, witty, jovial, of good name, and had plenty of money. You can imagine that my supremacy received a shock. At first, dazzled by my reputation, he sought to make friends with me. But I was very cool to him, and he turned away without the least apparent regret at my reception. I began to hate him.

"His success in the regiment and with the ladies drove me to desperation. I tried to find some occasion for strife, but his wit turned my assaults of words into laughter. Finally, at a ball on a Polish county estate, where he charmed even the hostess, who, I thought, was partial to me, I said some unsuitable words to him. He flared up in an instant and struck me. We were separated, and the same night set off for a place appointed for the meeting.

"I arrived just at day-break. My opponent came a little later, leisurely, on foot, in his shirt sleeves, and coolly eating cherries from his cap, which he had filled on the way.

"It was agreed that we should toss up for the first shot. With his usual good luck he won. He fired, and the bullet passed through my cap. At last his life was in my hands. I looked at him closely, to detect any signs of uneasiness in his face. No, he stood unconcernedly eating cherries from his cap, and throwing his stones toward me. Now and then they rolled almost to my feet. Then an evil thought came into my head. I lowered my pistol.

"'It appears,' I said, 'that at present you are not in a mood for dying. You prefer to breakfast. I will not disturb you.'

"'You are not disturbing me in the least,' he coolly replied; 'I beg of you to fire. Or, if it pleases you, the shot remains yours, and I am always at your service.'

"I told the seconds accordingly that I would reserve my shot, and so the meeting ended.

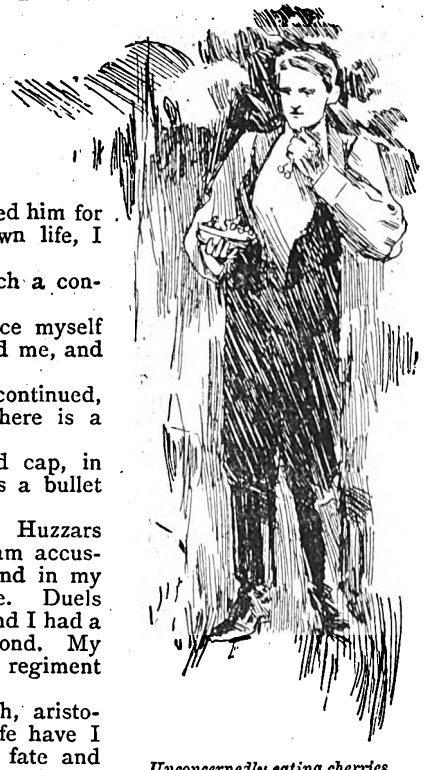
"I left the service, and came back here into the country. But no day has passed in which I have not thought of my revenge. Now my time has come."

Silvio drew from his pocket the letter he had received. It informed him that a certain person was about to marry a young and beautiful girl.

"I am going to Moscow," said Silvio. "We will see whether he will look death so coolly in the face before the wedding as he did then with his cherries."

With these words he rose, and throwing his cap on the floor, strode up and down the room like a tiger in his cage. Strange, opposing feelings overcame me as I watched him.

His servant came in and announced that the horses were ready, he pressed my hand warmly, then rushed out, jumped into the droschka, and in another minute was gone into the night.



Unconcernedly eating cherries from his cap.

PART II.

Several years passed, and circumstances compelled me to take up my abode in the regions of Stanow. I had but few neighbours, and, though busy with the superintendence of my estate, I led a rather lonely life.

About four versts away was the beautiful country seat of Countess Zaronski, which was in charge of her agent. But the spring following my arrival in the country I heard that the Countess and her husband were to pass the summer at their abode. The news was very welcome to me, and soon after their arrival I took the liberty, as the nearest neighbour and only other considerable landowner in that region, to call upon them.

A servant led me into the Count's reception-room, and went to announce my presence. The room was large, and furnished with all possible luxury. On the walls were cases well filled with books in elegant bindings, and rugs, bronzes, and

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pictures gave the place a comfortable and attractive appearance.

The door opened, and a handsome man of, perhaps, thirty-five entered. The Count received me in a most friendly and hearty manner, and, even before I could announce myself, welcomed me as a neighbour. His frank, easy manner soon banished the embarrassment I had at first felt. The Countess came in, and I was presented to her. She was, indeed, a beautiful woman, and in her presence I felt my first feeling of awkwardness and timidity returning. But they treated me so informally, so like an old acquaintance, that I felt once more reassured.

Meanwhile I looked at some of the books and pictures, and told them how welcome to my eyes were such things, for my house was but barely furnished, and a mansion had never been built on the place. One picture especially attracted my attention. It was a Swiss landscape, but it was not the painting itself that struck my eye, but rather the fact that right in the middle of the canvas were two bullet holes, one precisely above the other.

"A capital shot!" I remarked, turning to the Count.

"Yes," he said, "a very remarkable one. Do you care for shooting?"

"Well, I think I would not miss a card at thirty paces," I replied, glad a subject had been hit upon that was familiar to me. "Of course, with pistols you mean?"

"Really?" said the Countess, with a look of interest, and, turning to her husband, "And you, my dear, could you hit a card at that distance?"

"We will try it some day," answered the Count. "In my time I was not a bad shot, but I've not handled a pistol for four years."

"Well, in that case," I remarked, "I will venture that you will miss at twenty paces. Pistol shooting demands daily practice. I know that from experience. No, believe me, Count, a man must practice constantly or he becomes rusty. The best shot I ever knew never let a day pass without using his pistols—and generally took a few practice shots before each meal."

"And what sort of a marksman was he?" asked the Count.

"Well, for example, when he saw a fly on the wall he called out, 'Hullo, Knako, my pistols.' Knako brought him a loaded pistol. Piff, and the fly was smashed to bits."

"Remarkable skill," exclaimed the Count, "and what was his name?"

"Silvio, Count."

"Silvio," cried he, springing to his feet. "Did you know Silvio?"

"Know him! We were intimate friends. He was looked upon as one of our regiment. But I have not heard of him for five years. Then you, too, have known him?"

"Yes, I knew him—knew him well. Did he ever, perhaps, tell you of a strange occurrence——?"

"Do you mean of the blow a young fellow gave him at a ball——?"

"Did he tell you the name of this young fellow?"

"No—but, Count," I cried, suspecting the truth, "I beg your pardon—I did not know that you were the person."

"Yes, myself," answered the Count, somewhat confused. "The bullet holes in that picture painting are the mementoes of our last meeting."

"Please, dear," said the Countess, "don't speak of that. I shudder when I hear that story."

"No," answered the Count, "I must tell the gentleman all about it. It is but right that he should know how Silvio was avenged."

Mascha threw herself about my neck.

We sat down, and I listened with intense interest to the following narrative:—

"Five years ago we were married, and passed our honeymoon upon this estate. One evening, as we returned from a ride, I saw a travelling carriage at the door, and I was informed that a gentleman was waiting to see me. He had refused to give his name, and only said that he had business of importance to transact with me. I came to this reception-room and saw before me a man with dust-covered clothes and a long beard, standing by the chimney. I went up to him, but failed to recognise the features.

"'You do not know me, Count,' he said, with trembling voice.

"'Silvio,' I exclaimed, and I must confess that I felt my hair stand on end.

"'Yes, it is I,' he continued. 'I have one shot still to my credit and I have come to take it. Are you ready?'

"From a side pocket I saw the handle of a pistol protruding. I measured off twelve paces—the original distance—and stood in the corner over there. I begged him to shoot quickly, before my wife came in. He hesitated and demanded a light, as it was growing dark. Candles were brought. I closed the door and ordered that no one be admitted, and then again requested him to fire. He raised his pistol and aimed—I counted the seconds. I thought of her—a terrible moment passed—Silvio lowered his pistol.

"'I am sorry,' said he, 'but my pistol is not loaded with cherry stones—the ball is so heavy; but it occurs to me that this seems more like a murder than a duel. I am not accustomed to shooting unarmed men. We will begin again, and draw lots to see who shall shoot first.'

"My head swam—I believe I rejected the proposal—but finally a second pistol was loaded. We placed two pieces of paper in his cap—the one I had put a bullet through—and drew. I won a second time.

"'You have confounded good luck, Count,' said he with a smile which I shall never forget.

"I know not how it happened, nor through what means he compelled me to it, but I fired and hit this picture here."

The Count pointed to the landscape. His face was fiery red, but that of the Countess as white as a sheet.

"At any rate," continued the Count, "I shot, and missed, thank God! Then Silvio took aim (at that moment he looked almost like a fiend). Suddenly the door opened, and Mascha ran in and threw herself about my neck.

"Silvio let his pistol fall, and then raised it and took aim again.

"'No, I will not fire,' said Silvio. 'I am satisfied. I only wished to see you in pain and confusion. I compelled you to shoot at me. I am satisfied. You will remember me. I leave you alone with your conscience.'

"He took one step towards the door, but stopped at the threshold, cast one glance at the painting my ball had struck, and then fired at it almost without aiming, as he went out.

"My wife fainted. The servants did not dare to stop him, and looked after him in terror. He went down the steps, called to the coachman, and, before I could gain my presence of mind, was gone!"

The Count was silent.

So it was that I learned the end of a story, the beginning of which had greatly interested me. I have never seen the hero of it since. It is said that Silvio led a division of the revolutionists during the uprising of Alexander Ypsilenti, and fell at the battle of Shullein.

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MY NEIGHBOUR.

A FATIGUING journey up six long, winding flights of stairs carried me to the room I occupied in Lambert Street. Here I lived, in enjoyment of no end of fresh air, especially in winter, and a brilliant prospect up and down the street and over the roofs of the houses across the way.

I was studying painting at that time—learning to paint the landscapes and figure-pieces which I produce with so much ease and dispose of with so much difficulty.

At the head of the last flight of stairs in my lodging-house was a narrow passage-way, in which I was obliged to stop and recover my breath, after finishing the one hundred and thirty-nine steps that led to my paradise, before I could get my key into its lock; and into this passage-way open two doors, one of which, of course, belonged to my own room, and the other one to someone else's. But who this someone else was I was unable to find out. Was it a man or a woman? I was persuaded that it must be a woman, and as a woman I always used to think of her and speak of her to myself—and I thought and spoke of her often enough.

Of course I could have settled the question at once by knocking at her door and asking for a match, or by inquiring of my landlord, who occasionally honoured me with a friendly call; but I scorned resorting to such methods.

Every time I heard her door shut, I resolved she should not go out again without my seeing her, and I nearly fell into the street as I frantically attempted to reach far enough out of my window to see her as she came out of the street door.

The only communication I ever had with people in the house was an occasional conversation with the dust-coloured old woman who cleaned the windows and swept the halls.

A day came for cleaning my windows when it rained heavily, and I could not give the old woman a clear space by going out for a couple of hours, but told her to clean away and be as quick as she could, while I sat there and painted.

She had an eye for character, though, and told me the peculiarities of some of the lodgers, in a quaint way, nailing her sentences, now and then, with odd hard words, independently of the general text.

"Gentleman who's under you keeps 'imself quite to 'imself," she said. "Plants out queer herbs in boxes all the time, an' some of 'em on the balcony itself. P'r'aps 'e makes a kinder tea of 'em, or root-drink. Decoctifies."

"And who is in the room below that?" I inquired, more to make her talk than to satisfy any curiosity I had on the subject.

"Empty now. Two dark little gentlemen 'ad it for a fortnight—Jews, I fancy—an' as like one another as two spots o' dirt on this 'ere pane o' glass. Spoke a hard-biled kind o' tongue an' was furriners, most likely Polyanders."

I might have asked her about my next door neighbour, but refrained for fear my pretty romance would be destroyed by a description of a middle-aged spinster who wore glasses and wrought green roses in crewel-work.

When she had finished the windows and gathered up her cloths and pail, she paused an instant to give a backward glance at her completed task. The sun had broken through the clouds and rested tenderly on the stooping figure of the old woman in her faded rags.

"What a picture!" I thought involuntarily; then aloud I said, "Will you come some time and let me paint you, Maggie?"

"Me!" she cried, startled.

"Yes, just as you are now, cleaning rags and all. Will you come?" I cried, my enthusiasm rising.

"Law! Why d'ye want to paint an old woman like me, Mister Carroll, with a face wrinkled like a monkey's? Why don't you paint a pretty girl? Old women are painted though sometimes, but only to make 'emselves look young agen. Ha, ha!"

It was useless to argue the point with her, so I only said:

"Yes, but I want you, Maggie. Will you come?"

"Law, if you really wanter 'ave me, I'll come, sir, 'cause you've been very good to old Maggie."

The sittings began the next day, and I derived much amusement from the old woman's conversation, while I painted away, with might and main, resolved that this picture should be hung at the Academy; and my imagination even went so far as to speculate on the most suitable style of frame.

At first it was only of the other lodgers that old Maggie gossiped, but one day, when she was looking very tired, I questioned her kindly about herself, and she finally told me her story.

The old woman had evidently taken a great fancy to me, and I wish I could remember the quaint words in which she told me of her girlhood in London, and her courtship by a man, poor like herself, though much above her in station—a newspaper writer, she said he was.

"When we was first married, we took a little country 'ouse that made me think of a biled dinner, for 'twas painted in red, an' green, an' deep yeller—jest like that paint yer mixin' up now—carrotty. Then the baby came."

Her whole voice and manner changed, and during the rest of the story she dropped the abrupt witticisms for a tremulous eagerness.

"Did ye know I 'ad a son, Mister Carroll?"

"No," I answered, intent on my work; "where is he now?"

"E's a rich man, an' a gentleman," she said proudly, and yet with a wistfulness that made me glance quickly at her face.

"If I could only get that expression," I thought; and went to work with perfect frenzy on the face.

"How is it that you are not a fine lady then, Maggie?" I asked.

"That's what 'e'd make me—*me*, d'ye 'ear?—who's scrubbed floors for thirty years! But I'd only shame 'im, an' folks 'd say, 'Dear, dear, an' d'ye know 'is mother is a charwoman!' An' then 'e'd only be ashamed o' me. No, no, no, I couldn't stand that, an' I tol' 'im so."

There was an awkward pause, in which I could think of nothing to say to the poor thing, so glanced at her compassionately, and thoughtfully mixed some sepia on my palette.

"Ye see, sir, 'twas this way," Maggie went on, after a while. "After Joe died we 'ad nothin'—not a penny to buy bread, so I sent the boy to the 'ome for poor children an' began scrubbin' floors. It was 'ard to let Dick go, but I tried not to sorrer over it, for I knew I couldn't keep 'im. I didn't see 'im for quite a while then, not till 'e was five year, for they wouldn't let visitors in on Sunday, an' I was workin' all the other days.

"I went up there with my scrubbin' things, an' 'e didn't know me, sir! 'E ran away an' 'id when I tried to kiss 'im. Well, after that, I went up whenever I could get away after my work was done at night, though I was awful tired, an' 'e got kinder uster me, an' liked to build tents by puttin' up my broom an' mops, an' wrappin' my shawl round 'em. 'E uster call my mop 'Doctor,' 'cause 'e said the end was like Doctor Dick's whiskers. Doctor Dick was the regular doctor at the 'ome, an' 'e'd took a fancy to my little Dick.

"One day, I was washin' windows in an office in Turner Street, an' in walks Doctor Dick. Well, we 'ad a talk, an' the end of it was 'e took my Dick to fetch up for 'is son. 'E was a nice, kind gentleman, an' I knew he thought a sight o' Dick, but it was 'ard for me, for I 'ad to promise not to see Dick after 'e left the 'ome. But I'd no money to fetch 'im up on, an' Doctor Dick 'd make a gentleman out of 'im, an' I couldn't stand in the boy's way; 'e'd soon forget me, though it nearly killed me when I thought of it.

"That must a-been near thirty year ago, but somethin' hurts 'ere," touching her heart, "when I think of the day I said good-bye."

There was another pause, in which I painted furiously.

"What day's to-day? The thirteenth, isn't it? Well, 'twas just five years ago that Dick found me out, an' I was still scrubbin'. I didn't seem to 'ave no 'art to get anything better to do after I let Dick go. What was the use?

"Doctor Dick was dead, an' 'ad left my Dick lots o' money an' a letter that told 'im about me; so 'e'd come to look me up an' take me to live with 'im. 'E was good, but awful cold an' still-like, an' wore kid gloves, an' finer close nor Joe ever 'ad. But I ought not 'er say that, for 'e allers is very good to me, jest as if I was a lady; but you see 'e was different, an' I never could love 'im like little Dick.

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"So I told 'im 'e must leave me where I was, for I couldn't be 'appy in a big 'ouse with fine close, an' would only shame 'im before folks—an old woman like me. I was too old to change. I'd scrubbed all my life, an' was goin' to scrub to the end. 'An',' said I, 'ye musn't come to see me on week-days when I'm workin' either, 'cause 'twouldn't do no good, an' folks 'd only wonder.'

"'E got a little angry at that, but I fancy he was glad at bottom. I said 'e could come on Sundays, an' we'd spend that day together if 'e wanted to.

"So now 'e comes every Sunday, an' takes me to church, an' I rig out in the fine shawl an' bunnit an' things 'e keeps givin' me, and try to be like a great rich lady.

"It's hard sometimes to think 'e's really my boy, for 'e don't talk like me or seem to belong to me somehow; but I s'pose it's all right, and 'e's a real fine gentleman is Dick," she finished, with pride, which poorly concealed the aching mother-heart beneath.

"Poor Maggie," I said softly, under my breath.

"Why do you say that?" she cried, almost fiercely, "I ain't sorry 'bout anything, an' Dick's as good to me as 'e can be. Mighty few women's got such a son!"

After that we neither spoke till the clock struck six, and I stepped back to view my work.

It was truly the best thing I had ever done, and another hour's work would have finished it, but the light was going fast, so I began to put away my paints and brushes, and Maggie gathered up her things to leave.

"I wish there was something I could do for you," said I, as I slipped a coin into the old woman's hard palm. I felt more sympathetic now that my work was done, and her story seemed more to me than when I was wondering whether to use grey or brown for her faded eyes.

Her face brightened at the words.

"Sometime," she faltered slowly, "if you could paint Dick—jest a little thing for me——"

"Gladly," I answered, "but when and where can I see him?"

"Why, 'e——" she stopped. "Sometime, p'haps, you'll see my Dick, an' I 'ope you'll like 'im. I should like to 'ave you know my son, Mister Carroll. Good-night, sir."

And she was gone.

I had just got back from dinner, when there was a knock at my door, and Doctor Davis came in unceremoniously. I was used to having him drop in about that time in the day, and rather enjoyed a chat with my gentlemanly landlord, for, though outwardly grave, almost to sadness, he displayed at times a grim humour that was vastly entertaining, and he was, moreover, a man of education and refined tastes. He rarely spoke of himself and kept his cloak of reserve well buttoned up to his chin—sometimes I even thought he turned the collar up to ward off all personal questions. But I knew him to be a physician with a limited practice, and a fine house in G——— Street, besides the row of lodging-houses from 115 to 121, West Lambert Street.

"How are you, Davis?" I said, without changing my position.

"As well as this beastly weather permits anyone to be," he replied, taking the only vacant chair. "The fog is so thick outside you could drill holes in it and blast it with gunpowder."

But his attention was attracted just then to my easel.

"What's this?" he cried, and moved the lamp to get a better view.

I had my back to him; so after a long silence, I wheeled around to say, rather impatiently I fear, as I did not understand his hesitation:

"Well, how do you like it?"

"It's truly fine, Carroll. I never dreamed you would do anything like this. Why, my dear fellow, your reputation will be made."

I felt very much gratified, for Davis was something of a critic and his opinion worth having, but it wouldn't be manly for me to show my pleasure, so I only said indifferently:

"You think it will go, then?"

"Go! Now, look here, Carroll, I want this. Name your own price, but I must have it."

"You've seen Maggie, of course, haven't you—the old woman who cleans the halls here?"

"Yes, often," he answered slowly.

"Do you think it is like her?"

"Very like—and yet older and sadder-looking someway. Don't you think so?"

"No. She looked just like that to-day. She's to pose again to-morrow, for, as you see, it's not quite done yet. This hand needs touching, and the dress should be worked up a little more."

"Yes; but I wouldn't touch it, if I were you. It's just perfect now, and you might do too much, you know."

"Nonsense," I said, rather vexed at his tone.

"I must go along now," he said, buttoning up his coat. "I've some business in the next house—119."

I noticed for the first time that he looked ill, and tried to make him take some brandy before he went out, but he seemed in a hurry and couldn't stop.

"Good-bye," he said, "and remember the picture is mine." It was a hot, clammy night, and after Davis left I threw the windows open as far as they were made to be thrown, and got as far out of one of them as I safely could, by tilting my chair back, and extending my legs out into that undefined everywhere called the wide, wide world.

So Davis had bought my picture and I was to name the price. Well, he was a rich man, I thought complacently, and my price grew in size the longer I thought about it. It did not occur to me that a receipted bill for three months rent, due last week, might be justly considered as a part payment. I would make the sum large enough to cover my expenses to Paris and back next summer; and then——

I was startled by hearing the door to the next room shut gently. I had not indulged in many dreams of my fair neighbour lately; in fact, my new interest in art had locked the door on my curiosity, and someway now I cared little about finding the key.

I nearly jumped out of my chair, however, when I heard a distinct groan from the next room; and, as I sprang to my feet, there was the sound of a heavy fall. I rushed into the hall. This was no time for knocking, and I swiftly turned the handle of the door which had so baffled me in my desire to know more of the occupant of the room behind it.

The room was totally dark.

"What's the matter? Can I be of any assistance?" I called, peering into the blackness.

The room was larger than mine, and handsomely furnished, evidently by a person of taste, I had time to think to myself before my eyes fell on a dark figure lying, face downwards, on the floor beside the table.

I quickly put the lamp down, lifted her gently on to the bed, and bent over her to see if she were conscious.

To my surprise it was old Maggie, and she was quite, quite dead!

I was so stunned that I could not think for a minute. Then I went out, closed the door softly and reverently, and ran downstairs.

So this was my neighbour, and I never knew!

On the second floor I met one of the housemaids carrying a lamp, which I took out of her hands.

"Go quickly," said I, "to 119, and tell Doctor Davis that Maggie is dead."

The girl looked frightened, but obeyed without a word.

Then I suddenly thought of her son—Dick, she called him. He must know. I was about to go in search of someone else, when I met Davis on the landing in the dimly-lighted hall.

"Davis," said I, "we must send for her son. Do you know where he lives?"

I could see even in the semi-darkness that his face was working convulsively, but, without answering, he strode on to Maggie's room, I following.

Two of the maids were in the room now, one of them weeping noisily, for Maggie had been kind to her last winter when she was ill.

But Davis did not notice them. He went quickly over to the bed, dropped on his knees by its side, and taking the poor, stiff, wrinkled hands in his, he covered them with kisses.

When he rose and turned toward me, I saw the great tears rolling down his face.

"Carroll," he said gently, "leave us together. Her son is here."

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THE SHATTERED IDOL.

NELLY'S father was firm on that point.

"No," he said deliberately, "she is yet too young to even listen to a suggestion of marriage, Gordon; and, high as you undoubtedly stand in my estimation, I assure you it would be exceedingly bad policy on my part if I were to give my consent to your immediate union. The girl is only eighteen, and at that age it is not to be expected that her judgment and discretion should be mature, more especially where the passions of the heart are concerned.

"I do not for one moment doubt the absolute sincerity of your affection; but, at the same time, you must remember that you are the only man she has ever loved, simply because you are the only man with whom she has had an opportunity of becoming at all intimate.

"It is well to allow her to have ample opportunities for making a fresh choice in other directions if she is so inclined. During the next couple of years I promise you she shall have a chance of doing this; and if, at the end of that time, her disposition towards you is the same as it is now, then you shall have her, my lad, with my blessing."

Stared hard across the water.

Gordon gently tapped the floor of the hotel verandah with his foot and stared hard across the water at the white roofs of St. Kilda, that fringed the shore of Port Phillip Bay. The elder man, a bronzed type of an Australian sheep farmer, lay back in an easy-chair, and regarded the suitor for his daughter's hand with an expression of commingled pity and affection.

He was fond of Gordon; he would have chosen him among a hundred others as a son-in-law; but he was a wise father, and his daughter's ultimate happiness was at stake and turned upon his words. His arguments, to himself, were reasonable and well-chosen, but to Gordon, madly in love as he was with Nelly, they seemed absurd and unnecessary. Still, he knew that there was not one grain of ill-feeling in the motives that actuated Mr. Anson's refusal, and when the first flush of bitterness that rose unbidden to his compressed lips had died away, he held out his hand and, swallowing his disappointment, said that he was content to abide by his future father-in-law's decision.

"I can't possibly stay in Melbourne, though," he said, huskily, "unless I make myself perfectly objectionable to any fellows you want to get Nelly to know. I don't want to have a bad name in the city, and I know that if I remain here Nelly won't find many opportunities of making fresh male acquaintances. So I shall go up country for a few months at a time, and come and see you and dear little Nell when I am in the city. In two years from now, then, I may have her, mayn't I?"

Mr. Anson nodded solemnly, and Gordon went away.

That evening he sat with Nelly on the verandah, and told her what had passed at the interview, and at what decision her father had arrived.

"How absurd," she said, petulantly tossing her head. "How very absurd of father. But I suppose it is useless to argue with him. I really fail to see that his course of action is at all necessary in my case, because," her voice fell to a soft whisper as she bent closer to him, "you know, you dear old boy, how much you are to me."

Gordon pressed her hand affectionately. An elopement and clandestine marriage suggested itself to his mind for a moment as he looked on the little girl by his side and thought of the two long years that would have to elapse before he might call her his own. But his sturdy Scotch nature drowned the thought, and with a big sigh he answered:

"I know, dear. And I also know that my little Nelly will come out of the ordeal which her father has mapped out for her absolutely immaculate, and with an augmented love for the man who, even now, has a right to call her his own."

A week afterwards he had gone up country.

. . . . . .

Less than a year later, Gordon lay panting in the gloom of the North of Queensland bush. For three days no moisture had touched his lips, now blackened and disfigured beyond all semblance of those which had once pressed kisses on the mouth of Nelly Anson. For three days he had struggled on, now under the fierce glare of the unmerciful Australian sun, now ill-sheltered by the shade of the tall gums.

A couple of months' tramping had led him into the camp of a gang of bushrangers, to whom he fell an easy prey. They were brutal, insulting fellows, the whole lot of them, with never so much as the common feelings of respect towards themselves or towards others with whom they came in contact. He had got a large amount of hard cash and notes about his person at the time, and they took care of it for him.

Not only that, they made known to him their intention of keeping him a captive until they found an opportunity of making more money out of him. They sent a note from him to the nearest white squatter demanding a goodly sum as a ransom, which, on his release, he would pay with interest; and, when the messenger came back with their money, they put it in their belts and moved on to the next station, repeating the operation.

He was perfectly helpless in their hands—they took good care of that. He had made several attempts to escape, but each one had proved futile. They kept him in good health, and already he had lost his ears and three fingers of the left hand by refusing to indite further supplications for ransoms, and he was further once tortured for attempting to smuggle a line begging for aid and revealing their true motives on a slip of paper wrapped up in the fraudulent message.

At the end of a few months, however, he became of no further use to them on account of the fact that the trick had been played on all the squatters within a reasonable radius with unqualified success, and his presence among them became a constant source of anxiety. Dead men tell no tales, and it would be all the better for their personal safety if he told none. A breach in their opinions, resulting from a few of the more sensible of the ruffians not wanting the blood of a fellow-creature wittingly on their hands, led to his being turned adrift

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in the bush, unarmed, unprovided with food, and, to their certain knowledge, with no water hole within a radius of twenty miles.

The knowledge that he was at length free aroused the deepest emotions of his heart, and, childlike, he ran and laughed at the very conviction of it.

Three days later he was a helpless, dying unit of humanity, lying beneath the shadow of a eucalyptus, and on the verge of insanity and of the grave.

The quivering vapour rises from the undergrowth where the burning rays of the sun pierce the mass of foliage above. The heat is stifling. The air is thick, like that of a large oven, and indrawn breath scorches the lungs. Everything is silent as the vault, not even the welcome rustle of a dead leaf or the chirp of a lazy insect can be heard.

Gordon is half lying, half sitting, with his back propped against the smooth trunk of the tree that rises fifty feet above his head. His head droops forward on his chest, and reason is slowly ebbing from his mind.

His arms are covered with lacerations from which he has drawn his life's blood to ameliorate the fearful pangs of thirst that have tormented him for so long. This constant draining of his life has rendered his hands and face a sickly yellow, and the repulsiveness of his countenance is enhanced by the tortures he has undergone.

But there is vitality in his frame yet, for, with an effort, he reaches for a sharp stone and inflicts a deep gash on the back of his hand which he presses to his swollen lips. His eyes gleam wildly as he sucks at the wound, and then he drops his hand.

With the other arm he feebly draws a tattered photograph from his belt, pressing it to his bloodstained lips, and kissing it as he had done a thousand times since he left her away back in the hotel at Melbourne.

In a bewildered manner, he wonders how long she will survive him if he never goes back; *if*, that is, for an unreasoning instinct tells him that, before the sun has set, help will come to him and he will be saved.

A strange emotion cheers him as he has never been cheered for months past, and he strains his blunted sense of hearing for some sound that shall bring the glad tidings of release from this misery.

When this assistance comes, he will recover, and then he will make his way joyfully back to his darling, and claim her as his own, after these years of agonising waiting. They will, after that, never part again; and her father will regret the time when he ordained that their union should be postponed.

Round the nucleus of his affection, which had been formed in Melbourne, has grown a powerful, undying, passionate love, augmented by an unwilling and involuntary absence.

He gazes wistfully at the picture for a short time, and then the overpowering heat, combined with the open wound in his hand, causes him to drop it, and he instinctively pushes it in his belt, as he rolls over in a faint.

When the parched lids slowly uncover his glassy eyes, he sees men about him and feels a cool moisture trickling down his throat. It is almost dark, and these good fellows who are tending him are on their way to a station not ten miles off. They lift him tenderly on one of their horses, and, as he proceeds, the cool night air, in combination with the frequent small draughts of water carefully administered, revive him so that he can talk to them at times reasonably.

He tells them about those three days of agony, and then wanders off, in an almost inaudible whisper, on to the subject of the little girl in Melbourne, who so patiently awaits his return, and he asks them if he may not go back to that city at once. They soothe him with vain promises, and then he comes back to his senses, and wants to know if they will let him head a party to hunt down the men in whose hands he has been helpless for so long.

When they come up to the station he is insensible with the exertion, and they place him in a comfortable bed and administer to his wants. One of them stays by the bedside all night. He is the owner of the station, a young man with a kind, honest face, and whose eyes are moist as he listens to the mutterings and meaningless talk of the sufferer.

At daybreak Gordon opens his eyes. His face is flushed and his head throbs and burns. The stranger is still at his side, and talks kindly to him, smoothing his forehead and moistening his lips with brandy and water. Then, when he is quieter, he sees the man go out of the room, and shortly after a girl comes in.

He does not see her until she is close by his side, and when he turns his pain-drawn face towards her he cries, in a weak voice:

"Nelly! My darling!"

She looks sorrowfully at him—she cannot understand. There is no resemblance between this pale, sickly looking man and anyone she has known sufficiently intimately to warrant their addressing her by her maiden name.

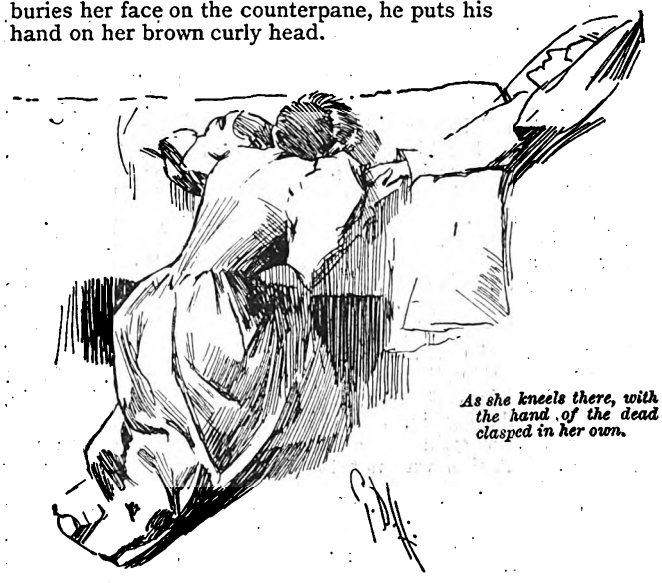
She takes his yellow hand in hers and smooths it softly, and as she does so he covers hers with his other fingers.

"I knew that I should see you again, Nelly," he whispers, a faint smile playing about his lips. "I knew that God would never ordain that—we—should—part for—ever." His breath comes in gasps now.

Still her contracted brows indicate her continued perplexity, as to who he is. Why should he call her Nelly?

"The two years are gone—dear; you—are my little—girl now."

She bends forward eagerly and looks into his face. Her cheeks are very white. Then she knows. But he does not, thank God. As she falls on her knees by the bedside and buries her face on the counterpane, he puts his hand on her brown curly head.



As she kneels there, with the hand of the dead clasped in her own.

"You are so—so glad to see me—back that you—cry?"

There is a glad ring in his weak, broken voice.

She nods her head almost imperceptibly.

"We will—get married as—as soon as I am able to get—up."

A heavy sob breaks from her in reply.

After a long pause he opens his eyes slowly.

"Nelly—darling little girl—do you—remember—that night—when we parted—you said that—you—would write me—by every mail. They took me—and I never got—your letters—dear—that is why—I did not write. I—was——"

The struggle to explain his seeming negligence of her faithfulness has sapped what little breath remained in his frame, and he closes his eyes in sheer exhaustion.

His lips move, and she reaches to hear the sounds that escape from them.

"Kiss me—darling—before—I go to sleep. I—am weary. To-morrow——"

She presses a passionate kiss on that poor contorted mouth, and then, as he falls into the long, deep sleep which knows no waking, she sinks on her knees and sobs as though her heart would burst.

And as she kneels there, with the hand of the dead clasped in her own, her husband comes into the room.

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MY FIANCÉE.

I HAD been telegraphic operator at "B Station" some six or eight months, and had held communication of a purely business character only with the operator at "D," when there came a change. Death silently removed the man who had been in charge there for so long, and a new operator was installed.

A message spun along the line one February morning in this wise: "Good morning, B."

I responded:

"Good morning, D."

Then came the information: "The old man died last night, and I have taken his place."

"What is your name?" I asked.

"Nellie Merton. What is yours?"

A spirit of devilry prompted my reply: "Ned Clayborn."

"Thank you," was the concise response. Then a message in real earnest came along the lines, and we were obliged to attend to business.

Every day I bade my unseen acquaintance, "Good morning," and never closed up at night without a farewell message. A twinge of conscience racked me at times, and a "still, small voice" whispered its warning; but the temptation was too great, and it was not long before I was sending sly messages, containing a good deal "atween the lines," to the unseen Nellie. The replies to these messages were guarded, but hopeful, and I grew bolder. It was no end of fun.

She told me her history. She had run away from home, because her parents insisted upon marrying her to a man she *detested* (and the last word came clicking viciously from my end of the line). She would never marry him—*never*. I advised her not to, and hinted at an affection deeper and truer than any the presuming "detested fellow" could offer.

Well, the outcome of it all was that I asked the unseen Nellie to be my wife, and even described the little home that was lonesomely awaiting her coming. I was floundering in deep water, and could but trust to a kind providence to pull me out. My "fun" was becoming dead earnest. How I wished the wires stretching between us were telephonic, instead of telegraphic, that I could perchance hear some exclamation, or gain some token of how my message was received. But this was not to be, and I had to possess my soul in patience.

That virtue was almost exhausted, when the well known call fell upon my ear. I flew to the instrument. It was concise, and not very complimentary: "Rather than marry that brute, I will risk it."

I was in for it now, and must perforce flounder still deeper by sending rapturous messages over the wires. I, Delia Brown, was engaged to be married to a young lady I had never seen. This was forcing the question of woman's rights.

I carried the "fun" on for over three months, and every day it grew decidedly less "funny," until I began to brood over the predicament into which I had giddily led my feet. The time was rapidly approaching when I would have to claim the bride I had won in this novel and romantic manner, and my blood ran cold at the thought of how easy it would be for her to learn of my perfidy, and from all I had seen of her temper, I felt sure she would not deal lightly with anyone who dared to play tricks upon her.

At last I could bear it no longer, and one day, just three weeks before I was to travel to "D" and claim my bride, I got into the train with altogether another motive. It was to "kiss and make up," after I had begged her with tears to forgive me, etc., etc.

I found a little house, with a little sign in blue and white swinging in the breeze, similar to the little house and the little sign at "B." It was occupied at the time by a young man reading a paper. I looked at him, without speaking, and he returned the compliment in kind.

"I wish to see Miss Nellie Merton," I said, and, as he did not speak, I went on to explain. "I am the operator at 'B,' and have an important message, which must be delivered to her at once. A moment's delay means——" I paused for a word, and he spoke for the first time.

"So you are the operator at 'B,' and desire to see Miss Merton? I am sorry to disappoint you; but you see Miss Merton is at home at the present time, while I take her place. The fact is, she is going to be married, and is preparing for the great event. She cannot be seen personally, but if you will entrust the message to me, I will deliver it immediately, if you will be kind enough to take my place while I run round to her house."

His coolness nearly distracted me.

"I *must* see her!" I exclaimed excitedly.

"But you cannot," he said coolly. "I have strict orders not to let anyone know her whereabouts for a day or two, until these preparations are well under way."

I was on the verge of tears, and, with a choke in my voice, I cried out, sinking into a chair, and holding up my hands deprecatingly:

"Don't say another word! You will set me wild. If you will not tell me where to find Nellie," I went on, in desperation, "will you please tell her this? I have been a bad, wicked girl, and—and—and—there is no such person as Ned Clayborn. It started in fun, and—and—and—please let me go to her. She will understand me so much better than you can explain it."

"No such person as Ned Clayborn! My dear young lady, I must beg leave to differ with you. That is the name of the young man who, in three short weeks, is to marry Miss Merton. Surely he is not dead?" he added in consternation.

"Oh, will you not understand? It was all a joke at first. I thought it would be great fun, and so I—well, I am Ned Clayborn, and after a time we became engaged—all in *fun*, too" (here I laughed hysterically); "I tried to stop, but I was so wicked I could not, and now poor Nellie will break her heart, and—and—and——" and I broke down and began to cry in a miserable way.

Unlike most men, my companion was not in the least disconcerted at the sight of my tears, but simply laughed, loud and long.

Presently the laughter ceased; then I heard uneasy movements in the chair occupied by my companion; then he got up and paced about restlessly. Pretty soon a light touch fell upon my arm, and his voice, very gentle and kind, said: "Nellie is here to receive your confession and forgiveness." I dried my eyes and looked up, but saw no one but the tall young man, who was looking at me very earnestly.

"Where is she?" I asked, ready to cry again.

"Here," he said, holding out his hand. Instinctively I put mine into it, and it closed over it firmly.

"I also have a confession to make," he said earnestly. "I thought you were another young fellow like myself, and, wishing to relieve the tedium of these long, monotonous days, struck up a flirtation. I intended some day to meet the young man and have it out with him, when you came with your strange confession. In short," he ended abruptly, "I am Nellie Merton. And you are Ned Clayborn? Come, dry your eyes, Ned; your Nellie is not heartbroken at the turn of affairs."

After staring at him in silent amazement for the space of five seconds, the truth of the whole matter began to dawn upon my confused brain. My face grew hot with indignation. I snatched my hand from his and sprang to my feet.

"You are a contemptible fellow!" I cried. He did not reply, but stood looking down at me from his superior height.

"It was a hundred times meaner in you, because your object was a *woman*. I will never forgive you, if I live to be a thousand."

"Isn't that rather paradoxical, considering the fact that you

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thought I was a woman, and *you* were enacting the rôle of the sterner sex?" he asked.

"You might have known," I answered severely.

"But I did not," he said.

"Here is my train," I said shortly.

"Good-bye," he replied, assisting me on to the train, despite my independence, and lifting his hat as it pulled out.

I travelled back to "B" a sadder but a wiser woman.

"You are a fool," said I to reflection in the little mirror as I removed my hat.

A year rolled by. I had entirely recovered from my chagrin, and buried in the darkest chamber of my memory was every thought of the tall young operator at "D Station."

One morning I was arranging and copying some night-messages, when a long shadow fell across my papers. A glance upward told me who it was. The door of that secret and darkened chamber of my memory flew open, and I knew that the tall young man at "D Station" was not as yet quite consigned to oblivion. Standing with hat in hand, and without any preface of any kind, he said:

"Over a year ago you asked me to marry you, and I consented. I have come to-day to ask, Will you come? Or shall I enter suit for breach of promise?"

What could I do? And, after all, perhaps he would not have made me a better husband had I met him in the old, conventional way, and waited for him to propose to *me*.

A SAILOR OF THE "SARACEN."

My life as a cabin boy on board of the *Saracen* was a hard one. The *Saracen* was a fine steam-packet of the early days, which carried the mail between Liverpool and New York. She took first and second cabin passengers, emigrants, and a general cargo. It was my first experience as a sailor, and I confess that it did not come up to my expectations. A sailor's life had figured in my imagination as one of the greatest independence.

I found it more like slavery than anything else. Every one seemed to take the greatest pleasure in abusing me and making my life miserable generally. I was kicked and ordered about from morning until night. Every menial service that could be thought of I was made to do. I was thoroughly disheartened and discouraged before many days, for there was not one person in the whole ship who gave me a kind word or look. My greatest tormentor was the second mate, a man named Douglas. He was a good sailor, but by nature he was a brute and a bully.

One of the crew was a man named Savage, who was a big, broad, powerful fellow, with an honest, upright face that attracted everybody who met him. Somehow he took a fancy to me, and, after that, nobody but the second mate ever abused me, and by dint of caution I managed to avoid him very successfully.

We had an ordinary, uneventful passage until we arrived off the Grand Banks, where we ran into a dense fog, and the weather became colder. The fog was so thick that it seemed as though we were sailing in the clouds, and the moisture dropped from aloft like rain. Every noise had an uncanny sound, and the whistle, which was blown frequently, as a warning of our approach, sounded as though it came from half-a-dozen different places at once.

A restless and oppressive feeling seemed to fill the air, and the passengers and crew paced silently up and down the decks, pausing every now and then, as if they had heard some strange sound. They seldom spoke to each other, and when they did it was always in whispers, and with cautious glances over their shoulders. Why we should have been so affected is more than I can explain.

I was standing on deck, and Savage was passing me, when he stopped and said, "I think there are bergs around. Don't you feel it getting colder?"

I had felt it, and was asking him questions about bergs, when the look-outs both cried, "*Starboard, sir! Ice ahead!*"

Before the ship could answer her helm, I saw an immense shape of white, towering high above us, and the next minute we crashed into a solid mass of ice, which looked like a mountain. The shock was terrific, and dislodged a huge fragment, which fell, crashing through our decks, and we heard the rush of the water, as the vessel began to fill and sink with incredible rapidity.

As soon as they could collect themselves, everyone rushed to the boats. Savage and I managed to crowd into the second cutter. She was soon lowered away, and we shoved off, and lay to a little distance from the ship. We were packed so tightly that it was next to impossible to even turn round, and the gunwales were barely awash. I found that Mr. Douglas had charge of the boat, and my heart sank with fear.

We saw two other boats get away before the *Saracen*, throwing her stern high into the air, and amidst a great rush of water, sank from our sight. One of the other boats was caught in the vortex and swamped, throwing the occupants into the water. The suction drew our boat in amongst them. Those who could grasped our gunwales, and endeavoured to climb aboard; but Mr. Douglas drove them back with blows from the tiller, and, cursing us for our clumsiness, bade us get out the oars.

The boat was so greatly crowded that this was difficult to accomplish, but after a good deal of trouble we managed to ship them, and had already taken a stroke when the gunwale was grasped by a woman holding a child in her arms. Mr. Douglas, with an oath, hit her with the tiller, but although she groaned from the pain she still hung on with a grip like death. He raised the tiller to hit her again, when Savage stood up from his oar, saying, "Hold on, sir; she can have my place," and without another word he slid overboard, and had shoved the woman in among us before we had recovered from our astonishment.

As he swam away I called to him to come back, but he only turned and waved his hand, and while we were gazing after him he disappeared in the fog.

The sea remained calm, and the next morning we were picked up by the bark *Mohasset*, and landed in Philadelphia.

Savage was never heard of again. He must have perished, but he died a hero, and, like many others who have performed the noblest deeds that man can do, he is utterly unknown.

In the next issue of *Short Stories* a thrilling serial story entitled "The Outlaws of the Air," by George Griffith, Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," and "The Syren of the Skies," will be commenced. Many novel features will be introduced, and the story will be profusely illustrated by E. S. Hope.

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A RACE FOR LIFE.

In some countries—even in many of the Southern States of America—convicted criminals are not kept confined in prisons, but are either employed on public works or "farmed out" to contractors, who employ them in digging canals, building railways, or other such enterprises requiring manual labour.

The system has certain advantages and many disadvantages. There is always a likelihood that the prisoners will escape in spite of the vigilance of guards who have constantly to watch them while at their work.

In conversation with a veteran engine-driver a few days since, on the various perils to which an engine-driver's life is exposed, he related a thrilling incident of his stay on the other side of the Atlantic a few years ago, which I will attempt to reproduce.

"The most dangerous run I ever made was down the Blue Ridge, where the railway crosses the mountain at a grade of 1 in 26. Throughout the long ascent up the Ridge it winds about the mountain sides in spiral curves, often quite sharp, and actually in one place passes the same point three times at different elevations as it works upwards.

"Near the top is the famous 'mud-cutting,' which has so puzzled all the railway engineers. Soft mud is being continually forced up by the pressure of the strata on each side, so that a 'ballast train' and gang of labourers are constantly required to keep the way clear. For this service the company has for some time employed State convicts.

"I was at this time in charge of the 'bank' engine, which assists the train to climb the heavy mountain grade, and on the eventful day I had pushed up the morning mineral train as usual, and gone into a siding to allow the early passenger train to pass on its way to Ashville.

"From this elevated situation a wide view is opened out down the mountains, and already the smoke from the passenger engine could be seen in the distance as it slowly ascended the spiral grades up the side of the main ridge.

"Meanwhile the ballast train, with its gang of men, was still on the main line, and the convicts were busily engaged in throwing the soft mud upon the waggons. The engine-driver had for some cause left his post for a few minutes, when one of the convicts, unobserved by the guards, stealthily withdrew the coupling pin behind the tender. The fireman was near the cylinders, oiling the bearings.

"Seizing his chance, the convict suddenly sprang upon the engine from the opposite side, and before either of the guards realised what was happening he had pulled the throttle valve wide open. In an instant the engine was moving off rapidly under full head of steam.

"The fireman's shout was the first intimation that anything was really wrong. The guards realised it when too late. Bang! bang! went the rifles all round, but the bullets were too tardy for the desperate rogue. He ducked nimbly down behind the tender, and the balls rattled harmlessly against the sides of the engine.

"Had they hit or killed the reckless fugitive the condition of affairs would hardly have been improved, for the locomotive was puffing away and rattling down the mountain side towards the approaching train. Evidently the convict intended to jump off when at a safe distance, and escape during the confusion of the wreck. The heavy ballast-engine would naturally crash into the other train like a cannon-ball.

"The officials and guards stood staring after the receding engine as though paralysed.

"What, indeed, could they do? Then the thought flashed to my mind. Could I give chase with my own engine and catch the runaway?

"It was the only chance to save the passenger train from the horrors of a collision, and, desperate as the chance looked, it must be taken instantly.

"'Open the points!' I shouted, as I threw the lever over.

"As my engine came up, one of the guards scrambled on beside me, and my stoker jumped on as we dashed past.

"In a moment we were out on the main line, and gathering headway under full pressure of steam.

"But the ballast-engine had the start, and was the heavier of the two engines, though mine had higher wheels. On this latter circumstance alone rested my chance of overtaking the ballast-engine, and it seemed a doubtful chance at best. It is a reckless business to give an engine full steam on a down grade. But all depended on the first few minutes, and I bade Henry, my fireman, shovel in coal with all his might.

"In half a minute we were going at thirty miles an hour, which rapidly increased to fifty, then sixty.

"The rocky crags and ledges beside the line flew behind us in streaks, and the trees below seemed blended into a confused patch of green as we were hurried towards them.

"Instinctively I closed the throttle-valve, for no engine could carry steam down such a grade and live. Ahead was a sharp curve. We swayed round it like lightning, and then caught sight of the forward engine, still a long way ahead. But we were gaining—I could see we were lessening the distance. Could we overtake it in time? The passenger train could hardly be more than three or four miles away.

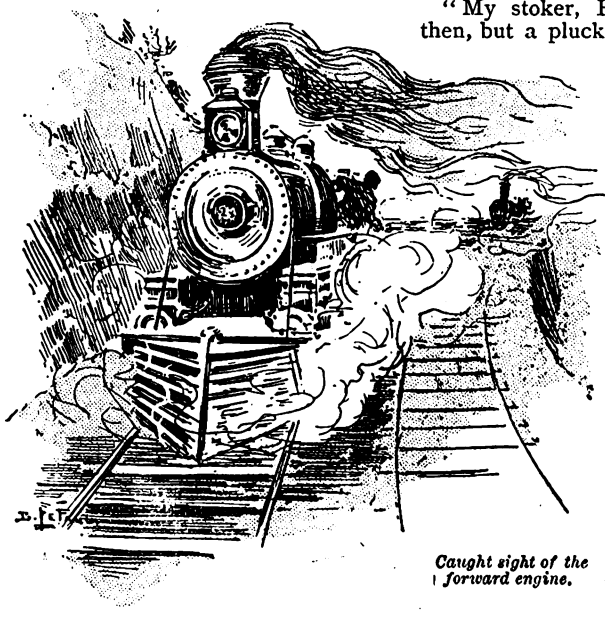
"Catching sight of us bearing down upon him, I saw the convict run out of the tender and look about as if trying to see a smooth spot to jump upon; but the engine had acquired such a terrific speed that he was evidently afraid to leap.

"'Point your rifle at him and call him to stop!' I shouted to the guard; but the guard, terrified at the rate we were running, dropped his carbine on the coal heap, and was crouching and holding on with all his might, the most abject picture of fear I ever saw.

"My stoker, Henry, was a mere slip of a boy then, but a pluckier lad never opened a fire door. Bidding him hold the lever, I caught the rifle, and getting on the tender, pointed the weapon at the scoundrel on the ballast-engine, motioning to him at the same time to reverse the lever. Evidently misunderstanding my meaning, or frightened by the terrific speed, he jumped off the tender the moment he saw the rifle, and was instantly hurled headlong over the ledges—down the steep mountain side. I caught a glimpse of him, whirling head over heels, as we passed by.

"He had left his engine running free, and I now knew that I must myself stop it, if it was to be stopped at all.

"We were gaining upon it but slowly, and I scarcely dared to give my engine more steam. I could not tell how far down the passenger train was. If our high wheels would but keep the track!



Caught sight of the forward engine.

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"The engine careered from side to side as we darted round the sharp curves. Every moment I expected to feel it plunge into the gorge below, and there was no hope that the low-wheeled ballast-engine would leave the rails. I must catch it, or the passengers would be lost. Several times I opened my whistle, hoping the passenger-engine driver might possibly hear me. The trouble was that owing to the curves the latter could not see us at all, and the rattle and roar of his own train would most probably prevent his hearing.

"'Give it her, Henry!' I shouted, for I knew now that what we did must be done inside another minute and a half; and in my desperation I determined that if there must be a collision, it should be in an effort to overtake the runaway. The locomotive now scarcely touched the rails as she bounded forward under the fresh pressure of steam.

"We were now within thirty yards of the ballast, and we could catch up to it in half a minute more if my engine could keep the rails.

"At this point a rocky cliff rose on one side of the line, and on the other the steep mountain dropped abruptly into a gorge hundreds of feet below.

"Looking down across the ravine, we seemed to be literally flying in mid-air.

"Meanwhile I had run forward ready to leap upon the ballast-engine the instant we came close enough. Then for an instant the runaway disappeared, as both engines plunged into a cloud bank that lay piled against the mountain side.

"For a moment or two nothing was visible. But for the roar of the wheels as they spun along the narrow shelf I should have thought we had jumped from the hill and were plunging down into the valley.

"When, a second later, we emerged from the fog, the tender of the ballast-engine was only a few feet before me. I dared wait no longer. Even now I fancied that I could hear the roar of the passenger train from below. Measuring the distance well with my eye, I stepped back, and straining every muscle for the dangerous leap sprang across the intervening space, caught upon the rear of the tender, hung for a moment, then, with might and main struggled to get aboard it—a feat that could not have been accomplished had not the engines had the same relative speed and motion.

The body of the convict was found on the rocks.

"Truly that was a spring for life! Not for my own life merely, but for many others on the coming train.

"Had the distance been a foot more I should have missed, and been instantly ground to pieces.

"It required but an instant now to scramble hurriedly over the coal, thrust back the lever, reverse, and open the sand boxes.

"Henry had at once done the same for our own engine.

"We had scarcely brought the two to a standstill when, puffing heavily round the next curve below, we saw the engine coming unconsciously on to a certain destruction had we not caught the runaway just as we did.

"It was an easy matter for the up-coming train to stop, and in half a minute more all three engines were moving quietly up hill. Very little was said, and to this day I suppose the passengers do not know why that abrupt halt was made on the mountain side, or how fearfully near they all were to death that forenoon.

"The body of the convict was found on the rocks, several hundred feet below, so mutilated that, but for the striped clothes, no one could have identified it."

THE MINER'S LOVE.

ROWDY! It was no word for it—too genteel by half. We were as wicked a set at our diggings as New South Wales could show—no slight thing. If the world's kettle had been set on the boil we'd have come to the top as prime scum—truth, mate.

But among us was a man dubbed "the squire," because, although he lived and dressed just as we did, there was that in him which stamped him as of a different breed. I never came upon his double before or since, and swells out of luck are plenty in Australia. Rumour went that he was an English baronet, but had been forced to cut and run; so he tried New South Wales and the gold diggings, bent on succeeding.

He did not live alone; his daughter was with him, though how and when she reached him no one knew. They lived in a small shanty in the midst of pines, far apart from the other huts, a queer frame for such a grand picture of a woman—a lady with a superior bearing visible in her father.

I'd walked that way with the squire once, and she ran out to meet him. The sight of her struck me all of a heap, so unexpected in a lonely spot where there was no other company than the birds, no sound but the wind in the trees. She was tall; the colour of wild roses in her cheek; heaven's blue in her eyes. Her dress was dark, and had none of the flashy ornaments that women such as we take up with cram on; her hair, coiled smooth about her head, shone like black satin.

"This is one of my—chums, my dear," said "the squire," with his soft voice and his hard smile.

Since then I had often hung about the log-house after work. I fetched water and sticks, and did such odd jobs as were not fit for her, saying no word; but she found me out in a brace of shakes, and was thankful for such help as I could give, knowing that I meant no harm, though I startled her at first—a great giant of a chap in my rough gear.

Once I came across her watching in the gloaming. How eerie it was under the trees: the wind soughed through the branches, bringing a dash of rain; a deluge was in the black clouds sweeping across the sky.

"I am anxious about my father," she said, and she looked like a tall white lily that had been shoved into the wrong spot, and touching my big, earth-stained fingers with her fine, slim hand, "I am always anxious about him, though, since knowing you I have not felt so absolutely distressed, for I am glad to recollect that you are within his call. You will stand between him and harm, I think."

"Why, yes, miss; make your mind easy on that score; 'twould be done with a will. But what harm is like to come that you need worry yourself?"

"Ned," she cried, stopping suddenly—her father always called me so—"I had such a curious dream last night. I dreamed that I went down into the valley beyond the wood,

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and there I saw my father lying upon the grass sound asleep —so sound that I could not wake him, while the clusters of wild flowers sprang up so high that they hid him, and I heard the pines in the distance chanting a solemn kind of litany. I was crying when I awoke."

"You are too much alone, miss, and grow nervous."

"My father has been very fortunate lately, has he not?" she asked.

"He has had some good finds, miss; and to-day he got hold of two jolly big nuggets."

"I am glad. Will he bring them home this evening? What's that?"

She sprang to the door, flinging it open, the shine of the lamp behind her.

"Dearest father," she cried, "is it you?"

But she broke off, alarm in her voice. "Ned! Ned!" for no father was there, but two of the worst of our lot—scamps for whom hemp was growing; the one a blackguard sailor, the other a smartish, slim chap, thin, dark, lying. His name was Phil Dawlish.

I remembered now, as I saw him by the flash of the light, that he, as well as I, had been near when "the squire" held up the two great nuggets; and it struck me—I'm quick at conclusions—that both scoundrels had not intended to come up to the house, but were just lurking about. What for?

Miss Helen—I only knew her by her Christian name—faced them steadily, though she had called me to her, and asked what they wanted.

"Why, nothin' in special, miss," stammered Dawlish, lifting his ragged straw hat with swell-mob politeness, and a leer that made me tingle to kick him; "only, is the old boss at home? I—I mean your pa, miss," he translated.

"No," she replied, nodding her head high, to show that she was not frightened, but I, being close to her, could hear her heart thudding like a hammer, while the blood flamed to her brows, under the foul gaze roving over her. "Why do you ask?"

"Just this, mum. Will you be so good as to tell him that me and my pal's off to Hulton's Ranch for a short spell, and if he'd like to tramp over—why, 'tis a mighty 'andsome part of the country, and he'd be welcome, that's all."

She shut the door upon them, drawing a stout bar across it.

"Are those the men he works with?" she cried, flinging up her hands. "Heaven help us!"

I was casting about for another job when she stopped me by asking if I would go and meet her father.

"But you——."

"Nay, I do not mind. The little house is secure. Why," with a wistful smile, "I am always alone from daybreak until dark."

I knew it was the fact; so, bidding her open to none until she heard me or "the squire," I started on my errand.

Not very far had I to go, for I met him in that same little ravine of which his daughter had dreamed; it skirted the pine woods. His pick was over his shoulder, his right hand in his pocket—feeling the nuggets, perhaps. He was singing a song in some foreign lingo, Italian or Spanish. He looked more content than I had seen him—more at rest, nodding to me in his patronising fashion.

After a few stray words, I related what had happened, advising him to be on his guard.

"Thanks, I will," he replied haughtily, much amused at the scamps asking him to pay a visit in their company. "But I've a secret to tell you, Ned," he added. "I have done with Green Valley Creek and shaken off its crew. Luck has favoured me beyond my hopes. I can afford to turn my back upon it. I shall take my daughter to Melbourne. I have thought of settling there."

As he spoke the little tie of comradeship between us was shattered; in a moment we were sundered as the poles, so quietly he brushed it away.

No rest was mine that night; evil was in the air. So, as I could not sleep, I got up and went out. Not being a fool, I knew I must keep my misery to myself; but my life was empty!—empty! You see, I was hard hit, mate, like the donkeys. What was Miss Helen to me—could she ever have been to me—a lumbering, vagabond chap, not worthy to kiss the dust she trod on?

But I must go back and watch the house that covered her for this last night, so I returned to the ravine. In it were many little dells swarming with the wild flowers of the grand Australian spring. Now, in one of these same dells what do you think I saw? A dead man's face. Yes, I knew at once that he was dead, but so easily "the squire" rested on the wet moss that the song I had heard him singing might still be on his lips. His pockets, turned lining outward, were empty. Snatching up his pick, I tore on to the log-house, knowing well whom I should find there. My long sharp knife was in my belt. I raced round to the back; the little kitchen door was undone; the friends were in the squire's bed-room, making free with some whiskey which he had kept in a cupboard. Where was Miss Helen?

I found her in the sitting room, tied in her chair, her lips bleeding over her white teeth. The cursed hounds had struck her.

"There are three of them," she whispered, "those two who came and another man. They watched for my father and murdered him—they told me so. Hark! they are coming. Ned, they have pistols, and will shoot you where you stand. Go away this instant—only—kill me first;" and then she lifted her white pillar of a throat.

"Now, my beauty," roared a drunken voice through the thin partition, "we're bringing you a sup o' whiskey to drink our 'ealths in. Ain't you longin' for us to make love to ye? We'll stow away the rhino first, and then—you shall have your turn."

"Be quiet," I whispered back to her, hacking at the cords with my knife, and in a few seconds I had her out of the chair, and we dashed out of the house together.

On and on and on until the last tree was at our backs. Then we made for a lane which led to Johnson's tavern, leaving the yells faint in the distance. There we stopped, and there she told her tale.

News spreads quickly at the diggings, and Judge Lynch is for immediate action. Before noon the stolen gold—including the two big nuggets—had been recovered, and a couple of figures dangled from an oak by the wayside.

As soon as it was possible Miss Helen started for Melbourne, whence she was to sail for England, where she would join her mother's relatives—very heavy swells indeed, I believe. And I followed her in secret every inch of the way, though she knew it not until I stood by her on the deck of the steamer, after I had helped to stow her boxes safely in the hold. Then I blurted out that I hoped she would not be offended at my coming, but——and then I shut up.

"Ned," she cried; "brave Ned! dear, kind, good Ned! There are debts which can never be repaid, and I am your debtor always—always, Ned!" and holding out her hands to me she bowed her head upon my big brown fists and sobbed.

"You are welcome, Miss Helen," I spoke with a quiet voice. "I wish—I could have been a gentleman for just a little while, so that I might have served you better."

"A gentleman!" she cried, lifting her face and looking full at me, and then she raised these hard fists of mine to her soft lips and kissed them. Yes, she kissed them—and I!—how was I to help it!—the touch of those lips broke me down smash. Yet she was not angry—not offended. She put out her little hands to me again, meaning—I knew it—both to silence and comfort me. She did not speak—for what could she have said—what could any stately lady such as she have said? Besides, the steamer's engines were puffing, and time was up. She laid her head down on my arm a moment, and then left me with a rain of pitying tears.

When the vessel had passed completely out of sight, and its long smoke line had died out from the sky, I hurried back to Green Valley Greek, and took up my work again. Hard work is the best friend life has for us, sometimes.

But I have never forgotten Miss Helen—I never shall forget her; and I have trudged to the old spot often and stood before the empty house.

That's my story, old chap; we've each our own, of one sort or another.

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THE MAN MY SISTER MARRIED.

CHAPTER XX.

KATHERINE was buried at San Antonio, for she had expressed to me once her horror at being carried by rail elsewhere after death. I wrote to grandfather after her death and begged him to let me stay at the Mission longer, unless they needed me at home. He had sent me word that all were well, and wrote long letters, full of kindly criticism.

From Aunt Marg I seldom heard. She never liked writing, and fancied, dear heart, her education had not been thorough enough to express herself well. I speak of this because it explains why I did not suspect the truth.

The little house had grown pleasant to me. I had no horror of its loneliness, nor even of the room where Katherine died. As for the Mission, not one of those priestly men loved it more than I. If I thought of John at all during those days, it was with a feeling of repulsion. I would not have summoned him for the world.

One day, when Katherine had been dead a month, I went up to the roof of the Mission, where I used to hold ghostly communication with my spirit-priest, or thought I did. There was a tiny door at the foot of the tower, then a spiral staircase made of tree-trunks, that will last another hundred years, yet was worn lightly by the passing of those vanished feet; and one could dream of the men who mounted the stair, of the times so troublous, of the days so monotonous, until it was easy to feel that spirits were in the air and all about one.

A little round window led out on the ruined roof of the chapel, and here, on a low wall edging the roof, I used to sit. Above me the belfry tower, the mossy bell, with no duty now of calling to prayers or vespers, to herald the dawning day, or to sound the solemn midnight hour. Over the crumbling walls grasses and flowers grew, and tiny green lizards crawled in the sun; far round me were green fields and forests, the blue and silvery gleam of a river, and the lazy curling smoke in the soft summer air from homes in the cultivated lands.

I saw a stranger come cantering along the road.

A little village of houses had grown up round the Mission, and at the doors were idle Mexican crones, merry children, men smoking and gossiping, and Justina visiting among them, the worst gossip of the lot. In the shadow of the Mission, before the door, watched by those sculptured saints on the façade, some of the Mexicans have buried their dead. I thought it a pathetic and pretty idea, and one old woman has an altar in a room in the Mission, and goes there to pray.

As I sat there on my house-top, I saw a stranger come cantering along the road from town, then disappear in the shadow of the Mission. I had been waiting for a messenger every day, hoping he would come, and each horseman that passed our way set my heart beating wildly, until I saw that he was not the one expected. I heard Justina call, "Chica, are you up there?" and then she must have seen me, for, before I answered, I heard the click of the turret door.

Someone came slowly up the stairs, out of the window to the roof, a tall, slight young man, whom I did not recognise for a moment—James Gregory. I met him with outstretched hand. I had forgiven him that past long ago.

"I've been back to Galveston on business for John," he said awkwardly. "I've always been sorry about that—our past, Letty. Will you forgive me?"

"From my heart," I answered. He sat down by me on the wall.

"I was such a cad once, Letty; I hate myself when I think of it. John is such a fine fellow, so good to mother and to me, and my brother Dean is a scoundrel. I found it out too late."

He went on then to tell me how well he was doing, and, with some shyness, showed me the photograph of the pretty girl he was to marry. He said the home folks were well, and that my grandfather had treated him very civilly. He seemed to dislike being questioned about them, so we talked of other things, and I pointed out the home where Katherine died.

"How could you bear it? There can't be any of the old Letty left in you, living here a year, in the shadow of this old ruin. I feel like taking my hat off to a saint. Don't frown, but you are so different, so pale and sad looking, as though you'd frozen into a calm. You used to be such a lively girl."

"I am still so weary, I don't feel merry, but some day I mean to be as I used to. It's no comfort to people who love you to be always sad."

When he started to go, he stopped by the window, and said nervously, "Haven't you some message for John, Letty? He does not know I came here. It was my idea to see you, and start square in life when I marry. But I tell you few girls are ever loved as he loves you."

I gave him the bunch of violets at my breast.

"Tell him to wait," I said; "only to wait."

I watched him ride away, without regret for the world beyond; I seemed somehow to have lost all interest in life. Two days later, grandfather came, and he saw the change in me the first thing.

"This old place has shadowed you," he said remorsefully; "you're not like a girl ought to be, light-hearted and merry. I don't think shut-in lives as you crack up those priests to hold is ever so wholesome for humanity as outside. It takes more Christianity to travel over the cobble-stones of the life you're born to, and helping your folks; though, of course, as you say, they were noble ones that came here and laboured with Indians."

I took him over all my familiar walks, to the pretty places in the neighbourhood, and all over the Mission, into each mouldy cell, and to the roof. Up there he sat down panting. "Heaven does seem nigher up here," he said; "you wouldn't wish a good soul back from there, would you?"

In that warm summer day, I felt a sudden chill. Something had happened. I noticed grandfather had not looked so neat as formerly, pathetic evidences of want of care were evidenced in his linen, and the buttons of his coat were loose.

"Is Aunt Marg ill?" I asked, trembling. "She used to be so careful of you. You are not the same, and every time I ask you of her you put me off. In my selfishness, I have forgotten her. I stayed here to grieve over my silly self, when I might have been making her happy."

He drew me down to the wall beside him, then holding my hand tight, he said solemnly: "She is happy beyond our making or marring. She died two months ago. Cry on, pretty dear, it will ease your poor little heart. You must not blame me," as I broke into passionate reproaches, "it was her command that you should not be told. She went so suddenly there was no time to send for you; 'heart trouble,'

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the doctor said, and it was, but not as he thought—a whole life of heart-ache.

"She said her work was done when the baby she had saved had grown to a noble womanhood. She was so glad you were caring for Katherine, and doing the best you could to make her repent. She said your sacrifice would be repaid in a happy future. That past, with all its misery, was ended. John could love and be as other men.

"The case was over, Letty. The criminals sentenced and executed, the jury dismissed, and the only witness gone to her last home. Think what she bore, shut out from woman's happiness, a husband's affection, little children to love her, all her life. She, who was so gentle and kind, to be an instrument of death and vengeance.

"Cry on, dear. It's better than those dry, wide eyes, that white, set face. How thin you've grown. Your hand lies like a snow-flake in my brown palm. She wrote you a letter. I'm to give it you a year after her death. She said you must not wish her back; she was so glad to go. I miss her most, Letty—a part of my home, the best and noblest woman, the most unfortunate as ever blessed a man's home, and gave him hope of a hereafter."

Back to my old home on the beach, where the whispering waves seemed at night like the rustle of the trees about my Mission—and, oddly, that word has two meanings now. It was a mission to care for Katherine. I made myself cheerful and gay. I would not let the past trouble me, and someone was needed to make light in the quiet house, to cheer poor lonely Liz, and grandfather, patient and uncomplaining, but grown so old and sad.

I tried to fill her place; my Aunt Margaret's. If I failed, my very efforts cheered them and made my own days brighter. There were little neighbourly kindnesses to do, and so much work for the poor that I realised what a life of ministering and hidden charity hers had been. In her good deeds she lived in many hearts, and all that I could find of her charities, reading by sick beds, helping weary mothers clothe their little ones, I did; and I think her blessing followed me, for people grew to like me—those proud, shy folk, who are so quick to take offence at the best-meant efforts to help.

Justina and I took many walks, but never near the big house, and Bruce, who brought me flowers often, said the folks were all up North.

One night at supper, grandfather complained of my gown. Why didn't I wear white, like I used to, and pretty ribbons. It was no compliment to him, wearing sombre clothes. He

"This place ain't a dispensary, nor a hospital."

I looked up, and there stood John Scott.

supposed I thought he was in his second childhood, too old to notice anyone.

"Don't ye scold the child," put in Liz, bringing in the cakes.

"You talk too much," growled grandfather, and the good soul, who hardly ever speaks now, departed to the kitchen in high dudgeon.

To please him, I went up and put on my best white gown, a soft creamy woollen, with white ribbons, one my Aunt Margaret made for me years ago; and I thought then how much of the beauty and luxury of my life had been due to her.

"That's more promisin'," said grandfather, when I came down in the porch in my finery, and he went and picked me a bunch of his best roses. "I always have roses here, when there isn't one in Galveston," he chuckled.

Just then a shabby, wan-eyed woman came up the walk. Mrs. Smith, one of my pensioners.

"Now look here," said grandfather crossly, "this place isn't a dispensary, nor a hospital, and Miss Vi'let hasn't the time to waste on you; takes half her day now sewing for your family. What did you have so many for, when you knew you might be a widder, and have to go out by the day?"

"Don't mind him," I laughed; "you know he likes to talk."

"Don't I know him?" she said gratefully. "He's got my Danny to the Market, doing so well, and gives us fish often. La, Cap'n Lombard is knowed all over town; but, Miss Vi'let, it's only about a sleeve, the bastin' come out, an' I couldn't fix it, an' my Nell's set her heart on goin' to school. After washin' all day, my hands gits so stiff an' clumsy, I can't do much. Ma says you're one of God's angels, an' how comfortin' them books you read her is, to her that's bin bed-rid fifteen year. Think of her livin' an' Miss Collier gone! Oh, deerie me, it's a queer world!"

I took the little garment into the sitting-room and sat down by the lamp to mend the sleeve. Grandfather, smoking his pipe, looked in at the door.

"An all-night job, isn't it?" he growled.

"Only a few moments. Go to your garden," I said. Mrs. Smith, her shawl dropping off, her bonnet pushed back over her untidy grey hair, watched me with intense interest; she was so eager to learn, and so grateful for the little things I did for her.

"Grandfather, go away," I said crossly, as steps sounded in the porch; setting a sleeve is such bothersome work.

"La, Miss Letty, it's a strange gentleman," cried Mrs.

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Smith. I looked up and there stood John. I put my hand across my eyes. Was I dreaming? Had he come at last, and must we meet in this queer way? "I—I am glad to see you," I stammered, giving him the hand with the thimble on it; "this is Mrs. Smith."

"I never knowed there was company expected," cried Mrs. Smith. "I kin finish, Miss Letty, it's easy now; the child was so set on it, or I'd never come in this world a worriting ye."

"I have only a few stitches," I said unsteadily. "Please do not go." I felt like clinging to her and begging her to stay. I could almost hear the beating of my heart. He sat down near her, and began to talk to her, remembering her husband, who had been a fisherman, asking her kindly questions, and saying he must get something better for her to do than going out by the day. She, on her part, grew reminiscent, then told him about me with so much praise that my face grew scarlet.

"It's done, Mrs. Smith," I interrupted; "you must not talk about me like that; only half is true. You see I've turned seamstress, Mr. Scott, instead of singer."

"She do sing butuful to mother, though," cried Mrs. Smith, folding the dress, "an' to the Sailor's Bethel, last Sunday, it were like an angel. Mebbe it ain't my business, but I think she's too pale an' sorrowful like, sir, an' a cheering up now an' then would do her good. Livin' 'mongst old folk is wearin'. I don't like to be advising my betters, but mother an' me hes talked it over many a time."

"Mrs. Smith," called grandfather, "here's a basket of things for you; its middlin' heavy. I'll see ye to the gate."

With many blessings she departed, in her worried way, much upset by having intruded. I put my needle and thimble away.

"What an old-maidish Letty," said John, and there was the old merry ring in his voice, "doing good to the widow and orphan; to all but one."

"It's a selfish charity to please children and mothers," I answered; "a little kindness goes a long way. Where can grandfather be?" I finished nervously.

John opened the window and looked out. "He is smoking his pipe at the gate. The widow and her burden are disappearing homeward. How soft the sea is to-night; like far-away music. I am going to live now on my Robinson-Crusoe-like island. I never had any home since I was a boy."

"Your mother will be so happy," I faltered.

"I hope my wife will," he said gently, and I began then to talk of Aunt Margaret's death, and he said he was with her when she died. As he talked, I looked at him shyly. He had grown quite grey, his face thinner, his eyes sad; but now, as he smiled, his face grew bright and young. Then he was silent, both of us thinking of that dear presence—the woman who had given us two such a high and holy love. Then I spoke of Jim's visit, and how changed he was.

"He will make a fairly good man," said John; "Aunt Ann is very happy with him, and quite fond of the bride to be. He gave me your message and some withered violets. Neither dismayed me. I waited. Violet, are your eyes weak that you keep them down? You have not looked at me once."

"I—I did not know that," I stammered; "I was a little upset, the surprise and all." I sat down in a dark corner, where he could not see my blushing face; but he came to me, knelt down, and took me in his arms.

"I have waited, Letty, and now I find you a sensible girl, as you used to be, not a suffering, morbid Letty, weary of the world. I have been at the house two whole weeks watching you. I have smoked a cigar nightly in the garden, under your window, and watched your light go out behind the white curtain.

"Sometimes I've seen you leaning out, watching the stars and thinking, and I have been so jealous of your thoughts. I have been patient. Ah, God, so patient! Give me the real Violet now. Here are the dead ones you sent. I have kept them until now." He flung the withered things across the room. "Come," he said, rising and lifting me to my feet.

"Where?" I cried.

"You did not see my fellow conspirator come down the stairs in that memorable blue coat, or know Liz and our family witch, Justina, have gone this ten minutes to town, or that the carriage is out there. My dear old mother has been tormenting the parson this hour, trying to explain that other wedding ceremony. I took her to the church on my way here."

I pushed him away. "I can't understand," I hesitated.

He took a tiny package from his breast pocket and held it out in his hand; my wedding ring.

"But this old gown," I stammered.

"It's the one you wore when you came to confess to me, years ago. I know that little bow on the left shoulder. Let's be odd and wear our old clothes. If you have not a wedding garment, you shall not be cast into outer darkness, dear."

"I almost fear to be happy again," I whispered.

"Dearest, no more of that dreadful past; forget all, even that grey morning when you went away. Be my little love again. Let me live as other men live, and you as other wives. Have we not suffered enough?"

"John," I cried, clinging to him, "the old Letty has come back. She will be trying and cross, not always good, perhaps, but she loves you so. I was not the dead, calm woman I thought. I only shut my soul in the prison-house for a time."

At the church, John helped me from the carriage and lightly kissed my hair. His mother ran out to welcome me, very tremulous and happy, and grandfather's beaming face seemed almost young again. Justina caught my hand.

"You won't forget poor old Justina," she sobbed.

"John," I said, "I must always love and care for her; she has been so good to me."

"Always, Chica," she smiled, and Justina had to say a dozen prayers to her patron saint at once. The church was dim and dark, only a flickering gas-jet; but I was glad of that, for, honestly, I should have liked a prettier wedding gown. How nervous the minister was, because he remembered that other marriage, I suppose; but I was quite calm.

"No one shall part us now, my wife," said John, when he kissed me, and I had no fear. With such solemnity he thanked my grandfather for saving him that day, when he said "Good night," that I realised how strong was the temptation and how nobly it had been overcome.

The old mansion was all alight, and the servants waited at the door to greet me. "Your home, my daughter," whispered Mrs. Scott, "and oh, how glad, how grateful I am to God its mistress has come at last—my son John's true wife!"

"Come into the rose garden," said John, "it is yours now, while we live. You have come into your own at last."

No more tangled paths or dark, dark ways. I wandered with him in the paradise of those who love and are loved. The flowers nodded an odorous welcome, the fountain tinkled a merry song, far off the sea chimed with the laughter of the rustling trees, overhead the stars twinkled and beamed upon my happiness. All the past faded away. I knew only the golden present. To few on earth are given such joy and love, such tender care and happiness as were given me when I entered that enchanted land, where I shall live till death calls one of us; and even then I know I shall not be waiting long. Not even the grave can separate my love and me!

The End.

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A PAIR OF OLD SLIPPERS.

(FROM THE PERSIAN.)

THERE was at Bagdad a merchant, very notorious for his avarice, and his name was Abou-Cassem-Tambouri. Although he was enormously rich, his clothes were constantly in rags and tatters; his turban, made of coarse stuff, was so dirty that its colour could no longer be distinguished. Of all his garments, however, his slippers were the most remarkable; the soles were kept together by large clumsy nails, and the upper leathers were pieced in every direction. The famous ship *Argo* was not made up of a greater number of separate fragments.

During the ten years of their existence as slippers, the cleverest cobblers of Bagdad had exerted their utmost skill to tag together their remains, and had only succeeded by adding piece on piece, by which means they had become so heavy that they had passed into a proverb; and when anyone wished to describe something weighty, the slippers of Cassem were always the object of comparison.

One day, when the merchant was taking a walk in the great bazaar of the city, a proposal was made to him to buy a considerable quantity of glass bottles; he agreed to the offer, because it was an advantageous one; and having heard, a few days afterward, that a perfumer who had fallen into difficulties had nothing left but some rose-water, which he would, of course, be obliged to sell as speedily as possible, Cassem took advantage of the poor man's misfortune, and purchased it at less than half its value, and filled his bottles with it.

This successful stroke of business had put him into good humour, and, instead of giving a great feast, according to the custom of Eastern merchants when they have made an excellent bargain, he thought it better to take a bath, a luxury which he had not enjoyed for a long time.

While he was taking off his clothes, one of his friends, or at least one who pretended to be a friend—for it is a rare thing for a miser to have one—remarked to him that his slippers made him the laughing-stock of the whole city, and that he certainly ought to purchase a new pair.

"I have long thought of doing so," replied Cassem; "but my old ones are not so bad, and will last me for some time yet." While talking, he stripped off his clothes and entered the bath.

At this juncture the Cadi of Bagdad came also to take one. Cassem, having finished his bath before the judge, went into the first apartment, where he found his clothes, but not his slippers, which had disappeared, and in their place was a new pair, which our miser was convinced were a present from the man who had made him such a friendly remonstrance about them.

With that he made no more ado, but put the new pair on his own feet, thus sparing himself the pain of buying new ones, and left the bath overjoyed with his prize.

When the Cadi had finished his bath, his slaves looked about in vain for their master's slippers, and finding only a wretched pair, which were immediately recognised as Cassem's, the police ran after the supposed sharper, and brought him back with the stolen goods upon his feet. The Cadi, after having exchanged the slippers, sent Cassem to prison; and, as he was well known to be rich as well as avaricious, he was not allowed to come out of prison until he had paid a handsome fine.

On returning home, the afflicted Cassem threw his slippers in a rage into the Tigris, which flowed beneath his windows. A few days, after, some fishermen, drawing up a net heavier than usual, found in it Cassem's slippers. The nails with which they had been patched had broken the meshes of the net.

The fishermen, to spite Cassem and his slippers, threw them into his room by the open window, and in their passage they struck the bottles containing the rose-water, and, knocking them down, the bottles were broken, and the water totally lost.

The grief and wrath of Cassem on seeing this may easily be conceived. He cursed his slippers, and, tearing out the hair from his head, vowed that they should cause him no more mischief; and, so saying, he took a spade, and digging a hole in his garden, buried them there.

One of his neighbours, however, who had borne him a grudge for a long time, perceived him turning up the earth, and ran and told the governor that Cassem had dug up a treasure in his garden. This was enough to excite the cupidity of the officer, and he sent forthwith for Cassem. In vain our miser declared that he had not found money, that he was only employed in burying his slippers. The governor had calculated on his bribe, and the afflicted and slipper-haunted Cassem could only regain his liberty by paying down a second large sum.

Our friend, in an extremity of despair, anathematised his slippers, and went and threw them into an aqueduct at some distance from the city, thinking that this time he should hear no more of them. But, the slippers somehow found their way just to the very pipe of the aqueduct, by this means preventing the flowing of the water.

The persons who were responsible for the care of the aqueduct, having gone to ascertain the cause of the stoppage and to remove it, carried Cassem's slippers to the governor of the city, declaring them to be the cause of all the injury. Their unfortunate owner was thrown again into prison, and condemned to pay a larger fine than before.

The governor who had punished the offence, and who pretended to be indebted to no one for anything, returned Cassem's precious slippers to him again most faithfully; and Cassem, in order to free himself from all the evils which they had brought upon him, resolved to burn them. As they were saturated with water, he first of all put them out to dry in the sun on the terrace of his house. But Cassem's evil genius had not yet quite done with his tricks, and the last which he played him was the worst of all.

A neighbour's dog prowling along the terrace on the house-tops, spied out the slippers, and, darting at them, carried off one of them. As, however, the dog was playing with it, and tossing it about, he contrived to let it fall off the terrace on to the head of a woman who happened to be passing below.

The fright and the violence of the blow made the poor woman quite ill; and, her husband having carried his complaint before the Cadi, Cassem was condemned to pay a fine, proportionate to the misfortune of which he had been the cause.

Going home, he took up his slippers, and returned to the Cadi with them in his hands. "My lord," he exclaimed, with a vehemence which excited the judge's laughter; "my lord, look at the fatal cause of all my troubles.

"These slippers have now reduced me to poverty; be pleased now to issue a decree, in order that the misfortunes which they will, no doubt, still continue to occasion may not be imputed to me."

The Cadi could not refuse to comply with this request, and Cassem learned, at great expense, the danger there is in not changing one's slippers often enough.

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DESPISE NO MESSENGER.

IN a great monarchy no subject can tell what other man may or may not be a messenger from the king. Angels of mercy seldom carry harps and arrive amidst radiant light and a vast flapping of wings. It may be a little child who shall bring you the longed-for good news, or, as in the case of Mrs. Charlotte Davis, it may be a quiet old lady who drops in to make an ordinary friendly call.

And help was badly needed, as it always is when pain and illness crush these frail bodies of ours as the rushes bend and bow before the swollen stream. Referring to the old lady's call Mrs. Davis draws aside the curtain from an experience of the summer of 1878. She says: "I fell into a condition that was strange and new to me. I didn't know how to account for it, nor could I tell what it was going to lead to. I had always a bad taste in the mouth, and was constantly retching and spitting up a sour fluid. The sense and feeling of it were horrible. My appetite failed until food had no attraction for me. Even after taking the least morsel I had great pain at the chest and under the shoulder blades. But the complaint seemed to be seated more particularly in the stomach. There the pain was very keen and violent. Sometimes it felt like a knife cutting me asunder. I got no rest day or night, and was confined to my bed for weeks together. Inasmuch as I could take no solid nourishment I grew weaker and weaker as the weary time dragged by. Indeed my only food was milk and soda water."

[We may remark at this point that Mrs. Davis's entire digestive system was, at the time she speaks of, dangerously deranged. The failure of the appetite was a signal indicating that the presence of food in the stomach could not be tolerated. As it could not be digested it would only serve to aggravate the inflammation which was raging there. Such a state of things is bad as possible. The very source of all power and life was virtually paralysed. We must eat in order to live, and yet—in such a case—to eat is only to invite additional suffering and to bid for a more speedy death. Hence the terror of that ailment, which some silly people (*who have never had it*) speak of as "only an attack of indigestion and dyspepsia." Would they allude to an inhabited dwelling wrapped in flames as "Only a house on fire"?]

Mrs. Davis, and plenty of others whom we know, are able to rebuke that addlepated sort of talk.

She continues: "The doctor who attended me said I had inflammation, caused by gall stones."

[Very likely. Gall stones are composed of bile sand, which is carried into the gall bladder and then adheres until the larger stones or masses are formed. The bile has stagnated, owing to the poisons from the stomach acting on the liver, until this painful and dangerous complication results. In other words, gall stones mean biliousness, and biliousness means indigestion and dyspepsia.]

But let us listen again to the lady: "I lay in great agony," she says, "week after week, during which time I passed two gall stones. The doctor's treatment gave me no relief, and what I suffered for over a year is indescribable. One day *an old lady called at my house*, and seeing my condition, strongly urged me to take Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. I said, 'Yes, of course, I'll take anything that will help me.' After the first bottle I passed a third stone, but *this time without pain*. I kept on with the Syrup and was soon as well as ever. Since that time, now fourteen years ago, I have kept in good health and perfectly free from my old ailment. I will answer inquiries from any sufferer. Yours, &c. (Signed) Charlotte Davis, 8, Edithna Street, Stockwell, London, September 27th, 1893."

"The first bringer of unwelcome news," says Shakespeare, "hath but a losing office." Quite true, but the messenger who tells of help and rescue wins a better place in our memory. Does he not? Yes, say all of us.

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35	3 17 6	11 9 4	4 12 0	6 17 4
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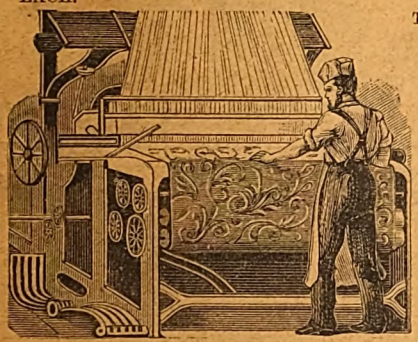

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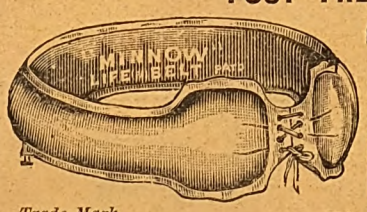

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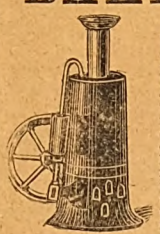

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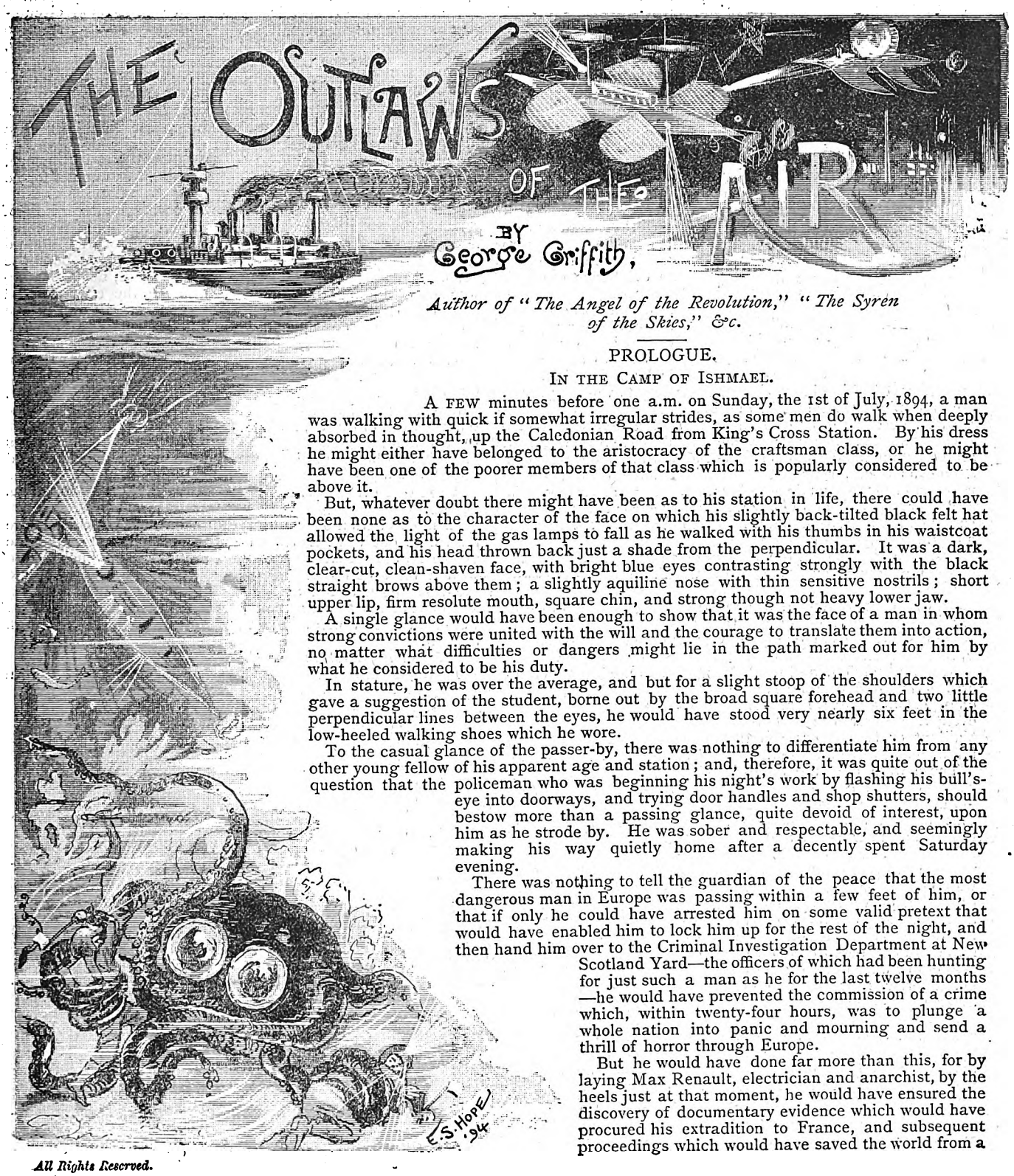
SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 297.—Vol. XI. *FOR THE WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 8, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.



Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," &c.

PROLOGUE.

IN THE CAMP OF ISHMAEL.

A FEW minutes before one a.m. on Sunday, the 1st of July, 1894, a man was walking with quick if somewhat irregular strides, as some men do walk when deeply absorbed in thought, up the Caledonian Road from King's Cross Station. By his dress he might either have belonged to the aristocracy of the craftsman class, or he might have been one of the poorer members of that class which is popularly considered to be above it.

But, whatever doubt there might have been as to his station in life, there could have been none as to the character of the face on which his slightly back-tilted black felt hat allowed the light of the gas lamps to fall as he walked with his thumbs in his waistcoat pockets, and his head thrown back just a shade from the perpendicular. It was a dark, clear-cut, clean-shaven face, with bright blue eyes contrasting strongly with the black straight brows above them; a slightly aquiline nose with thin sensitive nostrils; short upper lip, firm resolute mouth, square chin, and strong though not heavy lower jaw.

A single glance would have been enough to show that it was the face of a man in whom strong convictions were united with the will and the courage to translate them into action, no matter what difficulties or dangers might lie in the path marked out for him by what he considered to be his duty.

In stature, he was over the average, and but for a slight stoop of the shoulders which gave a suggestion of the student, borne out by the broad square forehead and two little perpendicular lines between the eyes, he would have stood very nearly six feet in the low-heeled walking shoes which he wore.

To the casual glance of the passer-by, there was nothing to differentiate him from any other young fellow of his apparent age and station; and, therefore, it was quite out of the question that the policeman who was beginning his night's work by flashing his bull's-eye into doorways, and trying door handles and shop shutters, should bestow more than a passing glance, quite devoid of interest, upon him as he strode by. He was sober and respectable, and seemingly making his way quietly home after a decently spent Saturday evening.

There was nothing to tell the guardian of the peace that the most dangerous man in Europe was passing within a few feet of him, or that if only he could have arrested him on some valid pretext that would have enabled him to lock him up for the rest of the night, and then hand him over to the Criminal Investigation Department at New Scotland Yard—the officers of which had been hunting for just such a man as he for the last twelve months—he would have prevented the commission of a crime which, within twenty-four hours, was to plunge a whole nation into panic and mourning and send a thrill of horror through Europe.

But he would have done far more than this, for by laying Max Renault, electrician and anarchist, by the heels just at that moment, he would have ensured the discovery of documentary evidence which would have procured his extradition to France, and subsequent proceedings which would have saved the world from a

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The most dangerous man in Europe.

reign of terror and an epoch of carnage and destruction in comparison with which the worst that society had so far learnt to fear from anarchy would prove to be the merest trifle.

But how was that most unimaginative and matter-of-fact of mortals, a British policeman, to know that in his waistcoat pocket he carried a foreign telegram which, properly interpreted, conveyed the intelligence that Caserio Santo was on his way to Lyons to await there the order in obedience to which he would with one stroke of his knife send a shudder through the civilised world; or how was he to divine that in the brain behind that open honest-looking brow, there were thoughts working which ere long might set the world in a blaze?

In St. Petersburg, or even in Paris, such a man would have been shadowed, his every movement would have been watched, all his comings and goings noticed, and at any moment—such a one as this, for instance—he might have been pounced upon and searched as a suspicious person, and assuredly, if he had been, the toils of the law would have closed about him in such fashion that little but a miracle could have set him free again.

But here in London, the asylum of anarchy and the focus of the most dangerous forces in the world, he went on his way unquestioned and unsuspected, for, although the police were morally certain that such a man existed, they had no idea as to his personality, no notion that this smart, good-looking young fellow, whose name had never been heard in connection even with such anarchist clubs as were known to have their quarters in London, and much less, therefore, with any of the crimes that had been laid to the charge of anarchy, was in reality even a greater criminal than Vaillant or Henry, or even the infamous Ravachol himself.

These were only the blind if willing tools, the instruments of political murder, the visible hands that obeyed the unseen brain, those who did the work and paid the penalty. But Max Renault was the brain itself, the intellect which conceived the plans for the execution of which the meaner and cheaper disciples of the sanguinary brotherhood of the knife and the bomb died on the scaffold or wore out their lives in penal prisons or the mines of Siberia.

In a word, he was the moving spirit and directing intellect of what was soon to become the most dreaded body of men and women in the world, but which was now only known to the initiated as "Autonomie Group Number 7."

But the stroke which, if his true character had been known, would have cut short his career, whether by rope or axe, would have done more than paralyse the brain which had plotted half the crimes that had been committed in the name of anarchy during the previous five years, and others in which the red hand had never been seen. It would have stopped his career at the most important moment of his life, and prevented him acting as the connecting link between two sets of circumstances which, though naturally of the utmost antagonism to each other, would, when united in such a personality as his, produce an explosion which might shake the world.

A few hundred yards past the top of the hill, Max turned sharply to the left, walked along a side street, turned to the right at the end of this, and went into another. Three minutes' quick walking brought him to the side door of a house which had a small timber yard on one side of it, and on the other a deserted beer-house, which had lost its license, and remained unoccupied because the premises were fit for no other kind of business.

The house itself had a low shop front, with the lower half of its windows painted a dull green, and on the upper part was an arc of white letters making the legend: "Social Club and Eclectic Institute." A lamp over the shop door bore the same inscription in white letters on blue glass, but the lamp was out now, for it was one of the rules of the club that all members should leave the premises not later than twelve o'clock at night on week-days and half-past eleven on Sundays.

This rule, however, seemed only to apply to a certain section of the members. After Max had opened the side door with his latch-key and ascended the stairs at the end of the passage, with a familiarity that enabled him to dispense with a light in the absolute darkness, he knocked at the door of an upstairs room which he found without the slightest hesitation. It was opened, and he found himself in the presence of four men and three women sitting round a table on which were the remains of what had evidently been a substantial and even luxurious supper.

Renault's action on entering the room was one which more than bore out what has been said of his character and the desperate work that he was engaged in. He acknowledged with a brief curt nod the salutations of the company, and then, putting his back against the door, he pulled his right hand out of his trouser pocket, and said, in a quiet almost well-bred voice which had just the faintest trace of a foreign accent:

"Victor Berthauld, sit still!"

There was a small slender-barreled six-chambered Colt in

His body shrank together and collapsed in a huddled heap.

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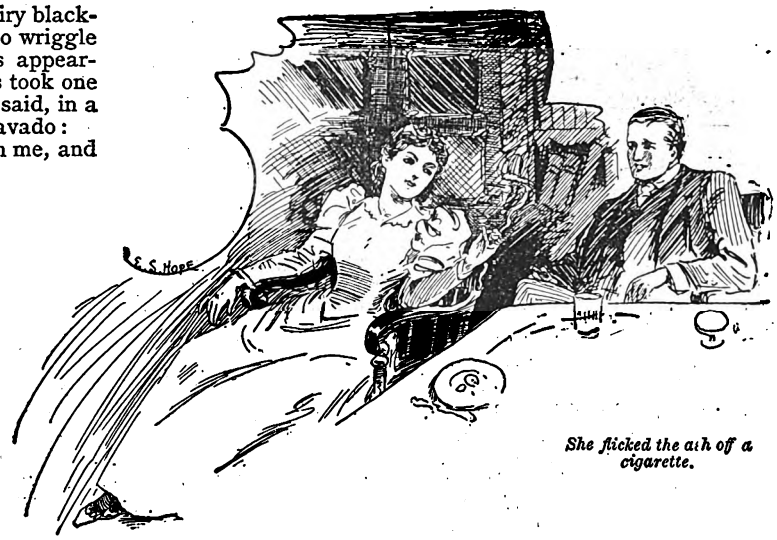
his hand, and the muzzle was pointed at a little lean wiry black-muzzled close-cropped Frenchman who had begun to wriggle uneasily in his seat the moment Max had made his appearance. His black eyes rolling in their deep sockets took one frightened glance from face to face, and then he said, in a voice to which he in vain tried to impart a tone of bravado:

"Well, Comrade Renault, what do you want with me, and what is that revolver drawn for?"

"Don't 'comrade' me, you little rat," said Max with a short savage laugh. "Tell me who tried to warn the Paris police that Carnot's life was in danger. Tell me who would have had Santo arrested at Marseilles if his telegram had only got into the hands it was intended for.

"Tell me who means to repeat the message to-morrow morning to Paris and Lyons, and who means to have this place raided by the English police at an inconvenient hour within the next week on the ground of unlawful gambling being permitted here. Tell me that, you dirty hound, and then I'll tell you, if you don't know, what we usually do with traitors."



She flicked the ash off a cigarette.

Berthauld sat for a moment speechless with fear. Then, with an imprecation on his lips, he leapt to his feet. Not a hand was moved to restrain him, but as he rose to his full height, Renault's arm straightened out, there was a crack and a flash, and a little puff of plaster reduced to dust, leapt out of the angle of the wall behind him; but before the bullet struck the wall it had passed through his forehead and out at the back of his head, his body shrank together and collapsed in a huddled heap in his chair, and Max, putting his pistol back into his pocket, said, just as quietly as before:

"It's a curious thing that even among eight of us we must have a traitor. I hope there aren't any more about. Take that thing down to the cellar, and then let us get to business; I've something important to tell you."

So saying, he walked round the table to a vacant arm-chair that stood at the end opposite the door, threw himself back in it, took out a cigar and lit it, and, with the same unshaken hand that a moment before had taken a fellow-creature's life, poured out a tumbler full of champagne from a bottle that stood half-empty beside him.

Meanwhile two of the men had risen from their seats. One of them tied a red handkerchief tightly round the dead man's skull, to stop what little bleeding there was from the two clean-cut wounds, and then the two picked him up, and without a word carried him out of the room.

"I hope I haven't shocked you by such a rough-and-ready administration of justice," said Max, half turning in his chair and addressing a girl who sat next to him on his right hand.

"No," said the girl. "It was obviously necessary. If half you charged him with is true he ought to have been crucified, let alone shot. I can't think what such vermin are made for."

And as she spoke she flicked the ash off a cigarette that she held between her fingers, put it between as dainty a pair of lips as ever were made for kissing, and sent a delicate little blue wreathing cloud up to mingle with the haze that filled the upper part of the room.

"And now, what is this interesting something that you have got to tell us, Monsieur Max?"

"All in good time, Ma'm'selle. I must ask you to wait until Casano and Rolland have come back; but meanwhile I will whet your curiosity by telling you I am thinking seriously of exiling myself for a couple of years or so."

As he said this he looked keenly from under his half lowered eyelashes into the girl's eyes, as if expecting or, perhaps, only half hoping for some sign of emotion.

Two dark fringed lids lifted suddenly for an instant, and then dropped again, and in that instant two liquid deep grey eyes, which before now he had seen grow almost black with passion, looked at him inquiringly. And that was all.

"That is news indeed," she said. "It must be something very important that takes Monsieur Max away from the scene of action at such a critical time as this."

"Yes," said Renault coldly, and with an almost imperceptible contraction of his brows, "it is important; so important, in fact, that I don't think I am exaggerating when I say that if I had not come back to-night, instead of to-morrow, and had given that fellow twelve hours more grace, the fate of the whole world would have been changed."

"What! The fate of the world!" said she half incredulously, while the others ceased their conversation and turned to listen to this strange passage of words.

"Yes," said Max, slightly raising his tone till it had a note of triumph in it, and at the same time bringing his hand down on hers, which was resting on the arm of her chair. The quick blood came to her cheeks and a flash of anger to her eyes, and she made an effort to withdraw it, but he held it fast, and, before she could speak, went on.

"Yes, Lea, if the venture that I am going to undertake turns out a success, I shall hold the fate of human society in my hand, just as I hold this pretty little hand of yours, only in a somewhat rougher grip, and then——."

"And then, Monsieur Max," interrupted the girl, snatching her hand away as the pressure of his relaxed for a moment. "I suppose you will have what you have not got now, the right to take what you want by the universal law of might."

"Yes," he said with another laugh, a somewhat more pleasant one this time. "And as I have the power so will I use it, whether in love or war. Are you agreed?"

Lea looked at him steadily for a moment, and then, with a swift flush overspreading as fair a face as ever man's eyes looked upon with love and longing, said in a low voice that had just a perceptible tremour in it:

"Yes, I suppose might is right after all, in love as well as war and nineteenth century society. He who can take can have; but, if you please, we will wait until you can take."

"Agreed!" he said. "That's a bargain—and now we'll get to business. Have you found Comrade Berthauld a quiet resting place?" he continued, addressing the two men who had just returned to the room.

"Yes," said Casano in his pleasant Italian tenor. "Ve haf gifen him a bath. I don't sink zere vill be very mooch left of him or his clothes by ze morning."

"Very well," said Max, taking some papers out of the breast pocket of his jacket. "Now sit down and listen."

They obeyed in silence, Casano first bolting the door.

"First," said Max, looking up from his papers and giving a quick glance at the expectant faces round the table, "Comrade Caserio Santo of the Cette Group has been chosen by lot to execute the sentence passed by this Group on the 6th of February on Sadi Carnot in return for the lives which he refused to spare. Santo will be at Lyons soon after daybreak. If that rat Berthauld had got out of this room alive, Santo would have been arrested and Carnot would have escaped. I have the proofs of his treachery here if you wish to

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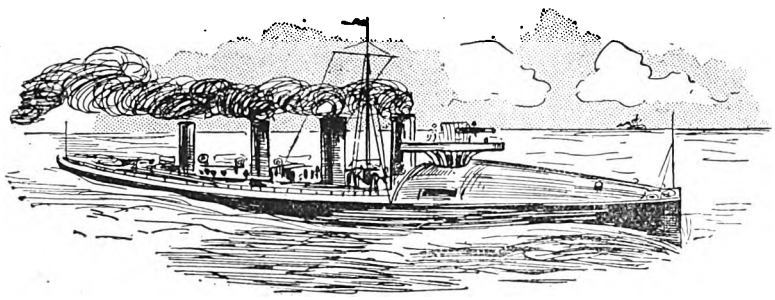


That gun-boat of yours.

see them. As it is, is it agreed that I shall direct him to offer our congratulations to M. le President on his visit to Lyons?"

He stopped and looked round the table again. The others nodded in silence, but Lea looked up with something like softness in her eyes, and said:

"What a pity! Poor Carnot is an excellent fellow in his bourgeois way, isn't he? Quite a model husband and father, incorruptible in politics and all that sort of thing. Wouldn't someone else do as well, say, Casimir-Pèrier or Dupuy? Incorruptible politicians are not so plentiful in France just now."

"The better the man the better the effect," said Max drily. "It is just as easy to strike high as a little lower. There are plenty of politicians in France, but only one President."

"Ja! dass is so," said a bright-faced, square-headed little German sitting opposite to Lea. "Strike high and hit hart. Dat is de way to make dese sheepsheads open dare mouths and stare when day reads de papers on Monday. Let Carnot go first, and den—well, den someone else. Dare are plenty of dem to spare."

A laugh followed this speech of Franz Hartog, who may as well be introduced here as elsewhere as the cleverest engineer in Europe and an anarchist heart and soul—if he had a soul, which some of his nearest acquaintances were very much inclined to doubt.

"Very well," said Lea. "I withdraw my objection, if, indeed, I ever had one."

The veto of one member, by the rules of the Group, would have been fatal to the execution of the proposal. As Lea withdrew hers she flicked some more ash off the end of her cigarette, and with it virtually fell the man whose death all Europe would be mourning within forty-eight hours.

"Then that is settled," said Max. "I will wire to Lyons the first thing in the morning. Now, Hartog, have you anything to tell us about this gun-boat of yours?"

"Ja, dot is all arranged. Her keel vill be laid on de slips next month. I have designed de engines mineself, and de speed contracted for by de firm with de Russian Government vill be thirty-five knots, and you can bet dat my engines vill make her do it. She vill make her private trial mit all her coal and arms and ammunition on board according to de contract, within eighteen monzs from now, and you can depend upon me to be on board her at de time with a suitable majority of de firemens and crew to do vat ve vants mit her.

"You can be sure, too, dat de oders vill have got someting inside dem that vill not make dem mooch good if we have to have a small scrimmage after all to get possession of de boat. Den ve vill rendezvous at the proper place, and den dere vill be some vild time on de Atlantic and de Cape routes ver dey bring de specie and de diamonds.

"Ja, you believe me, Monsieur Max and comrades, Franz Hartog vill make you de masters ov de sea, and you shall laugh at all de fleets of Europe ven dey try to catch you. Dat vill be anarchy vot vill be worth calling somdings. Ja, it is a great scheme and ve shall do it, you believe me."

The little German stopped and looked round the table rubbing his hands, and amidst the murmurs of approval that followed his speech, Max nodded laughingly to him and said:

"Yes, my friend, you are quite right. That is a great scheme, and if you can capture that little greyhound for us when she is built and armed you will have done more for anarchy and driven a bigger nail into the coffin of the tyranny of commercialism than ever any man did yet, and now I am going to tell you of a greater scheme than that."

"Greater as dot!" exclaimed the German, his steely blue eyes glittering through his spectacles with excitement. "How can any scheme be greater as dot?"

"Listen and you shall hear," said Max, "and I won't take very many words to tell you.

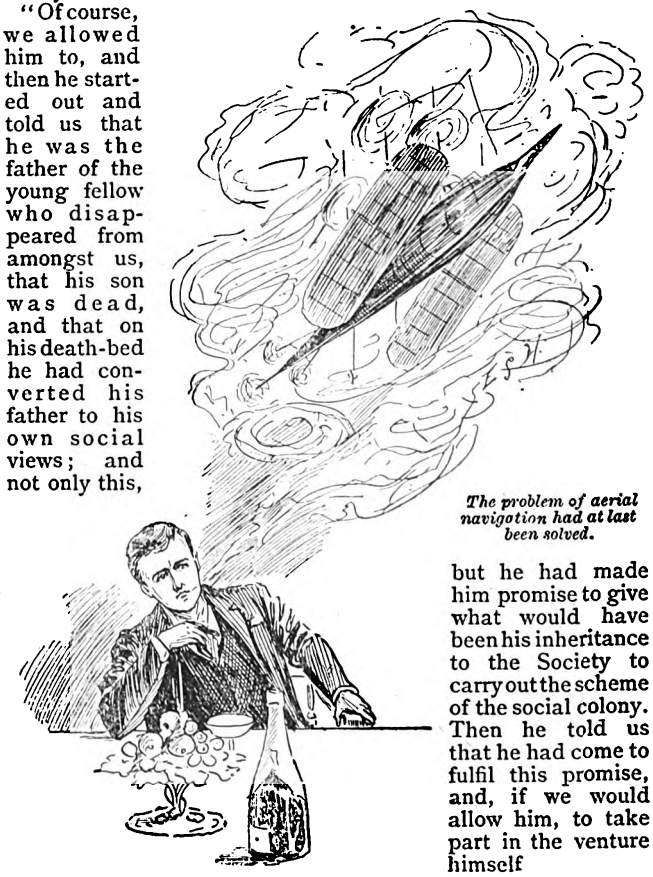
"Some years ago now, when I was a little more than a lad, and before I came to believe that there is no remedy for the present state of affairs except force and terrorism, I joined a society of amiable idiots who meet at each other's houses in different parts of London, and who call themselves the Brotherhood of the Better Life.

"I have kept up my membership, partly because it amused and interested me, and partly because I had a sort of idea that some day something might come of it. For a long time they have had a scheme on foot to emigrate to some out-of-the-way part of the world and start one of those social colonies which of course always come to grief in some way or another as the Freeland one has just done, but up to a few weeks ago they never had a chance of making a start for lack of money.

"Then, about a month ago, we had a regular romance, and something occurred that I would never have credited if it hadn't happened under my own eyes. Nearly six months ago one of our members who pretended to be a craftsman—but who was really nothing of the sort, for he was what they call a gentleman from head to foot—disappeared.

"For five months we heard nothing of him, and then, one night after a lecture by a sort of latter-day prophet of ours, a very clever but misguided fellow called Edward Adams, a stranger came out from the audience and asked to be allowed to say a few words.

"Of course, we allowed him to, and then he started out and told us that he was the father of the young fellow who disappeared from amongst us, that his son was dead, and that on his death-bed he had converted his father to his own social views; and not only this, but he had made him promise to give what would have been his inheritance to the Society to carry out the scheme of the social colony. Then he told us that he had come to fulfil this promise, and, if we would allow him, to take part in the venture himself



The problem of aerial navigation had at last been solved.

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"Well, we consented, on condition that he accepted the Constitution which we had been, as I always thought, playing at drawing up, and this he agreed to do, and then staggered us by saying how much he was prepared to devote to the carrying out of the scheme. We expected a few hundreds at most, perhaps just enough to give us a start with what we could get together of ourselves, so you can imagine what we felt like—and I in particular—when the figure came out at over a hundred thousand pounds."

"Ein hunderdt tousand pound!" cried Hartog, unable to restrain his enthusiasm. "Vi, I could build nearly three ships of thirty-five knots mit so mooch! Can you get hold of it, Monsieur Max?"

"I'm not going to get hold of that, friend Franz, but of something a good deal more important than money. It turned out that our fairy godfather was no other than Frederick Austen, the head of the big engineering firm of Austen and Son, of Queen Victoria Street and Woolwich. The death of his son has made it impossible for an Austen to succeed him in the business, and that, combined with his change of social views, has decided him to give up the business altogether.

"Of course, I needn't tell you that we accepted him and his money with thanks. But there was something stranger to come yet. Last night, at a meeting of the committee, of which I have the honour to be a member, he confided to us a secret which, as he said, would enable the colony not only to hold its own against any who might wish to interfere with it in case it prospered, but which will enable the colonists to enforce an object-lesson in peace, goodwill on earth, and all that sort of thing, on the first nations that go to war with each other, after they are in a position to wield the power that it will give them.

"Then"— and here Max Renault leaned forward on the table and instinctively lowered his voice while the others leant forward also to catch what was coming—"he told us that just before his last illness his son had completed a series of experiments which enabled him to say with truth that the problem of aerial navigation had at last been solved, and that he had solved it.

"He told the secret to his father, and he at once placed all the resources of his business at his disposal, and, comrades, believe me or believe me not, as you like, but I tell you that less than twenty-four hours ago I saw in action a working model of a flying ship which Frederick Austen is going to build with my assistance in the Brotherhood's New Utopia."

A murmur half of amazement and half of incredulity ran from lip to lip as Renault uttered these momentous words, and Lea suddenly straightened herself up in her chair, stretched her shapely arms upward, and then, folding her hands behind her head, looked at Max with undisguised admiration in her eyes, and said, with a ring of exultation in her voice:

"Ah, now I understand you, after wondering all this time what your parable was going to lead up to. Excellent, Monsieur Max, excellent! You have not been playing the Anarchist wolf in the Socialist sheepskin for nothing. You will emigrate with these good folks to their New Utopia, wherever they may find it, absorb such ideas as may be useful, appoint yourself aërial engineer to that excellent converted capitalist, and then——"

"Yes, and then," said Max, with a significant movement of his hand towards the pocket that contained his revolver, "when the Cruiser of the Air is built and equipped, and I have satisfied myself of her working power, she will be found missing some fine morning, and so shall I.

"I'm not going to exile myself with a lot of people like that for nothing, I can tell you. If I'm the man I take myself for, within three years from now that air ship shall carry the red flag through the clouds and terrorise the whole earth from East to West and Pole to Pole.

"And now," he continued, rising to his feet, under the stimulus of his own words. "If you've any more champagne, fill up. I've a toast for you. For another year or two you must carry on the work without me, or stop it altogether as seems best to you, and meanwhile you, Hartog, shall get your thirty-five knot sea-devil afloat and to business till you've levied ocean tolls enough to give us funds to build an aerial fleet on the model of the ship that I'll bring you, and then we'll have no more hole-and-corner assassinations and no more pettifogging bomb-throwing. We'll declare war—war to the knife, on the world that we hate, and that hates and fears us, and then——"

"Here's your glass, my Lord of the Air that is to be," said Lea, rising and handing him a full tumbler of champagne with a gesture of deference that was not altogether assumed. "And so let us have your toast."

"You shall have it, short and sweet," said Max, taking the glass and lifting it above his head. "Here's life to those we love, and death to those we hate—*Vive l'Anarchie* and the Outlaws of the Air!"

"Mein Gott, but dat is a great scheme! He vill set de vorld on fire if he only comes properly to bass," said Franz Hartog, as he drained his glass at a gulp, and then stood gazing at Max Renault with a look that was almost one of worship in his little twinkling eyes.

(To be continued next week.)

THE LITTLE FROCK.

YES, she would do. She could start in work as soon as she liked, money to be paid on the piece-work system, and hours eight in the morning, sharp, till seven at night, with an hour for dinner and half an hour for tea; instant dismissal on the first sign of intoxication while at work, and suspension of work in the case of foul language or bad conduct.

The chief clerk lowered his head and continued his writing, and the little woman went out of the room into the shed where a dozen rough, red-armed females spent their days in sorting rags at starvation wages. The foreman listened to what she had to say, and then curtly gave her instructions.

A bale of tattered garments was put for her, alongside some baskets, and she had got to sort them.

"Tuck up yer sleeves. Look smart."

She flushed, then rolled up the calico and displayed a pair of thin, white arms.

"*You* won't be 'ere long," this from the foreman, prophetically, as he turned on his heel and sauntered away.

The eyes of the other women, which had been directed at the newcomer during the conversation, fell simultaneously as the foreman moved round, and a dozen pairs of temporary idle arms moved rapidly from basket to basket.

During the dinner hour she went away alone. The other women loafed about the premises and washed down their chunks of bread with tea, and talked scandal, with the little woman for the subject.

"Seems stuck up. Givin' 'erself airs."

"Lor'; she'd better not start them tricks; it don't pay."

Then, one of them, a tidier woman than the rest, with a thin, sunken face, mildly suggested, in a deliberate tone, that perhaps the new hand hadn't got anything to eat.

Next day she applied for the money that was due to her for her previous day's work, and, although it was against the regulations of the establishment to pay otherwise than at the end of the week, the chief clerk made an exception in her case, provided she held her tongue about it.

That dinner hour she went and got some food and came and ate it with the other women. She tried to be sociable, and after her meal seemed a lot better and stronger.

Things went on for a fortnight, during which time she found

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considerable favour with the women, because, as her fingers and arms became accustomed to the work, she did it more quickly than anybody, and, what was more estimable in their eyes, she always spent the bigger portion of her money in drinks round.

They liked her for that, for she never let a drop pass between her own lips, although she talked and chatted with them all in the bar.

One day, however, she took a half pint of bitter. It was on a Saturday night, when most of them were flush of money. She called for gin after that, and at closing time they had to carry her out and let her lie in the road.

Monday morning she turned up at the shed, the traces of her debauchery still visible on her face, which was even whiter and more pinched than it had ever been. At first she seemed inclined to drop her head and avoid the looks of her fellow workers, as if in shame; but, as they took no notice and made no mention of the affair, to them so familiar in the squalid misery in which they dragged out their existence, she was herself again before the dinner hour.

Next Saturday it was the same—worse, perhaps. For some reason or other she let temper get the better of her, and the most violent woman in that select band, if not in the whole neighbourhood, was mild compared with her. She began by swearing, and left off by fighting outside the public-house. No woman ever made such a brute of herself, to the certain knowledge of the barman and of the policeman who moved her on, purposely oblivious to her state.

In spite of these Saturday night eruptions, in spite of the debilitating effect they naturally produced upon her constitution, she kept pluckily to her work throughout the week, earning a larger return than any of the other women employed in that place.

At times she would scarcely speak a word to any of them for a whole day, sitting away from their circle at meal times, and staring hard on the ground as if her mind dwelt on some point in her life which was sweet for her to think of; for, during these periods, a soft expression would come over her face, and sometimes they would see, or fancy they saw, her eyes wet.

They cared for her less now than they had when she used to stand drinks instead of tippling the whole of her money away herself; besides which, she was getting more stuck-up and reticent, except when anyone started to argue with her on a Saturday night in the "Grey Bounder." Then her arrogance gave place to degradation, and the foulest language poured out from between her lips as easily as the gin had been poured down.

The other women were frightened of her, all but those whose condition resembled her own. They endeavoured to get her discharged, and, wholly indifferent to her future, told the foreman all that regularly happened on Saturday nights.

It did not affect him, however, he said. They had better mind their own business. So she continued to work on.

The effect of the work upon her garments was such that in the course of a few months her dress was in an abominably filthy state and almost in rags. For a few shillings she was able to buy another of her employer from among those she sorted. All the women selected their garments in the same way, and from among the thousands that passed through their hands they had a good choice.

But the new dress of the little woman ill-fitted her form. She looked bedraggled, miserably untidy, and the certain amount of care which she had at first exercised with regard to her personal appearance was gone. The wan, drawn face became red and bloated, the arms developed till the muscles, hard and stiff, showed clearly through the blotched skin.

She was going to the bad fast, they said.

One day a woman said:

"Lawks, this is a purty frock." She was holding aloft a child's gown of cream cashmere, greasy and well worn.

A couple of the others went over and examined it critically.

"Yus, do fur my Sal."

"Fine 'mbroidery on it. Some kid from the hupper suckles, I suppose."

The little woman was staring from her place with contracted brows towards the group, and then, as if impelled by some sudden power, she walked rapidly over and joined them.

No one noticed her until she reached out and snatched the frock from the holder's grasp.

"I'm going to have this," and turning she went over to the foreman and asked what he wanted for it.

"It's a good 'un," he said, eyeing it critically, and turning it over in his hands. "Can't let you have it for less than two bob."

She folded it carefully, and agreed to the price, and he made a note of her debt on a slip of paper.

At the end of the day it was found that she had got through less work than she ever had before, not excepting the first hours of her employment at the sorting sheds. She seemed strangely glad when the hands of the clock, hung on the rafters, pointed over the cracked face to seven. The cream frock had not left her side from the moment it had become her property, and all through the afternoon she had cast yearning glances at the faded and greasy fabric that, at one time, had given warmth to the body of some little child, some daughter of society.

Whose child? The dull, ignorant women whom Fate had made her fellow workers discerned no association between the sad face, sadder than ever, and the little cream frock. They wondered in a vague, unreasoning way, for whom she wanted this garment, as, to their certain knowledge, she had no children of her own living with her, nor was she in any way particularly indulgent with other folks' little ones.

But, had they once, in some byegone years, lived and moved in places at which they now stared with open-mouthed astonishment and admiration, drinking in the views of luxury and ease to which their eyes and ears treated them; had they known the kind fond voice of a noble man whispering love into their ears in the midst of the palm-filled conservatory; had they drooped their heads and blushed in return; had they stood before the altar in a large grand church through which floated the sweetest music from the organ all in their praise; had they pressed to their bosom a little baby girl, who, in the course of years, filled the fine mansion in Belgravia with her laughter and merry prattle; had they feasted their devoted eyes on the little one clothed in her new cream frock; had they fallen from the highest pinnacle of this state of bliss and of intense happiness to poverty in one short month; had they despaired at the sight of the little one's sufferings and, weak-minded, sought solace in the stupor of drunkenness; had they been turned by a heart-broken husband from the little struggling home, from the darling of their mother's heart, from all they loved and cherished; had they sought to support themselves by honourable work; had they fallen, at the moment of success, to the hands of the devil again; had they in the course of their work (merciless coincidence!) found and held in their hands the little cream frock that they had sold in a moment of frenzy to obtain the means to purchase the baneful sorrow-drowner; had they experienced all this and much more, they would have wondered less, and given all their womanly sympathy to the little woman who lay that night tossing upon a sleepless bed of straw, and clasping a little cream frock passionately to her heart.

Next morning she was not at her accustomed place in the work-shed, nor did she arrive at all during the day; and the foreman at seven o'clock struck her name off the book, and prepared for the customary row on the morrow when the little woman, barely recovered from a wild debauch, should present herself at the door for admission, as other women had done before her.

But there was no need for this preparation. She had gone out in the morning, the first floor lodger said, and she had come back, but beyond that she knew nothing, only that during the night she had been "snivelling a lot."

The dying rays of the summer sun shot through the grimy window of the attic and pointed out to them the little woman white and cold on the bed of straw, her pinched face less pinched, and bearing a calmer and softer expression than they had ever seen upon it.

And they wondered why the little cream frock that was gripped so tightly in her arms should have induced her to go out and buy the bottle of rat poison that stood on the floor by the bedside.

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ALL the other actors of the company began to assemble on the stage for the closing tableau, the leading man began to manœuvre for his pose at L.C., where he was to voice the epigrammatic sentiment that gave the name to the play; and the escorts in the audience, heroically foregoing the finale, commenced to get together their ladies' wraps, fans, and opera glasses. The Babe poked Desfield with the handle of his cane, and said: "Let's get out of here before the crush."

Desfield picked up his programme from beneath the seat, where it had fallen, and put it in his pocket. He always made it a point to save his programmes. On the lower shelf of his clothes-cupboard at home he had made a pile that could be measured by feet.

Then he nodded to the Babe, and the two rose from their seats, Desfield very distantly conscious of the implied rudeness to the performers. The curtain, the original red curtain that had been down before the first act, fell just as they reached the end of the passage, amid hurried and doubtful applause, and whistles from the gallery. The house-lights were suddenly turned on, and the orchestra struck up a lively quick step.

It had been a *matinée*. They came out of the gloom of the theatre, which smelt of stale gas and plush upholstery, into the streets again. Desfield felt as though he were in a manner passing from one play to another, only with the difference that in this latter he was at once actor, author, and audience.

"Let's go somewhere and eat something," exclaimed the Babe, as they turned up the street. Desfield, as he instinctively reached for the middle part of his cane, cast a glance of some surprise at the Babe. He had not expected this. *She* had been in the first row of the dress circle with her mother, and Desfield had supposed that the unconscionable Babe would hang round the exit in order to see them to their carriage, and thus give Her a chance to ask him home to dinner.

But the Babe did nothing of this; he was a changed man to-day; he had moped all through the play, taking only the head of his stick into his confidence and his mouth, and, now that the play was over, skulked away from the theatre as soon as he could.

Desfield forbore to question. He knew that whatever was the ferment in the Babe's mind, it would sooner or later reach the boiling point, and bubble over in a prolonged recital of grievances.

This was precisely what did occur that very evening as they put their legs under the dainty table in the dining-room of their club. Desfield did not know whether the Johannisberger (1864) strengthened the Babe's impulse in the direction of unreserved intercourse between himself and his chum, or whether it weakened the barriers that the Anglo-Saxon throws before the spontaneous outburst of his more sentimental emotions; but whether the impulse was too strong, or the barriers too weak, out it came, and with admirable good humour Desfield submitted to listen to the endless chapters of lamentations of this new Jeremiah.

She had jilted him—thrown him over. You see, it was this way: the Babe had gone to call upon her on a certain day, and had found her (paradoxically) not at home. Then he had written her a neat little note asking if he might come on the following Sunday afternoon, and by return post she had told him that he might.

"And when I go up there," continued the Babe with a wail, "I find the Other Fellow coming away, who tells me, with a grin on his confounded face, that he's just been there, and that she's not at home. Now I just ask you——" and the Babe closed with a burst of indignation.

"I don't care, though," he added when he had finished, with his hands deep in his pockets, and rolling his head from side to side—"I don't care. If she can get along without me, I can make out all right. Let's see how she'll like the Other Fellow; that's all."

The next afternoon, at Somebody's tea, Desfield and the Babe saw her with the Other Fellow. She cut him dead. Oh, but it was one of those flat, unequivocal cuts, that was like a slap in the face.

"That's all right," said the Babe bravely, even if his chin would twitch, "did you see the look I gave her? Oh, I gave her a l——k."

The split was absolute after this. She sent back her picture that the Babe had copied for her from a photograph, and he returned the scented necktie-holder that she had embroidered for him. She became feverishly gay—was out somewhere every night. The Babe began to speak of life and youth as though they were spelt with capitals, and to talk of going abroad.

Things had reached this stage when Society took up illustrated lectures. It became a fad. It was rather peculiar too that the ladies of Society should have patronised them, because the Egyptian darkness that was the necessary adjunct to the lectures, precluded any possibility of gratifying the desire "to be seen of men." One particularly spiteful sheet gave it out that some people went, not in spite of the darkness, but because of it, which was, to be sure, very churlish.

But, however, they went in "numbers numberless." The lectures were upon European Travel, illustrated by magic-lantern photographs of all points of interest. In order to be consistent with his unconcealed intentions of foreign travel, the Babe was obliged to attend, and rarely missed a lecture.

Desfield was one of the ushers. Desfield always did seem to find his little niche in everything of this kind that was going on. In tennis tournaments he was apt to be chosen as scorer. In athletic contests for charity, he was always to be found upon the field in some semi-official capacity. At weddings he was best man.

At the club on ladies' night he was on the receiving committee; at cotillons he was generally leader. Somehow or other, those people that made up Desfield's "set" found they could not well navigate in the troubled waters of Society

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unless they felt Desfield's hand either at the wheel or upon the ropes.

The lectures were held at Oddfellows' Hall. There were but two a week; one on Monday evening, the other on Saturday afternoon. Admittance was by invitation only, and the price of seats was high. It was a select affair generally.

On the last Saturday afternoon of the series, reserved for Paris and its environs, Desfield found his hands full. The audience had never been so large or so fashionable. Until nearly half-an-hour after the lecture had begun, he was kept running up and down the aisle of which he had charge, seating the late comers, and this after the hall was darkened was no easy matter. She with the Other Fellow were among the last to come in. The few remaining chairs were soon taken, and Desfield's work was done. Those coming in any later were obliged to stand.

She and the Other Fellow had been with the latest comers. They were not, however, the last. The Babe was the last. The lecture was nearly half over when he came in, and finding Desfield, leaned up against the wall with him in the listless and melancholy manner which was now—poor beggar—not all affected.

"I'm off next week, Thursday, Desfield," he whispered after a while. "Got my ticket this morning."

Desfield was really sorry for him. "Hard lines, old man, isn't it?" he said.

The masculine emotion of these latter days can go no further than this. When the *fin de siècle* gentleman calls his friend "Old Man," he has figuratively fallen upon his neck and kissed him. Beyond this he cannot go, with dignity. The Babe felt and appreciated this, and loved Desfield accordingly; he would have liked to clasp him around the neck, or to have wrung his hands, and in the surrounding darkness could have done so without fear and without reproach; but instead he only shifted his position against the wall, and, in answer more to what Desfield implied than to what he said, returned:

"It's very good of you, old man."

"And now, ladies and gentlemen," went on the lecturer, turning from side to side, and occasionally silhouetting his head against the brilliant circular focus on the curtain, like the transit of a planet across the sun—"and now, turning from this marvel of engineering skill" (he had been talking about the Eiffel Tower), "which like the skeleton of the Tower of Babel, stands like a monument to the sky-aspiring ambition of mankind—turning from this, let us take one of those large and lumbering omnibuses drawn by those heavy white horses, a sight so characteristic of the streets of Paris." Here a picture of the sight was thrown upon the curtain. "We mount upon the top, are carried across the river, *viâ* the Pont de Jena, down through the beautiful Champs Elysées,

They drank champagne together.

and in a few moments emerge upon one of the most beautiful, as well as one of the most historic, squares in the world—the Place de la Concorde."

He pressed a little tick-tack between his fingers, and the picture of the omnibus seemed in a manner to dissolve into a view of the square. He paused a moment for effect, and then proceeded—"We now stand upon ground where history has been made and unmade. In the distance, across the river, is the Chamber of Deputies. In the immediate foreground rises the Egyptian Obelisk, a single block of granite." He plunged into statistics with ferocious relish: "Seventy-five feet six and one-half inches in height, weighing ten thousand tons, and transported from Egypt at the cost of seven million one hundred thousand francs."

Desfield was troubled. He was not listening to the lecturer's flow of periodic English, but was thinking of the Babe and his miseries. That the Babe was hard hit, he knew now beyond any doubt. What effect it was to have upon him was less certain, and therefore more conducive to anxiety. The two had been chums ever since their college days, and had always been everywhere, and done everything together. Now that the Babe was about to leave for the continent, for anywhere, Desfield felt in anticipation like a *corps sans âme*.

"And surrounded," continued the lecturer, "by four magnificent fountains, throwing jets twenty-seven feet high, and pouring out daily seventeen thousand gallons of water."

Then, too, he was almost sure that She loved the Babe very much indeed, and that her encouragement of the Other Fellow was a pretence and a sham. It did seem supremely silly that these two little children should spoil their whole lives by a quarrel over the most trivial thing in the world.

"Groups of beautiful statuary at the four angles representing the four principal cities of the nation."

It had always been a settled thing with Desfield that the two should eventually be married, and he had been accustomed to pose before himself as the friend of the household in future days, dining with them *en famille*, or spending a cosy evening at their fireside. He felt keenly disappointed over this failure of his little romance.

"Measuring six and one half feet, over a mile in circumference."

Desfield wondered if anything could be done—if he could do anything.

"Six hundred dekametres."

The Babe had moved to a little distance, having found a vaguely appropriate seat upon a cold hot-water pipe.

Somebody in one of the forward seats got up, and came down the aisle. As his figure emerged into the scant circle of light thrown by the lowered gas jets that burned on either side of the door, Desfield saw that it was the Other Fellow.

"Whew!" said the Other Fellow, as he came within whispering distance of Desfield. "Can't stand this any longer. Had to excuse myself to Her, and come out and have a peg. Come with me, won't you?"

Desfield thought this was very like the Other Fellow, but an idea suddenly occurred to him. He said: "All right; you go along, and I'll come after you as soon as I can get my overcoat."

The Other Fellow went out, and Desfield turned to the Babe, who was still sitting on the warming apparatus, oblivious to everything. Desfield woke him up, saying, "Come on, I have a seat for you." Then he piloted him softly down the passage and placed him in the seat the Other Fellow had just vacated, beside Her.

As the Babe sat down, they recognised each other. The Babe turned quickly. "Oh, I say, Desfield," he said. But Desfield was already gone, saying to himself, "Leave 'em alone for half-an-hour in a dark room, side by side—with no chance of escape—with nothing or nobody to come between 'em, and if something don't turn up it will be because they are a different kind of people to what I take them to be.'

He had now to direct all his wits to keeping the Other Fellow out of the way. For an instant he had the idea of getting him drunk, but he grimly reflected that a gun of that calibre would probably kick about as far as it would shoot.

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He went out blinking into the glare of the afternoon sun, and found the Other Fellow waiting for him at an adjacent bar. They drank champagne together. Desfield was as long about it as he could be, then inveigled the Other Fellow to the lunch counter, and dawdled over olives and caviar, talking about the 'Varsity Cricket Match, and Henley. Desfield knew the Babe had about twenty minutes more. They had already gone from the lecture-room about ten minutes.

By this, he thought, they must have got over the coldly-polite stage, and have come to mutual recriminations. He asked the Other Fellow to have another, with *him* this time. Then once more back to the lunch-counter, for another ten minutes. "Now, they're about coming round to explanations," thought Desfield. He wished that the Other Fellow were subject to epileptic fits, or could be drugged, or quietly knocked on the head. They left the room and started to return.

As the white-painted valves of the doors of the bar-room flapped back and forth behind them, they both heard a sudden noise that made them pause to listen. There is no more mistaking the bark of an angry dog than the hoof-beats of a runaway horse; there is a savagery, a viciousness, about it, that can be instantly distinguished from the ordinary canine utterance.

The noise came from a sort of blind-alley, hardly more than a deep recess, just behind the saloon. It was followed by a snarl, and a hoarse yelp in another key, and then a rapid succession of fierce, brutal noises, and the sound of furred bodies striking and rolling upon the ground.

The Other Fellow already had out a couple of five-pound notes, and was shaking them across the ring.

"A dog-fight," cried the Other Fellow with great delight, putting his hat on the back of his head. "Must take this in," and he ran up to where the crowd was already formed in a circle. Desfield followed him, looking at his watch. "Now they're about finished with explanations, and have started to make it up. The dog-fight is a special dispensation of Providence—they've about ten minutes more."

And when he saw the two dogs he perceived with unholy joy that the fight promised to hold out a good deal more than ten minutes, and he knew that the Other Fellow would stay as long as it lasted.

By the time that Desfield got sight of them, the two dogs were silent—they had already become "locked." The bull-terrier had a left-leg hold, while the Newfoundland, holding on temporarily to his adversary's ear, was gradually working for a grip at his throat. The Other Fellow already had out a couple of five-pound notes, and was shaking them across the ring at the large dog's owner, offering seven to ten. He seemed to be in his element. "Poor sport," said Desfield to himself, with great disgust.

"Isn't this beautiful?" said the Other Fellow to Desfield, rubbing his hands. "What a pity cats always fight in the night so you can't see 'em. Seven to ten on the bull, you over there!"

All at once the large dog let go, and made for a new hold. The instant the bull felt himself free, he slipped his jaws upward, from the fore-leg up along the shoulder-blade, along the shoulder itself, and then suddenly closed them, vice-like, sunk them in the soft part of the throat—all without a sound. "It's all over but the shouting now," cried the Other Fellow.

In a few minutes this would be true of the lecture as well.

"I think," said Desfield to himself, "that they should now have come to the most interesting part of all. They have about four more minutes." Then he looked at the Newfoundland; some men were vainly trying to pry the bull's teeth apart with a stout stick. "The bull won't kill him before four minutes, anyhow," thought Desfield. He waited till the Other Fellow's back was turned, then slipped over to the hall.

"Strange," he said, "that their future happiness should depend upon a dog-fight, and upon the strength of a bull-terrier's jaws. If the bull can only hold on for five more minutes they'll make it up, and get married."

By the time he had got the carriage to the door, the lecture was over, and the crowd began to stream out.

"Maybe the scheme failed after all," thought Desfield.

She came out on the Babe's arm. Both were nervously looking for the Other Fellow. Desfield made up to them.

"That's all right," he cried. "He's interested—elsewhere—just now, and your carriage is here waiting for you."

The Babe leaned out of the carriage window and wrung his hand. "You don't know of anyone, do you, Desfield, that want's to buy a Cunard ticket at a discount?"

"Oh, Mr. Desfield!" she began.

Through the window, on the other side of the carriage, Desfield caught sight of the Other Fellow hurrying distractedly round the corner.

"Where to?" he asked, interrupting her. Then, as he got her answer, he banged the carriage door, and looking up to the coachman said:

"Home, James."

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THE SILVER-STRINGED LUTE.

ONE! TWO! THREE! The soft-toned bells in the cathedral pealed forth the Angelus, and for a brief space the restless life of the city was still. Men stood with uncovered heads, women in prayerful attitudes—even the little beggar children ceased for the while their importunities. Only a moment; then all was merry and noisy again. Yet the brief season of prayer was not without its influence.

The scene was a familiar one to Will Harcourt. Yet it had not lost its extreme picturesqueness to his English eyes. The low houses, the gilt spires of the cathedral glistening in the evening sun, still possessed for him a peculiar charm. Black-robed priests gliding noiselessly, gaily dressed men and women, some on foot and some in the gorgeously liveried vehicles belonging to the aristocracy, little beggar children, whose alluring eyes never failed to coax the desired coin from his pockets, passed him, all hurrying to the plaza, from which the strains of the band already floated. There all the gossip of the day would be retailed, business discussed, and lovers obtain a sight of their inamorata, a smile, a rosebud, or, perhaps, even a hastily whispered word should the watchful eyes of the duenna be, for the moment, turned away.

It was now two years since the sign "Harcourt & Co., Chemists," had appeared over one of the quaint shops in the Calle Hidalgo, and both Harcourt and Ralph Swain, his friend and partner, had come to be liked and respected among the prominent Mexican gentlemen of the city. And not only did the sterner sex regard him with favour, but many a soft glance was cast after the handsome young Englishman as he strolled more slowly along the crowded streets toward the quiet portion of the city, where he and his friend had taken a small adobe dwelling.

Will Harcourt, however, was not thinking of the dark-eyed maids of Mexico, fair as they seemed. Against their smiles and fascinations he was proof. Truth to tell, a little maid in Cheshire held his heart, and his thoughts, his love, his work, were all for her. The story was a common one; they had met, loved, agreed to marry; but adverse circumstances, in the shape of financial difficulties, prevented, and they parted —Harcourt seeking Mexico, where he hoped to make his fortune. And it was upon this he was musing as he stopped at the post-office for his weekly letter, which was handed to him with a smile by the courteous official.

All of Harcourt's friends knew of his hopes and sympathised with him, while they admired the sturdy faithfulness and honour which made him true in every thought to the lady of his love and blind to the allurements of the gay Mexican city.

He was still thinking pleasantly of his letter as, the evening meal over, he settled down in the cool patio to smoke. Good humouredly refusing all invitations of his friend to "come out and enjoy himself," he felt rather relieved when that gentleman took his departure for his usual evening tour of the city. Mr. Swain had fallen an easy victim to the Southern beauties; and clandestine appointments, as well as skilful eludings of duennas, were with him a speciality.

Harcourt's meditations were exceedingly agreeable. Pacing slowly up and down the court, scenes and memories brought to mind by the letter he had just received, crowded upon him, and he thought with satisfaction that his promotion was nearly at an end. He had not toiled in vain; respected and prosperous as he had become, he knew that before the year was over he would be reunited to the girl he had waited for so long—a man she might well love and honour. Her face rose before him as he had seen it last, the brown eyes filled with tears, while the lips smiled bravely. The years that had passed seemed long and dark, the future bright.

Suddenly he was aroused from his musing by the sound of music, far away, yet near, and full of such surpassing sweetness that he stood spellbound. It was a lute touched by a master hand and accompanied by a woman's voice.

He glanced round. The door that led to the street was open, and the great dog lay peacefully in the passage. The sound did not come, then, from any serenading party, and as it continued he noted that it came muffled, as if through a wall.

On the left was the city prison; it could not come from there. On the right was a deserted dwelling, the former home of one Don José Flores, who, in a passion of jealous rage, had stabbed a rival and fled from justice to the mountains, where he had become the leader of a dangerous gang of bandits. The house and property had been confiscated, and the government seal was still on the gate. Yet the music seemed to come from this direction, and he heard it most plainly when he paused in front of an unused door, covered now by a luxurious rose vine, but which, he knew, connected with the passage leading to the Flores garden.

He stood still and listened. Soft and sweet came the sounds, thrilling him in every nerve. Something impelled him to follow them, and he pushed aside the tangled vine, opening with some difficulty the door, which turned slowly on its iron hinges.

As he had surmised, it led into a passage connecting with the neighbouring garden, which was surrounded by a high fence and filled with overgrown vines and bushes. No light came from the house, but he could hear the sound more plainly now, and guided by it he pushed open a door, then stood back amazed at his own temerity.

The door opened softly. As he had guessed it corresponded to the one in his own house and led into the patio.

The place was dark, except at one end, where a quaint silver lamp was fastened into the angles of the adobe wall. The perfume of the roses came to him, and palms and potted plants were arranged round the sides, all speaking of habitation in the place which was supposed by everyone to be deserted.

Nor was this all. The light from the lamp fell upon a woman who half reclined on a couch covered with panther skins. It was she whose voice Harcourt had heard, and it came to him sweetly and clearly as he stood there, unable to move hand or foot.

Her clinging robe of black, confined at the waist by a silver chain, left revealed the beauty of her neck and arms, and the lamp, as it flickered in the draught, gleamed on the red gold of her hair like a living flame. Her long, black lashes lay like shadows on her cheek as she sat, with head bent a little forward, picking at the lute she held.

Harcourt, unable to take his eyes from her beauty, felt a strange sensation creeping over him as he stood silent in the shadow. Something warned him to retrace his steps, yet he felt powerless to do so. Suddenly, as if to make the decision for him, the door behind him flew to with a resounding slam, and the lady started up.

Fearing that she might be alarmed, Harcourt stepped quickly forward.

"Pardon me," he said in Spanish, "I heard the singing, and something urged me to seek the singer. For my intrusion, fair one, you must blame this," and he touched the lute which lay on her knees, then stopped, astonished at himself. In three years he had not spoken in this strain to any woman.

She raised her eyes. They were dark as midnight, soft as the velvet pansy-leaves, tender, compelling, inscrutable. From the moment that Harcourt looked into their liquid depths he knew but one desire, and that, never to look away.

"Intrusion? No," she answered; "you are welcome, for I know you, Don Cullermo, and have often watched you. It is lonely here."

"Then may I stay," he asked persuasively, "and hear you sing again?"

She drew aside her dress and made room for him beside her. "I am Amorita Flores," she told him, "the sister of

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Don José. Sometimes I am with him and sometimes I am compelled to remain here, but keep it secret. It is a dreary life, señor; I would die if it were not for my lute."

Harcourt did not answer. Leaning back against the panther skins, he gazed dreamily into the star-set sky. A vision of Madeline floated across his mind, and, with a sudden resolution, he started up; but, encountering the eyes of Amorita, he hesitated, then sank slowly back again.

"It is a relic," she went on, in her soft, languorous voice; "it belonged to a troubador, and 'tis said that when he willed he could draw the hearts of man and maid from their breasts by its sweetness. See, the strings are all of silver, not one has ever broken. 'Tis said that when one breaks, the spell goes also."

"A dangerous weapon," answered Harcourt, lightly; "yet I court the danger. Sing again."

Smiling, she touched the strings, while Harcourt sat with half-closed eyes, his hand, which had fallen on her shoulder, resting there unrebuked. He felt a sort of faint surprise at himself, but it was dim and far away. He was content to be beside this beautiful woman in the soft Mexican night. Past and future, all faded; he was passive to her charming.

Her voice died away in a sweet, lingering note, and the lute softly slid to the ground. She leaned nearer, until her silky hair brushed his face. His hand crept round her neck, and, emboldened by her silence, he bent and kissed her throat.

Her lips drooped, but Harcourt started up suddenly, resolutely throwing off the spell. He pushed her from him. "No, I will not!" he exclaimed. "By heaven, I will not!"

Amorita also rose. Unheeding his violence she stretched her white arms out languidly, and let them fall slowly round his neck, looking full into his eyes. One moment she kept him thus, the next he held her closely in his arms, while their lips met in a long, passionate kiss.

. . . . . .

Ralph Swain had, for some time past, noticed a change in his friend. He was abstracted and reticent, and looked worn and haggard; yet he declared that he was in perfect health, and seemed to resent any remarks upon his appearance.

One day when they were standing talking to Don Juan Gonzales, a friend of Swain's, a woman of wonderful beauty passed the door. Swain, always eager to view a pretty face, craned his neck to look after her.

"Pretty woman that," he said regretfully. "Wonder I have not seen her before."

Gonzales laughed, then turned suddenly grave.

"Turn your eyes from her, my friend," he said. "That is Amorita, the witch and the ruin of Flores. It is said that by obtaining new victims she keeps him in funds. It is certain that no one who once gets into her toils can resist her, and many a man has died for her perfidy. There is something about her that makes a man believe in her until he finds her out. I know to my sorrow, for she ruined my faith in woman. It is now some time since she favoured us with her presence. I wonder where she is staying and who her latest victim is."

A gasp from Harcourt drew the men's attention to him. He stood leaning against the counter, breathing heavily, his face ghastly white.

Swain sprang to his assistance. "What is it, old fellow?" he asked anxiously.

Harcourt assured him that it was a sudden faintness produced by the heat; then meeting the keen eyes of Gonzales he blushed deeply. Swain thought no more of the incident, but Don Juan turned away with a cynical smile, murmuring "La belle Amorita."

Truth to tell, Will Harcourt, from the time he first opened the door leading to the Flores garden, had lived in a very torment. Possessed by an evil infatuation for the beautiful singer, his days were spent in remorse over his unfaithfulness to Madeline—whose letters lay unread and unanswered—and a determination to redeem his lost honour and free himself from the toils of the enchantress. But no matter what he might resolve, when night fell, and the silvery strains of her lute came softly through the adobe walls, he would hasten to the garden of Amorita. In her presence his doubts disappeared, but only to assail him with redoubled force when daylight came again, and he was forced to undergo the routine of his business.

The money he had carefully saved for Madeline was lavished upon Amorita. He believed what she told him, and, urged by her not to betray her hiding-place, he guarded the secret so jealously that even Swain never doubted him, but continually jested with him about his "hermit life," and his fidelity to Madeline. When he repeated to her Gonzales' story, she weepingly denied its truth, and at the sight of her lovely eyes filled with tears, Harcourt was ready to kill the man who had traduced her.

Time went on, until at last one day Will Harcourt awoke to the fact that he was ruined. A cheque given by him in payment of a bill had been refused at the Bank of Mexico. All the money he had toiled for had been cast in the lap of the siren. So far, he had been able to keep his secret from his friend, but now that would be impossible, and, after a long day of desperate conjecture, he resolved to bring matters to a crisis. He would throw himself at the feet of Amorita, beg her to marry him, and then join her brother in the mountains. By this act he knew he would dishonour himself for ever, but it would be better than his double life. Madeline's face rose before him, and he shuddered as he thought of her grief and broken heart. But the face of Amorita—alluring, beautiful, irresistible—drove all other thoughts away, and he determined to follow his desires.

As night drew on he paced restlessly up and down the patio, waiting for the sound of the lute, which was his signal to hasten to her side; but all was silent. Moments, hours dragged by, and still she did not call him. Finally, devoured by anxiety, he pushed open the hidden door, and followed the familiar way into the garden.

The patio was silent and deserted, the silver lamp unlit, but the moon, shining brightly, showed him the couch at the end, and it was empty.

He called her name. No answer but the echoes came. With growing alarm he searched the house; her lace mantilla lay where she had dropped it, but Amorita was not there.

Returning to the patio, he stood bewildered. The palms, the flowers were the same, the soft grasses strewn on the floor were undisturbed. The faint, subtle perfume, which was inseparable from Amorita, was in the air, but the lady had vanished. Something gleaning on the panther skins caught his eye. It was the lute which had first lured him to destruction, pinned with a small stiletto, and slipped under the strings was a note.

Hastily lighting the lamp he tore it open and read:

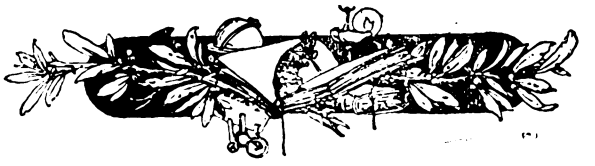
"Amigo mio: I go to the only man I could ever love, my brave José. To you who have made this possible I leave the lute you loved to hear in memory of your generosity. If that fails to compensate, there is the stiletto. Adios.

"AMORITA."

The paper fell from his hand, rustling softly. The unfilled lamp died down and went out. There was a sound of shrill discord, then—silence.

The first rays of the sun, peering merrily into the patio, fell upon Will Harcourt stretched upon the couch of Amorita with the dagger in his heart.

Beside him, rent and shattered, its spell gone for ever, lay the lute with silver strings.



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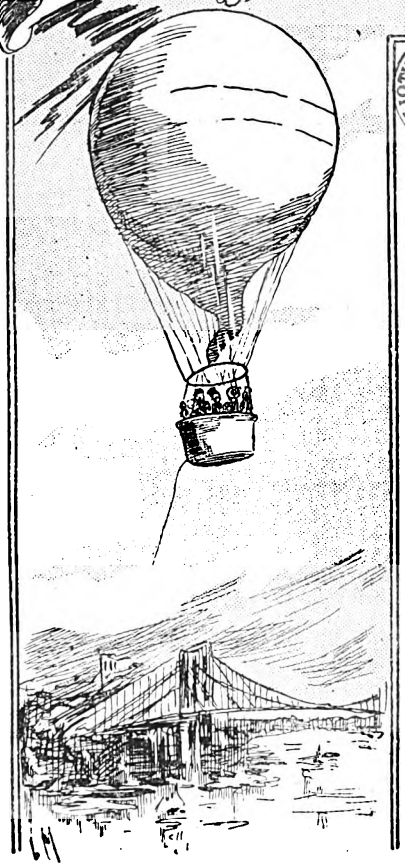
A WEDDING IN THE AIR



"YOU cannot marry my daughter, young Bergen," Mr. Rowley declared. "until you are worth £8,000. £8,000 isn't a fortune, but it permits a man to start in life."

"Yes, sir," said I, standing, hat in hand, near his office desk in New York.

"Very well, young Bergen, go and make it, then," said old Rowley, "and after that ask me for Caroline Elizabeth."

"Yes, sir," said I, seizing my hat in a great hurry, as if I were going to cash a cheque for that amount instantly, for fear the bank would close, "and thank you very much."

"Kindly shut the door after you on account of the draught," responded old Rowley.

I did so, and then with a groan stalked out into the street. I did not possess 8,000 farthings. I had left England to make my fortune and I had not made it. I could look forward to making a decent salary and living on it, even putting a few pounds in a savings bank for a rainy day, and Caddie—that is what I called her—Caroline Elizabeth did not seem a bit like her to me—Caddie said she could keep house beautifully, and that she could be happy in the very cheapest flat that we shared together.

And now old Rowley commanded me to produce £8,000.

I would do anything, I thought, anything to get that sum of money, but when, where, how was it to be done?

Suddenly I ran violently into the arms of another man, who had stopped in the middle of the pavement to light a cigar.

"What the dickens—hullo, old boy, how d'ye do?" cried this person.

"Millett, by all that's wonderful!" said I; "I thought you were in South America."

"So I was," said he. "Gonzales and Ravello offered splendid terms for a five-year contract, but when I got down there I found the yellow fever in full blast. Boat came out to take us in; looked over the side, saw something sewn up in a sack floating about. 'What's that?' says I.

"'That, señor,' says the fellow that had come to fetch me, 'that, señor, is the Señor Jones, last head clerk of the respected Señors Gonzales and Ravello. He is dead of the yellow fever, and they no longer bury the dead, there are too many.'

"'That's the fellow who resigned his place and expected me to come and take it.'

"'I believe so, señor,' said he.

"'Ah, then you can take me back to the steamer,' said I; and here I am. Confoundedly disappointed, too. I counted on making £8,000 in these next five years."

"£8,000?" I repeated.

"Yes," said he. "But much good they'd do a fellow that was bobbing about the ocean in a sack."

"A man might not take the fever," said I.

"He might not," said Millett, "and then, again, he might."

"Have Gonzales and What's-his-Name got another head clerk yet?" asked I.

"Not they," said Millett. "There is a lot of commission as well as salary; as I said, a fellow might make £8,000 and £10,000 for himself—a fellow with a good connection. But what use——"

I did not stay to hear the rest.

With a brief "Good-bye," I rushed away, leaving Millett staring after me, sought the office of Gonzales and Ravello, and presented my credentials to the senior partner—a gentleman with round, black eyes rolling in orange-coloured seas, a round nose, and a quantity of straight, black hair, who was most affable, and learning that I spoke Spanish, received me with open arms.

"You may go at once," he said. "We need a new head clerk; ze former is a little indispose; he vish to retire. Matters are confuse in consequence. You are needed."

I remembered Millett's narrative, but did not repeat it.

"I will go," I said; "my object is to make money."

I signed the agreement, and proceeded to extract from Mr. Rowley a promise that if I returned at the end of five years with the sum he insisted upon, I should wed his daughter.

"Five years," old Rowley said, laughing. "Well, if she'll wait for you five years, I won't hinder her. I don't believe any girl will do that, though she may think she will. However, you show a proper spirit, and I know a man or two out there who will throw something in your way, and you can spend the evening with Caroline Elizabeth, if you like."

Caddie wept bitterly. She asked what use was anything at the end of five years. She wondered if I knew we should be dreadfully old by that time. She was sure I should fall in love with a black-eyed lady in a high comb and lace mantilla, and forget her. But she—oh! she would be true. She would be old and ugly, but as true as steel.

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"Saw something sewn up in a sack floating away."

I was very unhappy myself, and I had added cause in my secret knowledge of the fate of my predecessor, Mr. Jones. But I pretended to be very hopeful.

"Only be true to me," I said—"only be true."

She wept in my arms as she repeated her promise; and I only saw her once more before I started, when she came to see me off. I reached my destination in safety, and found that I had secured a splendid position. The yellow fever was dying out; and, at all events, they were used to it there. I took every precaution, and I did not take the fever. In fact, I kept very well.

I began to make money. I wrote as often as circumstances would permit to Caddie, and our course of true love was running very well, considering, when I received a most frightful letter from old Rowley.

"Young Bergen," it began, "merely because I mentioned the well-known fact that he was a liar and a thief, that abominable, contemptible, cowardly, and untrustworthy sneak, your uncle Tomkins, has called me some of the most offensive names in the English language. I have pulled his nose, he has beaten me with his cane, which I have taken from him and broken over his confounded back. It all happened in the Stock Exchange before a thousand witnesses. He was taken home in an ambulance, and as soon as he is well enough I am going to have him sent to a convict prison for five years.

"After being so ill-used by your uncle, I, as every one knows, the most inoffensive, law-abiding gentleman in New York, must renounce the *honour* (?) and *pleasure* (?) of being connected with him by marriage, and forbid you to write or speak to my daughter again. I have made her take her oath that she will never marry you. I did it gently, though firmly; but she knows the value of an oath.

"O. ROWLEY."

"P.S.—She has begged me to permit her to write you a farewell letter of explanation. I have yielded to paternal weakness and permitted this. You must not reply,

"O. R."

Her oath. Old Rowley, who supposed he had brought up his family piously, had a habit of lugging out a large family Bible which he possessed, and making them swear all sorts of things upon it. Such an oath I felt sure my Caddie would never dare break. I read her letter with a sinking heart.

"Papa has told you all," she said. "I love you, and I never will marry anyone else. When he got out the family Bible I said at first, 'No, sir, if you please, I don't wish to be undutiful, but I will not.' When he locked me up on bread and water I still refused; but when he got his pistols, both of them loaded, and held one at either of my temples, and said he should curse me first and shoot me afterwards, and mamma called through the keyhole that she was dying of fright, I gave in.

"'Swear,' said papa, 'that you will not marry this young Bergen as long as you are upon this earth or sail upon the waters thereof. Swear it, Caroline Elizabeth, if you wish to live. Otherwise you die, with my curse on your head.'

"It was an awful scene, but I put my hand upon the Bible, and said, after him, 'I will not marry my Henry as long as I am upon this earth or sail upon the waters thereof, but I will love him until I die.'

"'Just as you please about that,' said papa. Then mamma had nervous prostration, and she is only just getting well, and I wish I were dead. Your broken-hearted

"CADDIE."

This was old Rowley's gentle firmness, then. He had made his daughter take the oath at the pistol's mouth.

I read the letter over a dozen times; that clause about the waters of the earth seemed to bar every way of escape.

Even mid-ocean would not seem to invalidate her vow to so conscientious a creature as my little Caddie.

I wrote to Caddie, despite her father's edict, but no answer ever came to me, and probably my letter never reached her.

At last, however, a New York paper brought tidings which, while they were tragic, were hopeful.

Mr. Rowley was dead. There was a glowing obituary notice of him in the columns, but I heard afterward that he died in a fit of rage, caused by a dinner that did not please him.

As soon as it was possible to do so I asked for a holiday, and returned to New York.

Reaching the great city, I flew at once to the residence of the late Mr. Rowley.

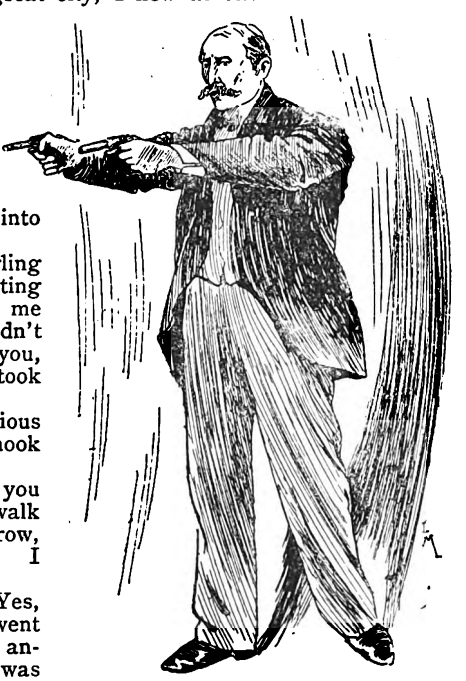
No one forbade me to enter the door, and soon Caddie, her eyes red with weeping, came to me in a black dress, and threw herself into my arms.

"Poor, dear, darling papa was just getting the Bible to make me swear that I wouldn't ever speak to you, when the angels took him," she said.

I looked as serious as possible, and shook my head.

"As he did not, you may take a little walk with me to-morrow, may you not?" I asked.

She answered, "Yes, dear," and I went away and made another call. It was upon a young clergy-



This was old Rowley's gentle firmness, then.

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man. And when he learned my plans and heard my story, he agreed to my request.

It was the year 1879. Coney Island had but recently been transformed from a peaceful solitude to the land of hotels, booths, showmen, and concert halls that it has now become.

It was to Coney Island that I took Caddie, and there we met the Rev. Mr. Nutley, a young clergyman, who bowed and blushed and introduced us to his married sister and her husband, and his younger sister, who smiled and showed her dimples as though she knew a little secret.

We walked about the island, had lunch together, and bought milk of the milkmaids, who drew it iced from the monstrous effigy of a cow, in the kiosk.

"There is the captive balloon," said my friend, the clergyman, just then; "let us all go up in her."

There was a captive balloon that year at Coney Island, and it was a great attraction.

An ascent was about to be made. A short interview with the manager won us permission to have it for ourselves for half-an-hour. We stepped in it, ascended the ladder, screamed and clung to each other, and in a minute or two we saw the world far beneath us. We were no longer of it.

"If the cord should break!" gasped Mr. Nutley's sister.

Nobody made any addition to this remark. Suddenly I seized Caddie's hand.

"My dear betrothed wife, we are no longer upon the earth, nor are we upon the waters thereof. Our position absolves you from the oath you took upon the family Bible. You pledged yourself to nothing concerning the air. It was only land and water. I have consulted Mr. Nutley, who is an expert in such matters. Being a clergyman, he is willing to marry us while we are in this balloon. He knows all the circumstances."

"My dear Miss Rowley," said Mr. Nutley, "I feel that it is quite proper of you to take a literal view of an oath you took under compulsion. Your excellent father, I am sure, would have it so if he could send a message from a better world. We all have moments of passion, in which we do things of which we repent. I believe he has repented of offering you that oath, and I believe, being what it was, you may marry in the air with all propriety."

"We think so too," chorused our friends.

Then Caddie, blushing and weeping, drew off her little glove, and my friend Nutley united us in the holy bonds of matrimony, in the presence of witnesses.

How the news got about I do not know, but we were saluted with cheers as we descended to *terra firma*, and were mentioned in next day's paper as a couple who sought notoriety by being married in the captive balloon.

My readers, however, know the reason, and no one has ever blamed us for it.

A SOLDIER OF BRITTANY.

FROM THE FRENCH.

It was in the country, near the forest not far from the Seine, in the modest villa where I hoped to spend my old age, that I saw Jean de Thommeray for the first time. He was scarcely twenty-two. Some pages signed with my name had won his heart to me, and he presented himself with no other recommendation than his good appearance and his desire to know me. The sympathy of the young has an irresistible attraction. It is very sweet to be able to draw them when one is approaching the autumn of life. I was the more willing to give him a welcome that I could do so without any effort, for he was really charming.

It was a clear April day. We walked together in the woods of Meudon. Though many years divided us, we conversed like two friends. He had generous impulses, holy illusions; all the happy and ardent feelings of his age.

Thanks to the confidences he gave me without my asking, I soon found out all about him. His father, who came of a good old Breton family, had studied in Paris, in the days when patriotism and liberty ranked as high as letters and arts among the young men of modern ideas.

The Breton gentleman felt the influences of this awakening in the flood of thought, and, without giving up the traditions of honour in his family, he set sail with the current. He loved, with a pure, delicate, romantic love, a poor girl of good family, of Irish descent, and he married her. When his studies were ended, he went back to Brittany.

Here Monsieur de Thommeray lived, like his forefathers, the life of a country gentleman—hunting, riding horseback, visiting his neighbours, improving his land; while his wife—"la belle Irlandaise," as they called her—gave herself up to domestic affairs, and governed with grace and authority. Though he had taken root in this primitive life, he was faithful to the tastes and inclinations of his youthful days. He never went beyond the circle of his remembrances, and for him nothing beyond them seemed to exist. Time, which never stops, had apparently forgotten him on the way.

It was a happy family, he, his wife, and his three sons. The elder and the second son showed no taste for study or literature, but Jean, the little one, more delicate than his brothers, grew up, under his mother's gentle wing, with a strong sense of the beauties and harmonies of creation and a love of books. While his brothers walked and rode over the farm, and led a hardy, rustic life, Jean read, dreamed, or composed little Breton poems that his mother proudly compared to Moore's "Irish Melodies," and that excited the admiration of his father. His brothers, too, were proud of his gifts and his charming ways, and even of his weakness when a little fellow, for that seemed to claim their protection.

But one morning, not long before the time I first met him, Jean embraced them all and set out for Paris, filled with the same illusions that his father had had before him.

Two or three years passed. I did not know what had become of Jean. I supposed that he must have left Paris, and that he was living peacefully in his father's home. He had evidently forgotten me. I was not surprised at that. As for me, I thought of him from time to time. A journey I made into Brittany revived in my heart the memory of my young friend, when I learned one day that I was only a few leagues from the Manor of Thommeray. I arrived at nightfall at the house I loved to think of as the asylum of happiness. I found the family assembled, and, not seeing Jean, naturally I asked for him. M. de Thommeray answered me briefly. "Monsieur," he said, "we have only two sons now—these whom you see. We never speak of the one we have lost."

Was Jean dead? No; the attitude of M. de Thommeray, his voice, his language, and his gesture were not those of a father who has buried his son. During my visit his mother found an opportunity of speaking to me alone. She told of her son and of the sorrow he had brought upon them—how he had compromised himself, falling lower and lower from day to day, in the wicked world of Paris, and how his family no longer looked upon him as their own. She made me promise to go to see him, to write to her and to let her know how he lived, to hide nothing from her. Could this be the same Jean de Thommeray whom I had known? How could he have fallen so low from the heights where I had left him?

I went back to Paris. I found him living in richly-furnished apartments, and he held out his hand to me with an easy grace, as if he had not a pang in the world—as if the luxury, in the midst of which I had surprised him, had been bought by the efforts of a glorious and honest labour, instead of the

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fruits of the gaming-table. He began to excuse himself for having so long neglected me.

"All that is excused," I said. "I have come from Brittany, where I saw your parents, and as you have always spoken of them with respect, I am only fulfilling a duty when I come to tell you of the sad state in which I found them——"

"Thanks, monsieur, you need not go on." He interrupted me calmly and with a tone of great urbanity. "It is nothing new that you tell me. My way of living is a subject of scandal and trouble to my family. My brothers disown me, my mother weeps in secret, my father no longer knows me. Well, sir, be my judge. I am not a saint. Not being able to reform the age as once I thought of doing, you remember, I have ended by adopting its ways and wearing its livery. It seems to me that in a society where money is a god, not to be rich would be an impiety. I have played, I do not deny it, and I have always won. By my skilful playing I keep up the state of the house and belongings I won by my luck. My parents lived according to the manner of their time. I live according to the ways of my own."

It was sad to hear this young man exult in his fall and glory in his ruin. All about him betrayed the habits of the life he now led. His very smile, once so sweet and clear, had a cold expression like the hard lustre of steel. He told me his story, how he had been basely deceived and robbed of his last centime by a woman whom he thought deserving of his heart's devotion, in spite of his mother's penetration, which had sounded the depths of unworthiness in the character hidden beneath the charms of beauty and an artless manner; how, when he came to his senses, his youth was dead, and a new and a worse man had come to life within him. He believed no more in anything good.

"There are no longer any women!" he said.

"You are mistaken," I replied. "We have mothers, sisters, friends, wives, who every day and every hour quietly accomplish miracles of goodness, devotion, and charity. Society is not as bad as you think; but you, you, sir, are much worse than I feared. Still, why not return to your family, who are grieving for you? Your youth is not dead; it is waiting for you there."

"It is too late! I must confess to you that since my sojourn at Baden the gambling fever has never left me. Let us live and enjoy ourselves; after us, the deluge? It is now my hour for the *Bourse*, and, to my regret, I am obliged to leave you."

"One word more," I said, rising. "Until now you have been successful; but fortune will not always be on your side. What will you do when she betrays you? For that day will surely come."

"Let it come. I am ready!"

"You will kill yourself," I said. He did not answer. "And God?——and your mother?" After a moment's hesitation, he held out his hand. I took it.

A few days after this I wrote to Madame de Thommeray and gave an account of my interview with Jean. I did not try to see him again. Other thoughts occupied me. War was declared. The enemy was already marching on Paris; the world was filled with the noise of our disasters.

Whoever did not see Paris during the last days of the siege cannot form an idea of the physiognomy of the city at that time. The confusion and flight brought on by the first news of our defeat gave way to manly thoughts and noble resolves. Every one was ready for great sacrifices.

One morning, on the Quai Voltaire, between the Pont-Royal and the Pont des Saints-Pères, I met Jean, face to face.

"At last!" I said, greeting him. "And you have stayed?"

"Yes, I have stayed here," he replied. "I was obliged to look after my fortune. Now it is all arranged. I have drawn out all my money, and I leave this evening to go and live in a foreign land."

"You are going away!" I exclaimed. "When your country is in agony, you think of leaving her?"

"My country, monsieur! The wise man carries his country wherever he goes. You, yourself, what are you doing here?"

"I have not returned only to go away again. I am not worth much; but here I have known good and bad days. Paris has given me whatever good I have in me. I wish to share her dangers, if only by my presence. I will live in her emotions, I will help to bear her anguish; and if we suffer hunger, I shall have the honour of suffering with her. But you, Jean de Thommeray! But you! I knew you were changed for the worse, but I did not think you were fallen so low.

"The land is invaded—and you, a young man, instead of seizing a musket, catch hold of your pocket-book! The fortunes of France are on the verge of ruin, and you have no other care than to realise your future. To-morrow the enemy will be at our gates, and you strap up your valise and fly like a coward! It was not enough to have plunged your family into mourning and despair. You must inflict this shame, too, upon them!"

A quick flush rose to his forehead. A light shone in his eyes.

"Pardon, monsieur, pardon. These are very grand words, it seems to me. You are too old and I am too young for us to understand each other. I am not running away. I am *going* away. There is nothing here to keep me. Paris does not interest me. It is only just that she should be punished. As for my family, they are safe enough from the dangers of war, and I do not see why I should be forbidden to seek for myself —in Brussels, or in London, or Florence—the peace and security they enjoy in Brittany."

My heart was sick and disgusted. I turned away, when suddenly Jean started with surprise. "Listen!" he said. I listened, and heard a strange music, the tones of which, vague at first and indistinct, grew louder and louder, and seemed to be coming towards us. I looked, too, as I listened.

I saw beyond the bridge of Solferino an immense crowd, who came on singing. It was a slow, grave chant, almost religious, and had nothing in common with the bursts of song to which we were accustomed. Jean leaned against the parapet. I saw that he was very pale. In the meantime, the confused mass approached nearer and nearer, and became less and less confused. The *gardes mobiles* of Finisterre were entering Paris.

The head of the column is now only a few steps from us. It is my turn to be startled. I look at Jean. His hand falls upon mine. "My father! My two brothers!" he says in a low voice. And he sees passing before him, under their most striking forms, the eternal truths that he has so long disowned or forgotten—God, country, duty, and family! The long pageant of his honest and noble days defiled before him singing as the troops go by. I give him the last blow. On one of the balconies of the *quai* I have just seen his mother.

"You unfortunate fellow!" I exclaim. "You said there were no longer any women. Look, there is one. Do you recognise her?"

Madame de Thommeray waves her handkerchief; the Breton chant redoubles in fervour, and the chief of the battalion, with the courtesy of a knightly gentleman, bows in his saddle, and salutes her with his sword. Mute and motionless, with sad eyes and dry eyelids, Jean seems turned to stone. I leave him to the mercy of God.

The next day, in the courtyard of the Louvre, the Commandant de Thommeray called the roll of his battalion. The call finished, he passed down the ranks, when a soldier stepped out and said:

"Commandant, one of your men was forgotten."

"What is your name?"

"My name is Jean," answered the volunteer, lowering his eyes.

"Who are you?"

"A man who has lived badly."

"What do you wish?"

"To die well."

"Are you rich or poor?"

"Yesterday I possessed an ill-gotten fortune. I have resigned it voluntarily. I have only my musket and my knapsack."

"That is well." And with a gesture he ordered the young man to return to the ranks. There was a long silence. The Commandant had again taken his place in front of the battalion. "Jean de Thommeray!" he called out.

A manly voice answered, "*Present!*"

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THE NORWEGIAN BRIG.

IT was during the Empire, when Napoleon was knocking the kings right and left. The Englishmen had blockaded all the French ports, and privateering was almost impossible, for a cruise was pretty sure to come to an end in the Plymouth Prison.

So nearly all the French ships lay sunning themselves at their moorings, like so many rotten old hulks.

But a few Frenchmen were still cruising on the high seas, and giving the Englishmen an occasional shot by way of revenge and in order to keep in practice. One of these was Captain Kerkof, a true Breton, hard-featured and swarthy; stiff as a handspike, thirsty as a cook, and jolly as a midshipman.

He was a good Christian withal, for he never failed to have mass said on leaving port, and had given one of his richest prizes to the chapel of St. Barbe—all of which did not prevent his being leader of a crew of sharks and the greatest scoundrel of the lot.

Kerkof, then, in spite of the Englishmen, was roaming the North Sea in his pretty schooner, the *Sans Quartier*, with his eye on the wind and his hands in his own pockets, in default of others.

It was a day of dense fog, and the horizon was shadowy, but suddenly the captain saw the ghostly form of a brig cleaving the fog, and standing on a course nearly parallel to his own.

At the same moment the look-out cried, "Sail on the starboard quarter!"

"What fool of a skipper dares come within gunshot of the *Sans Quartier*?" roared Kerkof. "If he's an Englishman, we'll give him a trip to France for the good of his health. Come, my lads, clear the decks! Crowd all sail and send the stranger our card, for we privateers must be polite, above all else."

The next instant a ball from one of the schooner's guns plunged through the fog and pierced the rigging of the mysterious brig.

There was a moment of suspense, but the stranger had evidently understood this polite invitation to show her colours, for a small English flag soon ran up a halyard, and fluttered at the brig's peak.

"Good!" cried Kerkof, calmly filling his pipe; "to your guns, my lads, but don't fire until I give the word."

The *Sans Quartier* changed her course slightly, and bore down upon her prey with outspread wings, like a cormorant.

The situation of the brig seemed desperate, as the point for which she was making would evidently be reached by the *Sans Quartier* at the same time, so that the stranger was running straight into the range of her formidable adversary's guns.

She kept on her course, however, and as she grew more distinct an expression of wonder overspread the faces of Kerkof and his crew.

"What kind of ship is that?" said the captain. "Did you ever see such a rig, my lads? She doesn't carry sail enough to cross a mill-pond in a week, you'd say, but there she goes making a good twelve knots before our eyes! I'll be hanged if I can understand it!"

The crew answered only by nods and oaths, and the like symptoms of surprise and terror.

But the preparations for attack went on, and the gunners stood at their posts with lighted matches.

"Attention!" suddenly cried Kerkof, springing into the nettings. "Ship or shadow, we'll send a volley into her. Now we're in line. Ready, men? Fire!"

A terrible detonation shook every timber of the *San Quartier*.

When the smoke cleared away, the men gazed in amazement at the spot where the brig had been.

She had vanished! Not a vestige of her to be seen!

"Sunk!" cried a dozen voices.

"Silence, fools!" roared Kerkof.

With an air of stupefaction he scanned the sea in all directions. All eyes followed his, and soon there rose a chorus of oaths, for the brig, dimly seen through the fog, was scudding away, *far to larboard and with all sails furled*.

"Fire again!" cried Kerkof, in a hoarse, unnatural voice.

The second broadside was given with less precision than the first, for the strange sight had lured some of the gunners from their posts.

The brig was too far away to be affected by the ragged volley, and was soon lost to sight in the fog.

Kerkof, leaning against the nettings, was still staring in amazement at the spot where she had vanished, when the boatswain's voice roused him from his stupor.

"Captain!"

"Well?"

"Captain, did you see that brig?"

"Of course I did, you idiot!"

"Well, Captain, she is the very one we sunk in the Channel a year ago this blessed day."

"What!"

"Yes, Captain, a year ago to-day. It was Good Friday, you know. Perhaps the crew were not prepared for death, and they have come back to ask our prayers for the repose of their souls."

"You are an idiot!"

"Well, may be I am, Captain."

The old sailor retired, slowly shaking his head, and Kerkof resumed his reverie.

The sun went down, and the privateer kept on her course with a favouring wind.

Suddenly the men, who had been discussing the strange occurrence, set up a great shout.

Kerkof raised his head and recoiled in astonishment.

Close on the port bow stood the strange brig, with all sails furled, but keeping even pace with the schooner. A torrent of smoke and flame poured from a great black cylinder amidships.

"The brig!" gasped a voice near Kerkof.

"To your guns and fire!" shouted he.

The terrible brig seemed to have heard this hoarse and broken command, for she bounded forward, crossed the schooner's bows, and soon disappeared to starboard.

She passed so close to the *Sans Quartier* that the roaring of the flames was heard, and through the port-holes was seen a fiercely-blazing fire, with fantastic human figures moving about in its ruddy light.

Not a word was spoken aboard the Frenchman. The crew fell on their knees. For full ten minutes Kerkof knelt, with head bared, and his rosary in his hands.

Several days later the *Sans Quartier* made Breton port. Kerkof and his crew never knew what had frightened them so badly, but about this time the English newspapers announced the arrival at London of a steamboat hailing from Norway.

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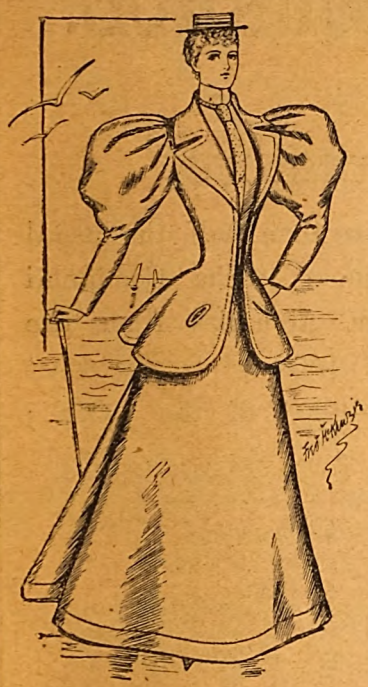

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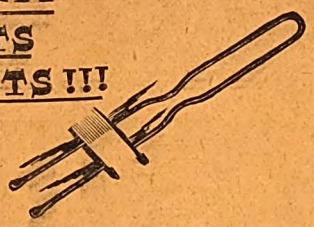

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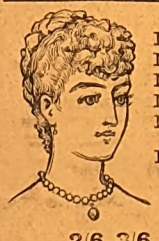

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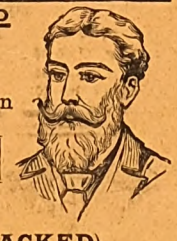

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 298.—Vol. XI. *FOR THE WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 15, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

A DAUGHTER OF THE DESERT.

A CARAVAN was plodding southward, long ago, over the glistening sand, under the torturing sun, crossing the great desert between Persia and India. The path was plainly marked by white and bleaching bones.

There were skeletons at every feast, no matter where they spread their mats; for this was the great highway between the old world of Persia and the newly conquered realm of India.

The caravan was as mixed as a caravan could be. It was a combination of small families and individuals, making the journey together for mutual protection against the Thugs and Brinjari who infested the desert. Each family lived and moved by itself, holding little intercourse with the rest, except in time of danger, when they united under a common chief.

Among the poorest yet most exclusive of the pilgrims was a family of three—a father, mother, and boy of five years. Very often they looked sadly backward; then, as if struggling to gather hope from the opposite direction, they looked forward again, over that interminable gleam of sand.

All that they possessed was borne upon the back of one donkey and yet his burden was so light that the mother rode beside it. It was nothing, in fact, but a bag of grain on one side for the donkey, a sack of maize meal on the other, with a bunch of red peppers, for the family, and the mutual goat-skin of water between them.

The mother, sitting behind the water-cask, was a beautiful Persian woman; frail and delicate, and very different from what one would expect to find upon the desert with a mixed caravan. The father, a tall and powerful man, walked beside the donkey, and much of the time the boy sat upon his shoulders.

These shoulders were so broad and strong that the little fellow could not imagine himself to be any possible burden; his black eyes were merry, and his red lips laughed, and the plume on his turban bobbed about as he tossed his head, as proud as any king upon a royal throne. And it was, indeed, a throne that was royal, little as he or any one else, except the woman riding upon the donkey, dreamed of such a thing. In truth, however, he was sitting upon the shoulders of the crown prince of Persia.

Serious complications had arisen between the royal family and various factions of the government, endangering the life of the little prince, and since he was two years old he had been carefully hidden. Even the boy himself was kept in ignorance of his rank. The secret escaped, at last, and his life was again in peril. His parents' only hope lay in removing him to some distant land. They thought of India; and rather than trust the precious charge to others, they went themselves, disguised as pilgrims, in the mixed caravan.

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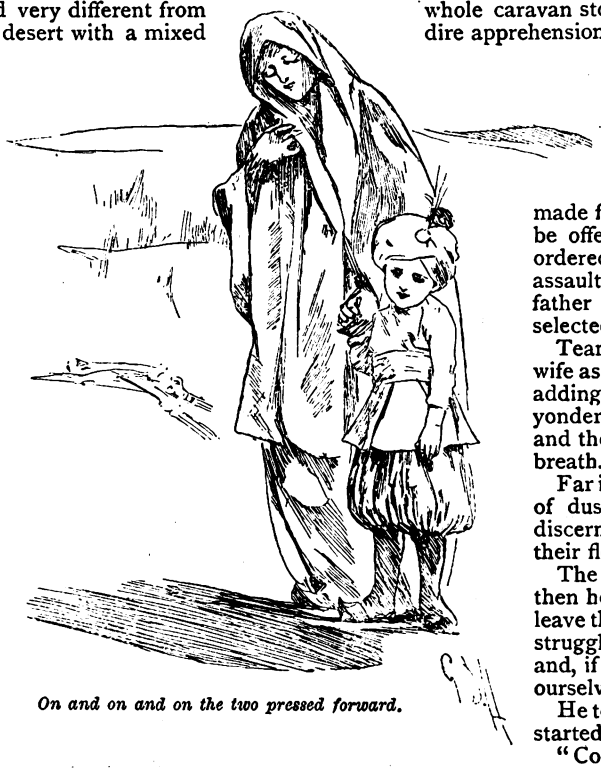
It was the eighth day of their journey, and but six days remained. "Have courage, Light of My Eyes," the man said to his wife. "More than the half is behind us, and better days lie beyond this desert sand. Thy face is sadder than its wont. Thou art not so well to-day."

"I am as well, Dearest Breath of My Body," she replied, laying her hand tenderly upon her husband's shoulder, while the boy, sitting upon the other shoulder, leaned over, behind his father's head, to caress it. "I am as well; but I dreamed a dream last night, three times repeated. I stood in the desert, with our son. I leaned upon a staff, and he on me. Out of the South there came a mighty hand and grasped the staff."

The mother shuddered, and for a moment clung, trembling, to her husband's shoulder. Then in a faltering voice she continued, "I gave one cry to Allah, as I fell, and lo! an angel stood beside me and each time, in my dream, I heard him say, 'Fear not. Thou must go hence, but I shall abide.'"

The husband tried to comfort her, but he too was troubled. In his day and country a dream thrice repeated assumed the importance of a message from the Most High.

Late in the afternoon the mother touched her husband, and silently pointed to the south, where a little cloud lay just above the horizon. He shaded his eyes from the fierce glare, and watched it anxiously as he walked. Others seeing him did the same, till soon, without a word of command, the whole caravan stood still, watching that cloud in dire apprehension.



On and on and on the two pressed forward.

It came from the desert, not the sky. It grew rapidly larger, and came directly toward them. It was not caused by the wind; neither was it a peaceful caravan. In great commotion and consternation, preparations were made for such feeble defence as could be offered. The strongest men were ordered to the front, to receive the first assault, and of course the stalwart father was one of the first to be selected.

Tears stood in the eyes of his frail wife as she bravely said farewell to him, adding, "I fear it is my dream, for yonder hand cometh from the south, and thou art my staff, my heart and my breath."

Far in the distance, beneath the cloud of dust, keen eyes could now easily discern the forms of armed men, urging their fleet horses over the sand.

The husband hesitated for a moment, then he replied: "Fear not. I will not leave thee. It will be a hopeless struggle. We might as well go on, and, if danger comes to us, face it by ourselves."

He took the bridle of the donkey and started forward.

"Coward!" cried the leader of the

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caravan, seeing that he did not obey, "Go forward as I bid thee and help the guard."

"I have my own to protect, and for it I ask no help from thee," the father replied calmly, and, to the astonishment of every one, he went out alone upon the desert with the two he loved.

He urged the donkey forward at its utmost speed, but they were still near enough to hear the savage yells as the robbers came upon the caravan. They did not dare look back, but it was easy to understand the sounds which reached them; the clash of arms, the shrieks of the dying, the yell of the victor, the groan of the victim, the silence of triumph, as when the vulture begins to glut himself upon his prey.

Harder and faster the father urged the donkey till at last the dumb animal, utterly exhausted, lay down upon the sand and refused to move.

"Take the boy with thee, my Sun and my Moon," the father said, in a choking voice. "Go as fast and as far as thy strength will bear thee. If the animal will not move, then I will take the food and water from his back and follow as quickly as I may. It may be that the robbers will not care to come after us, and if they do, they will not go beyond the burden, which is all they seek. Go! It was for him we started. It is for him that we struggle now. Go, and Allah be by thy side."

It was not a time for words. The wife looked into her husband's eyes, knowing well that it was for the last time; but she looked at their little boy and, silently taking his hand, turned forward again, upon the path marked by whitening skeletons.

On and on and on the two pressed forward, as long as their strength held out.

They walked, they ran. They rested for a moment, and then toiled on again. The rolling sand-hills soon hid the objects behind them from their view, and the sand shrubs rose above them. No sound, no sign came from behind, and when the red sun sank into the sea of sand, the mother fell prostrate, under a dry and crackling sage bush, alone in the desert with her son. There was a wild gleam in her dark eyes as they looked upon the boy beside her. The lips were parched that tried to speak to him. The hand was cold as ice that caressed him, as he lay upon the sand, with his head upon her arm, and slept.

Hour after hour those eyes, too full of agony for tears, watched the stars as they flashed and sparkled. Hour after hour the ears were strained to catch the sound of the footfall of the man she loved, in a desperate hope against the surest conviction that the Hand from the South had taken away the staff. Hour after hour, in bitterest agony, she saw the night drag out its cold and silent length, and morning dawned.

Looked down upon her two little ones.

Fiery and red, as when it set, the sun came up out of the great, lifeless sea, and the boy opened his eyes. He turned to his mother. She was lying upon the sand, at a little distance. Her eyes were open, but she was only partially conscious. She did not notice him. He crept towards her. What was it she was holding in her arms? Could it be an angel? He had listened while she told her dream, and had understood more than his parents supposed. He realised that his father had been taken away and that his mother had fallen upon the desert. Could that be the angel? He heard the plaintive wail of a little baby girl, pleading for nourishment which the mother could not give, and wondered if it could be the voice of an angel, saying, "Fear not. Thou must go hence, but I shall abide."

The tortures of the day were over at last, but it was only that the tortures of another night might begin. The stars were like flashing darts to pierce them. Cold and white the moonlight flooded the wide expanse of death. Throughout the day no groan or murmur had escaped from the pale lips of the mother, but as the night came on, she breathed one deep, quivering sigh, and, slowly rising, looked down upon her two little ones.

She felt the icy chill of death creeping over her. She could not lie there dead between them. She took off her long sarai, and bound it about the baby girl. She took off her only remaining garment, and laid it gently over the boy. "She is thy sister," she whispered in his ear. "Allah will help thee to guard her until I come again."

Kneeling on the sand, with her face toward Mecca, she touched her forehead to the ground, and the little boy remembered afterward that she said, "Thou knowest they are a prince and a princess, born to the throne of Persia. They are thine. Do with them as thou wilt." Then she rose to her feet and, weak and tottering, walked slowly away from them.

That was the last that was ever known of her.

In a stupor, between death and sleep, the little ones lay till the sun was ready to rise again; when out of the desert there came another caravan, moving as they had been moving, from Persia toward India.

There was no mixture of elements about this caravan. Gold and jewels glistened upon the camel trappings. Swords and shields and spears shone and flashed in the early morning light. The camels were young and fleet, and the swift-footed dromedaries seemed almost to glide along the glistening surface.

Why not? The lord of the caravan was the great sheik, Selim Christi, prime minister of Akbar, the Emperor of India. He was returning from a royal embassage to the throne of Persia, and the great white camel which bore him, in the midst of the royal guard, was passing the sage bush when a faint wail from the folds of the swaddled sarai attracted his attention. He lifted his hand. The entire caravan halted, and at his command soldiers opened the sarai and discovered Allah's treasure hidden there.

The children were given in charge of the women of the caravan, and soldiers were detailed to guard them. Their lives were staked upon the lives of the two to whom Selim Christi offered his protection, and when that gorgeous caravan swept through the marble gate of Futthepore Sackri, the magnificent capital where Akbar reigned in all his glory, the children were rapidly gaining health and strength

They were at once taken into the royal harem, though nothing was known of their parentage; for the secret which had been disclosed to the boy in his mother's prayer only became impressed upon him as he recalled it, again and again, in the years that followed, and treasured it in his heart till, later in life, he had an opportunity to prove it true.

Under the powerful patronage of the prime minister the boy grew and prospered. The blood of monarchs flowing in his veins spoke for itself, and when his patron died he took his place as second only to the Emperor of India. He married the daughter of his preserver, and became the father of the world-renowned Nur Mahal, wife of the Emperor Shah Jehan, the woman whose tomb, the Taj Mahal at Agra, is known, wherever that which is beautiful is admired, as the finest specimen of architecture in the wide, wide world to-day; while the Desert's daughter, the little sister whom he defended, the angel who came to his mother, well fulfilled the promise of the dream. She did abide, not only for her time but for all time; for she was Lalla Rookh, the heroine of Tom Moore's immortal poem.

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The Frost Lily

MIDSUMMER WAKA had come. This is the greatest festival of the year among the Norse peasantry, and in Vik, the cluster of little houses which nestle in the bend of a great fjord, the vigil of St. John's Eve was kept with dancing, and drinking and song. The old belief of the Northmen, that those born near the sound of many waters are endowed with a natural gift of music, made the Vik fiddlers sought far and wide for the June merry-making of St. John's fête; and before many houses in the little village the Wolmar fire burned brightly in token of the noisy betrothal within.

Somewhat removed from the gaiety and revels of the night, the small white dwellings of old Liof Thure nestled in the long grasses full of clover-blooms, with a gravel-pathed garden at one side, overflowing with old-fashioned pink and white rose trees, and a long white fence at the other, leading down to a quay and the tossing green fjord, which looked violet-black in the shadows of the night.

The family of Thure was an old one, and had lived in this same spot for generations, looking at the grand, grey, fir-clad mountains and the wild, moss-grown boulders, and listening to the wash of the great water against the little landing-stage. The present occupants of the place were old Liof, who had never known a day's variation from his accustomed routine in his life-time; his six yellow-haired, strong-limbed sons, who looked like nothing so much as pictures of the old Norse Vikings: and the pride of her father's heart, sweet, imperious Gerda, the acknowledged beauty of Vik, who looked at him with her mother's eyes and face, and spoke to him in the tones of the woman whose life had gone out eighteen years ago, when she gave to her husband the girl-baby for whom he had so longed.

Gerda was wilful, spoiled, and tantalising. Her brothers had lost all patience with her, because she had laughed in the face of every honest fellow who would have married her, and because she loved many strange things that had no beauty to the sons of Liof Thure; the magpies, which are as much a part of Norse scenery as the invariable birches and pines; the blue gentians of the snow-capped heights; the yellow and white water-lilies of the Norwegian tarns, and the lady-ferns, which the first cold snow-winds of winter tinged with bright scarlet.

She gave to the wind and the weather the love that should have been a husband's, and worshipped the swift, wild rain which made the moss and ferns so lovely, and the flashing of the waters and the brilliant heavens above them when the sun went down. She loved to paddle her boat idly about the shores of the fjord, watching the colours deepening in the sky, and the gloom which spreads itself over all nature as the day dies, when she should have been merrymaking instead with some Norse lover, after the fashion of her people.

Of admirers, who would have willingly become something dearer, she had had more than any other maiden in Vik. She was bright, with an intelligence far beyond the average Scandinavian girl, such as was that of Hörsberg, the peasant painter of Sweden. She loved nature with all the consciousness of the Greek and the passion of the German; but she was practical and well-skilled in the arts which attract a Norse husband. She could prepare the flesh of the reindeer most deliciously with cream, which is used so lavishly in Norwegian cookery; she knew the concoction of each of the many cheeses beloved of the Scandinavian; she could bake great round ryecakes a foot and a half in diameter, and so flavour and dry them for the winter that they were like confections; and the large attic chamber of her father's house was hung around with her wardrobe, most of which was her own handiwork; snow-white wool aprons with brilliant red borders, linens, coloured prints, embroidered bodices, deer-skin coats, snow shoes and winter boots; for Liof was a well-to-do peasant, and had brought up his daughter in the belief that plenty and cleanliness in the matter of raiment elevated the Norwegian woman above her Swedish sister.

But to-night there was no sound of joy from the white house so close to the fjord. No light gleamed from the windows, and a hush seemed to have settled over the place, in marked contrast to the revels of the neighbourhood. Sweet-smelling odours of fragrant new-made hay filled the air, and a savage looking cow, which wore a collar and a tinkling bell, was wandering home from the far-off fields, and was the only sign of life about the Thure homestead.

Old Liof had gone for a visit with two Norwegians just returned from a fifteen-years' sojourn in the western states of America. They found old Norway very slow after the nervous bustle of the new world. The boys were making the most of their holiday, and had trudged away early in the morning, each bearing gifts to his sweetheart. Gerda had persistently refused to join in the pleasures of the festival of St. John, and had strayed out this delicious night, going from boulder to boulder, until she had clambered nearly to the top of the mountain through the lichen, whortleberries, and ferns.

She had moped all day, said the great, rough brothers, Olaf, and Byn, and Nils, and Brun, and Rolf; while Jarl, the youngest, and more nearly in sympathy with his sister, had watched her wistfully when she was among the red-currant bushes of the garden, and whispered softly to his brothers: "She will never forget him!"

One year before, upon this very St. John's eve, the little steamer which came tri-weekly from the Norse capital, bringing with it a breath of the great world, in the shape of tourists who found fjord-travelling a charming novelty, had stopped at the little quay nearest to Liof Thure's dwelling, late in the afternoon, when the purest of purple shadows were lying over the lake.

Gerda stood waiting for its arrival, and the mate handed to her a small parcel, which from its size and shape one could easily guess contained a pair of new shoes.

"Great Heavens, what a lovely girl!" exclaimed a voice in English, as the boat moved away, and, looking upward at the steamer's tiny deck, Gerda saw a man whose dark eyes spoke to her plainly the sentiments which her Norse ear failed to comprehend.

The superb fringes of her large, dark-blue eyes drooped as she walked away. He was an artist and an Anglo-Saxon, of that she was sure, for he had had sketch-book and pencil in hand, and bore about him the general air of assurance which characterises the Anglo-Saxon at home and abroad. She had seen many of them, who had passed through Vik, finding a constant interest in the exquisite scenery of the fjord, and the mountains of the water-falls, and the stretches of green slope, with the hay stacked on the wooden fences to dry; she smiled again the next afternoon, when she turned her boat homeward after a long pull, and remembered his tone and glance.

The evening was coming on, and the setting sun tinged the snow-tops a faint pink, while the green grass on the mountain side was covered with white daisies, like a powder of pearls. Her boat was filled with hare-bells and purplish heath-plants, and ferns and mignonette, and as she reached the small wooden bridge which stretched across an arm of the fjord,

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she saw a stranger leaning upon the rail watching her. It required no second glimpse to assure the Norse girl that it was he whose admiration of her had been so outspoken upon the steamer the night before. In a moment he was at her side.

"Let me help you," he exclaimed, as she gathered the boat's fragrant freight in her arms, after making the tiny craft fast, and although the tongue in which he spoke was a strange one to her, she needed no dictionary to interpret his actions as he walked homeward beside her, and easily persuaded old Liof Thure to accommodate him as a boarder.

He was a landscape student from Montreal, with dreams and a great ambition, and he had come to paint the wild beauties of the Norse scenery and the glinting sunshine which laughed through the tall, swaying pines.

For six months he had lived in the family of Liof Thure, and had acquired enough of the Norwegian to tell them of the distant city of his birth, of his hopes, and his prospects and his friends.

He had learned to listen with the keenest pleasure to the sweet voice of Gerda during the long days and evenings, when she explained to him the lore of her country, and the folk-tales of the North—of the castle of the pirate Erik, and the three hunters turned to stone; of the mystery of the parsley bed and the milk-white deer and the white worm of the witches; and how the spectre-cross in the enchanted garden frightened the Finnish sorcerers.

And as the days went by, the idea of a picture which should show the beauty of Gerda to the world filled his brain, and the hours when she posed to him as a model passed too swiftly for them both.

There was no word of love between them, but, day by day, the Canadian saw the sweet womanliness of this Northern girl, the rich nature still undeveloped, thought responsive with poignant feeling to each vibration of his own artistic soul, the spirit of true life, unfettered with the contractions and ceremonies of conventionality, a life high and wide, like the blue Scandinavian heaven above; he saw all this, he felt the inspiration of this continual contact with nature, and yet he did not tell her that his whole heart was hers, because of the elder brother across the sea, who would have deemed it an unchangeable blot upon many generations of financial prosperity, that the sole sharer with himself of great wealth should marry a Norse peasant girl.

Finally the picture was completed. There was the wide fjord stretching out to the ocean with silence and solitude on its waves, which caught the blood-red reflections of an angry sky. There was not a vessel in sight, and so well had the artist caught the spirit of the scene, that the slow, majestic sweep of the heaving rollers seemed to die out without breaking and to give place to others, and against the gathering darkness the exquisite slenderness of a woman's figure stood clear out upon the canvas.

She wore a white skirt and white bodice, the dainty sleeves revealing more than half of the round, dimpled arms, which hung down and were clasped in front of her; the skirt fell full to the ankle, and the firm, well-shaped feet were bare upon the moss-grown shore; from the white cap upon her head the great braids of pale-gold hair extended below the waist line; her eyes, which were of the purple blueness of water of great depth, looked outward over the waves, and the whole face expressed subdued force and sweet seriousness. It was the portrait of a woman whose heart knew not yet the thrill of love, but had experienced the sadness of some undefined longing.

It was a matchless picture, a masterpiece of the artist's power, and, as he mixed his colours and laboured over it, but one name seemed suitable to the Canadian as he thought of Gerda. "So pure, so fresh, so cold!" he had said to himself; and when old Liof Thure first saw the painting and read the name of "The Frost-Lily," he was quick to grasp its significance and to realise what had prompted the stranger in his house to call the gem of his Norse collection by the title of the most prized and the most unattainable of the Scandinavian flora.

"It dies when they take it from the snow-bitten waters of its mountain tarns," thought the old man sadly. "Does he think to take her away from me to the country across the waters?"

But he was wise in his way and said nothing, although he could have chosen for his Gerda one of the white-skinned, serpent-eyed Northmen of her own race. Brown eyes and hair and beard did not accord with the Scandinavian ideas of freedom and manliness.

"Be a black slave!" was the old Norse curse. Gods and goddesses had light hair and a pure colour; the thralls were black; and, while the Americo-Norman has yielded up his prejudices against the brunette tinting, the delicacy of the fair skin is still a sign of better blood, a token of the free-born, in the Scandinavian peninsula.

When every detail of the picture had been made as perfect as brush and colours and the critical taste of the artist could render it, the Canadian packed up his palettes and canvasses, and bade good-bye to the snug farmhouse where he had eaten and slept and worked for so many months. When he said farewell to Gerda, it was in the presence of her father and brothers; there was a quick pressure of the hand, and he had jumped into the sledge which was waiting to speed him over the frozen snow away from his love to the nearest station of the continental trains.

That was nearly half a year ago; and through all the long months tidings had come from him but once, when he had sent a great medal of gold which the picture had taken in some famous exhibition, with the words, "Gerda, in remembrance of Ralph." And it was upon all this that Gerda was thinking, this anniversary of their meeting, as she strayed aimlessly upon the mountain slopes.

As Gerda turned to descend the hillside, a little boat darted out from the shadows of the fjord, and rowed swiftly through the long paths of silver light which the moon rays threw upon the waters. The road down the mountain so wound about that at intervals it commanded a view of the fjord, so Gerda saw the boat near the shore as she herself approached the valley. To the rower she paid little heed, simply noting that he wore the holiday costume of the Norse peasant, in scarlet and brown.

As the boat shot under the bridge, toward the pier, the man looked upward with a glad cry.

"Gerda!" said he, "Gerda, don't you know me?"

As the keel rasped upon the shore, he leaped from the boat and held his two hands out to hers.

"Dear-Eyes," he exclaimed in the Norse love-words, "do you love me?"

And what did Dear-Eyes do but nestle with a great throb of content against his heart!

"I have come straight from Montreal to you," he cried. "It is one year ago to-night since I first saw you, and I could not stay away another day. I stopped yesterday to buy this costume which is to be mine in the future, Gerda, and then I came on to you, sweetheart, to be with you always if you will have me." He paused an instant to press her head to his shoulder tenderly before he continued. "I could not ask you to leave everything that has made you what you are, and go across the seas with me. There is nothing about you that I would change for the world, and so I am come to you, Gerda. When we are married, we will live here in this pure air and amid all this grand scenery; our life shall be the same simple primitive one that has made you the woman I love. I am a Norseman hereafter for your sake!"

"Have you nothing to ask me, Dear-Eyes?" he murmured as he pressed his cheek against hers. "Have you nothing to ask me of the home or friends or family I have left?"

"No," answered Gerda, "I have you, and I love you so that there is no room for any other interest in my heart!"

Life's golden paradise opened for them, and unquestioning and content they entered in.

Two days later the following cablegram was sent to Horace Clifford, Esq., of Montreal:

"Dear Brother,—I have gathered the Frost-Lily, but shall not transplant it. When you do Europe next year, come and see us, and you shall have some of the finest salmon fishing in the world.—Always affectionately, RALPH."

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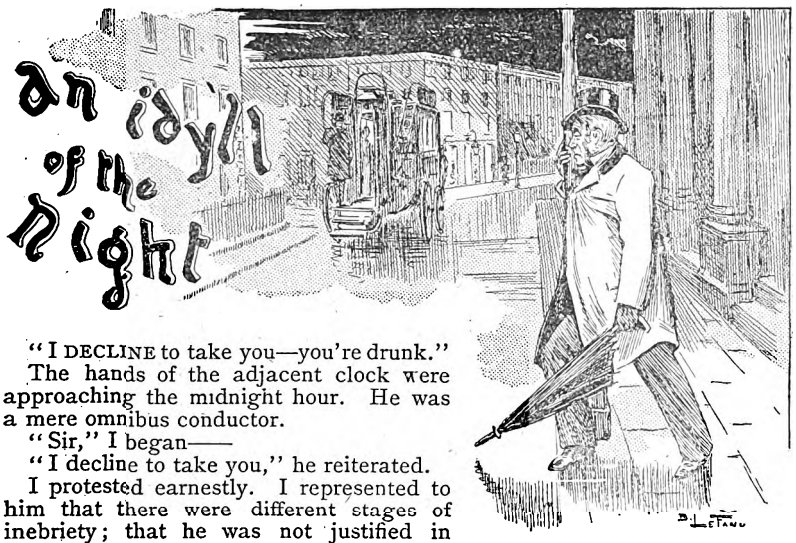

"I DECLINE to take you—you're drunk."

The hands of the adjacent clock were approaching the midnight hour. He was a mere omnibus conductor.

"Sir," I began——

"I decline to take you," he reiterated.

I protested earnestly. I represented to him that there were different stages of inebriety; that he was not justified in refusing the accommodation of his vehicle to anyone who had not achieved the maturity of intoxication. I poured forth a torrent of expostulation. In vain. Rhadamanthus on a footboard; he was inflexible. In the midst of my exhortations, he drove away, leaving me alone in the bleak, dreary solitude.

I looked round grimly. A soft rain filled the air and fell unceasingly upon the glistening asphalt. A bleary radiance invited my attention to a street lamp, and, embracing its pedestal, I suffered my thoughts to fly after the retreating vehicle, whose dark form, a fading hope, grew indistinct in the distance. I resolved to concentrate the whole efforts of my life upon the acquisition of an omnibus. "Some day," said I, "this conductor will come along and demand to be carried, while I on the footboard will defy him. And, as he lingers, then will I reveal to him the iniquity of this night." Overjoyed with this prospect, I laughed gleefully, and advanced cautiously to a doorstep that lay close by, and sat down thereon.

The contending clamour of unnumbered clocks rang forth the hour. The air seemed to grow dense and gloomy. Buildings expanded, and assumed gigantic proportions. My head grew heavy; strange shapes swept past my vision. I was in a weird and disconsolate shadowland.

A rough voice broke in upon my meditations: "Git up from there!"

I looked up, and saw a tall, swarthy figure—a policeman. Making no immediate response, I caused my eye to glide over his person, from the metallic lustre of his helmet-top to the tips off his mud-splashed boots. A sense of ignominy overspread my spirit. His words fell searing and burning into my consciousness.

"What!" said I, "have we returned to the days of slavery? Am I to receive with humility the brutal insolence of an official, whom I help to clothe and feed? And this ungrateful man orders me to get up!"

Impelled by these considerations, I arose and smote him.

"Ha! would yer?" exclaimed the scion of the law, and, advancing with cautious eye, he prepared to seize me, when a young man came out of the shade and interposed himself between us.

"I believe, constable," said the young liar, "that I know this gentleman. Allow me to speak with you for a moment."

After a short pause, I beheld the retreating back of the policeman, and my deliverer approached and lifted his hat respectfully.

"Young man," said I to him severely, "the fraud that is exercised on behalf of another may seem venial to your eyes; but, in mine, the villainy of falsehood derives no palliation from the presence of disinterested motives. Go!"

In an elegant manner he explained that he had frequently seen me before, and that it would afford him the most exquisite satisfaction to be allowed to see me to my house. As he said this, the heavens opened, and a deluge descended upon our heads.

I suffered myself to be persuaded by him, and propped by his sustaining arms we began a weary pilgrimage through the rain and mist. He supported my wandering footsteps with the most anxious solicitude, and bore, with patient resignation, the moral counsels that I offered for his consideration by the way. At length, after hours of muddy travel, I saw the familiar portals of my house, and I turned to thank, in a dignified manner, the person who had aided me during my temporary indisposition.

"The lateness of the hour," said I graciously, "precludes my offering you that hospitality which perhaps you have some right to expect, but I have every reason to believe that the consciousness of having, unrewarded, performed a good action flourishes in the heart, and affords comfort and consolation under the most distressing circumstances; and I congratulate you upon having laid up a treasure of this character in the friendly help you have given me. I wish you good-night."

He stared at me in a dumfounded fashion, but not overtly regarding his expression, I sought to produce my watch as independent testimony to the reason of my observation, but found it gone. The truth flashed upon me. Under the base pretext of Good Samaritanism, this scoundrel had profited by the opportunity of my confidence to pick my pocket. "Police! police!!" I shouted. He gave one distracted look around and fled.

The door of my house opened. Lights flashed. My fair-haired daughter came bounding down the pathway to the gate, and my stern-faced better-half stood, a dismal portent of troubles to come, on the doorstep.

At this moment, a dismal object, splashed with mud from head to toe, in the grasp of two policemen, appeared on the footpath.

"My dear," I explained, "there is the unprincipled wretch who took advantage of your parent's indisposition to prosecute his rascally profession. Do not be afraid."

The group advanced towards me, and I contemplated, with satisfaction, the retribution that had overtaken this unhappy wretch in his course of infamy; and, as I did so, I perceived him make an attempt to release his throat from the grasp that encircled it, with the object, as I apprehended, of making an appeal to those sympathetic instincts, which, in greater or lesser proportions are implanted in the heart of every human being. But I resolved to disregard, upon this occasion, the promptings of a benevolent disposition, and, turning to my daughter,

"My darling," said I, "he tried to rob your poor old father. Tell your mother not to wait up for me. Ah, they are bringing in the villain!"

As I said these words, what was my stupefaction to see my daughter throw her arms around the neck of the malefactor, and to discover, at the same time, my gold hunter in my coat-tail pocket! I stood aghast. Clearly, when my watch was in my pocket, the man in the clutches of the constables had not stolen it, unless, by some miraculous light-fingeredness, he had placed it there. But my daughter—how on earth? What reckless immodesty prompted the embrace? I stared at everybody! Who would explain to me?

"Henry," wailed my daughter, "what *does* this mean?"

* * * *

If vice were incapable of assuming the guise of innocence, this world would have no cause for the assistance of a numerous and able-minded legal profession. I freely admit a mistake in the character and motives of the youth who protected me from the onslaught of a vicious constable. It appears he is my daughter's accepted suitor, and the son of my old friend Jenkins.

It is true I had other views for her, but an earnest attachment is touching to the feelings of a parent, and without much solicitation I bestowed upon them my blessing and consent.

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THE OUTLAWS OF THE AIR.

By George Griffith,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," etc.

SUMMARY—PROLOGUE.

Max Renault, the leading spirit of the anarchist "Autonomie Group No. 7" meets his colleagues in a club near the Caledonian Road on the eve of President Carnot's assassination. He shoots a traitor who has almost betrayed the Group, and so saved Carnot's life. Then he tells them that he is about to emigrate with a society of Socialists, one of whom, Frederick Austen, a wealthy engineer, who has been converted to Socialism, takes out with him a working model of an aerial vessel which is to enable the colonists to enforce a reign of peace on earth. This air-ship Renault determines to steal when complete, and use for the purpose of bringing about an Anarchist reign of terror instead. Meanwhile, Franz Hartog, another member of the Group, is to carry out a plot he has formed to steal a very fast torpedo boat destroyer, which is to be built at Elbing for the Russian Government, and with her to levy blackmail on the Atlantic, and so raise funds to build an Anarchist aerial fleet when the time comes.

CHAPTER I.

Utopia in the South.

On the 21st of November, 1898, the *Calypso*, a steam yacht, rigged as a three-masted schooner and measuring between four and five hundred tons, met with a rather serious accident to her engines in one of those brief but deadly hurricanes which are known to navigators of the South Seas as "southerly busters."

They are the white squalls of the South, and woe betide the unhappy ship that they strike unawares. Over the smooth, sunlit waters there drifts with paralysing rapidity a mass of hissing, seething billows, churned into foam and then beaten down again by the terrific force of the wind that is roaring above them. Often there is not a breath or a puff of air felt by the ship until the squall strikes her, and then the blow falls like the united stroke of a hundred battering-rams.

If the ship is stripped and ready for the blow, she heels over till the water spurts in through the lee scupper holes and half the deck is awash. If there is a rag of sail on stay or yard, there is a bang like the report of a duck-gun, and, if you have quick eyes, you may see it flying away to leeward like a bit of tissue paper before the gale, and, if it has not yielded with sufficient readiness to the shock of the storm, a sprung topmast or a snapped yard will pay the penalty of resistance.

Meanwhile, what was a few minutes ago a smoothly-shining sea, scarcely ruffled by a ripple, is now a white, boiling, mass of swiftly rising billows, amidst which the straining, struggling vessel fights for her life like some stricken animal.

In company with his sister Violet.

It had been thus with the *Calypso*. A stout new fore-staysail that had been hoisted in the hope of getting her head before the squall had been struck square and had resisted just a moment too long at the cost of a sprung fore-topmast. Then, an effort to bring her round with the screw had resulted in the disaster that practically crippled her.

A big sea came rolling up astern, her nose went down and her stern went up, her propeller whirling in the air, and, before the engine could be stopped, there came a grinding, thrashing noise in the engine-room, and, a moment later, the yacht was drifting helplessly away before the storm with a broken crankshaft.

When this happened, the *Calypso* was on a voyage from New Zealand to the Marquesas Islands, between four and five hundred miles to the north-east of Auckland. The screw had been hoisted out of the water and a spare fore-topmast fitted; but only five days after this had been done she was caught in a heavy gale from the south westward and got so badly knocked about that when every spare spar on board had been used in refitting her she could only carry sail enough to take her at four or five knots an hour before a good topsail breeze.

The result of this double misfortune was that a month later she was still on the southern verge of the tropics, beating about in light baffling winds, unable to make her way into the region of the South-east trades.

The *Calypso* was owned and sailed by Sir Harry Milton, of Seaton Abbey, Northumberland, landowner and ironmaster, who rather less than three years before had come of age and entered upon his inheritance of broad acres, mines, and ironworks, which yielded him an income not far short of £30,000 a year, and in addition to these a comfortable nest-egg of nearly half a million in hard cash and good securities.

For the last year and a half, he had been seeing the world in the pleasantest of all fashions—cruising about from port to port, and ocean to ocean, in his yacht, in company with his sister Violet, a pretty, healthy, high-bred brunette between eighteen and nineteen.

Sir Harry, himself, was a good specimen of the typical English gentleman, standing about five feet ten in his deck shoes, well built, broad shouldered, ruddy-skinned and clear eyed, with features that were frank and pleasing in their open manliness, rather than strictly handsome, and yet saved from mediocrity by that undefinable, yet unmistakable, stamp of good breeding which distinguishes, as was once wittily if somewhat cynically said, the man who has a grandfather from the man who only had progenitors.

Apart from the officers and crew of the *Calypso* there was only one member of the yacht's company who needs introduction in special terms. This was Herbert Wyndham, second lieutenant of Her Majesty's gunboat *Sandfly*, an old schoolfellow and bosom friend of Sir Harry's, and just now on a year's invalid leave in consequence of a nasty bullet wound received in storming a stronghold of a West African slaver chieftain, at the head of his blue-jackets. Sir Harry had picked him up at Cape Town, when he was beginning to get about again after the fever that had followed on his wound, and, with his sister's assistance, he succeeded without much difficulty in persuading him to spend the rest of his leave on a cruise to the South Seas in the *Calypso*.

In person, Lieutenant Wyndham was a well set-up, clean-limbed young fellow of twenty-six, with a good-humoured face and bright hazel eyes, which looked alertly out from under a square strong forehead that matched the firm chin which, according to the modern fashion of naval officers, was clothed with a close-clipped, neatly-trimmed beard a shade or so lighter than the close, curly chestnut hair that formed not the least of his personal attractions.

As week after week passed, and neither land nor sail appeared in sight from the decks of the half-crippled yacht, Sir Harry began to feel a little natural anxiety for the ultimate safety of his beautiful craft and of those near and dear to him on board her. Another such a squall or a gale as she had already suffered from would almost infallibly wreck her in her present state, and both he and his sailing master would have been glad to reach even the shelter of a coral lagoon, within which she could take refuge until she could be thoroughly overhauled in a fashion that was not possible out in the open sea.

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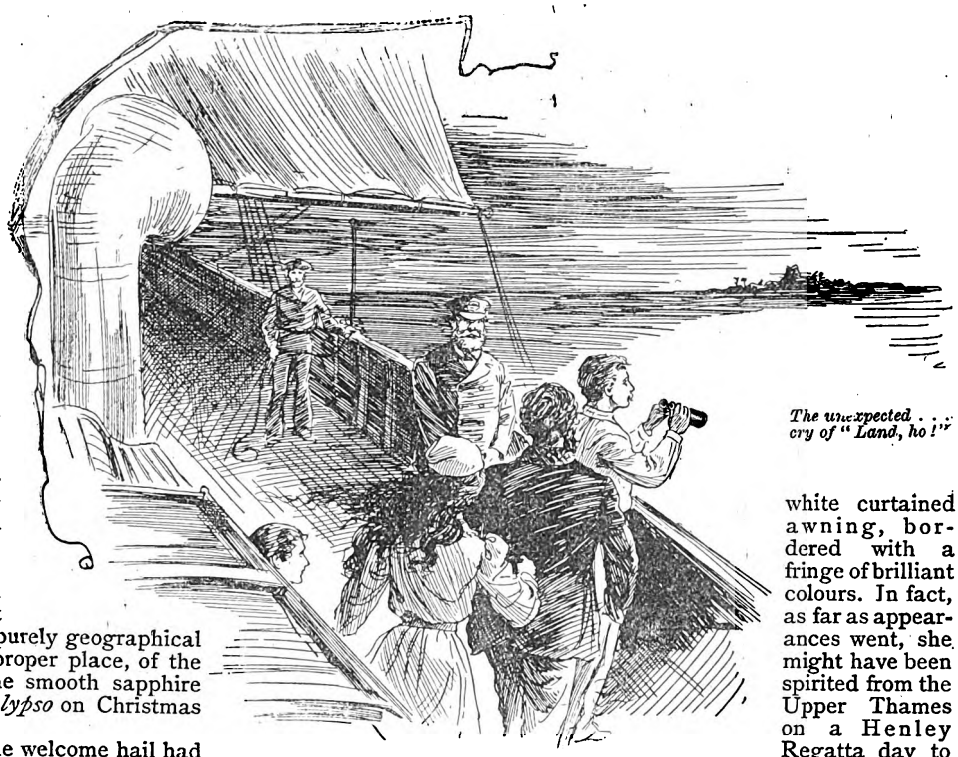

The unexpected . . . cry of "Land, ho!"

But most things have an end—even calms in the South Pacific—and by Christmas Eve the *Calypso* had at last crept out of the zone of calms and had begun to feel the first fitful puffs of the trade winds. Then, about an hour before sunrise on Christmas morning, the unexpected, but none the less welcome, cry of "Land, ho!" brought everyone, from Sir Harry himself to his sister's maid, or the "Lady-in-Waiting," as Lieutenant Wyndham was wont to call her, tumbling out of their berths and up on deck.

No one who has not seen the sun rise over an island in the South Pacific can form any adequate idea of the scene that greeted the eyes of the crew of the *Calypso*, as the light broadened and brightened to the eastward in front of them. The island paradises of the South Sea are like no other part of the earth. Their beauty is entirely their own. No word-painting can ever do full justice to it, and the reader must therefore fain be content with the purely geographical description, which will follow in its proper place, of the island that was seen rising out of the smooth sapphire sea from the poop-deck of the *Calypso* on Christmas morning, 1898.

In less than half an hour after the welcome hail had run along the deck, Sir Harry and the sailing-master were eagerly scanning the land, now about ten miles distant, through their glasses.

"What do you make it, Mr. Topline?" asked Sir Harry, after a good long stare at the mysterious land, taking his binoculars from his eyes and looking at the old salt with a puzzled expression.

"I can't say, Sir Harry. I've never seen the island before, and I don't believe it's down on the chart. You see, we've got clean out of the track of the trading vessels and mail steamers, and this part of the South Sea is even now very little known. I'd no idea there was land within three hundred miles of us," replied the sailing-master.

"No, it's not on the chart, for I was following Mr. Martin yesterday when he was pricking off the course, and there was nothing near us. Confound the wind! There it goes to a dead calm again. Hullo, what the deuce is that?"

As he spoke Sir Harry jumped, glass in hand, on to the rail that ran round the flush deck of the yacht, climbed half-a-dozen rounds into the main-shrouds, and again levelled his glasses in the direction of the island. A moment later he sang out to the sailing master:

"Topline, what do you say to a steam launch coming off from your unknown island?"

"A steam launch! Well, I'll be kicked if it isn't," said the other, mounting the opposite rail and focussing the approaching craft. "It must be the steam tender of some man-o'-war surveying the island or getting fruit and water, only she's got no funnel, and I don't——. Why, she's going twenty knots an hour through the water if she's going a yard! She's no man-o'-war tender, not she!"

All eyes on board the *Calypso* were now turned on the strange craft, which, by this time, had cleared the reef and was coming speeding towards them over the smooth, windless sea at a pace which proved that, whatever her motive power was, it lacked nothing on the score of efficiency. In less than half-an-hour, she was describing a wide curve round the stern of the yacht, preparatory to running up alongside.

It was at once evident that the sailing master had been quite wrong in his first guess that she was the steam tender of a man-of-war. She was a ten or twelve tonner, long, narrow, and low-lying, white painted, with a bright gold stripe from stem to stern, and covered, fore and aft, with a snowy white curtained awning, bordered with a fringe of brilliant colours. In fact, as far as appearances went, she might have been spirited from the Upper Thames on a Henley Regatta day to the distant and lonely region of the South Sea, out of which were now rising the high bluffs and green slopes of the unknown island whence she had come.

As she came up alongside the *Calypso*, a youth of about eighteen, who was standing at the wheel amidships, hailed the yacht in English and wished the new comers, "A Merry Christmas!" in a tone which left not the slightest doubt as to his nationality. Sir Harry returned the greeting as heartily as it was given, wondering not a little, like the rest of his shipmates, not only at the presence of such a dainty little craft in such out-of-the-way waters, but also at the strange contrast between the manner and language of the youth who had hailed him, and his entirely uncivilised appearance—uncivilised, that is to say, from the stand-point of modern fashion.

His bearing and speech were those of a well-educated and cultured young gentleman at the latter end of the nineteenth century, but his dress was more like that of a Phœnician mariner of a thousand years ago. His long, brown hair fell in curls on his broad shoulders and clustered thickly about his smooth forehead, held back from his bronzed, handsome face by a narrow fillet of metal that looked like polished aluminium

His dress consisted of a long over-tunic of soft grey woollen cloth, bordered with cunningly-worked embroidery in blue silk, open at the neck, where it showed a white linen close-fitting under vest, and confined at the waist by a red silk sash, wound two or three times round, and hanging in heavily fringed ends over his left hip. A pair of soft, yellow leather moccasins, beautifully worked in many-coloured threads and bead embroidery, covered his feet, and came half way up the calves of his bare, muscular legs.

"What craft is that and where do you hail from?" asked Sir Harry, some dim notion of pirates associating itself in his mind with the somewhat fantastic attire of the youth at the helm.

"This is the electric launch *Mermaid*, and yonder island is Utopia," he replied. "We came out to see if we could be of any assistance to you. You seem to have had rather a bad time of it somewhere by the look of your spars."

On hearing this queer, though kindly expressed, reply, Sir Harry began to think that the *Calypso* must have drifted out of the realms of reality and into the regions of romance, for the

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only Utopia he had ever heard of had been Sir Thomas More's Nowhere. But good manners forbade any expression of surprise or incredulity, and so he answered laughingly:

"I had no idea that a Utopia existed on earth in these degenerate days, but I am delighted to learn that I am wrong, and I'm also much obliged to you for coming out to us. We've disabled our engines and got our spars badly knocked about. But won't you come on board and let us introduce ourselves?"

"Thank you, if you'll throw me a rope I will. Never mind the gangway ladder. Here, Tom, take the wheel, and don't let those girls run away with you."

"That's just what he'd like us to do," came in the laughing tones of a girl's voice from under the forward awning as the young fellow caught the rope and swung himself lightly over the *Calypso's* rail.

"I didn't know you had ladies on board," said Sir Harry, meeting him at the gangway and holding out his hand, "if I had known I would not have hailed you so unceremoniously."

"There are no ladies in Utopia, and the Utopians dislike ceremony very much, so it's just as well you didn't," replied the youth with a laugh as he took Sir Harry's hand.

Three pretty long-haired girls.

"But surely that was a young lady's voice I heard just now, and a very sweet one too, if I heard aright."

"Well, it was a girl's voice, certainly. There are three of them on board the *Mermaid*, but they wouldn't like to be called young ladies. There are only women and girls in Utopia. We left the ladies behind in England."

He checked himself rather abruptly as his eyes met Violet's gazing in frankly undisguised astonishment at him. Then with a slight flush on his cheeks he went on:

"But pardon me, I had better introduce myself instead of talking about our manners and customs, which I daresay you will learn before long. I am Frank Markham, skipper of the *Mermaid*, and her crew is at present composed of Tom Harris, Ralf Smith, Lucy Summers, Annie Hilton, and Dora Merton, the girl who made a very true remark about Master Tom as I came on board."

As young Markham said this he went to the side and sang out:

"Come now, Mermaids, show yourselves! I want to introduce you to our visitors. By the way, you have not told me your names yet," he continued, turning to Sir Harry.

"My name is Harry Milton; I am owner and skipper of the *Calypso*. This is my sister, Violet, this is Lieutenant Wyndham, of Her Majesty's ship *Sandfly*, and this is Mr. Topline, my sailing master."

As Sir Harry made the introductions in turn the curtains which ran round the fore-deck of the launch were drawn aside, disclosing three pretty long-haired girls, picturesquely, if somewhat lightly attired, in gay tunics and cloaks and long moccasins, profusely ornamented with many-coloured silken embroidery, fringes, and curiously worked clasps and armlets of lustrous white and yellow metal. Instinctively every man who was looking over the bulwarks of the *Calypso* raised his hat or his cap as the three girls, half gravely, half shyly, returned the salutes from the deck of the yacht.

"And now, what can we do for you?" asked Markham when this little ceremony was over. "I suppose you want to get into port and refit as soon as possible?"

"That's just what I do want to do very badly," replied Sir Harry. "But where am I to find a port and a dockyard in this part of the Pacific?"

"Both are within less than a half-a-dozen miles of us, and the *Mermaid* shall tow you in in an hour if you will first oblige me with five minutes' conversation in private."

"Certainly, come into my cabin," said Sir Harry, leading the way to the companion.

In less than ten minutes they returned, Sir Harry looking just a trifle mystified, and without loss of time a light hawser was got out and made fast to the *Mermaid*, and the two vessels began to move smoothly towards the white reef in the distance, fringing the hitherto unknown Island of Utopia.

CHAPTER II.

GOING INTO PORT.

It took a little over an hour for the *Mermaid* to tow the *Calypso* from where she had lain becalmed into the lagoon of Utopia. As the yacht approached the island it rapidly became manifest that, whether chance or design had guided the Utopians in the selection of their far-away home, they had had the good fortune to choose a spot that well deserved to be called beautiful, even in that part of the world where land and sea and sky seem to conspire to wear their brightest and most beautiful aspects.

They were approaching it from the West, and before they reached it the sun had risen above the horizon, and against the flood of light that blazed along the Eastern horizon they saw, standing out clear and sharp, the truncated cone of an extinct volcano, which raised itself in lonely grandeur between four and five thousand feet above the sea. From the middle slopes to north and south two curving ranges of hills, sparsely timbered at their summits, but with their sides clothed with ever denser and more luxuriant vegetation, ran out to the south-east and north-west, gradually decreasing in height until they terminated abruptly in cliffs of naked rock which rose eight or nine hundred feet sheer up from the water.

Between these two headlands lay a wide irregular bay fronted by the broad expanse of brilliant emerald-green water and backed by verdant slopes which, clothed with all the wonderful vegetation of the Southern tropics, rose and fell valley behind valley and hill beyond hill until they merged in the distance with the heights of the volcano and its attendant chains.

"That is Mount Plato," said Markham, who at Sir Harry's invitation had remained on board the yacht to act as cicerone to the visitors to Utopia. "We call it that because under its shadow we hope to found our New Republic."

"But isn't the Republic founded yet?" asked Violet. "If you'll allow me to say so I should have thought it was not only founded but had reached a considerable height of prosperity."

"Yes," chimed in Wyndham, with a movement of his hand towards the *Mermaid*. "If twenty-knot electric launches are not a sign of a fairly prosperous civilisation, I can hardly see what would be."

"Twenty knots!" laughed Markham. "Why the *Mermaid* can run thirty when we're in a hurry, and we've got a three-thousand tonner on the slips now in the dockyard that we are building on a new principle, and which we expect to make forty."

"Whew," whistled Wyndham, lifting his eyebrows in undisguised astonishment. "Forty knots! If you can build vessels like that you Utopians ought to be millionaires to a man. Why, there isn't a European Government that wouldn't willingly give you half a million apiece for as many of them as you could turn out.

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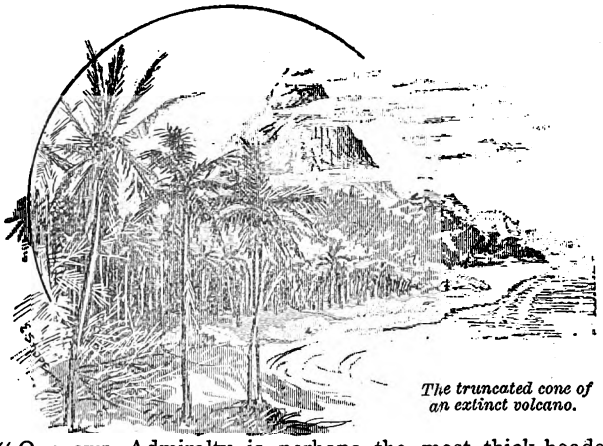

The truncated cone of an extinct volcano.

"Our own Admiralty is perhaps the most thick-headed institution of its kind under the sun; but I believe even it would give me a good deal for the secret of a ship like that, if you would let me take it home with me."

Instead of replying directly Markham looked at Sir Harry, who at once took the hint and said, with a shake of his head:

"No, Wyndham, I'm afraid there's no chance of that or anything of the kind. In fact," he said, "I may as well tell you, and you gentlemen also," he continued, with a glance at the sailing master and his chief mate, "that I have accepted the invitation to put into Utopia on the sole condition on which it was given, and I have pledged my word of honour for myself and everyone on board the yacht that no attempt will be made to learn anything that is not freely told to us, and even that if we learn anything by accident we will behave both here and at home as though we had never known it.

"You see, we have not the slightest right to pry into the secrets or discoveries of our hosts, and I'm sure you will agree with me that in giving such a pledge I was making the least return I could for the kindness and assistance that I'm sure we shall receive on shore."

"Oh, quite so, quite so!" said the lieutenant. "Of course, I was only joking. A man would deserve to be shot who did a caddish thing like that. Still, just now, you know, a forty-knot ship properly armed would be simply invaluable, not only to an individual nation like ourselves, but to the civilised world at large. You know what I mean."

"Ah, yes!" replied Sir Harry, his face becoming grave in an instant. "You mean to chase that brute with the red flag and hunt him down to wherever his lair is. Yes, a ship that could do that would be cheap at a couple of millions, and I believe Europe would subscribe the money to buy it in a week, even if the Governments couldn't find it. I'd give ten thousand myself with pleasure."

"Pardon me," said Markham, turning round from the rail where he had been standing pointing out the different features of the island to Violet, while Sir Harry was speaking. "But that sounds almost like a modern edition of one of the old pirate stories. Surely you don't mean to say that there are any pirates nowadays, either with black or red flags?"

"I am sorry to say that there is at least one?" said Sir Harry, "and he can do more damage in a month than all the old pirates put together could have done in a year."

"What a villainous shame!" said Markham, looking for the moment graver and sterner than they would have thought possible. "That will be news for them ashore if you care to tell them the story. In fact, I'm afraid we shall put a considerable tax on your generosity in that way, for we haven't had any news from the outer world for quite twelve months now.

"But here we are at the entrance to the lagoon. What do you think of it? Don't you think our Utopia is a lovely land?"

"Lovely, indeed!" said Violet, who, during the conversation, had been looking about her with all her eyes, as though she could never get enough of the beauty of the scene. "I've heard and read all sorts of stories about the Pacific Islands, but I couldn't have believed that anything earthly could have been so beautiful as this."

And truly the scene that was visible from the bridge of the *Calypso* on which they were now standing was worthy of the enthusiasm of her words. Every colour that Nature uses in painting her incomparable landscapes was here, either blended or contrasted to produce the most exquisite effects.

On land were mingled a hundred tints of green and gold, from the sombre hues of the banyan leaves to the golden ears of the patches of corn that were ripening on the upper hill slopes; trees and shrubs of every shape and height succeeded each other, from the lowly bananas to the towering palms and the splendid pines that crowned the higher summits of the mountain ranges, and, high above all, the bare blue-grey cone of the volcano rose to crown a picture which no words could adequately describe.

But when, to the medley of hill and vale, mountain rock and ravine, presented by the island itself, were added the snowy white of the billows breaking on the long reef—which, save for one narrow opening, stretched from point to point across the bay—the emerald-green of the lagoon inside it, and, outside, the deep blue of the open ocean reflecting the sapphire of the cloudless sky, the picture became almost unearthly in its strange and varied loveliness.

The roar of the tumbling billows upon the reef sounded louder and louder in the ears of the *Calypso's* company as the *Mermaid* and her charge ran in towards the opening.

"I think I had better take your wheel now," said Markham to Sir Harry when they were within about five hundred yards of the reef. "This is rather a ticklish piece of steering for anyone who doesn't know the currents."

"I should think so," said Wyndham, looking ahead as Markham went and took the wheel from the sailor who was steering. "I know I wouldn't care about the job of bringing a torpedo boat in here in the dark. Why, there doesn't seem to be much more than sixty feet of clear water to get through. If this place were properly defended it could be held against all the navies of Europe as long as they chose to stop here."

"Yes," laughed Sir Harry, "especially with one or two forty-knot cruisers dodging about outside and making a judicious distribution of torpedoes. What do you think, Topline?"

"I think, Sir Harry," growled the old salt, "that I'll believe in forty-knot cruisers when I sees 'em. If a speed like that's possible, why can't all the Governments of Europe, with all their money, build a cruiser that'll catch that craft, whatever she is, that's been playing up old Scratch among the Atlantic liners, according to the news we got at Sydney?"

"Because they don't know how," said Markham, without turning his head, "and because there are some secrets that money won't buy."

"Don't you think our Utopia is a lovely land?"

As he spoke he gave the yacht's wheel a turn and swung her about four points to port in imitation of a similar manœuvre of the *Mermaid*, which was apparently running dead on to the reef. Within fifty yards of the white water the *Mermaid* shot across into the seething foam, doubled sharply, and ran to starboard at right-angles to the yacht. This

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brought a strain upon the hawser, and, as it came up dripping out of the water and tightened, Wyndham could not repress an exclamation of surprise.

"That's queer towing; what on earth is she doing that for?"

"You'll see in a moment," said Markham, giving a spin to the wheel and swinging the yacht round after the launch. By the tenseness of the rope it was evident that the *Mermaid* was pulling very hard upon it. The *Calypso* came round, and then her stern swung with a rush into the swirling white water that was boiling about the narrow entrance.

Then, while the party on the bridge watched with barely concealed anxiety the breakers which every moment brought nearer until they were roaring only a stone's throw away, the line slackened slightly, and just as the sailing master, unable to contain himself any longer sang out: "She'll be on the reef in a minute! Tell the launch to tow harder, man; can't you see she's going?" the foaming, tossing mass of breakers suddenly seemed to slide away ahead, and a minute later the *Calypso* had drifted through the opening stern first, and was floating motionless on the smooth glittering water of the lagoon, with the *Mermaid* lying a few yards ahead of her.

"There's a twelve-knot current coming round the corner of that reef," said Markham, leaving the wheel and turning to the sailing master. "You could no more tow a disabled ship through there than you could tow her over the reef itself. The only way to get the yacht in was to let her drift in—with a proper check on her, of course."

"I beg your pardon, young gentleman," said Topline, looking just a bit crestfallen. "I was wrong, and you were right. You know the place, and I don't; and I'll be hanged if I could have got her in myself."

Saw the wall of rock open into a vast arch.

The *Mermaid* now got under weigh again and began to tow the *Calypso* across the lagoon towards the high bluffs at the southern arm of the bay. The bright smooth water of the bay was already dotted by dozens of pretty little craft, some canoes with outriggers, some double-hulled catamarans with great white sails that swept them along at a famous pace, others canoes of the shape seen on the Canadian lakes and rivers, and others again just such craft as you may see any summer's day on the Thames between Putney and Richmond, large roomy row-boats, slim outriggers, and broad, flat centre-boards, with their wide spread of snowy canvas.

All came racing away with the land breeze from the head of the bay, where half a dozen jetties ran out into the water, and where, behind the snowy coral beach, the verdant shore was dotted with white houses peeping out from shady groves of lime and orange trees and spreading tree-ferns above which the stately palms lifted their gently waving crests a hundred feet into the air.

The *Calypso* was soon surrounded by the light-heeled craft, and many a greeting of welcome was waved to the new comers by their gaily dressed crews, and, thus escorted, the yacht was towed to the bluffs. It looked as though the *Mermaid* was going to run her nose up against the huge frowning wall of rock that rose hundreds of feet above her, but within a couple of hundred yards of their base Markham went to the wheel again.

The launch swerved to port, and as he sent the *Calypso* after her those on her bridge saw the wall of rock open into a vast arch, the apex of which was over two hundred feet from the water. They glided through this for a distance of about fifty yards, and then the half light of the tunnel gave place to the bright sunlight again, and they found themselves floating in a perfectly land-locked oval basin about a mile long by about three-quarters of a mile broad, and closed in on all sides by perpendicular cliffs rising sheer from the water to heights varying from eighty to a hundred and fifty feet.

"Here we are at last!" said Markham. "This is the dockyard of Utopia, and in a couple of hours your yacht shall be on the slips in the dry dock; meanwhile, if you will come on board the *Mermaid* with me, we will go ashore."

(To be continued next week.)

THE OLD GUIDE

IN the Place des Thermes, at Luques-de-Born, the delightful, well-known watering-place, an old man was to be met every day tottering slowly along. He wore the picturesque costume of a guide—a suit of black velvet, a blue woollen cap and a red belt. He carried a long iron-tipped staff; from his side hung a leathern bottle, and on his back an axe and a ball of rope. His shrunken breast bore a shining plate displaying his name and title, "Auguste Lagnerot, Guide of the First Class."

His laborious gait indicated an age of at least seventy years. He strolled about among the tourists, saluting them respectfully, but no one desired his services.

In his youth Auguste Lagnerot had been one of the most intrepid and valued guides of Luques-de-Born. He was the first to conduct the excursionists to the magnificent valley of Arbelles, whose lakes, glaciers and cascades are now the admiration of strangers.

From that picturesque valley he had discovered a path by which, in five hours after leaving Luques, the famous peak of the Lion-Blanc, previously reputed inaccessible, could be reached.

In those days Auguste Lagnerot was a robust, sinewy young fellow, a favourite of the ladies who climbed among the glaciers. Passionately fond of mountain scenery, he had eyes only for the waterfalls, the stretches of snow, the chaos of rocks, the marvellous and changing scenes of nature among which he lived.

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From June to October daily for twenty-five years he had guided the tourists from his valley of Arbelles to his peak of the Lion-Blanc. Every scene of interest was proudly pointed out by him with an enthusiasm and delight ever fresh and inexhaustible.

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At that period Lagnerot earned fifteen francs a day and his travelling expenses—meals, lodgings, and tolls. But he

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would have esteemed the pleasure of reviewing the lakes, cascades, and glaciers an adequate compensation. And in the winter, when Luques slept like a dead city in the shroud of its white mountains, Lagnerot sometimes revisited his valley of Arbelles and endeavoured, notwithstanding the danger, to climb the snowy crest of the Lion-Blanc.

At fifty years of age he fell sick, and was confined to his bed for several months. His convalescence covered nearly four years, and when he was able to put in an appearance again in the Place des Thermes, he had become so old, and bent, and feeble, that his vigour did not inspire confidence, and he was no longer employed.

His illness had ruined him. He lived abstemiously with a nephew, who kept a furnished house in the suburbs of Luques, and the old guide never had enough money to undertake, at his own expense, the ascent of the Lion-Blanc.

Like many persons advanced in life, he was deceived regarding his powers, and continued placidly to wear his costume of a guide, hoping every summer day to find some tourist in need of his assistance. Auguste Lagnerot became an inoffensive monomaniac, whom everybody respected, and whose history was soon learned by strangers.

He constantly saw the guides, his successors, leave in charge of the excursionists; he looked from afar with melancholy eyes on the arid, snow-capped mountain at the further end of the valley; then, with shortened steps, and rounded back, and disheartened mien, his thin hair streaming in the breeze, he sought a photographer's window and scanned with pleasure the views of the glaciers, cascades, and peaks, all the objects which he loved so well, and which, no doubt, he would never see again.

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One day in September, close on his seventy-sixth year, he perceived a young couple approaching.

"Monsieur Lagnerot," said the gentleman, "can you conduct my wife and me to the valley of Arbelles and the peak of the Lion-Blanc to-morrow and the day after?"

The old guide drew himself erect and grew somewhat pale. Was he dreaming? What a time had elapsed since he last heard a similar question!

"Certainly, sir," he replied firmly, striving to hide the trembling of his hand on the iron-tipped staff.

The hour and the price of the excursion were agreed on, and after arranging that he should call for them at their hotel on the morrow at mid-day, they took leave of him politely.

The gentleman and lady had not long been married and having already made the excursion three times, and learned the story of the old guide, had a sentimental fancy to take him to the Lion-Blanc, under pretext of going under his charge.

The good man suspected nothing and at the appointed hour presented himself to take charge of the party. It was a fine day, and they started on the journey. Lagnerot, brushed up and carefully arrayed, held out well for the first hour. He was full of zeal, and the couple had some difficulty to keep up.

He pursued his former route, following the course of the Nivette, the resounding and foaming torrent which resembled a white-skirted little girl frisking in the meadows.

He arrived at the ruins of Castillon. As in former days, he stretched out his left arm, and said:

"The valley of Aurin!"

Then he pointed with his right hand, and exclaimed:

"The peak of the Crabère!"

His voice trembled with emotion; his eyes gleamed with pleasure; his cheeks reddened beneath their wrinkles.

He was still able to indicate the sombre gulf where the Nivette disappeared like a shifting diver. He hurried through the zig-zags of the slope, bent on exhibiting the precipice where the three Englishmen were killed; then drank deeply at the shaded spring where he had so often quenched his thirst.

When he resumed the route, and clambered up the steep ascent, he endeavoured, as in the days of old, to assist the lady; and it was really she who was the prop, and the gentleman following pressed against him while pretending to be seeking support for himself. The old guide did not perceive their intention.

"Courage, courage!" he exclaimed in a broken voice once and again to his companions. "Now then, one more effort and we're there."

He wiped his brow bravely, and did not stop too long to take breath.

They succeeded in hoisting him to the plateau, and as the sun set they debouched between the two rocks of basalt on the valley of Arbelles.

Lagnerot was so happy that he felt tempted to fall on his knees and kiss the ground. Oh, to see the Lac Bleu again! and the Chevelure de la Vierge, and the Ville-d'Enfer, the sparkling glaciers, the many-coloured peaks above which the Lion-Blanc reared its snowy crest!

He explained it all in a husky tone, trying to make gestures of admiration with his wasted fingers. Behind him the couple stood smiling, gratified to witness his enjoyment.

He was served with dinner at the inn by the side of the lake and provided with a good bed.

Rising at dawn, Lagnerot, as soon as dressed, went to wake the tourists, according to the custom of the guides. But the couple had already risen and were chatting together.

Lagnerot heard the husband say:

"Shall we take him up? You know it will be more fatiguing than yesterday. Perhaps we'll have to drag him all the way!"

The lady laughed out, "Poor old man!"

Lagnerot was startled. At first he could not fully comprehend. He crossed his trembling hands on his staff and stood with open mouth. He tried to think, to ponder, to recollect; but his brain was almost as incapable as his limbs. The reality gradually dawned on his mind as he looked at his wrists, which were quivering on the staff, and on his limbs, which seemed ready to give way beneath him. Almost stupefied, he fetched a deep sigh and turned back slowly without knocking at the door.

Shortly afterwards, the couple found him seated by the side of the blue lake, gazing up on the rose-tinted mountain tops.

"Well, Monsieur Lagnerot," they said. "Aren't we going to the peak? There's no time to lose if we are to return to Luques this evening."

The old guide shook his head and remained silent.

They did not insist, but left him alone, after instructing the innkeeper to take good care of him until their return.

Lagnerot remained on the spot. Dipping his hand in the icy water of the lake flowing between the rocks, he moistened his brow, and sat with eyes riveted on the rising sun.

At ten o'clock the innkeeper invited him to table, but he declined. He neither ate nor drank. He wandered away to the Chevelure de la Vierge, and was pleased to feel a little of the cold spray from the rocks striking his face.

At two o'clock the young travellers found him cold and unconscious. They covered him with wraps and gave him a stimulant.

He regained consciousness, looked at the two for a moment, and then closed his eyes. But he opened them shortly after, smiling in his tears.

"Pardon!" he stammered; "but you are so good! Yes, very good to contrive to give me this pleasure! If you believe in God, let me tell you that I shall pray for you every day until my death."

He rose and walked behind them, accepting their arms in the difficult places of the descent, and was able, the same evening, to reach Luques-de-Born.

The husband slipped two louis, the price of the excursion, in Lagnerot's vest pocket at the moment when the old man turned round to take a final look at the Lion Blanc.

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From that day the old guide put aside his velvet suit, his iron-tipped staff and his shining medal. He was seen at times wandering about the streets, but in appearance he was ten years older and scarcely ever spoke. He was almost blind, and seemed to be deaf, resembling a lifeless body which still moved slightly, but whose soul had made the ascent to the valley of his youth, to rest in sight of the resplendent peaks and the eternal snows at the foot of the Chevelure de la Vierge.

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IRISH MARY

A STORY OF THE SEPOY MUTINY.

IT was in the early days of the Sepoy Mutiny, and the revolt had already begun.

At little Flutterhabad, a small government depôt occupied by companies of the Sixth, one of the Inverary Rifles, and a battalion of native foot, under Captains Donaldson and Clare, though but thirty miles from Delhi, they were unconscious of any danger till, two days before, a messenger on horseback arrived at the cantonment with a note from the officer in command of the neighbouring town of Susi, informing Captain Donaldson that some of the sepoys there had raised cries of disaffection, that a large body of mutineers were reported as marching on the place, and, therefore, the officers of the Sixth were implored to start with all speed, and with whatever force they could muster, to intercept these latter, as, were they once to coalesce with the disaffected within the walls, the lives of the English would in all probability be the sacrifice. No time was lost in complying with the appeal contained in this dispatch, and the senior captain thought himself showing extraordinary prudence in deciding not to take the native battalion, in which, however, he had full confidence.

The regiment marched out of Flutterhabad an hour before sundown, leaving behind it, besides the soldiers' wives and children and the civilians, an English sergeant and ten men to overawe (!) the native troops; also the young wife of Captain Clare, with her little baby two weeks old.

The overpowering heat, dust, and noise of the dirty little town had so affected Mrs. Clare, in her delicate state of health, that her husband had moved her to a deserted mosque, about a quarter of a mile distant from the depôt, and which, standing in a garden thickly overgrown with palms and tulip trees, made a pleasant sort of improvised bungalow for the invalid.

The fierce day had faded into evening at last, the evening of the day after the departure of the troops, and Mrs. Clare lay on her couch, her ayah squatted on the floor beside her, with the infant in her arms, and the punkah waving with monotonous regularity over her head, being pulled to and fro by a servant seated in the verandah outside. The croaking of the frogs could be heard distinctly from the pool in the deserted garden below, mingling with the sharp "cheep, cheep" of the lizards, and an occasional murmur from the cantonment, or the shrill "ta-ra" of the bugle for supper; but it was not to these customary sounds that Mrs. Clare was listening as she leaned rather forward on her elbow.

"What can it be?" she said at last. "Don't you hear it, Zeena? Can it be the Sixth returning?"

"The mem sahib is feverish. Zeena hear nossing at all; and de sahib Clare and de Sixth not go to come back till to-morrow."

"But we were to have heard from them to-day, and there has been no message. Could anything have happened to him? Oh, no, not that! And yet it is so strange, no one coming near me this evening, not even Mrs. Smyth, as she promised or—there, Zeena, you must hear *that*.

"That" was audible enough indeed—a cry from the cantonment something between a shriek and a shout, and followed by a confused hum of many voices.

"Soldier got bhang—drunk—mad," said Zeena lazily. "Sergeant put him in black-hole."

"It is news of some sort from the regiment. Zeena, give me the baby, and run up to the cantonment and see what it is; and ask Mrs. Smyth to come back and stay the night with me. Make haste, run." And as the lady clapped her hands impatiently, Zeena rose with the silent docility of her class, and, only waiting to lay the infant by its mother, and place a tumbler of cooling drink beside her, sped swiftly through the low, arched doorway, and disappeared into the darkness.

Left alone, Mrs. Clare's anxiety increased. The strange rolling sound was now plainly distinguishable from the measured tramp of soldiers, and that some great excitement was going on at the cantonment was more and more evident. Once a shrill cry rose faintly into the air. Then came the sharp clang of a bell as suddenly suppressed, and yet no thought of danger there or to herself crossed her.

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A step aroused her. A quick, noisy step coming nearer every moment. Was it her husband? No, that was no smooth, military tread, but a woman's; and not the smooth, cat-like fall of the Hindoo, but one flying up the garden walk with frantic, almost clumsy, haste; another moment, and there was a clatter on the marble steps; another, and the heavy cloth curtain draping the arched doorway was roughly torn aside, and a young woman, with a sun-burnt, freckled face, hung round with tangled, reddish elf-locks, and lit by a pair of laughing blue eyes, bare arms hugging something like a dingy bundle of rags to her bosom, herself clad in similar rags of divers hues, badly covered by an old plaid cloak, thrust herself into Mrs. Clare's dainty presence—the girl, nick-named "Irish Mary," wife of a soldier in the Sixth, and a kind of self-constituted sutler to the corps.

She seemed beside herself now, for, after a pause for breath, she darted to the couch where the pretty patrician lady lay, and exclaimed, in tones hoarse with excitement, "Mrs. Clare, dear, is it lyin' here ye are, as if nothin' were doin'! Get up and fly for the love o' Heaven. Ochone! ochone! It's small chance ye'll have, anyhow."

"Fly where? From what?" cried Mrs. Clare, her indignation at the intrusion lost in astonishment, as the other, having deposited her bundle on the bed, almost lifted her on to her feet.

"From murther and slaughterin', an' worse a million times to the like o' you an' me!" Mary cried, her rough hands busy in thrusting Mrs. Clare's little, bare feet into a pair of shoes, and flinging a dark cloak, which happened to come handy, over her muslin wrapper. "Shure, an' aren't the Sepoy divils afther enterin' the depôt, an' our soldiers drugged aforehand, and no shot fired to stay them! Hark to thim, dear! There's a cry! Och! hurry, hurry, as ye're a livin' woman. There'll not be wan alive an hour hince, nor we aither if we're not gone from here!"

"The Sepoys here?" stammered Mrs. Clare. "Do you mean our battalion has risen?"

"An' have let in a couple of hundhred more, at laste. Misthress, dear, for God's sake don't stan' there. There was wan of ours as wasn't drugged—Sergeant McCann he was—an' the thing I stumbled over at the gate was the dead body of him hacked thro' and thro'. Shure, an' I turned straight roun' an' niver stayed till I got here; for I knew 'twas in yer bed ye were, an' none to purtect ye."

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"Thank you," said Mrs. Clare faintly and very pale, but still holding back; "but go yourself. I could not run or walk either far, and Captain Clare will be back in a few hours now, if he be alive, and if not, I—I would rather die here."

"*Die*, is it," cried Mary contemptuously, "and d'ye think I would be afther fearin' death, if that was all? Or d'ye think it's betther for the captain to fin' ye a slave to the black haythens and yer child's brains dashed out on the stones, as they did wid the childher at Meerut? Missis, I'm flyin' for Jim's sake an' me boy's here, an' I'm not goin' widout you; for the captain's been good and kind to Jim. Come, ma'am, hurry! Ye'll walk betther yersel' than if ye were tied to a gun an' driven. Here, take hould o' that shawl while I rowl the childher together. I'll carry them, and you kape close to me, and don't spake above yer breath. This way—so!"

The will of the Irish girl was paramount to-day, and the lady followed, with the meekness of a child, in her footsteps.

The eastern sky was red as blood from the blazing roof of her own house in the officers' quarters; and in that scarlet light Mrs. Clare could see the hillside and the walls of the cantonment dotted over with black figures, while the whole air seemed alive and quivering with a turmoil of shrieks, cries, and yells of agony or triumph.

One look was sufficient, and then, as the whole history of their successful treachery burst on her mind, Gertrude Clare cowered closer to the side of the Irish girl whose very existence she had hitherto so loftily ignored, and clung to her, murmuring: "We shall never escape! What hope is there for us?"

"Lave hould an' follow me, or it'll be thrue for ye," Mary muttered in curt response as she dived into a dense thicket of prickly pear and jungle grass, tramping a path in front with her strong feet, and leaving many a fragment of her ragged garments, many a streak of blood on the thorny boughs, yet never suffering a touch to disturb the sturdy, brown-skinned, eight-months' baby, or the tiny infant of scarce twice as many days which she carried so tenderly on her right arm.

On and on, tearing their feet and hands, stooping their heads low, praying inwardly the whole time, they struggled on for half-an-hour, treading their way at random through the scrub, only trying for the time to put so much more space between them and their foes; on and on, the Irish girl walking with the firm elastic tread of one well used to the march, the English one staggering after with a step momentarily slacker and more uncertain, until they reached the outskirts of the wood, and found themselves on the edge of a large field of Indian corn, covering the summit of the low hill where they stood.

Then as Mary stooped lower with her burden, that her head might not show above the tall green stalks through which she was about to make her way, Mrs. Clare gasped out:

"Go on. Save yourself. I can do no more," and sinking down, fainted away at her humble friend's feet. At the same moment the latter's baby, awakened by the sudden shock of the falling body, set up a piteous wail.

Half beside herself, Mary crouched down, hushing her baby to her breast with one hand, while with the other she loosened the fainting woman's dress, and turned her face upward that the night air might refresh her.

Loosened the fainting woman's dress.

She could do no more. There was not a drop of water near to moisten the lips already black and parched, but after a brief while, when her child, being fed and soothed, had fallen asleep again, she laid both babes down by Mrs. Clare and crept on hands and knees to a little eminence, where she could have a view of their surroundings.

Poor Gertrude! she was roused from her merciful stupor by something sharp stinging, and, opening her eyes, saw Mary leaning over with a branch of some thorny plant in her hand; but not even the seemingly cruel method of her revival recalled her so much as the look of horror on the girl's face.

"Foller me—so!" the latter whispered, and, crawling behind her, Gertrude came to a point where, peeping through the sheltering stack of the Indian corn, they could see the valley beneath. They were not more than half a mile, as the bee flies, from the mosque. It lay just below them, its white domes gleaming out of the tufts of palms, like a globe of frosted silver in the moonbeams. Mary pointed to it silently, and Gertrude felt her blood grow chill within her veins as she saw five armed figures, their black faces and white turbans plainly discernible in the pure white light, as they stole through the garden to the door from which the two women had so recently escaped.

"Hark!" Mary whispered—and even with the words there came to them upon the wind the faint cry of baffled rage, as the murderers found that their prey had escaped. The next moment they came rushing out into the garden again, beating about in search of their victims. Mary's hand closed on her companion.

"If they find our thrack, an' come shtraight afther us, they'll be ten minutes gitten' here," she said huskily. "An' if we're not gone—Missis, dear, I only ax ye to run ten minutes more. If we can but get through this field, an' down on the other side toward the river, I know where we can hide, an' they'll not be follerin' fur fear o' bein' cut off by our men. Only kape up yer heart for the love o' God, an' thry."

"I will do my best," answered Mrs Clare; "but if I drop, leave me. It will not be your fault, and I shall not suffer long."

Mary said nothing, but squeezed the slim, white hand in her brown and horny one, and then, only waiting to lift the mercifully sleeping children, they resumed their flight.

But before they reached the further extremity of the cornfield, Mrs. Clare stumbled, and Mary stopped of her own accord, warned by the long-drawn, gasping breath, that her companion's strength had well-nigh come to an end. A new idea seized her, and, taking off her cloak, she succeeded in strapping the infants on to her back, then, making Mrs. Clare take her arm, led her on, cheering the sinking woman every now and then with an encouraging whisper.

It was down-hill now, but every step was a stumble, every breath a prayer, and they had gained such a little distance.

Suddenly Mrs. Clare reeled, and the hold on Mary's arm gave way. The red spots on her cheeks had died out, and a mortal pallor was there instead.

"Mary," she said, every breath coming with a moan, "leave me now—I command it. You've done your best. God bless you. Go, take your child, and give me mine. It could not live long without me, and I can go no further, not one step."

And looking in her face, Mary Kirwan saw it was true. What was to be done? For a moment she stood still and mute, then a scarlet colour rushed into her cheeks, and she fell on her knees. "Oh, Lord Christ, I see a way, but it's hard!. Help me to do it; for there's no other at all.

It was a moment's prayer, and no sooner uttered than she rose, undid the children from her back, handed Mrs. Clare her own, and tenderly wrapping up the other in her cloak, darted away with it among the corn stalks without a word.

When she came back, her arms were empty, and her face was white as death.

"Mary!" cried the English mother, "where is it? What have you done with it, your child?"

"I've put it down," her lips quivering as she raised the other. "Maybe they'll not be afther seein' him (for it's in a

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hole he is—among the corn) widout he cries, an' he'll not do that the darlin', when I've nursed him but the now, an' wrapped him up warm to slape."

"But Mary, my God! What do you mean?"

"Mane! shure, that I can't carry you and the childher too," said Mary simply, "an' it's thrue, ye can't walk any further. Och! don't be talkin', but hould yer own tight while I lift ye. Shure it's not the feather-weight ye are. Don't be talkin', I say," checking with an almost fierce authority the resistance which Mrs. Clare would fain have offered as she was lifted from the ground. "But iv yer never axed the Mother o' God to pray for ye an' yours, as you're a mother yersel', ax Her now for me."

And on she strode as she spoke, walking far more swiftly now under her burden than when she had to accommodate her steps to the fragile creature behind her; though, now and then, a sob broke from her bosom, rending the heart of the prostrate woman she carried.

Yet it was not the weight that distressed her. It was the mother's heart in her, fighting and breaking for that sturdy, brown-skinned infant, whom every step put farther and farther away from her, and still she hurried on more swiftly for the agony in her mind, sometimes running, sometimes stumbling, sometimes nearly falling, never daring to pause, or lift her head once for a single breath.

Mary felt sure that, could she only reach a shelter she knew of, namely, an ancient tomb, half hidden among jungle and creepers in a thicket near the river, and which, though once often used as a sleeping place by tramps, fakirs, and smugglers, had, by some accident mysteriously significant to the natives, become unclean and had been shunned henceforth as an accursed and polluted spot by Mohammedan and Brahmin alike, they might safely hide there till the return of the regiment from Susi.

And she did. As the eastern sky flushed into a delicate rose colour, tinting earth and cloud with an ineffable opaline glory, her sore and weary feet stumbled heavily into the thicket of which she had been in search, and dropped upon the damp earth within with a cry of thankfulness, half inaudible from fatigue.

They were safe.

And Mrs. Clare, rising to her knees, took the brown hands, to which she owed her life, in her little fingers, covering them with tears and kisses as again and again she poured thanks and blessings on her preserver. Mary checked her.

"Whist! Not a word above yer breath! Shure it's scarce a hundred yards we are from the road, an' I'm hearin' somethin' passin' the now."

Men's voices were indeed audible, laughing and talking loudly along the road. There might have been half-a-dozen by the noise, but whether they were deserters, or only coolies on their way to labour, the women could not tell, as they cowered in the inmost recesses of their sanctuary, not even venturing for the next half-hour to creep out to drink at a little muddy pool among the reeds, though their lips and throats were so parched and swollen by this time that, during the period of waiting, they had hardly been able even to whisper a word to one another.

Mrs. Clare, with great discretion, drank sparingly, and would fain have coaxed Mary to do the same, but the latter plunged her hot face deep in the water, swallowing it in gulps, and only replying when she had slaked her thirst to the full.

"Lave me alone; it's got to last me till I get back."

"Back! where?" Mrs. Clare asked, but was abashed by the reply:

"Shure, an' is it lave me child for good I'd be doin'?"

Gertrude burst into tears. Her long fainting fit had confused her, and she now reproached herself bitterly.

"Ah! how could I let you! And you whom I've often looked down on! Why didn't you leave me instead?"

"You're a woman yersel'," said Mary gently. "An' could you be afther lavin' a feller-woman now to the marcy o' thim black divils? As to the boy, acushla"—her plain features working unrestrainedly with the sorrow she tried not to express in words—"wasn't it betther to lave him awhile, an' he slaping like an angel in me ould cloak, that's for all the world the colour o' the groun'? Shure, I tuk him to the font meself afore iver we left Calcutta, as is more than iver ye've been afther doin' for yours, I'll be bound, the purty, wee craythur! So I'd the clane right to say to our Blessed Lord: 'It's You he belongs to now, so take care of him till I'm comin' back, for it's meself is takin' care of a poor unbelavin' sowl for You,' I said, an' where would that be ef I didn't?"

"But Mary, Mary dear," cried Mrs. Clare, weeping more freely for the girl's simplicity and confidence. "Don't go *now*. It will be only throwing away your own life, and if they have discovered him—oh! please God, they have not!—it will be too late, too late to save. Don't, Mary! The Sixth will be here a few hours hence, and then we will go back together under good guard and search for him, and he shall never want for anything again if I can help it, or you either. Only stay!"

But Mary shook her rough head doggedly.

"I could thrust Him above to help me when I was thryin' to help Him," she said; "but ef 'twas carin' for meself I was—an' shure anyhow is it I could sit here an' me purty, bright-eyed boy, Jim's one bairn, tugging at me heart-strings all the while?"

And yet it was with a stern, beautiful patience that she delayed another ten minutes to feed Mrs. Clare's tiny infant, which had awakened, crying with a hunger which no longer warded off rapid movement, and which its poor young mother had no power to relieve. Then, her work of charity completed, the private's wife gave the babe back to its mother, and, cautioning the latter to keep well within shelter till she saw relief at hand, and undaunted by the growing heat of the sun, her terrible fatigue and bleeding feet, untroubled even by the prospect of almost certain discovery, she sallied forth on the return search for her child.

Left alone, the hours passed wearily with the officer's wife. She was worn out with fatigue and agitation. She was faint with hunger, and, do what she would, her child wailed and fretted.

The hours wore on. The sun rose higher and higher, till the low entrance to the ruin glowed like a yellow mouth of a furnace. The child, tired with crying, fell asleep again; and she herself was resting in a sort of half-slumber of exhaustion, when a noise from without startled her into a sitting position, her heart sick with terror. There was the regular tramp of many men coming up the road.

Was it the Sixth? Or was it the party of mutineers which had separated from their fellows?

If it were the former, and she remained in her hiding-place, they might pass on and leave her to perish of hunger and weakness. If the latter, and she were to show herself, God only could foresee her fate in its full horror. And the tramp, tramp, came nearer and nearer. She could hear the murmur of voices, and catch now and then the gleam of arms among the trees which hid the ruin.

The suspense became intolerable. Laying her child gently in a dark corner, she crawled to the entrance and looked out. A body of troops were passing, and almost passed. She could see the scarlet uniforms of the Sixth, and the Scotch caps and grey jackets of Captain Donaldson's men. She could almost hear the words of the soldiers, as at quick march and in double file they passed along, their sternly vengeful faces telling of the work they had been doing and the work they were about to do, and yet, when she tried to call to them, her tongue clove to her mouth, a mist rose before her eyes, and, with a faint cry, she sank face foremost on the ground.

When she recovered she was in her husband's arms, and his grateful tears were on her face. Little did that young officer, who had heard of the attack on Flutterhabad and the wholesale massacre, expect to see his wife alive and safe. The Sixth had indeed met and defeated the party of which they were in search, with more ease than they expected, and were in consequence returning rather earlier, when met *en route* by the body of mutineers dispatched for that purpose, and who, by first harassing and then leading them in pursuit, had without the loss of more than two or three men contrived to delay them two good hours on their way.

But what of Mary?

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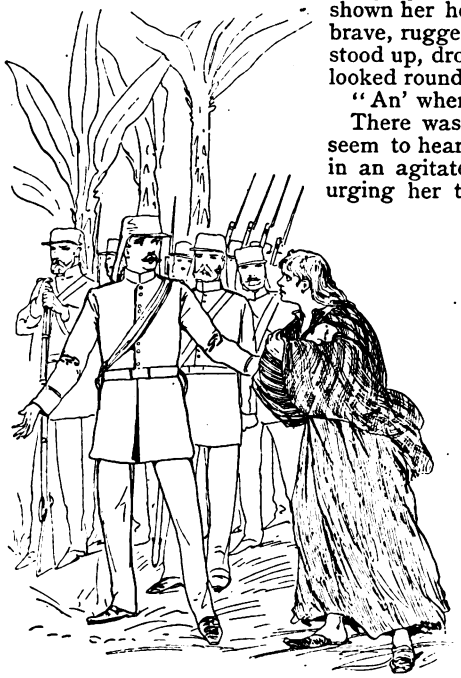
No one can tell what she endured in her return search for her child. It was then in the last week of May, and the heat at eight o'clock was so intense that it seemed to frizzle the brains in her uncovered head. She had lost a shoe, and her feet were cut and swollen. Her head felt swollen too, and her eyes dim and distended. It was the effect of the too hearty drink in the hot sun and the want of food, which was, besides, making her sick and giddy; and as the sun grew hotter and hotter, a species of delirium seemed to seize her. She saw before her a crowd of Sepoys, with inflamed eyes and dark, ferocious faces, and in the midst of them her baby held on high by one of the miscreants, in the act of dashing its brains out upon the ground.

She shrieked aloud in her agony, darted wildly forward, stumbled, fell headlong to the ground, staggered to her feet again, and, lo! the Sepoys were gone, and, instead her child was wailing, wailing, somewhere in front of her. Yes, she saw it now distinctly, wrapped in the cloak as she had left it among the cornstalks, and near it, crouching for the spring, a huge Bengal tiger. Again she screamed and sprang forward, throwing out her arms wildly to scare the animal, and again the horrible vision vanished, only to be renewed a thousand times in a thousand different forms.

Once she met a gentle-looking Parsee face to face, who stopped her and gave her some "chuppatties" (coarse meal cakes) and a drink of sour milk, and warned her earnestly against returning to the town, signifying, by gestures as well as by words, the fate which had befallen her friends there. She ate and drank ravenously of what he gave; but only shook her head at his advice and hastened on. The Parsee went his way, shaking his head. Evidently the poor woman had been driven mad by the slaughter of those belonging to her, and he should only embarrass and compromise himself by trying to detain her.



"An' where's my Jim, at all?"

And then at last, all at once, the weight rolled off her brain, and the red mist from before her eyes. She was on her knees in the maize-field and in front of her was the very hole where she had laid her infant with the rusty plaid cloak crumpled on the edge of it.

But the child?

For a moment an awful despair seized her, and a cry broke from her lips, so shrill and unearthly that it scared away a couple of vultures who were hovering low over something a yard or two distant. A little cooing, gurgling note of pleasure answered, and turning, she saw a round, rosy face among the cornstalks, and a pair of fat hands, and naked, dimpled feet, trying, by stretching and crawling, to get at the mother who had left it.

When Captain Clare, accompanied by four of his men, entered the same field in search of his wife's preserver, they found Mary quietly seated on the ground, nursing her baby, and the ringing cheer which greeted the sight might have shown her how her heroism was appreciated by those brave, rugged hearts. She hardly heeded it; but just stood up, dropping her courtesy to the officer, and then looked round at the others.

"An' where's my Jim, at all?"

There was no immediate answer. The men did not seem to hear, and Captain Clare began thanking her in an agitated way for all that she had done, and urging her to hasten with him to the carriage at the foot of the hill, where Mrs. Clare was waiting for her, which was to take them both under a strong escort to Susi, and thence, as soon as possible, to Calcutta. Mary courtesied again.

"Thank ye, sir. It's very good ye are to me; but I'm not wantin' to lave me husband, though it's not 'on the strength' I am. Shure, I'll go down to him the now, since he's no mind to come up to me. Maybe, though, he's not got lave to fall out o' the ranks for that."

The last words were said piteously, her eager, excited blue eyes lifted to the officer's kindly face. Very gently he took her arm.

"Come to the carriage first, Mary, any way. Mrs. Clare wants to—to speak to you. My good girl, my brave girl, you're not going to give way now!"

"Is it *kilt* he is?" she asked hoarsely; and then, before any reply could be given, save the mute answer of the eyes, the child fell from her arms, she reeled suddenly, and dropped, a senseless, crumpled heap, at the commander's feet.

When Mary recovered from the shock occasioned by her husband's death, she accompanied Mrs. Clare to England, and was ever after her constant companion. The two boys became fast friends, and when young Kyle, Mary's boy, grew to man's estate, Mrs. Clare had him established in a small business, for, as she said, "she could never do enough for the son of the woman who had so generously saved her life."

THE EXPLANATION OF THOSE PIOUS BURIALS.

ON the frontier opposite Spain, like a dog couchant between two pillars, lies Querterac, guarding the entrance to a valley. On the right and left the mountains, broken for a space, resume their monotonous, unending chain. Querterac is a small, old-fashioned town that was once fortified. It is difficult of access, and has about 6,000 inhabitants.

On the neighbouring mountain, regarded as neutral, was gathered a population as doubtful in morality as in nationality—a confused mixture of Gascons, Basques, and Catalonians, whose chief occupations were highway robbery and smuggling.

About the middle of the present century cholera was devastating Spain, Italy, and France.

In the country and in the towns there was a cessation from the activities of life. The inhabitants barricaded themselves in vain against the invisible enemy, which glided treacherously through half-opened doors, locks, and unsuspected openings in roofs and walls. In Querterac, a victim from the first day, nothing could be seen but deserted streets and houses closed from top to bottom. Those who fell in the public squares had no assistance, for pity was dead through fear.

The civil authorities were disobeyed and despised as useless and powerless, no regard being paid to the official notices that were placarded on the doors and walls.

If fear was great and selfishness hard in the city, the country was even more distracted and cruel. If a beggar showed himself at the door of some lonely farmhouse he was received with stones and bullets. The dogs were set on him, and he was maltreated.

Perfectly absurd stories were circulated among the country people. They said that cholera was not so bad as it was reported to be. Many people who had seemingly died of cholera had really been poisoned by some enemy, who had drugged the water or kneaded arsenic into the bread.

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In short, the people in the valley were eternally in dread of some hostile action on the part of "those rascals up above," as they called the mixed race that dwelt in the caves and recesses of the mountains.

The opportunity was a good one for these mountaineers to plunder the flocks and property of those below, but "those rascals up above" never stirred from their holes. Why?

Well, they also were dying. They seemed to die in more astonishing proportions than elsewhere, and one never could have believed that there were so many people in those mountains.

At Querterac there was considerable astonishment, for after a few days the epidemic began to decrease, but the mountaineers insisted on dying. The townspeople did not understand it, but they could not help admiring the piety of those people above. Every evening three or four jolting vehicles loaded with coffins and followed by men and women in mourning descended slowly through the ravine, entered the village and passed silently toward the cemetery.

The shadows of the mourning cortége in the light of the glowing fires cast dark, fantastic pictures on the walls. The passers-by fled at the sight, seized with fresh alarm. It was over a lonely route that the procession passed to reach the cemetery, and those poor wretches, those heathens, followed their dead to their last resting-place, when it would have been so easy to throw the bodies into the ravines and rivers or to leave them to the wolves and eagles; but no, those wanderers, those aliens, scrupulously regarded the rites of burial.

The charge of the custom-house at Querterac is one of great importance, and generally falls to a competent officer. From this point inspectors, going to and fro, carefully watch the narrow valley which is the only easy entrance from Spain. During the epidemic death interrupted the routine of duty, for on some days twenty men fell victims to the disease, and the survivors, distracted by the panic, neglected their work.

One man only kept his post, the old man Valgenod. He always sounded the final "d." He was a born custom-house officer. He belonged to that race. He could smell a smuggler three hours before he saw him, and six miles off a bale of tobacco would make him sneeze.

Night and day he kept on his rounds, declaring that it would be an absurdity for an old custom-man to die of the colic, as he called the cholera. The guards were increased, and Valgenod went the rounds of those who did not answer to their names at roll-call.

He was always watching the mountain, the lair of the monsters. He knew them every one—those smugglers on whom he had fired so often when he had found them prowling round the town on some dark night.

There was one old man, Father Meritas, a grey bearded gipsy, with whom Valgenod had frequently come into contact, and each had a high opinion of the cleverness of the other.

"Valgenod!" said Meritas. "The scoundrel! If it were not for him! If he were only out of the way!"

"Meritas!" said Valgenod. "The rogue! The day after my death he will smuggle Madrid into France."

Meritas was a smuggler—as Valgenod was a custom-house officer—from temperament and instinct. It was his vocation. Numerous were the tricks that he invented, the schemes that he devised, and he was never caught.

In the caves of the mountains were hidden bales of tobacco, cloths, skins, Spanish laces, and liquors. In some way or another all this merchandise was gradually smuggled into France, but how, no one, not even Valgenod, knew.

It was the third day of the epidemic, just about twilight, that Valgenod, scenting the winds and looking round, saw a cart, drawn by a broken-winded mule, entering the valley and going straight toward the gates of the town. Behind came Meritas and a few ill-clad fellows of his tribe, who were singing psalms in a harsh patois. The cart was a railed one, and, in spite of the approaching darkness, the sergeant made out the long shape of a coffin.

"Ah," he moaned. "There is suffering up there, too. Honest people are not the only ones to die, I see."

He drew himself up to let the procession pass and gave the military salute—a corpse deserved such salute even though it was one of those reprobates.

Before the walls of the custom-house, Meritas, whose eyes gleamed like two fires in his pale face, raised his long lean arms to heaven and sobbed:

"My wife! my wife! my wife!"

"Poor old man," said Valgenod, and he drew a match to light his pipe, for he felt an unusual tenderness creeping over him.

Two days later another procession was seen winding along the mountain, and Meritas was walking behind. This time there were three coffins in the cart.

"Well, now," thought Valgenod, "these cannot all be his. Perhaps it is a subscription."

But the old smuggler was tearing his beard and shrieking in broken tones at the top of his voice:

"My sons! my sons! Who can give me back my sons?"

The sergeant saluted three times, and the entire post, drawn out in line along the open gratings, uncovered piously before the bitter grief of the distracted father.

Every evening at the setting of the sun a funeral procession passed through the town, and Meritas invariably formed part of the cortége. He walked with a friend on each side supporting him, calling aloud on God, blessing the dead and lamenting his fate. He buried in order his wife, his sons, his daughters, his nephews, his cousins. One day he besought Valgenod to kill him, and end his suffering.

"He is getting silly, and there is some reason for it," said the sergeant shrugging his shoulders.

Finally, so strong is pity, he felt his former respect grow into love for his old enemy.

These funerals continued for three weeks. Then the people in the town began to wonder. Querterac awoke from its stupor, and the epidemic seemed to have disappeared. The deaths became fewer and fewer; the windows were opened; every one would have regained confidence if it had not been for those mournful processions that came down every evening from above, a lamentable proof that the epidemic was still raging, if not in the city, at any rate in the outskirts.

One evening—it was the last—three carts, as usual, were crossing the city bridge. One of them, the foremost, struck against a mile stone. The mule backed, and the cart upset, throwing its contents, two coffins, at the feet of Valgenod. In the fall, the lid of one of the coffins fell off.

Immediately Meritas and all the mourners, spreading out their arms like the wings of birds, fled to the mountains. Valgenod was astonished to see instead of the corpse, before which he was already preparing to flee, rolling between his legs four bales of merchandise carefully marked.

"To arms," he cried.

The post ran up, but it was too late. The smugglers had escaped. The other carts were seized and the coffins opened. They were all filled with merchandise. Valgenod tore his hair.

This then was the key to the mystery, and the explanation of those numerous deaths, of those pious burials. Not one of those "rascals up above" had died from cholera. Meritas had not lost a wife or sons, daughters or cousins. All the coffins that had entered Querterac, and had been saluted by the custom-house officials, had been loaded with lace, liquors, and tobacco.

They had been taken through the deserted streets, and the contents stored in a house at the gates of the cemetery. When the house was searched it was empty. The merchandise had been sent away every day to the large towns.

The villagers smiled. Valgenod swore that in future he would refuse to pass a skeleton unless he turned his pockets inside out. Meritas disappeared.

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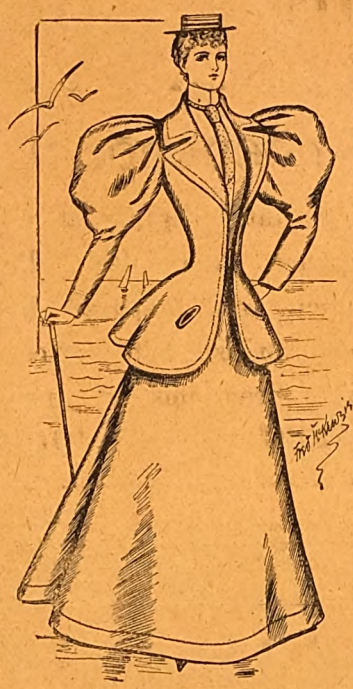

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Age last Birthday.	The Combined Experience Table Per Year.	£400. Average Cost of £400 in British Assurance Companies Per Year.	I.O.F. Table of Premiums Per Year.	Annual Saving to Members of the I. O. F.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s d.	£ s. d.
21	3 1 6	8 1 4	3 12 0	4 9 4
25	3 4 10	8 16 4	3 16 0	5 0 4
30	3 10 4	10 0 4	4 0 0	6 0 4
35	3 17 6	11 9 4	4 12 0	6 17 4
40	4 6 4	13 6 4	5 0 0	8 6 4
45	5 1 10	15 13 8	6 0 0	9 13 8
49	6 12 10	18 3 4	7 16 0	10 7 4

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(By GEORGE GRIFFITH, Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," and "The Syren of the Skies.")

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 299.—Vol. XI. FOR WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 22, 1894. [Price One Penny.

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4/- LARGEST EVER SOLD AT OR NEAR THE PRICE. **4/-**

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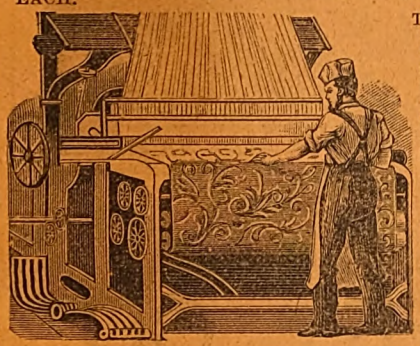

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The BEST of all TONICS and a GENTLE APERIENT.
MILD IN OPERATION, PERFECTLY SAFE, AND FREE FROM INJURIOUS DRUGS.
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If you really want your children to be Bonny, Chubby, and Strong, with rosy cheek and pure firm flesh, give them

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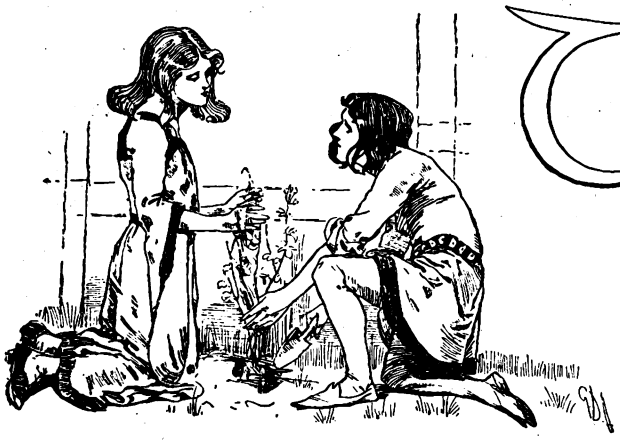
SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 299.—Vol. XI. *FOR THE WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 22, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.



The Kaiser's Tree

IT was in the year of grace, 1511. Two men were crossing the turf of the quiet Minster Square in Breisach; one was somewhat advanced in years, with fine, aquiline nose, full blonde beard verging on grey, and long hair that escaped in heavy locks from under a red velvet *berretta*. He walked with so majestic a tread that it was very evident he was no common man, but one on whose broad shoulders rested an invisible world. Handsome, tall and noble, he was indeed a King among men—a Kaiser—a German Kaiser from crown to toe; a poet too, he was, and a hero in the true sense of the word—Anastasius Grün's "Last Knight," Maximilian I.

Here in Breisach—*his* city as he called it—the Kaiser escaped from all affairs of State, and here he wrote those tender letters to his daughter Margaret, in the Netherlands. But in 1511 threatening clouds hung low and shadowed the Kaiser's brow, for they presaged a storm that was to carry him away for ever from the quiet spot of earth he loved so well. His eyes swept sadly over the bright landscape that lay at his feet; and suddenly turning to his companion he asked:

"Whose children are those?" pointing as he spoke to a niche in the wall, where a boy and girl knelt and with great industry were planting a rose-bush. The girl was about eight years old, and the boy some four years her senior, and so absorbed were they in their work that they did not hear the Kaiser's approach. When he stood beside them the boy looked up and exclaimed:

"Why, it is the Kaiser!"

"What are you doing there?" asked Maximilian, his artistic eye feeding the while upon the charming little pair.

"We are planting a rose-tree to the dear God," said the lad fearlessly.

"And do you think the dear God will be much pleased?"

"It is the best we have," he said, shrugging his shoulders.

The Kaiser smiled, as he asked: "What is your name?"

"Hans Liefrink."

"And is the little girl your sister?"

"No, she is our little neighbour, Councillor Ruppacher's Mailie."

"Ah, indeed! And you love each other very much?"

"Yes, when I grow up—and have a knife—I am going to marry her." The Kaiser looked astonished.

"Must you have a knife to get married?"

"Yes, certainly," answered the lad. "Without a knife I cannot cut, and if I cannot cut I cannot earn money, and I must have a great deal to marry Mailie, because she is a Councillor's daughter."

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"But what will you cut?" the Kaiser inquired.

"I will cut wood."

"Ah, I understand now, you want to be a woodcarver. Was that your father's art?"

"Yes. When I was little I watched him carve, and now I want to learn myself; but father is dead, and mother cannot buy me a knife."

"Will this do?" And the Kaiser drew a magnificent many-bladed one from his pocket.

The hot colour rushed into the boy's face, and one could almost see his heart beat with joy through the coarse, torn shirt.

"Yes, yes," he stammered; "it is splendid!"

"It is yours; be diligent with it," said the Kaiser.

Hans took it timidly. "Thank you very, very much," was all he could say, but a bright fire glowed in the dark eyes that showered sparks of love and gratitude upon the Kaiser.

"Now you can go to Nuremberg."

"I should love to go there to Dürer's, for I will never carve plates. I can't bear such flat work; I mean to carve figures that are natural, and that one can take hold of."

"The genuine sculptor!" exclaimed the Kaiser. "You are right, Hans Liefrink; hold to what is natural, and you will never fail." He drew a leathern purse from his doublet, and handing it to the lad, said: "Only have patience, Hans; keep these *guldens* until you are old enough to travel, then go to Dürer and tell him that as his Kaiser once held the ladder for him, so shall he hold it now for you to mount as high as he. Will you promise me all this?"

"Yes, dear Herr Kaiser," cried Hans enthusiastically, and he took the Kaiser's hand and kissed it in his sudden joy. "If I ever carve the dear God," he exclaimed, "I will make him look just like you."

"Farewell," laughed the Kaiser, as he strode down the mountain with his companion.

The boy stood as in a dream, while Mailie chewed a hole in her apron. A maid came in search of her, and to her Mailie told the story of the Kaiser and the knife. It soon became the gossip of all Breisach. "Hans Liefrink was such a bold fellow; it was no marvel that he should have been prattling to the Kaiser," and everyone wanted to see the wonderful knife and the contents of the leathern purse. But the latter Hans was prudent enough to show to no one.

Years passed. Hans Liefrink lost his mother—Mailie hers, and the orphaned children were drawn closer together. In the

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evening, after work, Hans would break through the hedge that separated the gardens, and would carve lovely figures for Mailie, such as no child in all Breisach possessed; and she listened in open-eyed wonder and admiration while he told her of the wonderful pictures and wood-carvings he had seen in the Freiburg Cathedral. Whenever they could they ran up to the Minster and watered the rose-tree—the "Kaiser's tree," Hans had named it—and there they loved to linger, hoping always that their kind friend might come again. Often they called aloud: "Herr Kaiser, dear Herr Kaiser, come again"; but the childish voices echoed and re-echoed in vain under the blue sky—and the Kaiser came no more.

The little ones grew up, and the "Kaiser's tree" grew with them, and they seemed more and more drawn to it and to each other, as though its tender roots had reached out silver threads of love into each heart, and bound them close with ties that held them fast. But, alas! this one true friend was not strong enough to hold together what men would keep apart.

The lovely, stately *Ruppacherin*, the Councillor's daughter, dared no longer be friendly with the poor wood-carver; her father strongly forbade it, and put a high wall between the two gardens, so that Hans and Mailie lost all chance of meeting, save at the "Kaiser's tree," and here, but rarely, when the Minster was deserted.

But this only made the stream of love that coursed in their hearts overflow their lips; and one evening when Mailie had long been absent from the "Kaiser's tree," Hans sang his first love song under her window that overlooked the little garden:

"My heart is mine no longer,
'Tis stolen quite away
By a maiden, sweet and lovely,
Who listens to my lay.

"There grows a slender rose-tree
Within the Minster's shade,
And underneath its branches,
A sign of love is laid."

Early the next morning Mailie came to the rose-tree, and found a tiny golden heart hidden in the moist grass; she listened with sparkling eyes and burning cheeks to Hans' words of love, and laid the tiny golden heart on her own fast-beating one, and swore never to let it go, while Hans, half mad with joy, cried: "Ah, if only the Kaiser would come now"—but the Kaiser came no more.

The autumn passed, winter came, and the young people saw each other more rarely than ever, but Hans often sang the "Song of the Rose Tree," and many another, all telling of his love for Mailie, till at last her father noticed it and threatened her with his curse if she did not stop all intercourse with the "good-for-nothing artist."

So one day Hans and Mailie stood for the last time beside the rose tree they had planted many years before. Mailie had told Hans of her father's threat, and now she stood silent, her hand resting in his, while tears coursed slowly down her cheeks.

"Mailie, tell me that *you* do not think me such a worthless fellow."

Her blue eyes looked full into his brown ones, and a smile of love and trust crept over her face.

"No, Hans, indeed I do not; no one shall ever make me think that. They do not know you as I do; you have taught me all that I know that is great and beautiful; you have moulded me and made me what I am, even as your artist-hand forms an image from a shapeless piece of wood," and she took his strong hand and pressed it to her soft, warm lips, then folded her white fingers over his brown ones and added: "I will believe in you always, for you honour God with your art, and whoever does that cannot be evil."

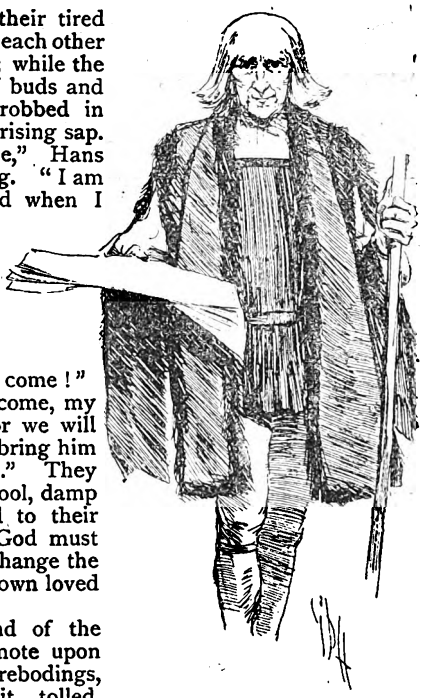
"And will you be true to me, Mailie, till I have brought my art and myself to honour, and till I come back to claim you for my bride?"

"Yes, Hans, I will never leave my father's house but to go to you—or to the cloister. And if I should die before you come, I will ask them to bury me here, under the Kaiser's tree, where we have been so happy. Then, if you come back and lie here in the sunshine to rest you from your toil and sorrow, every rose-leaf that falls on you shall be a kiss from me," and she wept on his breast, their tired hearts beating against each other in the pain of parting; while the promise of spring—of buds and roses—pulsed and throbbed in the rose-tree with the rising sap.

"Don't cry, Mailie," Hans said, trying to be strong. "I am going to Dürer's, and when I have learned to do something of worth, I will seek the Kaiser and ask him to use his influence with your father."

"Oh, yes, if the dear Kaiser would but come!"

"He will certainly come, my love," said Hans, "for we will pray the good God to bring him to us—or me to him." They knelt together in the cool, damp grass, and it seemed to their trusting hearts that God must work a miracle and change the Kaiser's tree into his own loved presence.



The kindly old messenger left.

Suddenly the sound of the great Minster bell smote upon their ears—full of forebodings, mournfully, slowly it tolled. People began to climb the hill that led to the church, and Hans ran to them with eager inquiry.

"Where have you been?" they said, "Have you not heard that our Kaiser is dead?"

The Kaiser dead! Poor Hans stood as if turned to stone. Where were all his hopes? He rested his burning brow against the cool stem of the rose-tree and groaned aloud.

The knell ceased, and all nature was so still and dead, it seemed as though spring and life could never come again. A light hand rested on his bowed head; Mailie had come to be his comforter.

"Oh, Mailie, the Kaiser will never come again!"

"But God is with us," said Mailie softly. As she stood before Hans in her maiden purity and beauty, the light of inspiration overspread his face, and he whispered low:

"Mailie, God is truly with us. He shows me now—as in a vision—the Queen of Heaven surrounded by holy angels, and if I can but carve all that He shows me, I shall be great myself and need a Kaiser's help no longer."

Next morning at daybreak Hans set out. As he passed Ruppacher's house loud and clear his voice rang out:

"My heart is mine no longer,
'Tis stolen quite away——"

Softly one of the lower windows was raised and a white handkerchief waved a last farewell through the dusky light; the song went on, but the voice grew trembling and uncertain—full of unshed tears—then ceased, and all was silent once more.

Years passed and nothing was heard of Hans Liefrink, and no one thought of him, save Mailie, in whose gentle, loving heart he was ever present and ever dear, and who watched for him till at last hope was almost dead, and the roses faded in her cheeks, and a dumb sorrow looked out of the sweet blue eyes.

Her one pleasure was the care of the little rose-tree, and tenderly she watered it each day and saw with loving pride that it repaid her care, for it grew stronger and taller till it reached the very top of the niche where it was planted, then fain would go beyond, but she bent its budding top and bound it fast within the niche. She could do her work without hindrance from her father, for he was buried deep in political matters brought about by the Reformation, and paid but little heed to his daughter.

Breisach was trembling much for its old faith, and Duke Ferdinand, Kaiser Maximilian's nephew and successor,

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counselled her children to do all they could to strengthen the Catholic faith, by means of votive offerings and ideal paintings and sculptures in their churches. The Minster had long lacked a high altar worthy of it; and notices were sent broadcast bidding all German artists to send in their best plans, that the best might be chosen and the work began.

Mailie heard but little of all this, for she never went among the people, and lived alone in her little bay-windowed room, waiting for Hans to come. But she was growing weak and weary with waiting, and the eyes she turned toward the Christ that Hans had carved for her were often full of tears. Five long years had passed since she had seen him, when one evening—.

"There grows a slender rose-tree
Within the Minster's shade,"

echoed softly as a summer zephyr under her window. She sprang to the casement and looked out, but could see no one in the darkness. Love lent wings to her feet, and like an escaped bird she flew up the mountain-side to the Kaiser's tree, where two strong arms clasped her and held her close, while her head swam, and it seemed as if the waters of the Rhine were closing in about her. They held each other long in silent embrace, for true love needs no words to tell its depths. Hans was the first to speak.

"How pale you are, sweetheart; are you ill?"

She shook her head with a happy laugh. "Oh, no; not now. But you were gone so long. Why did you not come sooner?"

"I could not, little one. If I had come back a poor, unknown fellow, your father would have dismissed me again. So I stayed and feasted my eyes on all the art treasures of the great cities, and worked in Dürer's studio till my name was mentioned with honour among his pupils, and I said to myself, 'Now you may woo the lovely Mailie.' And when I heard there was to be a new altar put in our Minster, I hastened here to make application, and, if I am found worthy to do the work, what can your father have against me then?"

Mailie shook her head doubtfully, but Hans was full of joy.

"How the Kaiser's tree has grown!" he cried, in wonder; "it seems to have taken all the warm blood out of your cheeks, its roses are so red. Give my love's roses back to her," he said, playfully brushing her cheek with a flower, but they were pale and white. "That is not good paint; let us try this," and he pressed a kiss on her cheek. "Ay, that is better," he laughed, and laid her blushing face against his breast. "Bloom out, my little rose; the spring is almost here."

The next morning the usher of the high-gabled town hall came into the Council Chamber with hesitating steps.

"Your honourable body will be graciously pleased to pardon, but there is one without who insists upon coming into your presence."

"Who is it?" asked the Burgomaster.

"It is Hans Liefrink," said the usher, "but so much changed I hardly knew him. He wants to compete for the new altar, and submit his plans."

"What have we to do with such a scrapegrace as he? Let him go back where he came from," was the decision. "We want no such bunglers as he."

The kindly old messenger left the room with a somewhat crestfallen air, but returned almost immediately, bringing a paper of draughtings with him, which he presented with many bows and apologies.

"Liefrink begs you will examine these, your worship, and you can inquire of Dürer, in Nuremberg, as to his ability."

"If the fellow don't take himself off we will have the jailor after him," cried Ruppacher in a rage.

"Softly, softly, Master Ruppacher, the draught represents the coming of the Mother of God in Heaven, and is right fancifully thought out, it seems to me."

"But to imagine a thing is much easier than to do it. Liefrink never could do such a thing," said one of the Councillors. "Besides, it was simply ridiculous to give such a work into the hands of a Breisacher child, whom some had even looked askance upon." So Hans was summarily dismissed.

The authorities finally decided to send their plans to Albrecht Dürer and to let him be their judge; and, at the same time, with the letter from the Council went a letter from Hans to his great teacher and good friend.

Weeks slipped by in alternate anxiety and sweet stolen happiness for the lovers; they met as formerly at the Kaiser's tree, for the struggles of 1524 drew Ruppacher's attention from his daughter, and Mailie grew bright and rosy in this spring-time of love. At last Dürer's answer came; but who can describe the amazement of the Council when it was found that the letter contained Hans Liefrink's despised plan and these words: "I can recommend nothing more beautiful than this plan of my friend and pupil, Hans Liefrink, whose ability to execute it I fully guarantee."

Half-an-hour later a crowd of people pressed up to the narrow street and stopped before Hans Liefrink's little house. He came to the door, and, to his astonishment, saw a deputation from the Council, one of whom stepped up and told him with great pomp that his plan had been approved by Dürer, and he had been chosen by the Council to execute the high altar for the Minster.

Hans almost shouted for joy. Was it really true, or only a beautiful dream! When the deputation had departed he hastened over to Ruppacher's, for this was his time to speak.

Mailie opened the door for him—a low cry of happy fright, a quick kiss—and she disappeared into her own room, where, with beating heart, she sank before her crucifix and implored the Blessed Virgin's help. Hans stepped fearlessly into Ruppacher's presence, who cried with flaming eyes:

"What do you want?"

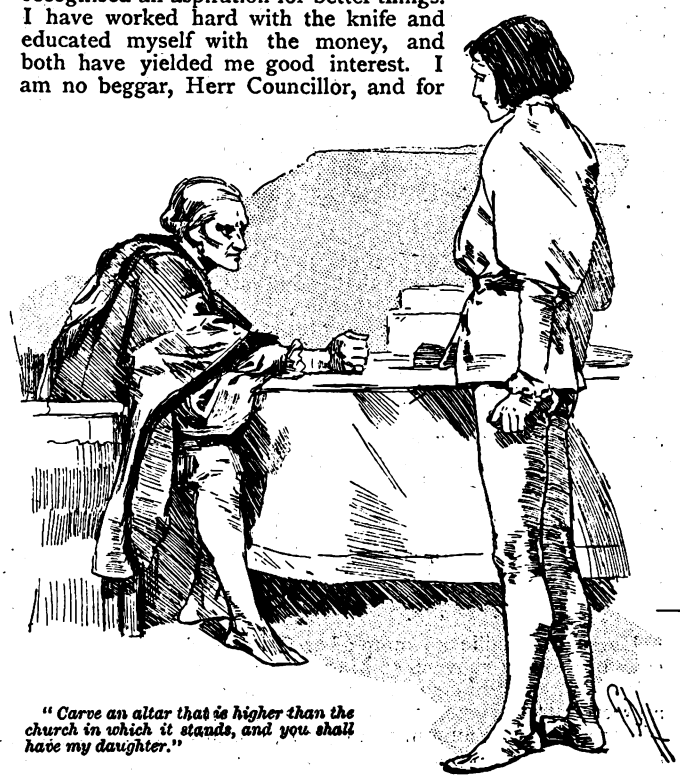
"Herr Ruppacher, I know an honest man who loves your daughter and who would marry her, and I want to bring him to you."

"So——and who may he be?"

"Myself, Herr Councillor."

"You! Did anyone ever hear such impudence. The beggar dares——"

"Herr Councillor," Hans cried out, "I never was a beggar. My father was poor, but he supported us with his wood-carving, and after his death my mother took care of herself and me by the honest labour of her hands. The only things I ever received in my life were the knife and the purse from Kaiser Max, and those I did not beg—he gave them to a poor boy in whom he recognised an aspiration for better things. I have worked hard with the knife and educated myself with the money, and both have yielded me good interest. I am no beggar, Herr Councillor, and for



"Carve an altar that is higher than the church in which it stands, and you shall have my daughter."

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the next two years the commission I have just received will enable me to abundantly provide for a wife."

"Two years, and what then?" sneered Ruppacher.

"Then new commissions will come!"

"Oh, you think you are something fine, no doubt, but you belong to a race of star-gazers and loafers, who do nothing but spin dreams and are too lazy to work."

Hans was burning with indignation, but he controlled himself for Mailie's sake, and only said:

"A Kaiser held the ladder for Albrecht Dürer—the ladder on which he painted—and a town councillor of Breisach, whose dust will soon be scattered to the winds, insults his best-loved pupil. There, I tasted all the honour of my reputation; here, I must be insulted and trampled upon!"

"Then go back to your honour. Why did you come here with your silly art?"

"Because I love your daughter so truly that no sacrifice is too great to be made for her; and because I want her for my wife."

"Well, then, I will tell you that you are as likely to marry a wife as far above you as my daughter is, as you are to build an altar in the Minster higher than the Minster itself."

"Is that all you have to say, Herr Councillor?"

He laughed contemptuously. "Carve an altar that is higher than the church in which it stands, and you shall have my daughter—not before—so help me God!"

A piteous cry came from the next room. Ruppacher opened the door; Mailie lay unconscious before the crucifix. Hans hastened to her, but the angry man raised his hand against him.

For a moment it seemed that the sacred knife must leap from his pocket; but he struggled with himself, and rushed out of the house, up the hill to the Minster, to his old friend, the "Kaiser's tree."

It was a perfect noonday. A cloudless sky arched the shadowless earth; the castle of Sponeck was outlined against a background of gold, like some fairy-palace, and the Rhine broke in foaming surf on her steep rocks. But the beautiful picture before him wounded Hans, for it seemed to him that nature was unsympathetic with her child's grief, and he sat in the niche, under the rose-tree, for the first time failing to find happiness there.

He could never win Mailie now, no one could help him, not even Kaiser Max, if he should come back from the grave, for had not Ruppacher sworn a terrible oath that he should never have her till he had made an altar higher than the church?

This was impossible, unless God should work a miracle for him; perhaps he might never see her again, and tears of longing and pain coursed down his cheeks, and he buried his face in his hands like a helpless child, and none came to comfort him; all was silent around him, save the chafers humming about the roses.

Suddenly something struck him sharply on the back; he started and turned quickly, but it was only the little rose-tree that had at last, by its own strength, broken forth from the niche where Mailie's hand had bound it, and in escaping, had struck him as if in greeting. There it stood, tall and straight, and he saw for the first time how much higher it was than the niche in which it grew. Quick as lightning a thought shot through his tired brain. A moment of reflection—a cry of triumph—then he fell on his knees in joyful thanksgiving. "Lord God, Thou art great, even in Thy small things, and Thy wonders never cease!"

What was it that the little tree had taught him? What was it that made him kiss its rough bark in a wild transport of joy?

Hans saw Mailie no more; her father had sent her to the convent at Marienau, yet her prison walls were not so strong but that a song, a greeting from Hans, sometimes reached her. He, too, lived like a hermit in his cell, working from early dawn till the last faint streaks of light tinged the western sky. Curiosity ran high, but every request to see his work received the same answer: "That was not included in the contract; you must wait."

At last, after two long, weary years of patient labour he declared the work done, and three days later, on the Feast of the Assumption, the new altar was to be dedicated. Great was the excitement, and that morning an unusual crowd of worshippers climbed the Minster-hill. Joyfully the bell rang out across the Rhine, and Hans, who had been in the church since daybreak, gave one last glance of love at his work, and with bowed head and bent knee said: "God, bless Thou the work of my hands," then disappeared behind the altar to watch the effect of his work upon the people.

The doors were opened, the crowd entered, and a cry of admiration echoed through the church. The altar lay in the full rays of the morning sun and the whole glorious vision stood out before their eyes in perfect rounded forms. In the centre was the Blessed Mother with her arms crossed over bosom, and head meekly bowed, to receive the crown that God the Father, and God the Son, held above her.

When the service was at an end everybody pressed forward to see the creator of the great masterpiece. He came from behind the altar, modest and deeply moved, but so handsome and so full of unconscious pride that every eye hung on him in admiration.

"Is not the *Ruppacherin* like the Blessed Mother of God?" whispered one in the crowd.

"And God the Father is like Kaiser Max," said an old man. "'Tis his face exactly."

Like a train of fire it ran through the crowd that Liefrink had put Mailie Ruppacher and Kaiser Max in his work.

"Yes, dear friends," said Hans quietly, "you are right, and I have done it because I know of nothing in the world more beautiful and good than the *Ruppacherin* and our dear dead Kaiser."

"Well said. He is right," was heard on all sides. Now Hans went fearlessly to where Ruppacher stood.

"Herr Ruppacher," he said, "two years ago you promised me your daughter for my wife when I should have fulfilled a strange condition made by you. I was to build an altar higher than the church—an impossible thing you thought; but look up, Herr Ruppacher, the altar is a foot higher than the place in which it stands. I have only bent the top."

The Councillor looked up and grew pale. He had not thought of that. A murmur of applause ran through the crowd.

"I have done my part, Herr Councillor, now do yours, and give me your daughter for my wife."

"It was the Kaiser's tree that taught me that."

Ruppacher tottered as if struck by a heavy blow. Hans had taken him at his word, and he was not the man to trifle with his oath. He took Mailie's hand and placed it in her lover's.

"A Ruppacher has never broken his oath. Take my child," he said drily, "since I have sworn."

"Mailie, my wife!" cried Hans with exulting joy.

After seven long years of alternate hope and despair he had won her for his own. Words cannot describe Mailie's look of happiness as she was folded in his strong arms.

Some of their old companions ran out and hastily wove two crowns from some twigs of the rose-tree, and amid loud applause they crowned the master and his bride. But Hans laid his crown on the steps of the altar, and said:

"Let them be God's roses, for through them He saved me. Look, Mailie," he whispered, pointing to the bent summit of the altar, "it was the Kaiser's tree that taught me that."

Three weeks later Hans and Mailie were betrothed before the altar. Breisach had never seen so magnificent an affair, and Father Ruppacher was no longer so testy as one might think, for he had now more respect for the worthless art of his son-in-law.

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OLD BARNABY'S BESS.

BESS had been put to a great deal of trouble this day. There was always plenty to do at Freshwater Ranch, and she also had to do it all, for the old man, Barnaby, had ceased to be of any particular use in this world long before Geronimo had become the war chief of the Chiricahua Apachés.

Bess, his daughter, managed the ranch, milked the cows, cooked the food, did the washing, attended to the modest little garden that she had coaxed from the arid Arizona soil, and even gave the two cayuse ponies that belonged to her father all the grooming they ever got. Besides that, she had to attend to the selling of water from the artesian well that was the only excuse for Freshwater Ranch's existence.

There was not so very much traffic on the road that ran by Mount Graham down to the dusty Gila Valley, but there were forty miles at a stretch of it, and Freshwater Ranch had the only water that was to be found upon it.

And so, when the freight-teams and the army ambulances made the trip from Fort Grant to Fort Thomas, the teamsters were very glad to pay a shilling a bucketful for water and double rates for forage. And that is how Bess made a living, a wretched, lonely, almost outcast living, for her father and herself.

But there was plenty to do this day, and plenty of excitement. For the first time in all her memory a whole troop of handsome cavalrymen, with a bright-cheeked and still handsomer young lieutenant at its head, had come to Freshwater Ranch to actually camp over night, and perhaps stay even longer.

A body of White River Apachés, getting over the effects of a tiswin drunk, had crossed the reservation, and started on a murdering and thieving raid after their usual manner. Quite after their usual manner, also, two troops of cavalry had started in pursuit, following their trail with the faint hope of catching up with the fleet-footed Apachés; while the remainder of two regiments of cavalry and twice as many of infantry had been put at patrol duty, and at the guarding of waterholes, springs, and mountain passes.

It is the young lieutenant who is sent on this patrol duty as a rule. The more experienced officers are sent in pursuit. And it is a hard grind, indeed, on the nerves of the impatient young lieutenant to sit for days in his camp watching the surrounding country through his field-glass and receiving the reports of his scouts, always the same monotonous: "Didn't see no signs of 'em, sir."

It is his ambition to get under fire. It is the height of a young lieutenant's wildest dream to capture or kill a raiding Apaché. And so the poor fellow gnashes his teeth and swears at his luck, and looks through his field-glasses until he can see all sorts of things with his tired eyes—except Indians.

But woe to him if Mr. Crazy Bear, with his family and relations and intimate friends, happens to slip through his lines during the night and the trail is not discovered promptly the next day. Woe to him if it is the grinning captain of the pursuing troop that tantalisingly informs him, while he is still rubbing his sleepy eyes, that not only Crazy Bear, but he with his whole troop of tired cavalry has been able to steal upon him and past him.

On the other hand, though, what glory if, by a rare piece of good luck, one of his men dashes breathlessly in while the dew is still heavy on the lean bunch-grass of the mountain with the exciting report that he has happened upon the raider's trail, and that it is but an hour or two old!

Then it is "Boots and saddles!" and mount and away, and ten to one the lieutenant is able to cut in ahead of the troops that are pursuing, and, with his fresh horses, and his wild anxiety to "get there," able to catch up with Mr. Crazy Bear, and capture him and all his retinue, after a nice little skirmish, in which he gets a hole through his hat, we hope, and not his heart.

And then he is one of the regiment's heroes. The old captains talk about how young Smith of "ours" cut in ahead of grumpy old Blank, of some other regiment, that never could ride, nor fight either, for that matter. And he sends his campaign hat, with the identical hole in it, back to his mother, who almost faints, and surely sobs for a whole day, and has to pray more fervently than ever that her boy will not be killed by some awful Apaché.

Such was the precise situation of young Mr. Barstow, second lieutenant of the —th Regiment of United States Cavalry, on this day when Bess was at her wits' end with work and excitement.

Chilcauno and his band had crossed the reservation at San Carlos, after murdering a freighter and stealing his horses, and all Southern Arizona was in a state of excitement. To be ordered out to guard a watering station is bad enough, but when you are quite persuaded that the miscreants have gone in another direction, and that you have no chance whatever of being in or near at the death, the situation is almost unbearable.

And that was why Lieutenant Barstow fumed and fretted, and walked up and down in front of the half log, half adobe house called Freshwater Ranch all the long afternoon, and did nothing more important than swear at a trooper, much after the manner of several captains he knew, and then apologise to the trooper and make himself ridiculous, just because he had some of those higher ideas of a soldier.

And so Bess caught but few glimpses of the lieutenant as he occasionally passed the door, but she saw that he was young and handsome, and her woman's heart was in a flutter. It was all that she could do to think up something unusually good for supper.

Besides the regular menu of biscuits, bacon, beef, and potatoes, she had some carefully treasured tinned corn and some tinned peaches. She got out her very brightest and newest calico dress, and braided her unruly hair for the first time for months. She did not even scold the sly trooper whom she caught stealing some milk, for fear the young lieutenant would come round to that side of the house—which would be dreadfully embarrassing. And yet she wanted to see the lieutenant and hear him talk—oh, so much!

She had read in novels some mysterious things about how young people fell in love with each other and married, and—well, everything is possible in this world.

It was at supper that they really met.

The lieutenant made a polite bow. He was a little bit surprised. He had heard some of the other officers of the garrison say laughingly that the only pretty woman in Arizona was Barnaby's Bess—excepting always, from regimental courtesy, the ladies of the regiment.

But he had forgotten all about it in the excitement of his first experience in the field. It occurred to him now, but she was prettier than he had imagined she could be. His ideas of beauty were framed in civilised landscapes, and his divinities had been dressed in costly stuffs and wore diamonds and were buds from mature New York family trees.

But he had not seen a pretty woman for several months, and he was just a little bit embarrassed himself. He hardly noticed the calico. He was quite charmed by the white apron. He concluded at once that, perhaps, this first scout of his would not be so monotonous after all. He would flirt a little—only in fun, of course. It would be rather a relief from the dulness of the post.

So he ate in silence, and stared so hard at Bess that her cheeks flushed a deeper crimson than they had ever known before. And to her amazement and delight he insisted on calling her Miss Barnaby. In her day-dreams she had often imagined some handsome young man addressing her respectfully as Miss Barnaby. Here was the delightful reality. She

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spilled the coffee, and could not eat a mouthful of supper, although she was tired and hungry.

And after supper the young lieutenant insisted on helping her wash the dishes. He said it would be great fun, and quite a relief from the rough life of a soldier. Poor youngster, he had become so used to war's alarms. In fact they had become quite a bore. And it seemed to Bess that he stood awfully close to her.

Once or twice their hands touched—an accident, she was quite sure. And then, when all her work was finished, the dishes cleaned, the cows and horses fed (in all of which duties the young lieutenant helped)—delight of delights! he actually asked her to take a little walk with him.

As for him, well—she was a girl, and she was pretty. Her calico dress looked sweet in the moonlight, and she had taken off the apron. They strolled up the road a little distance, and then branched off on a winding trail that led down to a little valley flooded with the rich moonlight that broke through the clear Arizona atmosphere. There was an intersecting trail at the foot, and when they reached it Bess gave a little start, and the lieutenant, with all his old college days promptness, took advantage of the opportunity to place his arm round her waist.

"Don't be afraid," he whispered.

"Oh, I am not afaid," she answered demurely.

And then she stooped down quickly and seemed to pick something up from the trail.

"Did you drop anything?" he asked with mock politeness. "Why didn't you tell me? It was my duty to pick it up, you know."

"I did not drop anything," she answered. "Let's sit down on this rock."

They sat down on the rock, and the young lieutenant put his arm round her waist again and took hold of her hands, and found himself unconsciously looking for rings, in the manner of young men who wish to hold a young lady's hand, and feel in duty bound to offer some slight excuse to the fair one.

They did not talk very much. There was not much to talk about. Their mutual friends were few, and, therefore, there could be no gossip. Theatres, books, fashions, everything were barred, from necessity. Nevertheless, it was not long before the lieutenant's brown moustache drew gradually near to Bess's pretty lips, and not long after that Bess received the first kiss she ever had from a young man. She did not struggle. She was utterly unaware of the arts of her fair sisters in the East. But she did turn squarely round and look the lieutenant very earnestly in the face.

"Do you mean anything by that?" she asked him.

He was surprised at the question, and he was gentleman enough to perceive that what was a mere evening's diversion to him might be something infinitely more serious to a lonely girl on almost a western desert. He took his hand from her waist and moved away a little.

"No," he answered frankly, "only that you are pretty—and I didn't think you'd mind."

"I didn't mind," answered Bess, "and I wouldn't mind if I thought you cared for me. In fact," she added, with alarming candour, "I would like it if I were sure you were not making fun of me."

The lieutenant was silent.

"Tell me," she said, clasping his hand excitedly, "if I should do something that would be a great benefit to you, would you think more of me—would you love me?"

"No," he answered quickly, standing up and looking at her a little curiously. "You are too serious. I want to be fair. The fact is, I am engaged—to a young lady in New York. We are going to be married in a year or two, when I get more pay. And perhaps sooner—if I could do something to distinguish myself, you know. Her father has enough influence to get me promoted to the staff, or something like that, so we could live in the east and have more pay. Perhaps I owe you an apology."

She was clutching the rough edges of the rock.

"Is she very beautiful?" she asked.

"I think so," he answered. "See, here is a picture of her. You can see what she looks like in the moonlight."

She looked at the photograph a long time.

"Does she always dress like that?" she asked.

"No," he answered laughingly. "That is a ball-dress—an evening dress. It would hardly do for her to go out of doors in a dress like that. She might catch cold. But she is just as pretty in other dresses; and I love her very much."

Bess handed back the photograph, and looked for a long time at the yellow trail. She had bit her lip to repress a sigh, but she had been too long alone and friendless to lose her self-control.

"Look here," she suddenly asked, "if you were to catch these Indians would that be what you wanted to do to be able to get your promotion and marry her?"

"I should say it would," he answered bitterly, "but that isn't my luck."

"It is! It is!" she cried, falling upon her knees by the trail. "See, I give her to you. Look here—and there—and there!" She held up to him the thing she had picked up when he was mockingly polite. "It is the lash to an Indian quirt—worn through. They are riding hard and their horses are tired. To arms! To arms! I tell you, you can catch them before morning! To arms!"

He had started before she had finished, and was bounding up the trail with long, athletic strides, leaving her alone on her knees at the intersection of the trails.

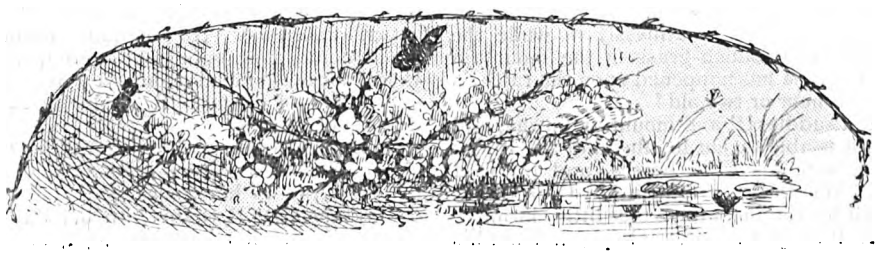
She was still there when the troop rode silently by with the anxious but silent young lieutenant at its head. He bowed to her as he passed, but she did not see him. After the last pack-mule had passed out of sight down the valley, she rose and walked slowly up the mountain.

"I was very foolish," she said. "He has known her a long time, and he never saw me before. Besides, she wears silk dresses all the time and is rich. But that should not make any difference in love. He kissed me! Why should he kiss me if he did not care for me? It is queer. She is a great lady, and I——"

She burst into tears and cried for a long while as she sat on the yellow trail at the top of the hill. It was far into the night when she rose to go.

She heard, far off in the distance, through the clear air, the faint popping of carbines and rifles.

"I have given her to him," she muttered, as she made her way uncertainly to the ranch. "She is a lady, and wears silk; and she will never know about me, for he will be ashamed to tell her; and—and—I am going to ask Father José, when he comes here next year with his little Mexican donkeys and his candles and white robes, why it is that God has never sent anyone to love me."



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THE GOOD FORTUNATE ONE.

A FAMOUS TALE OF JAPAN.

MANY years ago there lived in Tokio a certain nobleman, renowned for his wealth and his great philanthropy. It was his delight to wander about the streets at night, unattended, and disguised as a simple samurai (knight, or retainer), and so, untrammelled by rank or dignity, enter the theatres and tea-houses of all classes.

One night he was sitting in a tea-garden, in a humble portion of the city, when three young men, dressed as labourers, sauntered in, and, seating themselves near him, called for refreshments of the cheapest kind.

"Will you not honour us by joining in our humble repast?" said one, addressing him with the courteous humility which distinguishes all classes of Japanese. "I see by your two swords that you are a samurai, and far above us in rank, but you seem lonely, and we should feel honoured if you will join us."

The nobleman, pleased with this cordial invitation, immediately left his solitary square of matting and seated himself near the speaker.

"What Daimyo (feudal lord) do you serve?" they asked him, when the formalities of welcome were at an end.

"None," answered the nobleman. "I am a roin (wandering knight), a free and independent samurai, having left by my own will the service of the Duke Itsu," mentioning his own name.

"I have heard that he was a very kind master," said one of the young men. "Why did you leave him?"

"Oh," said the Duke, "he had many strange and undignified habits which kept me in a state of constant mortification. He would wander about the streets of Tokio at night, entering into the commonest tea-houses, and talking familiarly with persons of the lowest rank. I do not doubt that he has been on this very spot."

"Oh, no!" cried his listeners, in some excitement; "he surely would not come to this cheap place."

"I wish that he would come," said one of the three, with a sigh; "I would beg a favour of him."

"What is it that you would ask?" said the nobleman, with great interest.

"My one wish," answered the speaker, "is to ride a horse. I have dreamed many times of being on horseback, and it was delightful beyond words, but I expect to die without ever gaining my desire."

"And what would *you* ask, if the Duke were here?" said the nobleman, turning to the second youth.

"My great wish," answered he, "is to eat a dinner exactly like the one the Duke eats every day. If I could have one such dinner, I would ask no more."

"And now tell us your desire," said the nobleman, addressing the young man who had first given the invitation for him to join their party.

"I would not be satisfied with either of their wishes," said the young man slowly. "I would desire to live a whole day and night as the Duke lives; to eat from his dishes, to ride in his kago (palanquin), and, at night, to sleep in his bed. Then would I be contented and happy."

"The Duke's slumber is not the happiest," said the nobleman, with a sigh. "Spies and secret enemies lurk, as poisonous serpents, under the castle walls."

For some time longer he conversed with them, learning the name and abode of each; then, bidding them a cordial farewell, he left the tea-house, and made his way to his stately castle.

In the morning a body of servants, carrying heavily adorned kagos, were sent to invite the young men to the castle. Their surprise and delight knew no bounds, and when the mighty Daimyo welcomed them as friends, and seated them in the place of honour, they were ready to burst with pride.

For the one who had wished to ride, he ordered his finest steed, caparisoned in white and gold; but when the young fellow was placed upon it, fear seized him, and he pleaded for mercy.

"No, no, you shall ride!" cried the Duke, in high good-humour; and the horse was made to prance and plunge about the court-yard, until the wretched rider fell to the ground, and had to be carried to his home.

The second guest, who had wished to eat as the Duke ate, was now conducted to the banquet-hall, where such a bewildering and tempting array of strange dishes was set before him that he soon made himself ill, and was borne away groaning and racked with nausea.

The third young man was now the object of attention.

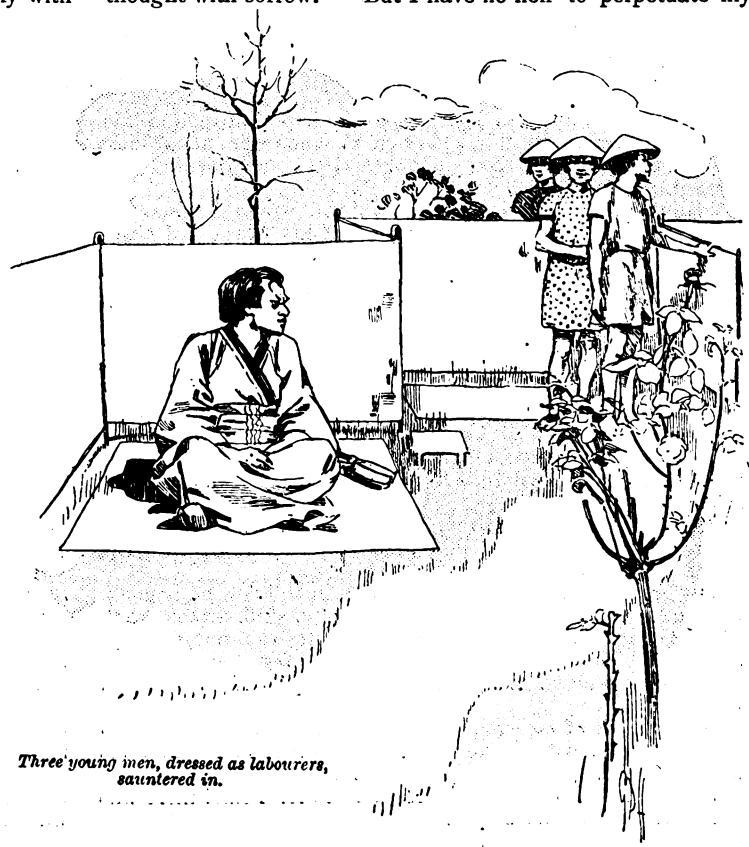
All eyes were upon him as he watched his two friends taken away in misery and disgrace; but his head was set proudly, and he turned with composure toward the Duke.

"I have no fear," he said, in tones which were almost haughty. "I still wish to live one day and one night as thy equal; then I am content."

"Lead him to my richest bath," said the Duke to his servants, "and then attire him as my son."

When the young man re-appeared, his thick hair oiled and perfumed after the manner of noblemen, his tall form robed in silks of heaviest texture, and the two swords of rank thrust through his gold-embroidered sash, he made such a picture of manly beauty that the Duke's heart yearned toward him.

"Would that the gods had granted me such a son," he thought with sorrow. "But I have no heir to perpetuate my



Three young men, dressed as labourers, sauntered in.

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name; I shall fall like a lonely pine tree beside the river, and none shall come after me."

For that day, the young plebeian was given the name of Yomei (Yo-may), which means one-day-spending, and through all of the ceremonies and observances of rank he conducted himself with such modest dignity that all of the court officials were filled with wonder, and whispered among themselves, "He is born to a high position."

That night he was given the ducal sleeping apartment.

After the castle was still and dark, he cautiously arose, and lighting a candle, prepared to examine the wonders and beauties of the room. Hanging in the toko-mono (shallow alcove) he found a bow of ancient workmanship and a sheaf of arrows such as the old heroes once used. Fitting one to the bow, he gave it a backward pull, when, to his dismay, it slipped from his grasp, and went whizzing through the rich and painted mado (inner sliding walls).

He heard a low cry, followed by the thud of a falling body, and then all was silence again.

"Unhappy wretch!" he cried to himself. "My day of triumph has ended in murder. I have killed some one with my ignorant stupidity, and in the morning I shall be beheaded."

He blew out the candle, and went to bed, where he lay shivering and trembling until the day broke.

Then the sound of the moving servants came to him, and the coldness of despair filled his heart, for he knew that the discovery of his deed might come every second.

Presently he heard a cry of alarm, and then, indeed, did he give himself up for lost.

"Here is a dead man!" exclaimed one, in frightened tones. "Where is he?" "Who is it?" "Who killed him?" came a mingling of voices, as other servants ran crowding in.

"Why, it is the traitor Gujiwa, who has thrice attempted to kill our master." "Oh, blessed deed!" "What a beautiful shot. The arrow has pierced his left eye to the skull." "It is an ancient arrow from the Duke's chamber."

"The young stranger sleeps there to-night; he must have sent the deadly shaft." "Ah! a hole in the mado! He must have shot through the mado." "What skill! What wonderful power; to shoot an enemy without seeing him!" "Wonderful! He has saved the master's life."

Yomei, listening to all this, became almost crazed with delight.

The sudden transition from despair to hope intoxicated him like strong wine. He threw his rich kimono (robe) about him, pushed aside the pierced mado, and strode towards the servants.

"Have you found the traitor Gujiwa, whom I slew last night?" he asked haughtily. "Cut off his head, and carry it to your master with my compliments. I suspected that this attempt would be made, and obtained an entrance to the castle by disguising myself as a labourer."

The servants grovelled at his feet.

"But, honourable lord," implored one, an old man who had been in the family for half-a-century, "how could you take such aim when the mado were closed?"

"Tut!" said the young man with a gesture of contempt, "I do not need both sight and hearing to take good aim. I can shoot any portion of the body by hearing alone. This time I selected the villain's left eye, just as he was winking it."

"Wonderful! Wonderful!" they whispered in awe-struck tones, and he walked through their cowering ranks with the air of a conqueror.

The gratitude and admiration of the Duke knew no bounds. Indeed, so pleased was he with the beauty, skill, and courage of his young *protégé* that he took measures to formally adopt him; so Yomei was raised from the rank of a bamboo-cutter to that of son and heir to one of the most powerful Daimyo of the empire.

He led a life of ease and luxury, and improved from day to day, so that his fame went abroad to other cities, and his adopted father grew to love him deeply.

But no life can be all happiness, and so for Yomei there was the thorn, the one dark spot.

This was in the person of his adopted mother, the Duke's wife, who from the first had been his bitter enemy. Having no children of her own, she was ungenerous enough to hate the innocent adopted son, who by his very presence reminded her that she had given no heir to the Duke. She also suspected that his skill in slaying the robber was not entirely genuine; and she had learned, beyond all doubt, that his antecedents were of the humblest. At first she tried in every way to turn her husband against him, but, finding this impossible, she set to work to find other means of deposing him.

Soon there came a rumour of a band of robbers who infested a hill in the suburbs of Tokio, and were so fierce that even the soldiers dared not attack them. The Mikado had offered a title and great wealth to anyone brave enough to attempt their capture, but up to this time none had been found.

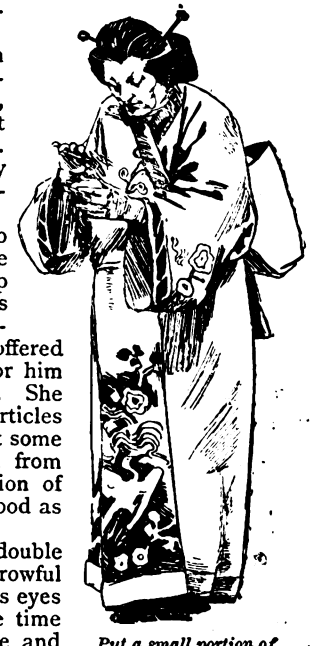
The evil step-mother, without consulting her husband, sent a letter to the Court saying that her noble son Yomei was thirsting for the opportunity to display his skill and courage, and declared that he was able to vanquish the band single-handed.

The Mikado, highly pleased with so much bravery, immediately despatched a royal document to the young man, accepting his services, and ordering him to start forth the following morning.

Poor Yomei was again in despair.

"Alas! the end of my dream has come," he mourned to himself. "There are eleven arrows, and eleven robbers, and so I must kill a robber with each arrow. Oh! why did I not keep to my bamboo-cutting, and leave ambition for the rich!"

His father grieved deeply to see him set forth, but, in spite of his sadness, was buoyed up by his evident anticipation of his son's success. The envious step-mother, affecting equal regret, offered to arrange a basket of lunch for him with her own aristocratic hands. She prepared all of his favourite articles of food, and then, for fear that some lucky accident might save him from the robbers, put a small portion of deadly poison in each piece of food as she laid it in the hamper.



Put a small portion of deadly poison in each piece of food.

Yomei, unconscious of this double danger, bade them all a sorrowful farewell, and rode away with his eyes bent upon the ground. At one time he thought of turning his horse and making his escape, but then he reflected that death would be no worse than disgrace and the old life of toil, and so listlessly kept on toward the haunted mountain.

He had reached the foot of this, when he heard loud, hoarse shouts, as if of triumph, and, filled with terror, he sprang from his horse, and rapidly climbed a tree. In a few moments the robbers were upon him. "Where is the rider?" called out one, looking about him with an aspect of such fierceness that Yomei well nigh fell to the earth.

"The horse is mine!" cried another.

"This is my saddle!" exclaimed a third. "See! It is heavy with silver."

"Ah!" from a fourth, as he tore open the hamper. "I have found the dainty fellow's lunch. Let us feast upon it before we find and kill the owner."

Yomei, knowing nothing of the hidden poison, thought these moments his last. With the apathy of despair, he gazed upon them as they portioned out, with many a rude jest and remark, the food which had been destined for him.

"What carrion the aristocrats do eat!" cried the Captain, throwing from him the remains of a small devilfish stuffed with rice, sugar, and vinegar. "The thing is filled with

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medicine! It is bitter! By all the fiends of earth and sea, it is poison! We are tricked!"

"It is poison! It is poison!" they all shrieked, running frantically past one another, with horrible exclamations and contortions of physical agony. "Where is the man?" they cried. "We are poisoned like frogs in a well! Where is he who has tricked us?"

"There he is!" called the dying chief, who had just caught sight of the cowering Yomei, "Shoot him! Up after him! Burn the tree! Ah-h-h!" But it was too late. They lay about on the lush mountain-grass, in various attitudes of violent death, and their glassy eyes were all turned upward toward Yomei. The fears of that valiant youth, however, were at an end. He descended with a bold and careless air, and, walking from one to another, stuck an arrow deep into the left eye of each. Then, mounting his horse, he rode home.

The first person to meet him was his step-mother. At the sight of him she fell to the ground, faint and stricken with fear.

"Are you not pleased to see me, mother?" he asked brightly. "I must thank you for the delightful lunch you prepared for me. See!" opening the hamper, "every morsel has been eaten!"

His father's joy at seeing him alive was deep and sincere.

"Why, my son," he said, after the ceremonials of welcome were through, "your armour is untouched, your hair is as smooth as when you left the house. How did you slay such a fierce body of men with so little exertion?"

"Oh, it was a simple matter!" said Yomei proudly. "When they caught sight of me, they came toward me running side by side. I took the eleven arrows, fitting them all to my bow which I held horizontally, instead of in the usual manner, and the arrows were placed so exactly that, as they flew, each was pointed towards a robber, and struck him directly in the left eye. You will find them all there now, each with the arrow sticking upright"

"Your skill is more than mortal!" cried the happy father. "Now you are a nobleman in your own right, and will be given a daughter of the Mikado in marriage. I foresee that you will add lustre to the ancient name which you bear." And he fell upon his son's neck and wept with pure joy.

After this the step-mother ceased in her evil designs, fully convinced of Yomei's supernatural powers.

He married a princess, built a great castle for himself, and to this day his name is a synonym in Japan for shrewdness and luck.

THE ALPINE INN.

LIKE many of the wooden hotels found in the rocky crevices which abound among the white summits of the high Alps, the Inn of Schwarenbach offered refuge to any tired traveller who followed the Gemmi Pass. The inn was open for six months, and kept by the family of Jean Hauser, but as soon as the snow began to fall, filling the valleys, and rendering the descent to Loëche impracticable, the women, the father, and the three sons departed, leaving the old guide, Gaspard Hari, with the young guide, Ulrich Kunsi, and Sam, the big dog, to take care of the house.

The two men and the dog lived until spring in this snow prison, having before their eyes nothing but the white slopes of the Balmhorn, and surrounded by peaks buried under the same blankets of snow which almost crushed the little house, heaped on its roof, walled up its door, and blocked up its windows.

It was the day that the Hauser family was to return to Loëche—winter was approaching, and the descent would soon be dangerous. Three mules, loaded with baggage, and driven by the three sons, led the way; on a fourth rode the mother, Jeanne Hauser, and her daughter Louise; following them came the father, accompanied by the two guides, who escorted the family to the end of the pass. This made up the little procession.

They passed the lake, now frozen, which lay at the foot of the rocks, extending before the inn; then they followed the valley, white as a winding sheet, and about which towered all the snow-clad mountains. A ray of sunlight fell across this shining and frozen desert, lighting it with a cold and blinding flame; no living thing was visible in this ocean of mountain summits, no movement in this vast immeasurable solitude, not a sound in this profound silence. Little by little, the young guide Ulrich Kunsi, a tall Swiss, with long legs, left behind him Father Hauser and old Gaspard Hari, and joined the mules on which the women rode.

The younger one saw him coming and watched him with wistful eyes. She was a little blonde; her milk-white cheeks and her very light hair looked as if they had been bleached by living in this ice and snow. When he had reached the beast upon which she was mounted, he put his hand on the crupper, and walked slowly. Mother Hauser talked to him, repeating over and over the innumerable details for the winter's work. It would be the first time he had stayed up there, whereas the old Hari had spent fourteen winters under the snow in the Inn of Schwarenbach.

Ulrich Kunsi listened without noticing a word, constantly watching the young girl. From time to time he replied, "Yes, Madame Hauser," but his thoughts were far away, and his calm face was unmoved.

They reached the Lake of Daube, whose long frozen surface lay at the foot of the valley. At their right the Dauberhorn rose, showing the tall rocks which crowned its peak. As they approached the Gemmi Pass, they commenced to descend to Loëche, and all at once was opened up to them the immense horizon of the Valois Alps, which separate the large and small valleys of the Rhone.

As far as one could see, white summits rose, irregular, flat, or pointed, glistening in the sunlight; the Mischabel with her two peaks, the powerful Wisschorn, the ponderous Brummeghorn, the high and pyramidal Cervin, that slayer of men, and the monstrous coquette, the Dlut-Blanche. Below them, in a deep valley, at the foot of a very steep precipice, lay Loëche. The houses looked like grains of sand, thrown into this enormous crevice, which finishes and shuts in the Gemmi Pass, and opens below on the Rhone.

The mule train stopped on the edge of the serpentine path, which wound zigzag down the mountain side, reaching at last the little village almost invisible at its foot.

"Good-bye, and good courage till next year, my friends," said Father Hauser.

Old Hari repeated, "Till next year."

They embraced each other, Madame Hauser offered her cheek, and the young girl followed in her turn.

When Ulrich Kunsi kissed Louise, he murmured in her ear, "Don't forget us up there," and she replied, "No," so faintly that he had to guess what she said.

"Good-bye," said Jean Hauser again, "keep well."

He passed in front of the women, and began the descent. Soon all three had disappeared at the first turn in the road, and the two guides wended their way toward the Inn of Schwarenbach.

They walked slowly, silently, side by side, realising fully that the summer was over, and that now for four or five months they should see only each other.

Finally, Gaspard Hari began to tell some of his experiences of other winters. He had lived with Michel Canol, who was now too old to try it again, as some accident might happen during this long solitude. They were not lonely, he said. The only way to do was for each one to have his regular work, and then for amusement they played cards, or threw dice—anything to pass the time. Ulrich Kunsi listened, his eyes on the ground, and his thoughts following the little winding path which descended to the village.

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Soon the inn came in sight, a little black spot in the immense snow cloud. When they opened the door, Sam, the big curly dog, played and jumped about them.

"Come, son," said old Gaspard, "we have no women to help us now, we must get the dinner. You pare the potatoes."

Sitting down on the wooden bench, Hari began to prepare the soup.

The next morning seemed long to Ulrich Kunsi. Old Hari smoked and spat in the hearth, while the young man looked at the glistening mountain in front of the house. In the afternoon he went out and retraced the steps of the day before, hunting for the footprints of the mules on which the two women rode—and when he reached the Gemmi Pass, he lay flat on his stomach on the edge of the precipice and looked at Loëche. The village in its rocky well was not yet buried under the snow which was all around it. The pine forests protected it. The little houses from that distance looked like stones in a field. The young girl was there now in one of those little grey houses. In which? Ulrich Kunsi was too far away to distinguish one from the other. How he wished he could go down there while he might. But the sun had already disappeared behind the high peak of Wildstuebel, and the young man went home.

Gaspard Hari still smoked. When he saw his companion enter, he proposed a game of cards, and they seated themselves opposite each other at the table. For some time they played a game called "La Brisque," then, having had their supper, they went to bed. The following days were like this one, clear and cold, without snow. Old Gaspard spent his afternoons hunting eagles and other rare birds which ventured up to these frozen heights, while Ulrich went regularly to look at the village in the valley. Then they again played cards, dice, dominoes, gaining or losing a little to add interest to the game.

One morning Hari, having risen first, called his companion. A moving cloud, light as foam surrounded them, and noiselessly buried them little by little under a mantle of froth. This lasted four days and nights. They had to break open the doors and windows, and dig a path so that they could get out of the house. The snow in twelve hours had frozen as hard as granite. They lived like prisoners, not venturing beyond their threshold. They divided their daily work. Ulrich Kunsi took the washing and housework, and also cut the wood, while Gaspard Hari did the cooking and tended the fire.

These monotonous and regular occupations were only varied by a game of cards. They never quarrelled, each being calm and placid; they did not even have sharp words, or show any temper, or grow impatient, for they had philosophically resigned themselves to the winter on the mountain top. Once in a while old Gaspard, being the bolder of the two, went in search of chamois. Occasionally he shot one. Then there was great rejoicing in the little inn—a festival with fresh meat.

One morning he went out. The mercury was 18 below zero—the sun had not yet risen, and the hunter hoped to find the chamois near Wildstuebel. Ulrich, remaining alone, stayed in bed till ten o'clock. He was naturally a good sleeper, but he never had dared indulge himself in his fondness for rest while the old guide set him such a good example by being very prompt. He breakfasted slowly with Sam, who passed most of his time, day and night, sleeping by the fire. Kunsi felt sad, frightened by the solitude. Seized by the desire for human companionship, he went in search of Gaspard, who should return by four o'clock. The snow had levelled all the valley, filling up the crevices, effacing the two lakes, covering the rocks. It was blinding to the eyes—a glare of ice.

It was now three weeks since Ulrich had been to the precipice where he could see the village of Loëche; he wished to see it first before cutting a path toward Wildstuebel. Loëche was completely covered by snow, and the houses could not be seen at all, buried under this white mantle.

He turned to the right and reached the Glacier of Loemmern, walking with the long, steady strides of a mountaineer, hitting the snow with his steel-pointed staff, and looking with his strong, far-sighted eyes to discover a moving body on this immeasurable sea of ice. Reaching the end of the glacier, he stopped, wondering if Gaspard had come this way, and, feeling anxious, began to run.

The day was dying, the snow gradually became pink. A dry and chilling wind blew over the crystal surface. Ulrich gave a shrill and prolonged cry. His voice echoed in the death-like stillness. It ran along over the icy billows of the glaciers, like the cry of a bird over the waves of the sea. At last it was heard no more. There was no response.

He resumed his steps. The sun had set. The crests of the mountains were still purple, though in the valley it was dark as night. The young man felt afraid. It seemed to him that the silence, the cold, the solitude of these wintry heights, entered into his very soul, and would stop or freeze his blood, stiffen his body, and make him into a man of ice. He ran as fast as he could, flying toward the Inn. Gaspard must have come home during his absence. He had undoubtedly taken another route; he should surely find him seated in front of the fire, with a chamois dead at his feet.

Soon the inn came in sight. No smoke issued from the chimney. Ulrich ran faster, and threw open the door. Sam curled about his feet to welcome him. Gaspard was not there. Alarmed, Kunsi turned round and round, as if he hoped to find his friend hidden away in some corner. Then he lighted the fire, put on the soup-pot, and waited, hoping to see the old man come in at any moment. From time to time he went to the door to watch for him. Night had fallen, the dark and gloomy night of the mountains. At the edge of the horizon, a dim, new moon was sinking behind the hills.

Ulrich came back, warmed his hands and feet, and thought of all the accidents which might have happened. Gaspard might have broken his leg; fallen in some ravine; made a false step and sprained his ankle; and there he was in the snow, stiff with cold, distressed, lost, crying for help with all his strength, in the awful stillness of the night. But where? The mountain was so vast, and so dangerous at this season, that it would take ten or twenty guides, walking for a week, to find a man in this immense space.

Ulrich Kunsi, however, resolved to take Sam and hunt for Gaspard if by one o'clock in the morning he had not returned. For this purpose, he made all his preparations—putting in his bag food for two days, taking his hob-nailed boots, twisting about his waist a long, strong rope, looking to see that his steel-pointed alpenstock and his hatchet, with which he cut steps in the ice, were in order. The fire burned brightly on the hearth, and the big dog warmed himself in the firelight.

The clock, in its sonorous wooden box, ticked like the beating of one's heart. His ear was sharpened to hear any distant sound, and he started when the wind rattled the roof or the door. Midnight sounded. He trembled. Feeling faint with apprehension, he put some water on the fire, so as to have some hot coffee before starting out. When the clock struck one, he got up, called Sam, opened the door and set out in the direction of Wildstuebel. For five hours he climbed, scaling the rocks, cutting the ice, always advancing, only halting occasionally when the dog hung back, at the foot of some very steep precipice. It was nearly six o'clock when he reached one of the summits where Gaspard often found the chamois, and then he waited for day to break.

The sky was pale over his head. Suddenly a gleam of light, born no one could say where, illumined the immense ocean of white peaks which surrounded him. Little by little, the most distant summits became pink, and the red sun appeared behind the heavy giants of the Bernoise Alps. Again beginning his search, like some hunter who sees the footprints of the chamois, he called to Sam, "Hunt, old fellow, hunt;" and as he descended the mountain, his restless eyes searched every crevice, and he cried shrilly, the cry dying in the awful silence.

Toward noon he seated himself in despair and ate his breakfast, giving the poor dog some food. Having finished, he again began his quest.

By the time night came he had covered thirty kilometres of the mountain; he was too far from the Inn to go home, and

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too tired to walk any longer, so he dug a hole in the snow, and lay down with his dog, under a cover which he had brought with him. There they rested, the man and the beast warming their bodies against each other, and still frozen to the marrow. Ulrich could not sleep. His mind was full of visions, and his body was shaking with cold. The day was breaking when he rose, his legs stiff as iron, his mind filled with anxiety, his heart beating so loudly that he imagined he heard noises all about him. Suddenly he felt as if he should die of cold in this solitude, and the horror of this thought aroused his energy and re-awakened his vigour. He hurried toward the inn, followed by Sam, limping on three legs.

It was four o'clock when they reached Schwarenbach. The house was empty and cold. Ulrich made a fire, ate, and fell asleep—so exhausted that he could not keep awake. He slept a long time—a heavy sleep. Suddenly a voice, a cry, a name, disturbed his slumbers. "Ulrich," it called. Was he dreaming? or was it one of those uncanny sounds which come to those who are losing their minds? No—he listened intently—this shrill cry came through his ears—and penetrated his whole being, to the very end of his nervous finger-tips. Certainly, it had called him, "Ulrich"—it was near the house—he could no longer doubt it. Opening the door, he shouted "Gaspard!" with all the strength of his lungs. No reply, no sound, no murmur, nothing. It was night. The wind had risen, the icy wind which leaves no living thing on these frozen, abandoned heights. It blew in gusts, more deadly and destructive than the hot winds of the desert. Ulrich called again, "Gaspard! Gaspard! Gaspard!" All remained silent on the mountain.

With one bound he re-entered the inn, shut the door, pulled in the blinds, and fell trembling on a chair, certain that his friend had called to him as his soul was leaving his body. He was as sure of this as he was that he lived and breathed.

It had cried its last farewell, its last reproach, its last malediction, to the man who had not hunted until he found his friend—and Ulrich found that it was there—near him, behind the wall, outside the door, which he had just closed. It roved and hovered about like a bird which flutters its wings against a lighted window. The young man was filled with horror. He wanted to escape, and yet he dared not move. The spirit was ever present, day and night, while the body of the old man lay unburied in consecrated ground.

With the return of the sun Kunsi gained a little assurance. He prepared his own breakfast, and made some soup for the dog—then he sank inertly into a chair, his heart tortured at the thought of Gaspard out there in the cold. When night came new terrors again seized him. He walked up and down the dimly-lighted kitchen, pacing from one end to the other of the room, listening for the cry which should break this silence. He felt so alone, this poor miserable man!—more alone!—more alone than any man had ever been, alone in this white desert of snow, alone two thousand metres from human beings, from the life that burns and palpitates—alone in the frozen sky!

An insane desire filled him to go somewhere, no matter where, no matter how; to go to Loëche—throwing himself down the abyss; but he did not even venture to open the door, certain that the other, the dead man, would block his way.

Toward midnight, weary with walking, filled with anxiety and fear, he threw himself on his chair, for he dreaded his bed, as one dreads a haunted spot. All at once, the shrill cry which he had heard the other night filled his ears. So piercing was the sound that Ulrich put his arms out to repulse the unseen form, and with such force that he fell over, chair and all. Sam, wakened by the unusual noise, began to whine, as frightened dogs whine, and turned and looked all about the inn to see where the danger came from—smelling under the door, snorting and breathing very loud, his hair bristling, and his tail between his legs; he kept on growling.

Kunsi meanwhile had risen, and, holding his chair in his hand, said, "Do not enter; if you do, I will kill you!"—and the dog, excited by this means, barked furiously at the invisible enemy who defied his master's voice.

Sam little by little grew calmer, and came and lay down by the fire; but he was nervous and restless still, and growled low between his teeth. Ulrich, in his turn, regained his senses, but, feeling weak, he looked for a bottle of brandy in the buffet, and rapidly drank several glasses. His thoughts became vague, his courage left him, and a burning fever filled his veins. The next day he ate nothing, living wholly on alcohol, and for several days he remained drunk as a beast. The moment he thought of Gaspard Hari he drank until he fell on the floor intoxicated.

When the effects of the alcohol wore off and he had digested the heating and feverish liquid, the same cry, "Ulrich!" would pierce his brain. He sat up, rose tottering, stretching out his hands for support, calling Sam to help him.

In three weeks he had consumed all the alcohol he possessed, and this continued drunkenness only increased his fear, which grew more and more intense. The fixed idea, exaggerated by a month of idleness, grew and penetrated his very being. He walked up and down the Inn like a wild animal in a cage—occasionally putting his ear to the door to listen if Gaspard was there, and defying him through the wall. No sooner would he fall asleep than the voice would rouse him, and he would jump with a bound to his feet. At last, one night he gained some courage, and with a slow, cowardly step, he stole to the door and opened it.

Shivering, he threw some wood on the fire, and sat down to warm himself. He started—someone had hit the door. He called out, "Go away!" and a long and plaintive cry answered him. Ulrich's few remaining senses deserted him, and he was paralysed with fear, turning round and round to find some corner in which to hide himself. The dog, wandering about outside the house, moaned constantly, and scratched with his paws the woodwork.

Ulrich lifted the heavy wooden buffet, which was filled with dishes, and with superhuman force put it against the door as a barricade, and piling up everything that was left, the mattress, the chairs, the bench, he blocked up the windows as if for a siege. The dog gave long, low groans, to which the young man replied with similar sounds. Days and nights passed in this way, the one outside pawing and biting the wall, and growling low; the one inside following all his movements, his ear against the wall, and replying to his moans by dreadful inhuman cries.

At last Ulrich heard no sound, and he lay down, so exhausted that he slept. When he awoke, he could remember nothing.

. . . . .

The long winter was over, and the Hauser family prepared to go up again to the little Inn.

As they approached the mountain-top, the two women on their mule talked of the two men whom they were to find there, and wondered that one of them had not come to meet them, as the pass had been open for several days. Soon they saw the house covered with snow. The doors and windows were closed. A little smoke came from the chimney, reassuring Father Hauser. But as they drew nearer, they saw on the door sill the skeleton of an animal, the flesh having been picked from the bones by some wild birds. All examined it. "It is Sam," said the mother, and she called, "Gaspard!" A cry answered from the house, a piercing, wild cry, which sounded like the call of some tortured animal. Father Hauser repeated "Gaspard!"

The three men tried to open the door. It would not move. They got from the stable a long beam, which they used for a ram. With all their might they forced open the door. The wood cracked, the panels broke in many pieces, then a loud noise filled the house, and they discovered, curled up behind the buffet, a man. He had long white hair, which fell on his shoulders, a shaggy white beard, and his clothes hung on his thin body in rags. No one recognised him until Louise Hauser said, her voice trembling, "*Maman*, it is Ulrich," and they all agreed that it was he, although his hair was white. They went in, touched him, asked him questions, but he answered not a word, and they carried him to Loëche, where the doctor pronounced him insane. No one ever knew what became of old Gaspard. The little Louise died that summer of a malady which the doctor attributed to the cold air of the mountain top.

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THE OUTLAWS OF THE AIR.

By George Griffith,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," &c.

SUMMARY OF PROLOGUE AND CHAPTERS I. & II.

Max Renault, the leading spirit of the Anarchist "Autonomie Group No. 7," meets his colleagues in a club near the Caledonian Road on the eve of President Carnot's assassination. He shoots a traitor who has almost betrayed the Group and so saved Carnot's life. Then he tells them that he is about to emigrate with a society of Socialists, one of whom, Frederick Austen, a wealthy engineer who has been converted to Socialism, takes out with him a working model of an aerial vessel which is to enable the colonists to enforce a reign of peace on earth. This air-ship Renault determines to steal when complete, and use for the purpose of bringing about an Anarchist reign of terror instead. Meanwhile, Franz Hartog, another member of the Group, is to carry out a plot he has formed to steal a very fast torpedo boat destroyer, which is to be built at Elbing for the Russian Government, and, with her, to levy blackmail on the Atlantic, and so raise funds to build an Anarchist aerial fleet when the time comes.

On Christmas Day, 1898, the *Calypso*, a steam yacht belonging to Sir Harry Milton, a young and wealthy landowner, having been disabled in a gale and then becalmed, sights an island in the South Pacific, from which an electric launch, the *Mermaid*, puts off and tows the yacht in. Frank Markham, in command of the launch, tells Sir Harry, with whom are travelling his sister, Violet, and Herbert Wyndham, a lieutenant in the British Navy, on sick leave, that the island is Utopia, a Socialist colony, founded some three years before by emigrants from England.

CHAPTER III.

OLD FRIENDS AND NEW.

As the *Mermaid* came alongside in obedience to a hail from Markham the gangway steps were lowered, and Violet, Sir Harry, Lieutenant Wyndham and the young Utopian went on board the launch leaving the sailing master to see the *Calypso* into dock.

Under the forward awning the introductions were repeated in more formal fashion, and as Violet shook hands with the Utopian girls, which she did with mingled feelings of slightly strained propriety and irrepressible admiration, she said, with a laugh:

"I see that in Utopia, at any rate, the vexed question of rational dress has been satisfactorily settled."

She spoke almost in an undertone, but her brother caught her words, and exclaimed with more enthusiasm than discretion:

"Settled, I should think so! It's a perfect triumph of art and convenience over Mrs. Grundy and conventionalism. I hope you'll take some patterns home with you, Violet."

His sister stole a sidelong glance, not at him, it must be confessed, but at Lieutenant Wyndham, and said, with just the faintest possible flush on her pretty cheeks:

"Oh, of course, it would be delightful, but—I am afraid you are forgetting the difference in climate. Miss Dora, here, for instance, looks entirely irresistible in Utopia at Christmas, but for her own sake I should be very sorry to see her shivering in the Park in the severity of the British June."

"I should think so," said Dora also, with the faintest suspicion of a blush and a smile, that made Sir Harry wonder why he had never seen as pretty a girl as this in England. "Why, quite apart from the shivers, which would be uncomfortable enough, the people would think that I was one of the girls out of 'Utopia Limited,' trying a new sort of advertisement, and then, I suppose, some one would call a policeman and give me in charge for outraging public decency."

"Very probably," chimed in Wyndham drily, "and the first to do it would be one of the women who go to a dance or a theatre, well——"

"Thanks, Lieutenant Wyndham," almost snapped Violet, this time blushing in real earnest. "You seem to forget the last time that you and Harry took *me* to the theatre. Suppose we change the subject. I ought to have known better than raise such a purely feminine question in the presence of unregenerate males. No, don't apologise I deserve what I got. If you say another word I won't speak to you for the rest of the day."

Anywhere else a certain amount of awkwardness might have followed this little scene, but Dora promptly came to the rescue by saying very demurely:

"Well, it's only about three years since we left England, and I have not forgotten the weather yet. I don't think there can be any more comparison between your dress and ours than between the British climate and this one. At any rate I can promise that when you have succeeded in reforming your climate, we girls of Utopia will form a mission and go and try and reform your dress."

By the time the laugh that followed this sally had died away, the *Mermaid* had run alongside a jetty which ran out from a platform of rock at the head of the basin and was made fast.

"Why, bless my soul! surely that can't be Mr. Austen—and yet I'll be hanged if it isn't either him or his double. How do you do, sir? Who on earth would have dreamt of finding *you* in Utopia!"

By the time he had uttered the last words of his somewhat disjointed exclamation Sir Harry had cleared the gangway between the *Mermaid* and the jetty with a couple of strides and was shaking hands with a man of spare figure and medium height, with a keen, intellectual, clean-shaven face and close-cropped grey hair, who was standing on the jetty, forming a somewhat commonplace contrast in his easy-fitting brown holland Norfolk jacket and trousers and grey solar topee to the picturesquely-clad little group about him.

"How do you do, sir?"

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"And equally who in Utopia would have dreamt of having the pleasure of wishing a merry Christmas in the Southern tropics to Sir Harry Milton and his charming sister?" said the old gentleman, returning the Baronet's grip with equal heartiness, and then letting go his hand to hold his own out to Violet, whom Lieutenant Wyndham had just handed ashore.

"For such pleasure as there is in that, Mr. Austen, you must thank a combination of good and bad fortune, which has brought us out of the matter-of-fact world that we sailed from into—well into some realm of romance which really doesn't seem as though it were on the surface of the same planet," said Violet, in response to his greeting.

"This has really been a morning of wonders for us, and, finding you here after your mysterious disappearance from London, is certainly the greatest wonder of all. I can tell you I feel even more than the usual feminine curiosity to know how it has all come about. For my own part I feel something like Alice in Wonderland, only the Wonderland is a very much nicer one"

"And all the wonders shall be explained in due course as far as I can explain them, I can assure you," said Mr. Austen; "but our first duty is to make you feel a little bit at home in Wonderland, so you must come and be introduced to some of its inhabitants. Me, you know already, and you seem to have made friends with the *Mermaids* too. This is Edward Adams, who would be first President of Utopia if we had any Government or politics, which I thank Heaven we have not. He is the man who conceived the ideal of which Utopia is the realisation."

As he said this he presented her with a gesture which included her brother in the introduction to a tall, well-built, grave-faced man of about thirty-five, with crisp curling brown hair and a blond close-clipped beard and drooping moustache which was not quite thick enough to conceal the gravely-pleasant smile with which he bade them welcome to Utopia.

"And this is Max Renault, our chief engineer and electrician, to whose genius the existence of the *Mermaid* is due," continued Mr. Austen presenting the man whose acquaintance the reader has already made under such different circumstances. Like Adams, he was dressed in the Utopian costume; but distinguished and even handsome as he looked in it, Violet somehow found herself unable to return his readily offered handclasp as heartily as she had returned those of Adams and Mr. Austen. The man seemed to her to have a reserved or rather a concealed power about him which to her woman's swift intuition seemed to strike her with a vague sense of deceit. When Lieutenant Wyndham was presented to him, after being introduced to Mr. Austen, he looked at him keenly for a moment and then said:

"I'm afraid I can't claim the pleasure of your previous acquaintance, Mr. Renault, but somehow your face seems familiar to me."

"It is quite possible that it is sufficiently commonplace for you to mistake me for someone else," replied Renault, with a smiling politeness that contrasted but ill with the vision of recollection that flitted before his mind's eye as he shook Wyndham's hand.

"And now," said Mr. Austen, when the introductions had been completed, "if you like we'll have a turn round the dockyard while they are getting your yacht on the slips, and then we can go on board the *Mermaid* again and run round to the settlement and get some lunch and find you quarters."

During the inspection of the dockyard, which occupied the next hour or two, both Sir Harry and Lieutenant Wyndham were amazed to see how much had been done in the three years that they were told the Utopians had spent upon the island.

There were three basins, partly natural and partly artificial, which had been fitted with sluice-gates moved by hydraulic power, the largest of which, the one the *Calypso* was being put into, would have taken a vessel twice her size, while the other two would amply have accommodated a craft of three-hundred tons.

On the opposite side of the main basin, on a rocky plateau about thirty feet above the water, there were two blast furnaces of the newest design in full operation, and water-power engines, actuated by penstocks and turbines under a five-hundred foot head of water, were running a plant of machinery capable of performing all the processes of steel ship-building, and were also operating a powerful installation for the extraction of aluminium from earths and clay by what seemed to be a highly improved and very economical process of electrolysis.

"This is Edward Adams."

From the interior of a large oblong wooden shed, that stood on a plain of rock sloping at an angle of about fifteen degrees down to the water's edge, came the sound of hammering, drilling, and rolling, which told the lieutenant's practiced ear that some vessel, probably the three thousand ton forty-knot cruiser of which Markham had spoken, was being constructed within it.

He would dearly have liked to have been admitted within the enclosure to see what manner of naval marvel it concealed, but good manners and his recollection of the pledge Sir Harry had given compelled him to possess his soul with patience and hope for a future invitation. None was given, however, for Mr. Austen, on passing the shed, merely nodded towards it, and said:

"We are trying an experiment in ship-building in there. Perhaps Markham may have told you of it, but as it isn't in a fit state for criticism yet, and as we're not quite sure about its ultimate success, I'm afraid I can't ask you to go and look at it."

After that, of course, nothing could be said on the subject by any of the visitors. By the time they had seen what they were shown at the dockyard the *Calypso* was safely shored up in the dry-dock, and the hydraulic pumps were throwing the water in tons into the outer basin, and then, after Sir Harry had told the sailing master not to allow any of the crew to leave her until he received word from him, the party went on board the *Mermaid* again and were soon speeding across the green waters of the lagoon to the settlement.

Then more introductions were gone through, everyone according a simply-worded and yet hearty welcome to the voyagers, and then Mr. Austen, insisting on the privilege on the ground of old acquaintance, carried off Violet, Sir Harry, and Lieutenant Wyndham to his house to lunch. Adams and Renault excused themselves from joining the party, saying that they would have plenty to talk about at first without them, but promised to come and smoke a pipe on the verandah after lunch and hear all the news from the outer world.

During the meal the host did nearly all the talking in satisfying the curiosity of his guests as to the origin of Utopia, and the reason for his own presence in the colony. He told them in a simple circumstantial narrative how the death of his son had led him to become a member of the "Brotherhood of the Better Life," and how the change in his social views together with his determination to retire from the business that had brought him into commercial relations which ended in friendship with Sir Harry's father, and devote the whole of his fortune,

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amounting to over half a million, to the practical development of the scheme which he had heard Edward Adams propound at one of the meetings; how they had bought a steamer, loaded her with everything that could be of use in the new colony, from a spade to the elaborate machinery they had seen working at the dockyard, and had brought out the first party of five hundred colonists to this island, which had been discovered twenty years before by one of the members of the Brotherhood, named Ambrose Miller, an old salt who had been captain of a South Sea whaler.

Then he went on to tell how the colonists prospered exceedingly during their first year in their island paradise, how they had escaped the fate of all similar ventures by rigorously excluding everything that savoured of politics and political economy from the primitive and purely domestic system which alone existed on the island, and how at the end of a year they had sent the steamer back to England with invitations to the best of their friends and kindred to come and join them at any rate for a year's visit on trial; and, lastly, how, at the end of that year every man, woman, and child of the six hundred souls who had accepted the invitation elected to renounce for ever the world that they had left, and become citizens of Utopia.

"So far," said Mr. Austen, bringing his story to an end, "the experiment has been a distinct and undeniable success, and that, I think, is chiefly due to the fact that we have only tried to make ourselves comfortable, and have not played the fool with constitutions or theories of government. We are simply a collection of about two hundred families, each perfectly independent of all the others, and only acting with them where common interest prompts them. As a matter of fact, we get on very well together, and the one law that we have all solemnly agreed to effectually prevents any unpleasantness arising from personal ill-nature."

"For pity's sake, tell us what it is—we want a law like that *so* badly in London!" broke in Violet, in a tone of eloquent mock entreaty.

"With pleasure," smiled Mr. Austen in reply, "though I'm afraid English society is too hopelessly complicated to allow of its application. It is simply this: If any Utopian of responsible years meddles with the personal or domestic concerns of any other in word or deed, he or she is to be at once turned out of the colony and banished for a year to a small islet about four miles off the eastern coast. A second offence would mean being set adrift in a boat with a month's provisions outside the reef and being forbidden to return on pain of death."

"Capital!" exclaimed Sir Harry. "What havoc a law like that would make with some of our most cherished institutions. Has it ever been put in force?"

"No," said Mr. Austen smiling and slowly shaking his head, "and I don't think it ever will be. We are too busy in Utopia to be busybodies. But here are Adams and Renault, and you must get your news ready."

"And especially the news of this mysterious nineteenth century pirate with no name and a red flag that Markham has been telling us about," said Renault, stepping in from the verandah as he spoke.

Settled themselves in their easy lean-back chairs.

CHAPTER IV.

THE STORY OF THE RED PIRATE.

"LIEUTENANT WYNDHAM is the freshest of the party as far as news is concerned," said Sir Harry, when they had settled themselves in their easy lean-back chairs on the verandah and had lighted their pipes charged with fragrant Utopian-grown tobacco, "and added to that, there's just a chance he may let some naval state secret out in the course of his yarn, and that will make it all the more interesting."

"I don't know any naval state secrets," laughed Wyndham, in reply, "and therefore I can't tell any. The British Admiralty doesn't communicate its official secrets to lieutenants of British gun-boats. Of course, if you happen to be an officer in the German Navy with a handle to your name, and the favour of the Kaiser behind you, it is a very different matter. However, that's not the story.

"The story itself," he continued, settling himself in his chair and blowing a long contemplative whiff of smoke up towards the verandah roof, with all the air of a man who knows how not to spoil an interesting story by an undue plunge *in medias res*, "is something so strange and unheard-of that when the news was first published from some unknown source of information in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, it was received with about as much incredulity as you'll remember the *Pall Mall's* story about the retirement of Mr. Gladstone was, but I'm sorry to say it proved every bit as true as the other.

"To begin at the beginning. You remember that about five years ago the British Admiralty, in some queer freak of common sense and patriotism, gave orders for the construction of a flotilla of forty-two torpedo boat destroyers, and bargained for a speed of twenty-seven knots.

"The first of these boats was the *Havock*, and the second was the *Hornet*, both built by Yarrow. The *Havock* did a trifle over twenty-seven knots, and the *Hornet* a bit over twenty-eight. This put the Russian Government on their mettle, and, as it is considered good business, and correct commercial patriotism for loyal British firms to sell the deadliest possible weapons to our likeliest enemy, there was no objection to the builders of the *Havock* and the *Hornet* undertaking to build a twenty-nine knot boat for the Tsar.

"Then, no sooner had the order been given than Thornycroft, of Chiswick, who, by the way, has said that if the money was forthcoming he could build a boat that would do forty knots, went one better, and, in June '94, turned out the *Daring*, which astounded everybody by doing twenty-nine and a quarter knots over the measured mile at Maplin. This, of course, woke Yarrow's people up like a shot, and they turned out the Tsar's boat, and rushed her over the measured mile three times running in a shade under two minutes, and that of course meant a speed of nearly thirty-one knots an hour.

"We all thought the limit had been reached, at any rate, for some time, but six months later, that is to say towards the middle of '95, Thornycroft turned out the still celebrated *Ariel*, which knocked all the other records into a cocked hat by running the mile twice each way in less than a minute and fifty seconds. The average speed worked out at thirty-three knots an hour, and common consent seemed to take this as the maximum.

"The *Ariel* remained unbeaten until the *Pall Mall Gazette* startled the world in the beginning of April last by publishing the news that Schichau, the crack torpedo boat builder of the Continent, had built a destroyer for the Tsar with a guaranteed speed of thirty-six knots an hour, engined on quite

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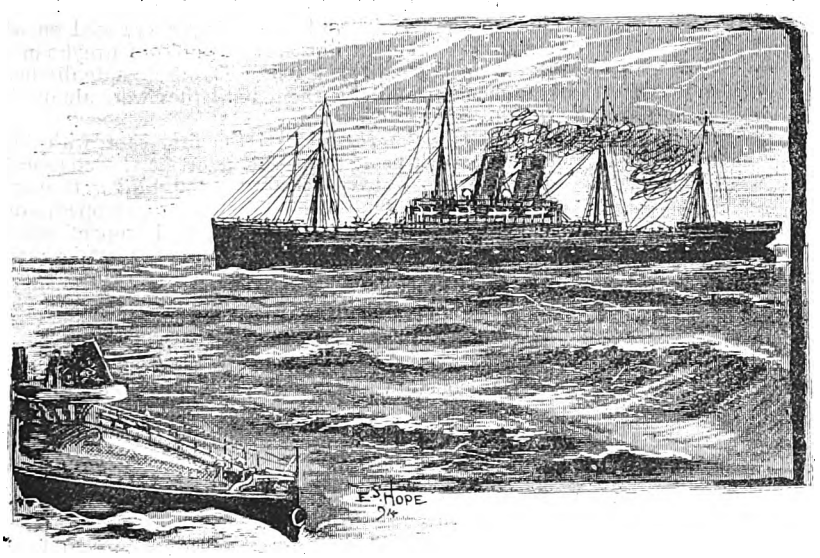


"The 'Alberta' had been stopped in mid-Atlantic."

a new principle by a German engineering genius called Franz Hartog, and that she had gone out for a trial run on the Baltic and had just vanished into space, taking Hartog among others with her.

"All sorts of speculations of course began to fly about as soon as it became impossible to keep the affair secret, and the *Pall Mall's* story was confirmed by the German press. Some people said that she must have run full tilt in to a rock or a sand bank and gone down with all hands; some said that they had tried to over-drive her and had blown her up, and this certainly seemed the most feasible explanation. Some again said that she must have been stolen by the Nihilists, but this was laughed at as impossible.

"For all that, however, it turned out to be very much nearer the truth than any of the other guesses. Four nights after she disappeared, the lieutenant in command of a Danish torpedo-boat coming through the Sound from Copenhagen to Kronborg went ashore as soon as he got into port, and stated that a grey painted boat about the size of the missing destroyer, that's to say, about two hundred feet long, had passed him during the night at a tremendous speed with no flame or sparks coming from her funnels.

"He said that his own boat was travelling over twenty knots at the time, and yet the unknown vessel ran away from it as though he had been standing still. This, combined with the fact that she showed no lights, certainly made it look as though she had really been the runaway. The lieutenant's story leaked out, and of course the papers jumped at it, and then they seemed to plunge into a contest of invention to see which could get the wildest and most ridiculous answer to the problem: What had become of the lost destroyer?

"I don't know whether any of you remember it, but there was a highly imaginative book published, I think, in the early part of '94, the author of which put a most curious combination of buccaneer and sentimentalist on board an equally curious cruiser worked by gas engines which stopped at the most critical moment for want of oil, and brought her piratical raidings on the Atlantic to a timely but ignominious end.

"Well, the general belief was that those who had stolen the lost destroyer had done so with the intention of emulating this gentleman's exploits in a really practical fashion, for I ought to have told you that the boat, with that excess of technical detail which the Germans sometimes indulge in, had been sent to sea for her trial fully equipped in fuel, stores, arms, and ammunition, just exactly as though she'd been going straight into a fight.

"Affairs were rather strained just then between Russia and England, in consequence of the old row about Korea, and there was a rumour that the Russian Government had requested this to be done in case of emergencies.

"A little over a month passed, and nothing more was heard of her. The rumours were beginning to die away and give place to fresh sensations when, like a thunderbolt out of a clear sky, came the news that the *Alberta*, one of the new fast Canadian line from Halifax to Liverpool had been stopped in mid-Atlantic by a long wicked-looking grey painted vessel, with a turtle-back deck for'ard, three funnels and one mast, and flying a plain blood red flag from a flagstaff astern, and plundered of every ounce of specie, and all the portable valuables that she carried. The *Alberta* brought the news herself, and so there was no doubt about its truth.

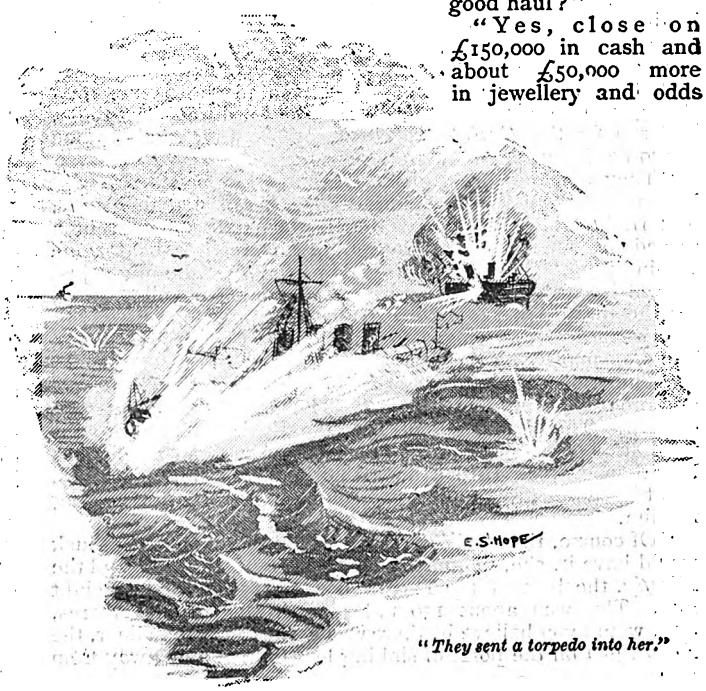
"The pirate, for he couldn't have been anything else, came up at day-break one morning at what the captain of the liner described as a perfectly incredible speed, fired a six-pound shot through her bows, and then ordered her to stop under pain of being torpedoed. Then a small launch put off, a dozen men, armed to the teeth, boarded the liner, while the *Destroyer*, as they called the stranger for want of a better name, lay to and covered her with her machine guns and a couple of torpedo tubes ready for action.

"Of course the skipper of the *Alberta* could do nothing but submit. He had nearly a thousand people on board, and there was no mistaking that the pirate meant business. Resistance would have meant being blown out of the water in five minutes, so there was nothing for it but to make the best of a bad job.

"No one was hurt except a Yankee, who got blustering with a revolver, and he was shot. When the looting was over, the pirates went off in high good humour, leaving a message that in future all mail-boats crossing the Atlantic would have to pay toll to the Red Flag."

"Very neatly done, blackguardly and all as the robbery was of course!" said Renault, as the Lieutenant paused for a minute to relight his pipe, which had gone out for lack of attention during the narrative. "I suppose they got a pretty good haul?"

"Yes, close on £150,000 in cash and about £50,000 more in jewellery and odds



"They sent a torpedo into her."

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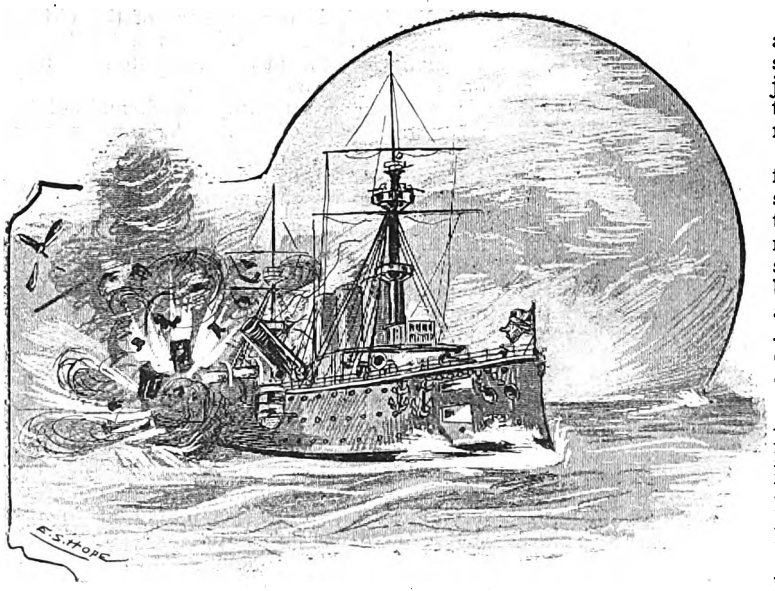

"Literally blew her stern off."

and ends. Not a bad morning's work, I must confess, even for a quite up-to-date pirate," replied Wyndham, noticing with some curiosity a faint flush that deepened the bronze of Renault's cheek as he spoke.

"I suppose an outrage like that produced a tremendous excitement as soon as the news was known?" said Adams, who had been following the story with the most intense interest.

"Sensation! I should think it did," said Wyndham, with a short laugh. "The newspapers raised a howl that you might have heard almost here. Politics and divorce were discounted to nothing in the way of interest, while broadsides of questions were fired into the First Lord of the Admiralty. Standing Orders were suspended to discuss the pirate, and even the Admiralty itself began to wake up and rub its eyes, and wonder what the deuce it was all about when, five days later, a much more terrible story was brought to Plymouth.

"The American liner *New York* had been stopped in mid-Atlantic, just as the *Alberta* had been, and while the usual looting was going on, an American gun-boat, the *Albany*, appeared on the scene, and the *New York* signalled for assistance. The pirates that had boarded her opened fire with their magazine carbines, and cleared the decks, then they got into their launch as fast as the Lord would let them, and ran for the *Destroyer*, which, by the way, really turned out to be the proper name of the pirate.

"They were no sooner on board than they opened fire with half a dozen quick firing guns, and a lot of machine guns, and riddled the *New York* like a sieve; then they sent a torpedo into her, and blew her up just as the gun-boat came within range. She opened fire right away, but she might just as well have shot at an express train a couple of miles away, for the pirate spun round on his heel, clapped on full speed, and went away, as one of the officers of the *Albany* put it, like a locomotive on the loose.

"The gun-boat saved about half of the *New York's* people and brought them into Plymouth. Then the row began in good earnest. The pirate had outraged the British lion, and, as it were, fired point-blank in the face of the American Eagle. In less than a week British and American cruisers, gun-boats, and torpedo-destroyers were swarming on the Atlantic looking for him.

"Of course, the *Ariel* was foremost in the hunt, and as luck would have it, she, in company with the cruiser *Medea* and the *Firefly*, the best of the Yarrow boats, was the first to sight him. This was about 150 miles north-west of the Azores, and, would you believe it, there was a North German liner, the *Lahn*, just on the point of sinking less than a mile away from him

"He was only about five miles ahead of our boats, and so the *Ariel* and the *Firefly* cracked on all steam and went at him like a couple of greyhounds just slipped from the leash. The brute actually had the cheek to wait for them until they were almost in range.

"Just as the *Ariel* fired the first shot with her forward quick-firing twelve-pounder, he slewed round, slipped like a streak of greased lightning through the water for about five hundred yards, stopped, and returned the shot. The *Ariel's* shell dropped about six hundred yards astern of him, and his burst squarely between her and the *Firefly*. Then he rushed away again on a wide curve trending round to the old *Medea*, who might as well have been motionless as doing the sixteen knots that was all they could grind out of her.

"My cousin, Charlie Curzon, who was on board the *Ariel*, and who told me the story, said the excitement for the next half hour or so was something indescribable. The two boats dashed at him to head him off, the *Ariel* doing all her thirty-three knots and the *Firefly* a good thirty-two, but they were just too late.

"The fellow tore through the water—incredible as you may think it—at a speed that must have been very nearly forty knots an hour. In fact, Charlie told me they could see nothing but a cloud of spray with the boat's nose in front of it and her red flag showing through the after part of it. Do what they could they couldn't stop him getting the *Medea* between them and him.

"This forced them to separate. As they did so the *Medea* opened fire and blazed away like a floating volcano, but it wasn't a bit of good, they no sooner got the range than they lost it again, the brute was moving at such a frightful speed. He ran up to within a mile of her, stopped dead, spun round on his heel, fired his two stern torpedoes at her, and away he went again, sending the spray flying thirty feet into the air on each side of him.

"One torpedo missed, but I'm sorry to say the other took the old *Medea* under the quarter, and literally blew her stern off. The *Firefly* stood by to give what assistance she could, and the *Ariel* took up the chase again, with every ounce of steam her boilers would stand. From what Charlie said, she might just as well have tried to chase the Flying Dutchman.

"She stuck to it the whole afternoon, and in six hours travelled over two hundred miles to the north-west—but all that her crew ever saw was that cloud of foam away ahead of them, always getting smaller and smaller, and at last night and a fog came on together, and it faded away into the darkness and the mist and they lost sight of it.

"That," said the lieutenant, knocking the ashes out of his second pipe, "is the last that I heard at first hand of the pirate with the red flag, for the day after Charlie told me the story I was ordered out to the West Coast. That was nearly nine months ago, and, from the accounts we saw in the Australian papers, which you will be able to read at your leisure, he is still at large, looting a liner every now and then, as the fancy takes him, and laughing at every attempt to catch him."

"Then, if no one else can catch him, we will!" said Mr. Austen, almost passionately, rising from his chair with a flush of anger on his thin cheeks. "It is an outrage on humanity and civilisation that such things should be! I'm afraid we must give him three months' more license, but, after that, we'll hunt him down and sink him, if we have to chase him round the world to do it! Renault, we must have the *Nautilus* afloat in three weeks!"

(To be continued next week.)

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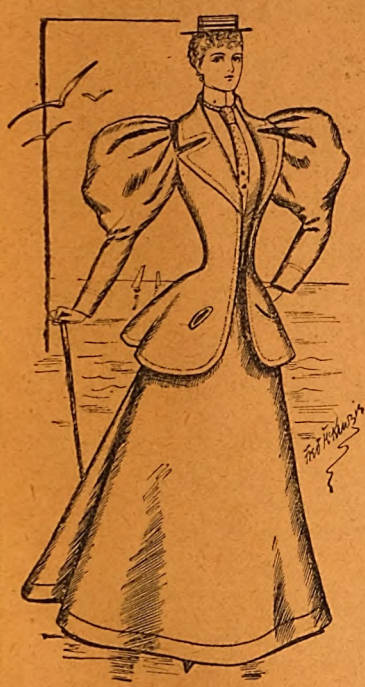

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A sworn guarantee is enclosed with all testimonials and medicine, which is inexpensive, as one bottle at 4s. 6d. (by post, 4s. 9d.) is usually sufficient for any case.
Full particulars will be gladly forwarded to any lady on receipt of addressed envelope.
Write privately to—
Mrs. P. S. S.,
145, STOCKWELL ROAD,
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Patronised by Royalty.

SILK UMBRELLAS

Direct from the Manufacturer, **2/6** *each.*

Ladies' or Gents' Plain or Twill Silk. Parker's Hollow-Ribbed Frames, Carved and Mounted Sticks.

"THE PARKER" UMBRELLA REGISTERED.

Sent Parcel Post Free, 2/9 Postal Order (or 36 Stamps).

Re-covering neatly done, Plain or Twill Silk, Ladies' or Gents', 2/6 each, returned next post. List and Testimonials Free.

J. B. PARKER, Umbrella Works, Broom Close, SHEFFIELD.

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VACCINE for the MOUTH
Strengthens the Gums
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The only Dentifrice securing
BEAUTIFUL TEETH

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London Agents: WILCOX & Co., 239, Oxford Street.

A BOON TO LADIES

Collins' Marvellous Female Remedy.

Mr. COLLINS [who was 30 years a member of the Royal College of Surgeons of England], will forward free of Charge, full PARTICULARS of a REMEDY, which during an extensive practice both at home and in the Colonies, he has never known to fail in the most OBSTINATE CASES of OBSTRUCTION and IRREGULARITIES. Send addressed envelope for full particulars, and waste no more time and money on useless Pills and so-called Remedies, &c., which, in the majority of cases, are nothing but PURGATIVES, and cause SICKNESS, PROSTRATION, and PAIN, without having the desired effect.

Letters to be addressed—

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GOTHIC HOUSE, 9, ERSKINE STREET,
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TOWLE'S PENNYROYAL & STEEL PILLS

FOR FEMALES.

QUICKLY CORRECT ALL IRREGULARITIES, REMOVE ALL OBSTRUCTIONS and RELIEVE the distressing SYMPTOMS so prevalent with the sex. Boxes 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. (the latter size contains three times the quantity), of all Chemists, or will be sent anywhere on receipt of 15 or 34 stamps, by the maker,

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Beware of Imitations injurious and worthless.

MUCH BETTER THAN STEEL AND PENNYROYAL.

OTTEY'S Unlabelled strong FEMALE PILLS Quickly and Certainly remove all obstructions, arising from any cause whatever. Invaluable for married women. Post free, under cover, for 14 and 33 stamps, from—

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Please mention this paper.

If you have ECZEMA

OR A SKIN DISEASE OF ANY KIND, 1/6 invested at your Chemist or Store in a bottle of "Anteczema" will at once prove to you how easily and pleasantly it can be cured.

Valuable Book on the Skin free, from
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BALDNESS CURED in all its forms.

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permanently, root and branch, without injury to the skin. Particulars on receipt of stamped directed envelope.

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The most powerful and effective on earth.

For the most obstinate cases. Will not injure the most delicate. Price 7s. 6d. (Strongest, 11s per bottle); post free, 6d. extra. HERBAL INSTITUTE, 1a, Hackney Road (opposite Shoreditch Church), London, N.E. Send at once stamped directed envelope for particulars and proofs. I will forfeit £100 for every testimonial that is not genuine, and they can be seen at any time.

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£20

See Illus. Guide. 259 pp. 3d. "How to open a Cigar Stores from £20 to £1,000." "TOBACCONISTS' CO.," 186, Euston Road, London. Manager — H. Myer. Estab. 1866. *N.B.*—Shopfitters and Show Case Makers for all trades. ESTIMATES FREE.

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26 GUINEAS (Net Cash Price).

This Piano is confidently recommended as the very best instrument ever produced at the money. For beauty and resonance of sound, for delicacy and brilliancy of touch, for exquisite modulation and the perfection of workmanship it cannot be excelled. It has all the latest improvements, including entire Iron Frame (suspended), Harmonic Bar, Best Check Action, Double Covered Machine Hammers, Bushed Keys, &c., Marqueterie or Chased Gilt Embossed Panels and Gilded Bracket Trusses. Supplied in Walnut, Rosewood, or Ebonised, and the net cash price is 26 Guineas. Inspection and trial is invited.

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Gives Life Assurance at Rates slightly above actual cost—that is, at less than half the usual charges of Life Assurance Companies. The Premiums are based upon "The Combined Experience Table," which was prepared by a Committee of Eminent Actuaries from the Experience of Seventeen British Life Offices. This Table of EXAMPLES gives the Cost for £400; the Average Premiums of Insurance Companies; the RATES of the I.O.F.; and the SAVING EFFECTED BY JOINING THE ORDER.

Age last Birthday.	The Combined Experience Table Per Year.	£400. Average Cost of £400 in British Assurance Companies Per Year.	I.O.F. Table of Premiums Per Year.	Annual Saving to Members of the I. O. F.
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.	£ s d.	£ s. d.
21	3 1 6	8 1 4	3 12 0	4 9 4
25	3 4 10	8 16 4	3 16 0	5 0 4
30	3 10 4	10 0 4	4 0 0	6 0 4
35	3 17 6	11 9 4	4 12 0	6 17 4
40	4 6 4	13 6 4	5 0 0	8 6 4
45	5 1 10	15 13 8	6 0 0	9 13 8
49	6 12 10	18 3 4	7 16 0	10 7 4

The full sum assured is payable at death. All premium-paying of ordinary members in the I.O.F. ceases at 70 years of age, when one-tenth of the amount assured is paid to them annually, the unexhausted balance being payable at death. The entrance fees are very moderate, a £100 policy costing 17s.; £200, £1 16s. 6d.; £400, £2 3s.; 600, £2 9s. 6d.; £800, £2 16s.; and £1,000, £3 5s. Court Dues (10s. to 12s. per annum) have to be paid by each member.

The Accumulated Funds amount to £160,000, of which £20,000 has been deposited with the British Government. Every claim has been paid within ten days, £328,000 having thus been paid during the last eleven years.

CHIEF OFFICE FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM:—

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Where Prospectuses and Forms of Application for Membership may be obtained.

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NEW SERIAL—"THE OUTLAWS OF THE AIR"
(By GEORGE GRIFFITH, Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," and "The Syren of the Skies.")

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 300. FOR WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 29, 1894. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

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For the BREAKFAST, LUNCHEON, TEA, and SUPPER TABLE.

Of all Grocers, &c.; or send 7½d. or 1/3 for Sample Jar to Maker—

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It is not claimed that these Camomile Pills will cure all diseases, but they have 100 YEARS' REPUTATION for being UNEQUALLED and, indeed, UNAPPROACHED as a remedy for

NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS

INDIGESTION BILIOUSNESS HEADACHE
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The BEST of all TONICS and a GENTLE APERIENT.

MILD IN OPERATION, PERFECTLY SAFE, AND FREE FROM INJURIOUS DRUGS.

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Ask for "NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS," and do not be persuaded to purchase an imitation.

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WORLD FAMED
CORN & BUNION PLASTER

Boxes, 1s. 1½d., of all Chemists, or post-free, for 14 stamps from the Proprietors,
M. BEETHAM & SON, Chemists,
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IS THE BEST REMEDY EVER DISCOVERED.

It acts like magic in relieving all pain and throbbing, and soon cures the most obstinate corns & bunions. It is especially useful for reducing enlarged Great Toe Joints, which so spoil the symmetry of otherwise beautiful feet. **Thousands have been cured, some of whom had suffered for fifty years without being able to get relief from any other remedy.** (It is a thin plaster, and takes up no room in the boot.) A trial of a Box is earnestly solicited, as immediate relief is sure.

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IT IS A STARTLING FACT

that **Three Half-Crowns (7/6)** will purchase a beautiful **SERGE DRESS LENGTH** in any of the following colours:—Black, Blue, Brown, Green, Claret, Nut Brown, Chestnut, Mulberry, Ruby, Red, Moss, Olive, Myrtle, Bronze, &c., also several very pretty and effective mixtures.

Full Dress Length (Carriage Paid) FOR **7/6**

Money returned if not approved.

20,000 Sets of Patterns now ready, write at once. Patterns are sent Post Free and need not be returned.

These beautiful Serges are specially manufactured for Autumn and Winter wear, elegant in appearance and are not heavy as most Serges are. They will not spot with rain or wear threadbare.

£5,000 to be Given Away in Presents to Purchasers.

Thousands of Testimonials from all parts of the World.

Cloth Table Covers, 2 yds square, 4s. 9d. each, in Crimson, Claret, Tan or Emerald. Remnant Bundles of Serge, 5s. and 10s. each, carriage paid. Write to-day for Patterns of Dress Materials, post free to any address.

LUTAS LEATHLEY & Co., Dept. 21, The Dress Warehouse, Armley Leeds.

PREVENTS COLDS AND CHILLS

BOVRIL

THE BEST AND CHEAPEST STOCK FOR SOUP.

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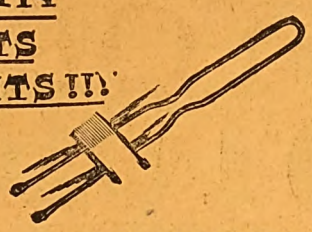
A HAIR PIN

WITHOUT POINTS
HAS GOOD POINTS!!!
SEE THE
POINT?



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"Pyr Point"
Hair Pin.

CAN'T SCRATCH THE HEAD, AND WON'T FALL OUT.

THEY COST YOU EXACTLY SAME PRICE AS OLD SORT.

EACH STORE AND WAREHOUSE KNOWS ALL ABOUT THEM.

SAMPLES FREE ON RECEIPT OF POST CARD.

Hindes Ltd., MANUFACTURERS OF BRUSHES & TOILET ARTICLES, BIRMINGHAM & LONDON.

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HANDKERCHIEFS

1/- ONLY. ONLY 1/-

I must clear my overstock of about one million pure Silk Handkerchiefs, direct from the looms. To do this quickly I will give to each of the first 100,000 postal customers a valuable present; please mention if a lady's or gentleman's prize is required. The Handkerchiefs are of large sizes, and well worth 2s. 6d. each. Suitable for Ladies' or Gentleman's wear. LIGHT, SOFT, WARM, and DURABLE, as only a Silk Handkerchief can be. I have reduced the price for the Special Sale to 1s. each, or 13 stamps; 2 lots for 2s., 6 for 5s., 12 for 9s. 6d. Prize and a free insurance coupon for £100 with each handkerchief.

A Living Testimonial worth a Thousand Recommendations from me.

"105, Boundary Lane, Liverpool, "March 16, 1894.

"Dear Sir,—Sample Handkerchief and present to hand this morning, with which I am both exceedingly pleased and absolutely astounded at the price you are putting them in at. You are worthy of patronage. With all possible despatch please forward me to above address 14 more as follows: 10 Ladies', and 4 Gentlemen's. Enclosed you will find P.O.O.'s as per your quotation, 11s. 6d. Sincerely hoping you may have an extensive sale of the Handkerchiefs.—Yours faithfully, JOHN D. COSTA."

P.O.O.'s payable at Rugby. Letters addressed to

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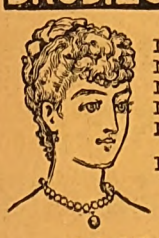
BRODIE'S IMPERIAL HAIR DYES & C°

(REGISTERED) ONE LIQUID



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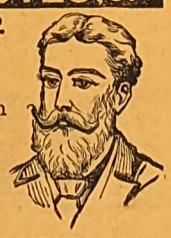

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QUICKLY CORRECT ALL IRREGULARITIES, REMOVE ALL OBSTRUCTIONS and RELIEVE the distressing SYMPTOMS so prevalent with the sex. Boxes 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. (the latter size contains three times the quantity), of all Chemists, or will be sent anywhere on receipt of 15 or 34 stamps, by the maker,

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£20 See Illus. Guide. 259 pp. 3d. "How to open a Cigar Stores from £20 to £1,000." "TOBACCONISTS' CO.," 186, Euston Road, London. Manager — H. Myers. Estab. 1866. *N.B.*—Shopfitters and Show Case Makers for all trades. ESTIMATES FREE.

MELVILLE'S
New Upright
GRAND PIANOFORTE

26 GUINEAS (*Net Cash Price*).

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MELVILLE, 61, CHARING CROSS ROAD, LONDON.

THOUSANDS OF TESTIMONIALS RECEIVED.

PATCHWORK FOR THE MILLION.

Never was such a thing offered to the public before.

As we are now Clearing our Enormous Stock of SUMMER PRINTS, we will send Free, per Parcels Post, on receipt of 15 Stamps,

FIFTY Splendid Pieces of PRINT for PATCHWORK.

Now is the time to Make Cheap and Warm Quilts for the Winter. This is thoroughly Genuine.

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EXTRACT OF HERBS

For the Immediate Production of

BOTANIC BEER.

A Nine-gallon Cask of Alcoholic Beer from a Brewery will cost you 10/6, but Eight Gallons of Beer made from

MASON'S
EXTRACT OF HERBS

Can be obtained for 6d., plus a pound or two of Sugar and a little Yeast.

THE FINEST BEVERAGE IN THE WORLD.

Inventors and Manufacturers:

NEWBALL & MASON,
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NOTTINGHAM.

If unable to obtain it in your neighbourhood, send 9 stamps for sample bottle; or samples of both Wine Essence and Extract of Herbs, post free for 15 stamps.

A Real Boon to Ladies.

TO LADIES

Especially to those who wish to know of a safe, certain, and speedy remedy for all irregularities and obstructions, a remedy which, under the most trying circumstances and in the most difficult and

OBSTINATE CASES,

NEVER FAILS TO AFFORD RELIEF,

GENERALLY IN A FEW HOURS.

No case hopeless, failure is simply impossible, as Mrs. Snow, of Denmark Hill, Camberwell, writes:—

"By adopting your treatment my anxiety and misery was over within twenty-four hours, although I had been daily taking pills and other things in vain. Half the quantity you sent proved effective, to my intense joy and surprise.

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ECZEMA

OR A SKIN DISEASE OF ANY KIND,

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Letters to be addressed—

D. COLLINS,
GOTHIC HOUSE, 9, ERSKINE STREET, LIVERPOOL.

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 300. *FOR THE WEEK ENDING SEPTEMBER 29, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

A LAST RESORT.

A DARK night in Tennessee, and the sky hidden by a mass of hurrying clouds. A raw, chilly wind, the ground all mud, the tall trees and grasses dripping from heavy rains. Just emerging from still darker woods, a young man, his clothing drenched and mud-stained, his face haggard and desperate, and his whole attitude, as he leaned heavily against the rail fence, telling of utter exhaustion. He was worn out. For more than two hours he had been flying for life over a country imperfectly known to him, though familiar to his pursuers.

More than once he had been compelled to retrace his steps, when every moment was precious, and every step through the yielding mud required an effort. Worse yet, there was no possibility of throwing the followers off the trail. Every step left its plain impression, to be followed as fast as horse could trot, and capture meant sure and swift death—no wonder he was desperate.

Turn which way he would, Gilbert Hazelton could see nothing before him but speedy and disgraceful death. Never to see the sun again, nay, not even a friendly face! Was this the end of the bright hopes with which he had kissed his mother good-bye only two short months before? It seemed like a far-away dream now. He had lived ages of fear and agony since then, gone through unspeakable humiliation and dread.

He had been accused of murder, tried for his life, found guilty, and sentenced to death. His letter to his friends must have miscarried, for they had not come to his relief. Poor, and alone among strangers, who persisted in believing him identical with the tramp who had murdered poor David Westford, Gilbert had yet fought bravely for his life. Some few had been convinced of his innocence, and his lawyer had succeeded in obtaining a new trial, in which new witnesses might at least prove an alibi.

But when this word went abroad, the townspeople were furious. They had seen more than one undoubted criminal escape through some technicality. Were they now to see the murderer of poor David Westford escape through the easily bought perjury of some worthless companions in crime? They vowed it would not be so. Last night at dusk groups of stern-looking men stood before the gaol talking grimly together, and a whisper in the air warned the Sheriff what was coming.

The gaol was old and rickety. He could not defend it, and his resolve was quickly taken. In the early dusk the prisoner was sent out by a side door, under charge of the Sheriff's son, while the Sheriff himself remained to make sure mob violence did not make a mistake and seize some other victim. But treachery carried the word to the mob, and they were soon in hot pursuit of the fugitives. In this emergency the boy, who was firmly convinced of the prisoner's innocence, released him, demanding only a promise to rejoin him at a place appointed, and himself turned back to throw the pursuers off the trail, if possible.

Gilbert fully intended to keep his promise, but in the darkness he missed his way, and the bloodhounds in the rear caught his trail.

Now, for two hours, which seemed two eternities, he had been running for life, and the unknown country and horrible mud had completely exhausted the little strength that two months of confinement and terrible anxiety had left him. Nothing but utter desperation could have driven him another yard. But when a shout came faintly from the rear he pushed forward with a great effort across the strip of corn-field, through the fence, and out on a well-travelled road.

To one less utterly exhausted this would have given a glimmer of hope, for here at least the mud had become liquid ooze, which retained no footprint. The pursuers would not know which way to turn, and must watch both roadsides to see that he did not turn aside. But he was too tired to use the advantage, and when, after running a few yards, he slipped and fell, he lay there a full minute, too utterly exhausted to rise. What was the use, when his utmost endeavours could only put off death for a few moments? Why not take one moment for rest and thought before the end came?

A farmhouse stood a quarter of a mile farther on, and as he lay there panting, exhausted, waiting only for death to overtake him, his hopeless glances fell upon its light. How placid and peaceful looked the lamp, shining serenely through the parted curtains! Doubtless a happy family were sitting round it, father and mother, sturdy sons and pretty daughters, laughing and talking, and never dreaming of the dark tragedy being enacted so near.

Would they care if they did know? Would they come to his aid if some instinct should tell them? And then he suddenly scrambled to his feet, resolving to make one last

Groups of stern-looking men stood before the gaol.

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effort for his life. He would struggle on to the farmhouse and appeal to the quiet family circle. They might give him concealment. It was but death if he failed, and it would be no less if he did not try.

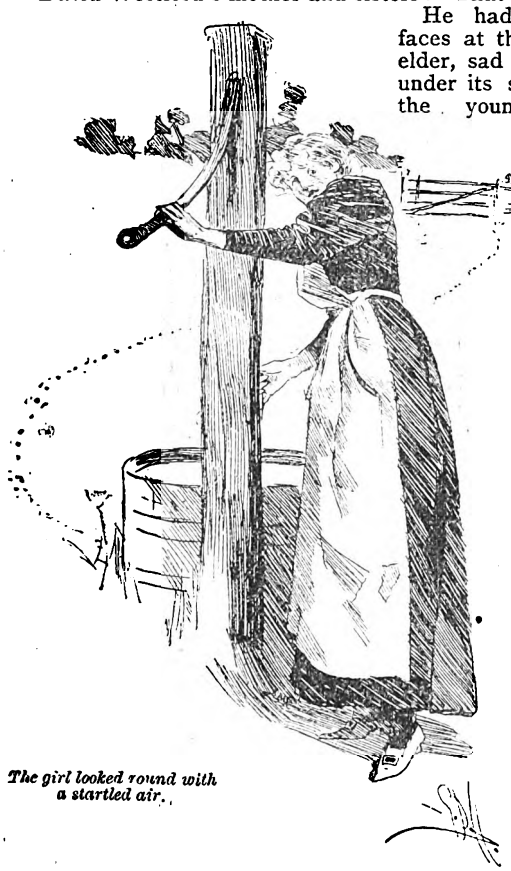
It took all the strength this last faint hope gave him to carry him to the gate and up the cinder walk, whose hard, dark surface would betray no footstep. Yet his heart failed as he reached the door, and leaned, utterly exhausted, against the doorpost.

"If I could know there were women inside! A woman would be merciful. But it may be some stern old farmer, who will only order me off and set the dogs on me."

The window was but a step away. He crept to it, and looked between the curtains. A plain, neat farmhouse kitchen, and two women, evidently mother and daughter, sitting by the table before the fire, the mother sewing, the daughter reading aloud. No one else in sight, yet Gilbert gave a smothered gasp and fell back in despair.

"David Westford's mother and sisters! That settles it!"

He had seen both faces at the trial—the elder, sad and patient, under its silvery hair; the younger, pure, pale, and clear-cut, thrown into strong relief by the dark eyes, long jet lashes and heavy black braids.



The girl looked round with a startled air.

He stood there still, hopeless and helpless, when there came a sudden break in the clear voice within. The girl had ceased reading. He looked in, and saw her pick up a pitcher and come toward the door. A moment more and she had come out, all unconscious of the man so near, gone straight to the pump, on which the lamplight shone, and was filling her pitcher. Nerved to desperation, Gilbert stepped toward her.

"I will appeal to her. Why shouldn't I? I did not kill her brother. She may pity me. She is a woman, and they are half Quakers I have heard," he muttered—and aloud, "Miss Westford, help me for pity's sake!"

The clanking of the pump ceased. The girl looked round with a startled air. "Who spoke?" she demanded.

"A fugitive, utterly exhausted with flight from a bloodthirsty mob. They are close at my heels. I can't go farther, and I am doomed unless you have pity and give me help or concealment!"

"Who are you?" she inquired; and with a dreadful sinking at his heart he gave his name, "Gilbert Hazelton."

She uttered a sharp cry and looked away towards the distant cornfields—the pursuers on his track.

"I must ask mother," she said, and snatching up her pitcher swept past him into the house.

He heard her quick voice, and Mrs. Westford's startled outcry, and in very desperation followed her in.

The old mother met him, white-haired and venerable. "So thee can seek shelter here, of David Westford's bereaved mother?" she said bitterly, wonderingly.

"Why not? I have never harmed you or him," he urged, desperately. "As true as there is a heaven above us, I am innocent of what is laid to my charge. It will be proved when my friends come. But that will be too late unless you help me."

"But I do not know it now," Mrs. Westford wavered. "Thee speaks fair, but do not all criminals the same? A trial was given thee, and thy innocence was not proved. Why should I save the murderer of my boy?"

Gilbert fell into a chair, too exhausted to stand. "You will know when it is too late if you refuse me aid. Madam, will you risk it?—risk feeling that you might have saved an innocent man, but instead let him go to his death?"

"Ernestine," cried the old mother piteously, "what ought we to do? How can we risk a life-long remorse, or how can we risk letting David's murderer go free to break other hearts as ours are broken? What does thee say?"

The girl stood in the open door, her glances alternating between the pleading face of the fugitive and the lanterns coming along the roadside.

"We must decide quickly, mother," and her clear voice quivered with feeling. "He may be innocent. It hardly seems as though a guilty man would come here—to David's home—for shelter. And if we are accessory to his death—mother, it is murder for them to take the law into their own unauthorised hands. Our choice lies between one man, who may or may not be a murderer, and a score who will surely be if we do not hinder.

"Then thee says save him!" Mrs. Westford asked doubtfully.

"I dare not refuse it, mother. Do you?"

The old lady hesitated, then, opening a corner cupboard, took a pair of handcuffs—relics of the days when David had been deputy-sheriff and earned the enmity of tramps and evil-doers—and held them toward Gilbert.

"If thee will put these on, that we may have no fear from thy violence when the mob are gone, we will conceal thee safely, and, when the search is over, send thee back to thy lawful guardian. That is all. I cannot place myself and my daughter at the mercy of one who may have none. Will thee consent?"

She was only prudent. Gilbert bowed silently and extended his hands. It was his only chance for life, and it would be the height of folly to object. Yet a faint colour came into his face as the cold steel snapped on his wrists, rendering him helpless—yet scarcely more so than fatigue had already made him.

The hesitation of both was over now. Ernestine bade him remove his muddy shoes, while she swiftly closed the door and drew down the blinds, and the mother hurried into another room. Thither Ernestine beckoned him to follow, pausing only to thrust the shoes out of sight.

At the door she turned. "It is David's room," looking keenly into his face. "Come in."

Did she think he would draw back? Guilt itself would hardly have done that now, with the pursuers so near.

"If David can see, I know he is willing," Gilbert answered quietly.

It was a small, plainly furnished room. Mrs. Westford had drawn the bed from the wall and thrown back the last breadth of carpet, revealing a tiny trap-door. At his entrance she opened it, and motioned him down.

"It is only four feet. You can drop that far," said Ernestine encouragingly. "There is no outer door. You will be quite safe."

Her mother smiled sadly: "How many frightened fugitives have slept there in safety! But that was years ago—before the war. Thee need not fear. Now—but stay, thee must be faint. I will bring thee food and drink."

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She hurried away, and he swung himself down. It was not very easy with his manacled hands, and Ernestine helped him. His heart thrilled at the touch of her cold, trembling hands.

"She shrinks from my touch. She thinks my hand stained with her brother's blood," he thought bitterly.

But another glance at the pure, pale face relieved him. She was listening anxiously, and said with hurried kindness, "There is an old bed down there. Look, while I hold the light down. There! Even half-an-hour's rest will help you. But you must eat and rest in the dark, for this cellar extends under the kitchen, which is carpetless, and has cracks in the floor. Here comes mother."

Very hurriedly Mrs. Westford passed the well-filled dish and pitcher to him, reporting that the mob were almost up to the house.

"Cover up quickly, Ernestine. I am going to wake Harry."

That was her youngest son, still sleeping soundly upstairs.

She hurried away, and Ernestine quickly lowered the trap-door, and pushed back the bed.

Shut down in the darkness, Gilbert groped his way to the old bed, and sank down on it in utter exhaustion. He could do no more, be it life or death. He heard the girl's quick steps, the closing door, the louder steps directly overhead, and a slender spur of lamplight came down through a crack.

She was back in the kitchen—and there were stern voices indistinctly to be heard without. Ernestine heard them more plainly, and stood with clasped hands and pale face, praying silently, but oh, so earnestly, that the innocent, if he were innocent, might be saved, when her young brother came rushing downstairs, just as there came a thundering knock at the door.

Mrs. Westford had told him no more than that a crowd of men with lanterns were approaching, and it was in perfect good faith that he flung open the door and angrily demanded their business. They soon satisfied him.

"The tramp that murdered your brother is at large, and we are hunting for him. We have looked all up and down the road, for we know he came this way, and it looks mightily as if he had slipped into your premises and hidden somewhere. Your folks will have no objection to our searching, I reckon."

"Not a bit. I don't think he would stop here, but if he did I hope you will catch him and hang him to the nearest tree," the boy answered fiercely.

The fugitive, plainly hearing every word, shuddered, but he had no idea how many times that old house had been searched in vain for hunted souls, or he would not have feared. Harry knew the secret of the long unused cellar, but never dreamed that his mother and sister could know anything of the hunted tramp-murderer, and so had no idea that he could be in the house. So the outbuildings and premises were thoroughly searched, while Ernestine and her mother looked on with pale, quiet faces and wildly beating hearts, and the fugitive lay and listened in the darkness.

Then the men rode on, grumbling and cursing the Sheriff for letting the prisoner escape. Harry fretted a little, never guessing that his every word reached the ears of the man whom he would willingly have surrendered to his murderers, and then went back to bed.

Silence settled on the old farmhouse, and Gilbert actually fell into a light doze, from which Mrs. Westford's soft call roused him. Half asleep, he made his way to the trap door, and was helped up. Ernestine, in cloak and hat, stood waiting.

"Mother thinks it best that you should be back in safety before daybreak," she said simply. "I can drive you over very soon."

"I hate to let thee go, dear," her mother said anxiously.

"It is only for an hour, mother," reassured the girl; "and we can hardly trust Harry. He is only a boy, and so impetuous and bitter."

Mrs. Westford sighed. "It seems to be a duty, and surely our Father will not let thee suffer for doing thy duty. Well, go. My prayers shall go with thee. But be careful, child."

The light cart and bay pony stood at the door. The prisoner was helped into the back seat, and Ernestine sprang in before. The big watch-dog followed at her call and curled up under her seat, and Gilbert felt that however kindly these women might feel, they were not disposed to run any useless risks.

"Good-bye, mother; don't fret," was Ernestine's parting word, and Mrs. Westford's earnest "May God protect thee" showed her uneasiness. Yet she added a kindly word to the prisoner: "And may He bring out the truth. I hope we shall see thee free before all the world right speedily."

Then they drove away in the darkness. Ernestine spoke little; her heart beat too fast. She half apologised for taking the dog.

"The roads would be so lonely, coming back," an apology which he readily accepted. Could he resent her prudence when she had given him his life? But he could not help being intensely thankful that the dog had been asleep in the barn when he approached the house.

"You must come and see us."

Their trip was about half done when lanterns gleamed ahead, and wheels and voices were heard approaching. "The mob!" was his first thought, and Ernestine whispered hurriedly, "Down, under your seat, till they pass!" Then with a sudden joyful change in tone and manner, "Oh, it is the Sheriff! Thank heaven!"

The Sheriff it was, looking anxiously for his charge, but with little hope of ever seeing him again alive. Ernestine turned quickly.

"Your wrists, please," and the manacles fell off. "There! You need not tell that part unless you wish. It was only—but you understand. Mother had a right to be cautious, you know."

And then the Sheriff was hailing them, and as much surprised as delighted to find his prisoner in such hands. The transfer was soon made, and with a kindly word of farewell Ernestine hastened back to her anxious mother.

At the new trial, Gilbert Hazelton had no difficulty in proving his own identity, and after a short hearing, was triumphantly acquitted.

Of all the warm handclasps and congratulations he received, none gave him more pleasure than those of Mrs. Westford and her daughter.

"You must come and see us," Ernestine said blushing. "I know we were not over polite to you, mother and I; but come again, and you will find that we can be civil."

And he did come—not once, but many times—and at last carried sweet Ernestine away as his bride.

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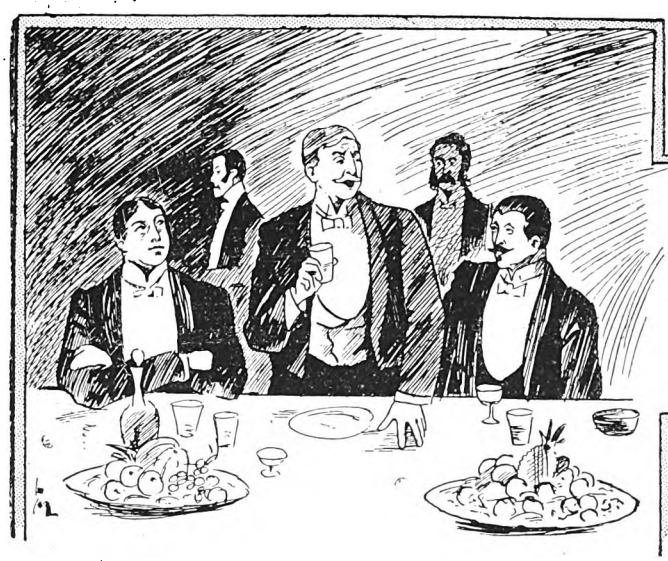

COINING HIS BRAINS

THE dinners of the *Dolce Far Niente* Club were as far above ordinary club dinners as the music-hall symphony concerts are above average theatrical overtures and interludes. The uneducated palate could no more appreciate their delicate savours than the uncultured ear can appreciate Listz's scores executed by Paderewski. The vulgar ideal of a club dinner is one which costs enough per plate to support a country clergyman's table for a week; one like those which aldermen and councilmen enjoy at the city's expense, and from which they rise with overloaded stomachs and apoplectic faces.

The president, Mason Macknight, had been chosen, not on account of any special executive ability, but simply because he was the most agreeable and popular fellow, and the best after-dinner speaker in the club—albeit he was so poor in worldly possessions that he could have ill afforded to retain his membership if the club had not frequently presented him with liberal testimonials of their gratitude for his inestimable services. He was bright looking and handsome, he sang a sentimental or a humorous song with effect, and he was not only an entertaining talker, but, what is even more essential to popularity, an appreciative listener.

At the closing dinner of the season, in his valedictory and introductory remarks, before presenting the speaker of the evening, he outdid himself, and so deepened the general admiration that he was unanimously re-elected, in spite of a prevailing sentiment in favour of rapid rotation in office.

I have a vivid recollection of that dinner, not only on account of the brilliant appearance which the president made, but because I was down for a speech, and more particularly because of the strange events which followed.

I am a little crotchety about always occupying the same seat at table. Even when I take only two successive meals at an hotel I feel imposed upon if the seat assigned me at first is changed at the second. This foible of mine was pretty well understood at the club, so, excepting for a little temporary joke, one particular chair was as sacredly reserved for me as the president's and distinguished guests' chairs were reserved for them. Upon entering the hall on this occasion, however, I found a stranger in my accustomed place. I glanced quickly round for the sly wink or the guilty look which should reveal the joker, but no one responded, and I took the next chair with as good a grace as possible. The stranger soon opened conversation with me and proved exceedingly affable, although no one in his vicinity seemed disposed to acknowledge acquaintance with him. His personal appearance was striking to a degree. He was pale even to ghastliness, the effect being greatly heightened by coal-black hair and moustache, and the most piercing black eyes I have ever seen.

In a little while a note was handed me from the president, requesting me to send him the name of my "friend." I replied that I did not know; that the gentleman was not present by my invitation.

While I was refolding the paper, the stranger handed the waiter a card, which, with my reply, was delivered to the president.

I saw a look of surprise and perplexity pass over Macknight's face, but he gave the stranger a most courteous bow, which fairly satisfied myself and apparently several others who had been casting inquiring glances in my direction. Still, I could not help wondering who and what my neighbour was, and why he should be present at a strictly private—I may say, exclusive—gathering, under such very singular circumstances.

As I have said, I was down for a speech. This fact prevented me from sustaining my share of the conversation with my neighbour in a manner satisfactory to myself, however it may have been to him. I had made two or three speeches on previous occasions. I had elaborated them with much trouble, committed them thoroughly to memory, word for word, and, much to my surprise and secret satisfaction, had won the reputation of being an easy, off-hand speaker. If my club-mates had only known what those "off-hand" remarks had cost me, their applause would surely have been changed to pity!

"And now, gentlemen," said President Macknight, rising with the genial smile with which he habitually haled his helpless victim to the rostrum, "I have the pleasure of presenting to you one who, etc., etc.—one, in fine, who loves to talk, but not so well as you love to listen. 'If you have tears, prepare to shed them now'; if you have laughs, prepare to laugh them now. Gentlemen, our esteemed secretary, Mr. Wilkins Dobson."

With expectations thus aroused, all turned their beaming faces towards me, prepared to laugh or weep at my first sally. From the beginning of the feast I had been so ill at ease at the certainty of what was in store for me, that I had now only made, I fear, but a poor impression upon my brilliant neighbour as a conversationalist; but I had really enjoyed none of the various dishes which had been set before me. So far as my consciousness was concerned they might have been the plainest of fare instead of the daintiest.

All through the president's introduction my heart had been thumping so obstreperously that I thought it must be heard above his resonant voice, and I felt sure that my face must betray my inward agitation. I had carefully committed my remarks, however, and I arose with what I felt was an air of entire self-possession. I was received with generous applause. Several witticisms which I had laboriously contrived, and which fortunately seemed inspired by what the president had just said, evoked satisfactory responses.

Once only did I hesitate. Oh, what a moment was that!

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For the life of me I could not think what I had arranged to say next, and such was the paralysing effect of the lapse that I could no more substitute anything than I could fly.

The smoke-filled hall, the president, the long tables, and the smiling or coldly critical faces round them, began to spin before my eyes. My tongue cleaved to the roof of my mouth. I took my glass of water, and was in the act of putting it to my parched lips, when I heard a whisper from the stranger at my side. Though it was doubtless inaudible to others, it reached my ear clearly and distinctly, uttering the very words with which my forgotten sentence began! In the joy of my rescue I did not stop to think of the seeming miracle, but, satisfying myself by a swift glance round me that my dilemma had not been generally discovered, I forged ahead, and finally took my seat amid even louder applause than that which had greeted the beginning of my address.

"Dobson, my boy," said my friend Knowlton, who sat at my left, patting me facetiously on the back, "you spoke your little piece *well*. How many rehearsals did you have?"

"You give me credit for wonderful prophetic power," I retorted scornfully, "if you think I knew what the president was going to say in introducing me!"

And yet my conscience did not wince.

"You *did* turn it cleverly, old fellow," answered Knowlton, "and all on the spur of the moment, too. I would give a thousand pounds this moment if I had your gift of impromptu speech!"

"Bah! You would do nothing of the sort. It's easy enough, if one only thinks so. It's just like swimming—all you have to do is to strike out boldly, not caring whether you sink or swim."

"But suppose I should sink?"

"Oh," said I carelessly, "there's no danger, if you only keep on kicking."

Here, I confess, I began to feel some inward prickings, as well as some slight embarrassment, lest the stranger on my right might have overheard my complacent words. Suddenly the recollection of the assistance he had so mysteriously given me rushed into my mind. In my elation at my success I had entirely forgotten it. I felt my cheeks turn scarlet. Facing him shamefacedly, I said:

"I beg to thank you, sir, for the service, the—ah—a wonderful service, you rendered me in my extremity. I must confess that it entirely passes my comprehension. May I ask you how you knew so exactly what I wished to say?"

"You did *not* say all you had prepared, even with my help," he replied coolly, watching my face to note the effect of his words. "You omitted two whole pages of your manuscript—those in which you combat the popular notion that the *dolce far niente* tends to the atrophy of real strength and energy."

So I did! And yet I was absolutely sure that no eyes but my own had ever seen my manuscript. I had, of course, heard and read a good deal about what is called mind-reading, but I had always relegated the whole matter to the limbo of fortune-telling and all other superstitions or fraudulent nonsense. I stared at the stranger in helpless amazement.

"Sir," I said at length, "will you have the goodness to explain this most astonishing mystery?"

He smiled, displaying a row of narrow, glistening white teeth.

"This is hardly a favourable opportunity," he replied. "If you and your president will invite me to one of your little rooms after the banquet, I may be able to interest you."

. . . . . .

"Oh, ah, yes," said Macknight, taking the stranger's hand, "I remember you *now*, Mr. Pilgrim, and the standing invitation I gave you to the hospitalities of the *Dolce Far Niente* Club."

Mr. Pilgrim bowed and smiled. "And do you remember a certain bargain you said you would like to make?"

"No; I don't recall anything of that sort. What is it?"

"You made no definite proposition. You merely expressed a desire to exchange some things you possessed for others which you did not possess."

"Oh!" laughed Macknight, "there's nothing strange or unusual in that. I'm always expressing desires. I'm one of those uneasy mortals who never *are*, 'but always to *be* blest!'"

When we three were cosily ensconced in a little card-room in the third story of the club-house, and were discussing our champagne and cigars, we began to speak about various indifferent matters, although both Macknight and I were burning with impatience to hear our guest's explanation of his apparently miraculous power.

At length Macknight said to me, "So that brilliant effort of yours was not impromptu after all?"

The consciousness that any attempt at concealment would be futile before the piercing black eyes of our strange guest, caused me to throw all reserve to the winds. I made a clean breast of my vain pretensions to the easy self-possession of the born extemporaneous orator. I told how, on receiving my invitation to address the club a week before, I had lost no time in beginning the preparation of my "desultory remarks"; how I had studied my encyclopædia for the pat allusions which had won me so much applause, and a collection of modern Joe Millers for the best of the jokes which had evoked so much laughter.

"But those admirable turns you made to my best points in introducing you," urged Macknight—"those were impromptu, at least?"

"Not at all. I weighed very carefully the probabilities. I knew that you would allude to every one of those little incidents connected with my secretaryship, and I thought it more than likely that you would indulge in just the flattery you did indulge in. If you did not happen to do so, I had so worded my speech that I could omit those special replies without in the least interfering with the connection of thought."

"Well, you *did* take pains!" exclaimed Macknight, setting his glass down on the table with dangerous force. "I shouldn't suppose you would attach importance enough to a mere after-dinner speech to put so much work into it. After all, what is there depending on it?"

"Heaven only knows! I only know, as Mr. Pilgrim doubtless does also, that the very prospect of speaking in public sets me into a shiver of dread. At the same time I feel an irresistible impulse to respond to every call, and to shine among the best of them. I have often wondered whether others who succeed as I sometimes do, are affected as I am. How is it with you, Macknight, who always succeed so immeasurably better than I, or, for that matter, than any other man in the club?

"Don't you ever feel any trepidation when you are about to face hundreds of critical auditors, who will note every little lapse of logic or wit, and every little faltering of speech?"

Macknight reflected. "Well, no, Dobson, to be perfectly candid, I can't say that I do."

I glanced involuntarily at Mr. Pilgrim. As if in reply to my unspoken question, he said instantly:

"Your president is right. Not that his words need confirmation, of course, but, as he seemed a little in doubt himself, I will say in his behalf that he is as perfectly at his ease before any audience, however large or critical, as he is at this moment before us two."

Macknight looked at him as if uncertain whether to be surprised or only complimented. At length he said:

"Thank you. Mr. Dobson has told me of the mysterious and very opportune assistance you gave him. We are both waiting with the utmost impatience to hear your explanation of your marvellous power."

Again Mr. Pilgrim displayed his glittering teeth, scarcely more white than his face. "You do not believe in the power of mind-reading, which many quite respectable persons of to-day claim to possess?"

"*I had* not believed in it—until to-night, at all events," I answered.

"No," added Macknight, "I never could believe in it more than in any other supernatual power claimed by mere mortals."

"But who has the right to say that there is anything supernatural in it?" retorted Mr. Pilgrim.

He then proceeded gravely to expound the general theory and practice of hypnotism as taught by its professors;

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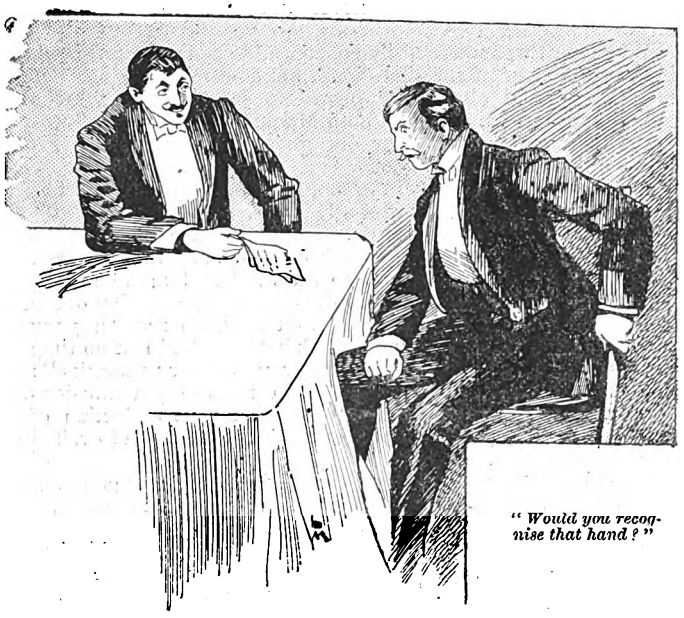

"Would you recognise that hand?"

arguing that the art of mind-reading was closely allied, and finishing with the emphatic declaration that both were accomplished facts, and that he was simply one of their exponents.

"But," I objected, "what you did in my own case was not mind-reading. That which you read was not in my mind at all. I would have given a hundred pounds, at that fearful moment, if it had been there!"

"Shall I consider you in my debt to that amount?" asked Mr. Pilgrim, with his sinister smile. "You mistake, however, in saying that it was not in your mind," he went on, gravely. "It *was* there. The only trouble was that the electric current, so to speak, of association was for the instant broken. All I did was to close the connection."

"A new explanation of memory-lapses," observed Macknight, "and a very good one."

"No," replied Mr. Pilgrim, "not new. It is as old as the science of psychology."

"Well, a new illustration, then."

"No, not even that."

Notwithstanding Mr. Pilgrim's apparent earnestness and sincerity, neither Macknight nor I was convinced, either of the soundness of his conclusions or of his own actual belief in them. His appearance and manner were so uncanny, especially his smile, that, in spite of our reason and common sense, we could not avoid an uneasy feeling that there was something in our guest either above or below Nature.

"If Knowlton had possessed this wonderful power," I remarked to Macknight, "he would scarcely have told me that he would give a thousand pounds for my gift of impromptu speech. I can truly say, however, that I would give more than that if I really had what he thinks I have."

"And what would you give," asked Mr. Pilgrim quickly, "for the oratorical talents of your president?"

"Five thousand," replied I, bringing my fist down on the table, "this instant!"

"You would be a fool!" exclaimed Macknight. "I would sell what little knack I possess at spouting for a quarter of that sum!"

"I only wish I could take you!"

"I only wish you could!"

"You place rather a low value upon your intellectual gifts," said I.

"On the contrary, I think I have set the price exorbitantly high. Twelve hundred and fifty pounds may mean very little to you, but think what it means to me! Comfort, independence, perfect serenity of mind, for a whole year! How often I have wished that I had been allowed some choice in the gifts which Nature and Fortune bestowed upon me! There would have been a different assortment, I can tell you!"

Mr. Pilgrim bent forward eagerly. "Suppose Nature and Fortune should grant you your choice *now*. What would you choose?"

"Ah! 'Goods exchanged on application at the office,'" laughed Macknight. "Very good. Well, the very first thing I should ask for would be money—and plenty of it."

"And what would you be willing to exchange for money?"

"Let me see. Well, there's the knack of impromptu speaking which you have credited me with. I would give up that without the least hesitation."

"Yes, and what else?"

"H'm! Well, to tell the truth, I don't know of much else that would be worth offering."

"Phew!" exclaimed I, seizing the opportunity to praise my friend's versatility, "what of your conversational and epistolary powers, your genius for music and painting, your knack at verse-making, your natural skill at billiards, whist, and chess, your—your elegant penmanship?"

At this feeble anti-climax both my auditors burst into a laugh.

"I would be willing to throw in that last article gratis," said Macknight.

"A man who appreciates his gifts so little as you do doesn't deserve to have them!" I retorted indignantly.

"Pshaw! Even granting that I possess all the elegant accomplishments you have just inventoried, what are they worth to a poverty-stricken wretch like me? Will they pay my landlord, my tailor? Doesn't every successful man—successful, I mean, in the financial sense, the only sense recognised—look down on me with indulgent pity so long as I don't owe him a shilling, and with dislike and contempt when I do? There's that last precious accomplishment you mentioned, for instance—my 'elegant penmanship.' Of what earthly value is that to a man who can't draw his cheque for a hundred pounds. The chicken-track style, which usually ornaments your ten thousand pound drafts, is far more to my taste."

"What would you sell your elegant hand for, in cash?" asked Mr. Pilgrim, in a business-like manner.

"For anything I could get."

"Would you take two hundred?"

"*Would* I? Give me the chance and see!"

Mr. Pilgrim produced a note-book and a fountain pen, wrote rapidly on a leaf, tore it out, and handed it to Macknight.

"Will you sign that?"

Macknight read:

"London, June 6th, 1890.

"In consideration of the sum of two hundred pounds, received from Peter Pilgrim, I hereby consent to give up all grace and beauty in my style of penmanship—retaining only its present legibility."

"I'd sign it in an instant if it would do any good," he sighed. Mr. Pilgrim laid a couple of bank notes on the table. "There's your money."

We both stared. My flesh began to creep.

"Look here," blurted Macknight, "I don't know how Dobson feels. He stood the mind-reading test with a good deal more equanimity than I could, but this is——. Who are you, sir, anyway?"

"It doesn't matter who I am. You have made an agreement. Are you going to stand by it?"

Macknight swallowed another glass of wine. "Hang it, here goes! Macbeth boasted that he dared what man dared. Macknight will beat Macbeth!"

He took the pen and wrote. As he did so, his face, which had been flushed, turned deathly pale, and his eyes seemed starting from their sockets.

Mr. Pilgrim took the paper. His teeth gleamed in a satisfied smile. "Would you recognise that hand?" he asked handing it to me.

I could have sworn to it at a court of justice. And yet it was the most awkward scrawl I ever saw outside of a schoolboy's copybook.

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"Would you mind signing your name as witness?" pursued Mr. Pilgrim, addressing me.

My power of resistance seemed paralysed. Mechanically I signed my name, half expecting to see the miracle repeated; but, barring a little tremulousness due to my agitation of mind, my chirography was no poorer than usual.

"Thank you," said Mr. Pilgrim, carefully replacing the paper in his note-book. "Should Mr. Macknight wish any further business transactions with me, all he has to do is to write to the address on the card I sent to him."

When I awoke the next morning the whole affair seemed so unreal—so absolutely impossible, in fact—that I made up my mind it was either a hallucination attributable to too liberal an indulgence in champagne, or a cleverly-arranged hoax played upon me by Macknight and his friend. The more I thought of it the more I felt inclined to the latter view of the case; although, of course, I was still mystified by the remarkable feat of mind-reading which had been performed in my behalf.

A note received from Macknight by the morning's post in the same horrible hand I had seen last would not have shaken my conviction in the least, if it had not been for one thing—it contained his cheque for £20, a sum he had been owing me for more than a year. I confess I was considerably staggered by this circumstance, but vastly more so, a few days later, by the news that he had bought, for cash, a handsome cottage in the suburbs. After some further perplexity my mind settled down upon the only reasonable conclusion possible. He had received a legacy and was continuing his hoax upon me.

The summer vacation passed, and the evening came for the first club-dinner of the next season. Macknight, in a new evening suit, was in his place at the head of the table, but it required only a few moments for those in his immediate vicinity to discover that something unusual was the matter with him. Instead of keeping everybody in a tingle of exhilaration at his sallies, as usual, he was taciturn and sombre.

"Come, Macknight," said the vice-president at last, "what ails you? You haven't said ten words since you came."

The reply was so clumsy, so utterly stupid, that his neighbours all looked at him and then at one another in astonishment. I left my seat, went to him, and said in a low tone:

"Don't, for heaven's sake, keep up this thing any longer!"

I confess I was considerably staggered.

"Keep up what thing?"

"Acting like an idiot!"

"Don't insult *me*, Dobson!" he returned, with a blank stare. "I can buy *you* out, and a dozen more like you!"

I returned to my seat in disgust.

The cigars were lighted, the secretary's and treasurer's reports were read and approved, and the president arose to make his opening address.

"Gentlemen," he began, "I thank you for re-electing me as the president of the *Dolce Far Niente* Club. I will try to discharge the duties of the position as well as I can. As an example of what I intend to do for you, I will ask the treasurer to read this."

Here he actually broke down.

The treasurer took the slip which the president handed to him, glanced at it, raised his eyebrows with an expression of great surprise and pleasure, and read:

"London, September 28th, 1890.

"National Bank. Pay to the treasurer of the *Dolce Far Niente* Club five hundred pounds.

"MASON MACKNIGHT."

Amid the hand-clapping that followed, the president sat down with a smile of imbecile complacency. When quiet had been restored, Knowlton moved that "The honoured president's extremely liberal gift be accepted with the most cordial thanks of the club."

A dozen voices seconded the motion.

"And now," said a member at the foot of the table, "we are eagerly waiting for the rest of the president's speech."

"I have made my speech," replied Macknight. "I should suppose that five hundred pounds would—would——"

Here he actually broke down, unable even to finish his sentence coherently. Quivering with shame for him, I rose in my place and said:

"The president would imply that 'figures talk.' I think we will all agree that they have spoken eloquently to-night. Your secretary will record the inaugural of this season as the most acceptable and weighty in the archives of the *Dolce Far Niente* Club."

. . . . . .

"Have you heard the latest about poor Macknight?" Knowlton asked me the other day.

"No. But I can imagine. Has he gone crazy altogether?"

"Worse than that. He is in the W—— Lunatic Asylum."

Ah, well, if the rest of us had the opportunity to transmute ourselves into gold, where should we stop? Many a man coins body, heart, and brain without the help of Peter Pilgrim.

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MME. JAMBE.

A STORY OF THE FRANCO-GERMAN WAR.

PERHAPS you are going to find that this name is somewhat ridiculous. Do not hurry yourself to smile at it, however, for not only was she who bore it a brave woman worthy of all respect, but she was besides, on a memorable and tragic day, a true heroine.

You must first know that Mme. Jambe, or Mother Jambe, as she was called, had for a long time been canteen woman in a regiment of the line. Officers and soldiers alike venerated her, and during the quarter of a century she passed in the army there was never a day when she could have complained of having been the victim of an impertinence or a brutality.

When thirty she married a quartermaster, who was getting ready to leave the service, and who remained in the army to help his wife keep the canteen. The couple prospered.

Mother Jambe had more than one string to her bow, and knew how to employ her leisure hours profitably. She was a very clever pedicure. She had also learned to dress hair, and was able to do a service to the ladies of the officers.

After a year of marriage Mme. Jambe had a son. Agreeing with her husband, she decided that he, too, should be a soldier. At sixteen he enlisted. Already trained in the habits of military life, he had besides intelligence, judgment, a heart full of uprightness. Everybody was convinced that he would have a brilliant career.

Then her husband died and the war broke out.

During this terrible time of 1870-71 she did not succeed in sleeping more than three hours out of twenty-four. She passed weeks without knowing hardly anything, either of the progress of the war or her son.

Then, blow by blow, she knew of the defeats the French had met with, and at last she learned that the child—become a sergeant, although he was not yet eighteen—was assigned to make part of the Army of the East which was being formed under the command of General Bourbaki.

From that time, and in all kinds of weather, they saw her every day cross the few kilometres which separated Pontarlier from the village of La Cluse, or go up to the fort of Joux, which dominates the Swiss frontier. She was going for news. Unfortunately news was scarce or contradictory. The hope of a victory or deliverance was little by little extinguished.

But about the last of January suddenly the report spread abroad that the Army of the East was coming near, after having lost a battle and vainly attempted to relieve Belfort.

Here I ought, and wish, to let Mme. Jambe speak, for what follows was received from her. She related it to me some months after the event.

. . . . . .

One morning at daybreak, being still in bed, I heard some noise at the door, and then a fall of window-panes which were broken. I jumped out of bed, putting on my dress, and hurried to the door. I gave a cry, my boy was before me and behind him three of his comrades; but in what a condition! Emaciated, their cheeks hollow, their skin chapped with cold, their clothes in rags, their boots without soles.

"Ah, my poor child," said I, opening my arms.

"Mother, we must hide," he replied. "My general has charged me with carrying an order to the commander of the fort of Joux. But the Prussians bar the road; they have seen us; they are pursuing us. They must not find me."

"Eh, *parbleu*; give me your order: I will carry it myself, while you will stay here. An old woman, she can go anywhere."

I had no time to finish. A fusillade was heard and a man entered, crying:

"There are the Prussians!"

I pushed my boy and his friends into a carriage house, at the end of which, under the hay, opened the little cellar where I kept my wine. The Prussians entered. Through the open door I saw others on the road. There were more than a hundred. A young officer commanded them.

He came to me, arrogant and brutal.

"You are Mme. Jambe?"

"I am."

"Your son has just gone into this house."

"My son! He is far from here, bandits, if, however, you have left him alive for me."

"He is here. I am sure of it. Come, where is he?"

"Look for him."

He motioned, I was surrounded, unable to budge, and the soldiers began searching the house, while I was asking myself who was the miserable coward who had informed against my boy.

At last the brigands found him—him and his friends. I saw the poor children come back, pale but resolute, all covered with hay in which they had been hidden. And my son, so handsome, such flames in his eyes. Ah, he was really of my blood, that one. They searched their clothes to find the order which the general had charged them with. But the order was verbal. They could not find anything.

The officer threw himself about, fretted, mad with rage. Suddenly he said to me, covering the prisoners with a gesture of fury:

"Is your son among them?"

"He is not there. And if he were there I would not acknowledge it."

He raised his sword to me. Then they pushed us pell-mell into the road. Then he asked:

"Where is the man who informed us?"

"One of his companions has just killed him, captain," said a sergeant, pointing to a corpse I had not seen, hidden as it was by a bush.

It was the traitor, a freeshooter, who, to save his own life, had not feared to give my child's secret to the enemy. Besides, he had not waited a long time for his punishment.

"The assassin shall be shot," said the officer.

Then looking in a terrible way at some inhabitants of our village, who were trembling under the lowered bayonets, he went on:

"Does anybody know the boy Jambe? Come, answer, or I set fire to your houses."

Of all the brave people nobody answered.

"Then we are going to see," said the officer.

He gave an order in a low voice.

They bound me against the wall, while they were putting arms into the hands of my son and of his comrades.

And the officer said to them:

"You are going to obey my order and shoot that woman for me, and if you do not obey it is you who will die."

A cry of horror was raised, to which a great silence succeeded. I committed my soul to God, saying to myself that I would show these people how the French die, and I looked at my son. But he did not see me. His eyes were turned towards his comrades as if to exchange a sign.

"Lower your arms!" ordered the officer.

They obeyed.

"Aim."

They took aim at me.

"Fire!"

They faced about. A report sounded which shot five Prussians down, and among them their officer. And this report was dominated by the voice of my boy, who sprung up:

"Yes, fire, brigand, but on you and yours."

A general discharge from the exasperated Prussians replied to this stroke of audacity, and it was then that I fell struck by a bullet in my shoulder. But before fainting I had time to see that my boy was still standing.

I learned later that at the moment the guns of the fort responded. The sun, in rising, had all at once illuminated the helmet points, and the commander of the fort, judging by this mass of men seen in the distance that something was happening, had sent some balls into the crowd and dispersed the enemy. It was, besides, the guns of the fort which, some hours later, covered the retreat of the Army of the East when it passed into Switzerland.

. . . . . .

Mme. Jambe died some years after these tragic events. I recalled them the other day on learning that the son of this heroic woman, prosperously pursuing a career begun with so much brilliancy, has just been appointed commandant.

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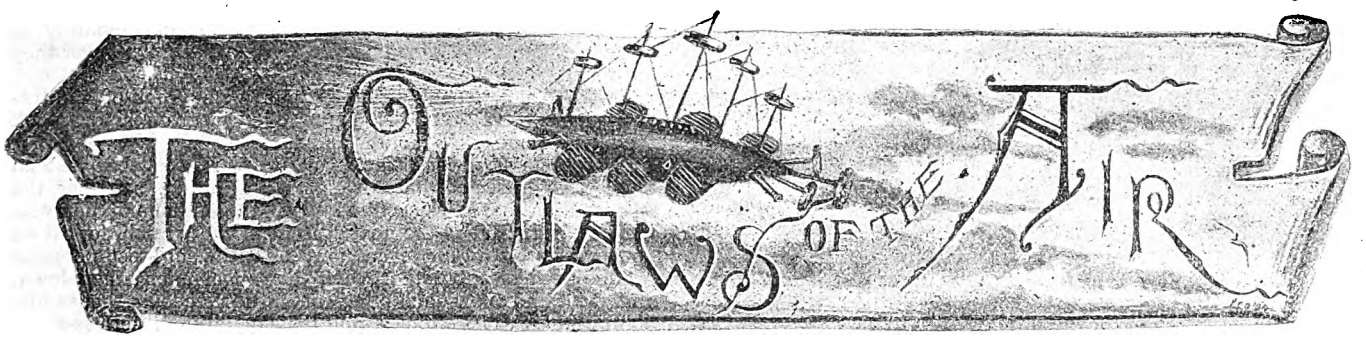

By GEORGE GRIFFITH,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies, &c."

SUMMARY.

MAX RENAULT, the leading spirit of the Anarchist "Autonomie Group No. 7," meets his colleagues in a club near the Caledonian Road on the eve of President Carnot's assassination. He shoots a traitor who has almost betrayed the Group and so saved Carnot's life. Then he tells them that he is about to emigrate with a society of Socialists, one of whom, Frederick Austen, a wealthy engineer who has been converted to Socialism, takes out with him a working model of an aerial vessel which is to enable the colonists to enforce a reign of peace on earth. This air-ship Renault determines to steal when complete, and use for the purpose of bringing about an Anarchist reign of terror instead. Meanwhile, Franz Hartog, another member of the Group, is to carry out a plot he has formed to steal a very fast torpedo boat destroyer, which is to be built at Elbing for the Russian Government, and, with her, to levy blackmail on the Atlantic, and so raise funds to build an Anarchist aerial fleet when the time comes.

On Christmas Day, 1898, the *Calypso*, a steam yacht belonging to Sir Harry Milton, a young and wealthy landowner, having been disabled in a gale and then becalmed, sights an island in the South Pacific, from which an electric launch, the *Mermaid*, puts off and tows the yacht in. Frank Markham, in command of the launch, tells Sir Harry, with whom are travelling his sister, Violet, and Herbert Wyndham, a lieutenant in the British Navy, on sick leave, that the island is Utopia, a Socialist colony, founded some three years before by emigrants from England. On the island Sir Harry finds Frederick Austen, an old friend of his father's, who introduces the visitors to Edward Adams and Max Renault and the rest of the Utopians, and after lunch tells them the story of Utopia. Later on, Lieutenant Wyndham describes the outrages committed by the pirate *Destroyer*—the vessel Hartog has stolen from Elbing—on the Atlantic, and Mr. Austen vows that if no one else can sink the *Destroyer* the Utopians will.

CHAPTER V.

ANARCHY AFTER DINNER.

A BRIEF and somewhat uncomfortable silence followed Mr. Austen's outburst of righteous indignation. Adams looked at him with an expression of surprise not unmingled with regret, and a dark flush and a most unmistakable scowl passed over Renault's swarthy features. Only for an instant, however, did he suffer his feelings to betray themselves. Even before Mr. Austen had time to notice it, the scowl had passed, and he turned to him and said in a tone that seemed intended to convey more meaning than the words he used:

"Three weeks! I'm afraid it will hardly be possible to have the *Nautilus* ready for sea by that time, and, of course, you can't refer to anything but her."

"Oh, no, of course not," replied Mr. Austen hastily, and, as Wyndham thought, rather confusedly, "Of course I referred to her, and," he continued, turning to Adams, as if for corroboration of what he said, "I certainly should have thought that she was sufficiently far advanced for us to have had her ready for sea within a month from now, and then, allowing two months for the voyage and the search for this miscreant, we surely ought to be able to run him down within three months."

"I really don't see why we shouldn't, Renault," said Adams in reply to this. "And I don't see why I shouldn't tell you, gentlemen," he went on, turning to Sir Harry and Wyndham, "now that Mr. Austen has partly let the cat out of the bag, that the naval experiment which was mentioned down at the dockyard is a new type of sea-going warship which we are constructing, not, I can assure you, for offensive purposes, but purely for defence should it ever be necessary, and for swift transit in the meantime.

"She is a sort of combined submarine ram and torpedo boat, designed and engined on a new principle by our friend Max here. She is not submarine in the sense that she will be able to plunge entirely under the water, but if she turns out a success and ever goes into action there will be nothing of her to be seen but a small oval platform carrying her machine guns and the conning tower.

"Everything else will be from ten to twenty feet under water, and therefore beyond the reach of shot, and even if the platform got knocked to pieces she could still get away, for the engineers and crew will not be dependent on ventilation for fresh air, and she can be steered by compass, though of course not by sight, from the interior of the hull ten feet below the surface of the water. But when I say that we expect her speed to be quite forty knots an hour, you will see that there will not be very much chance of her getting knocked about."

"Forty knots an hour!" exclaimed Wyndham, sitting bolt upright in his chair and bringing his hand down on his knee with a sounding slap, "why, if I only had command of *any* boat that really would do forty knots an hour I'd stake my life on running the *Destroyer* and her red flag off the sea within ten days of the time I got fairly on to the Atlantic; and with a cruiser such as you have just described, I'd fight the fleets of the world and sink them ship by ship, if there was any necessity for me to do so. Thank heaven, she doesn't belong to any of the possible enemies of England."

"There's no telling," said Max, laughing, but not, it struck Wyndham, in a very pleasant fashion. "You know, although we have not published any declaration of independence or any theatricals of that sort, we Utopians owe no

"Forty knots an hour!" exclaimed Wyndham.

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"But surely, Mr. Adams, you are not going to defend those dreadful wretches."

allegiance to any of the Governments of the world, and I suppose we should resent interference from the British Foreign Office just as readily and as forcibly as if it came from any other quarter."

"Very possible," retorted Wyndham, a trifle nettled, more at the tone than the words; "but that, if you will pardon my saying so, is hardly the question at present. Of course, I have not the slightest right even to suggest, much less to dictate in any way, to you gentlemen who have given us hospitality and are helping us out of a very considerable hole. But if you will allow me to express my candid opinion, as a man whose business it is to know something about such things as these, I should like to say that, granted that this wonderful cruiser of yours does what you expect her to do, you alone of all the people of the earth will have in your hands the means of tackling this enemy of Society—part of whose story I have been able to tell you—on equal terms, or even at some advantage, and if that is so, surely it will be your duty to Society——"

"Stop there for a moment, please," interrupted Adams a trifle warmly. "To Humanity perhaps, to Society, as you call it, no. We owe no duty to Society, and we will pay none. Society made use of us and our labour as it suited its convenience, caring less for us personally than it did for its horses, and when it had no further use for us, would have left us to starve in the gutter or the garret as the Fates might have willed it.

"That is why we are here; that is why Utopia exists. If the Brotherhood of Man which is preached about in your churches and prattled about in your parliaments were a fact instead of the mockery that it is, we should never have come out here to the ends of the world to seek the possibility of living a healthy human life without the necessity of being somebody's slave or somebody's tyrant.

"The enemies of Society are those of its own household, bred up in its own midst. Take the Anarchists for instance, those much-abused Ishmaels——"

Here Adams in his turn was interrupted, and Violet broke in:

"But surely, Mr. Adams, you are not going to defend those dreadful wretches. They are murderers of the basest sort, for they kill the innocent, who have never harmed them, for the sake of frightening those they hate. Surely people who do that are enemies, not only of Society, but of humanity at large, and ought to be stamped out like vermin wherever they are found."

Before Adams could reply, Renault, with a look of admiration in his eyes, and a just perceptible sneer on his lip, took the parable out of his mouth, and said:

"And has it never struck you, Miss Milton, that just on those very grounds there is something to be said for the despised and hated Anarchist? Will the millions of men who will be confronted in the next European war, which, for all we know, may be raging even now, have the slightest personal grudge against each other when they shoot each other down, and slash and blow each other into little pieces by thousands, making their wives widows, and their children fatherless?

"Not a bit of it! That is Anarchy by wholesale, and is called honourable warfare, waged at the call of patriotism. The work of men like Ravachol, Vaillant, and Santo, is only Anarchy by retail, a handful of men at war with the whole world, and therefore it is called outrage and murder. I can assure you, my dear young lady, that it is a difference only of name, and the proportionate strength of the two sides."

"Just so," said Violet in a tone of chilly disdain that took Renault almost as much by surprise as her words did, "I am not sufficiently sentimental to wish to deny that what we call life is a game—and a brutally played game sometimes, if you like, for the prizes which we call the good things of this life. But Society, even in warfare, plays the game according to the rules and the Anarchists do not. I can understand Mr. Adams's position; those who do not like the game can get out of it—if they can—and play what they think a fairer game among themselves; but there is neither excuse nor forgiveness for criminals like the Anarchists, who remain in Society and play the game with marked cards and loaded dice."

"I am not defending the tactics of the Anarchists," said Max in an apologetic tone, somewhat disconcerted by this unexpected facer; "I was only suggesting that there is some excuse in the very constitution of Society to be found for desperate and despairing men and women who see no hope of getting fair play——"

"And so use foul play," interrupted Sir Harry bluntly. "No, it won't do, Mr. Renault. Your case is hopeless. I hate argument and discussion, because one never gets anywhere with them, but it doesn't want any arguing to show that Society is in the right in crushing the Anarchists at any price. They are vermin, and we must kill them before they kill us. That's the first law of nature, and we must obey it.

"It is simply a matter of self-preservation, and there is no right or wrong about it. If you have a house, and another man wants to blow you and it sky-high because he hasn't one, you have to kill that man or lock him up to save yourself, and there's an end of it—at least, that's what I should do if I could."

"And then again," said Wyndham, returning to the charge, "you are hopelessly out in your analogy between warfare and Anarchy. Your Anarchist murders without mercy and strikes without warning. What do you suppose would happen to, say, France if, in a time of profound peace, a French fleet turned up off Brighton or Eastbourne, and proceeded to bombard it without any declaration of war?

"Why, even in time of war, an act like that would put the nation that was guilty of it outside the pale of civilisation; but to do it in time of peace would be a crime against international law that every other nation in Europe would combine to punish, just as we punish piracy or slave-trading.

"Let us suppose that this *Destroyer* has been stolen and is manned by Anarchists, as I daresay she is after all——"

"Very likely," said Renault quietly. "I always wondered why they didn't do something like that; it would all be in the game, as Miss Milton calls it."

"Certainly," retorted Wyndham, who was just on the point of losing his temper, "from the sharper's point of view——"

"Look here, Wyndham," said Sir Harry, getting up and indulging in a modified stretch, "don't you think we've had about enough of this academics and Anarchy? We've something a lot better to do than fire syllogisms at each other while we've got Utopia to explore and the *Calypso* to look

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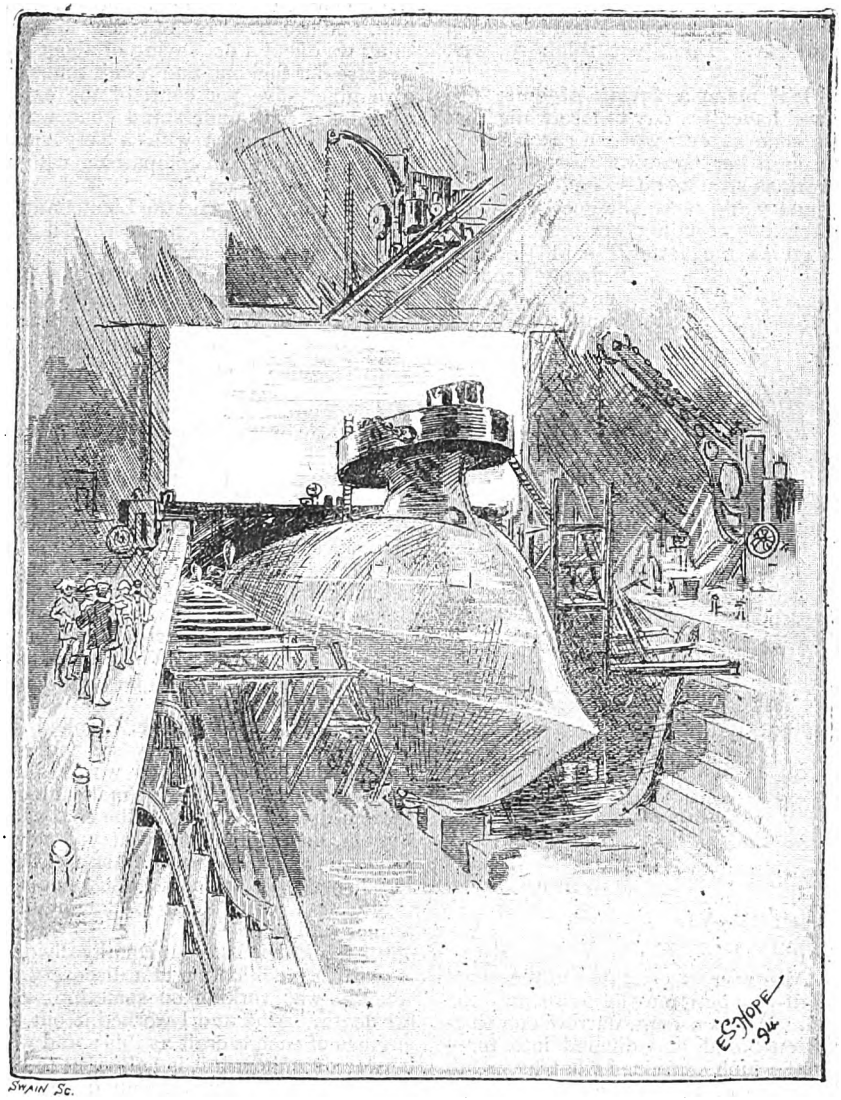
after. Hang pirates and Anarchists, metaphorically as well as literally. Wouldn't it be more to the purpose if, instead of jawing here, you were to place your professional skill and experience at the service of these gentlemen in getting the *Nautilus* ready for sea?"

"Of course it would, if they'll only accept them," replied the Lieutenant getting up with an air of relief as though he had had quite enough of polemics, "I'm theirs to command if they think I can be of any use."

"Of course you will," said Adams, rising with the rest of the party. "Frankly, we didn't intend to tell you anything about the existence of the *Nautilus*, for fear our intentions might have been misunderstood; but what you have told us about this pirate and his doings makes it quite a different matter. We shall be glad of all the help we can get. Will you come down to the dockyard now and have a look at the *Nautilus*?"

Both the Lieutenant and Sir Harry jumped at the invitation to see the mysterious craft from which such great things were hoped, but on the way down to the jetty, where the launch was waiting for them, Violet was captured by Dora Merton, and another *Mermaid*, and carried off, by no means unwillingly, to afternoon tea and to chat on more congenial subjects than ship-building and machinery.

Renault had apparently quite recovered his equanimity, and chatted in the most friendly and open fashion with both Sir Harry and Wyndham on the subject of the *Nautilus*, and with apparent frankness expressed himself as glad to have the benefit of the naval officer's practical experience in putting the last touches to the craft, and equipping her for the campaign.



"The Nautilus."

When they once more landed at the dockyard and had gained admission to the shed, which before had been closed to them, they found themselves alongside the hull of a vessel which Wyndham's practised eye saw at a glance formed a very considerable advance on the ideas in vogue in the naval arsenals of Europe and America. A long, narrow hull, shaped as nearly as possible on the model of a mackerel's body, carried, supported by a sharply oval structure on the back, a larger and still more elongated oval platform, with a low, heavily armoured conning tower situated at the forward end

Three four-bladed propellors projected from the stern and quarters, one in the line of the keel, and the others from the quarters, diverging slightly outwards from the middle line.

"Now," said Renault, after the two visitors had taken a bird's eye view of the whole exterior, "if you'll allow me, I'll act as showman and explain her points to you. This hull is 250 feet long, 30 feet deep, and 25 feet wide in its largest dimensions, which you see are not amidships but rather towards the head.

"It is made of mild steel throughout, with the exception of the ram, which is faced with Harveyised nickel steel hard enough to pierce or tear ordinary iron or steel plates as if they were no tougher than brown paper. When you get inside, you'll see that, in addition to her twenty-four water-tight compartments, she's very much strengthened towards the bow, so as to give her the greatest possible resisting power when she is striking her blow.

"These slides that you see cover the apertures for the underwater torpedo tubes. There are eight of them, two forward, two aft, and two in each broadside. The gun deck there is the only part of her that will be visible when she's in deep water fighting trim. It stands ten feet above the hull, so that when the hull is entirely submerged—as it will be—there will only be a freeboard of about seven feet; and as the deck itself is only forty feet long by fifteen in its greatest breadth, there won't be much to shoot at."

"No," said Wyndham, "she'll be a very ugly customer in anything like smooth water; but I don't see how you are going to fight your guns in anything like a sea, for the deck would be swept fore and aft by almost every wave."

"So it would," said Renault, "and we should let it be. The guns will all be mounted on disappearing carriages, and, as you will see when you get on deck—where we may as well go right away now—can be brought completely under cover, so that in heavy weather the craft would simply be a torpedo ram with nothing to shoot at but the bare platform and the conning tower."

So saying, he led the way up a ladder on to the deck, which Wyndham found already fitted ready for the reception of what when mounted would be a formidable armament of quick-firing cannon and machine guns, all of which, when in position, would, as Renault explained, be capable of being lowered out of sight and under shelter by means of the dis-

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appearing carriages working through sections of the deck, covered with steel slides.

"We haven't got our guns yet," said Adams, in reply to a query from Sir Harry. "They, and the torpedo armament, are being made at Elswick, but we expect them to be ready by the time we get the *Nautilus* home to receive them."

"Oh, then you are going to take her home?" said Wyndham.

"Yes," replied Adams, "I think so. We were intending to have them brought out in the steamer that you see lying on the opposite side of the basin," he continued, pointing to a trim-looking craft of about 2,000 tons, "but, in view of the urgency of this business, and the high speed that we hope the *Nautilus* will show, I think there will be a great saving, especially in time, if we take the ship to her guns, instead of bringing them out here to her. Don't you think so, Mr. Austen?"

"Oh, by all means! It'll mean a saving of quite two months, if not more, and we haven't a day to lose while that scoundrel is at large. As soon as ever we can get her into the water and put her through her paces we must start for England, and get her to work as soon as possible."

"Bravo!" said Wyndham, "and when she goes may I go with her, if I only go as cabin boy or stoker's mate."

"You certainly won't go as the latter," said Renault, "simply because our engines don't want stoking."

"The day of steam is already past."

"What!" exclaimed the Lieutenant. "Then they are not steam engines. No, of course. What a fool I am! I ought to have seen that you have no funnels. What are they—gas, electric, or what?"

"Neither," said Renault, moving towards an open slide from which a companion-way led down into the interior of the vessel. "But come along, you shall see them for yourself."

CHAPTER VI.

A VISION IN THE SKY.

THE engine-room of the *Nautilus* was situated in the after-section of the hull, about half-way between the stern and the midships line of the vessel. It was a long, narrow compartment, forty feet long by fifteen broad, and divided into three longitudinal sections, each of which contained what looked to Wyndham like a vertical engine of the quadruple-expansion type. A second glance, however, convinced him that they must be something essentially different, for there were no steampipes and no indications of the presence of either boilers or furnaces. As far as could be seen, steam was not the motive power at all. To set this question at rest the Lieutenant turned to Max and said:

"This is certainly no steam-engine. But where do you generate your motive power?"

"The day of steam is already past for the engineer who stands at the high-water mark of his craft," replied Max with just a suspicion of superiority in his tone. "This is a gas-motor, not worked by ignition of inflammable gas as in the old-fashioned engines, but by the deflagration of a solid salt by means of the electric spark.

"You see this steel box at the side of the high-pressure cylinder. That is the explosion chamber. From there the products of the explosion pass through the cylinders in turn, doing their maximum of work in each, and in that chamber at the end they are collected and condensed, and then, with the addition of other chemicals, they can be used to manufacture new supplies of what I may call our motor-fuel."

"Why that's precious like the old idea of perpetual motion!" exclaimed Wyndham, looking almost incredulously at the engineer, "You get your energy from your chemical at one end of the engine, and at the other you collect it again and use it over and over almost indefinitely, I suppose."

"Not quite indefinitely," chimed in Mr. Austen. "You see we can't use all the products of combustion for recombination, and we have to add new materials each time. Still, I think we effect a net saving of about fifty per cent., that is, we can use our fuel one and a half times over, and as our engines give ninety-five per cent. of the explosive energy in actual work, you will understand that we shall be able to travel enormous distances with a very small expenditure of fuel, that is, of course, in comparison with a steamer's expenditure of coal or petroleum."

"Oh, quite so," said the Lieutenant; "it will make a perfect revolution in marine engineering if it ever gets known, as I suppose it must do some day——"

"Unless Max and I die with the secret of the explosive in our possession," replied Mr. Austen with a meaning smile, which warned Wyndham not to ask the question that was on his lips. So, instead of doing that, he said:

"Of course, I have neither the right nor the desire to pry into secrets that don't concern me, and so I will just say that this motor-fuel of yours would be worth a good many pounds a ton for driving torpedo boats and high-speed cruisers; but I suppose there is no harm in my asking the amount of horse-power you expect to get out of these three engines?"

"None at all," said Renault. "You see they are of rather peculiar construction, and the cylinders are a good deal stronger than the ordinary steam-cylinder. That is because they have to bear a very much greater pressure. Each of the engines is calculated to work up to a maximum efficiency of fifteen-thousand horse-power."

"Fifteen thousand each!" exclaimed Wyndham. "Forty-five thousand gross! Why, it seems incredible that such a tremendous power should be locked up in such a small space as this."

"Nevertheless, it is true," replied Renault. "You see that is the difference between waste and economy. I needn't tell you how much power you would get of the modern steam-engine if you could only make ninety-five per cent. of the thermo-dynamic energy of the coal effective."

"Oh, no; I quite see what you mean. It is all a matter of economy. And now may I ask to whom is due the honour of the discovery of this marvellous motor fuel?"

Mr. Austen and Renault exchanged a glance, and then the former said:

"I think that is about equally divided between us. The fuel is really a modification of a discovery that my poor Fred made when he was working on something else not very long before his death. Max and I worked it out as an adaptation to the engines of such a craft as this; and we designed the engines between us, though it is only right to confess that the credit of their high efficiency is mainly due to friend Max."

After examining somewhat more closely the details of the strangely simple machinery that was to drive the *Nautilus* at such an astonishing speed through the water, Sir Harry and the Lieutenant left the engine-room and were taken over the other parts of the ship. They were shown living rooms for a crew of sixty men and officers, comfortably furnished saloons, smoking-rooms, magazines, torpedo-rooms, gas and water chambers for raising and lowering the hull, refrigerators for food, apparatus for oxygenating the respired air, a laboratory for the preparation of fresh supplies of motor-fuel, electric light installations, and, in short, everything that skill and ingenuity could provide for the efficiency of the wonderful cruiser, and the comfort of those whose lot it would be to navigate her.

The hull and engines had been made in England and sent out

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o Utopia—the former, of course, in sections—in the steamer that had brought out the second party of colonists. Different parts had been made by different firms, and all due precautions had been taken to conceal their real destination. All the work of actual building had been done upon the island by the most skilful mechanics in the colony, under the constant supervision of Mr. Austen and Max Renault—to the latter of whom, and not entirely in the interests of the colony of Utopia, it was due that the *Nautilus* had been built at all.

He had furnished most of the plans for the hull and armament, as well as the skilfully specious arguments which had persuaded Mr. Austen and Adams that such a cruiser, in addition to being of immense use to the colony for pacific purposes, would be of still greater value in the time of war. How completely he had succeeded in this respect was proved by a conversation which took place on the deck of the *Mermaid*, which had come round to bring the party back from the dockyards to the settlement when the inspection of the *Nautilus* was over.

"This is a very marvellous craft of yours," said Sir Harry to the three Utopians generally; "but what I find more marvellous even than the vessel itself is the fact of finding her here in Utopia, where one would naturally expect to find nothing but the arts of peace in vogue."

He spoke in a half joking tone, but Adams, who answered him, did so much more seriously.

"Yes," he said, "that is so; but it is just because we believe in the arts of peace and mean them to flourish here that we are creating the means of protecting ourselves."

"But, my dear sir," exclaimed Wyndham, looking at him with an incredulous smile, "what on earth have you got to protect yourselves against? Really, I can't see that you stand in much danger of being attacked by any one in an out-of-the-way part of the world like this."

"In the first place," replied Adams, "our Utopia is beautiful, and will some day be very rich. You know, as well as I do, the fatal attraction that beauty and wealth have for those Powers which indulge in a mission for 'protecting' just such out-of-the-way parts of the world as this. Then again, now that the Panama Canal is at last completed, a few months will see the establishment of the Southampton and Panama route from England to New Zealand and Australia.

"Utopia is not known now, except to us and you, but then it will be almost in the track of the Panama and Auckland steamers, and will practically command the route. Now, when you have seen a little more of this island, you will agree with me that, with a very little trouble and expense, it could be converted into a perfect ocean fortress, absolutely impregnable to any assault from the sea, and, at the same time, containing accommodation enough to shelter and even to refit a very considerable fleet. In short, it might easily be made the Malta of the South Seas."

"So it might, of course, and a magnificent position it would be, too!" exclaimed Wyndham. "Why, it would command all the East to West routes to Australasia, and a strong squadron stationed here in time of war would practically command the South Pacific."

"Just so," replied Adams, "and that is just what we don't want. We were here first, and we propose to stop here. We have no more desire to be protected than we have to be annexed. As Mr. Austen has told you this afternoon, we have no politics at home and no policy abroad, and we don't want any.

"Hence, if a French or German, yes, or even a British warship were to turn up here some fine morning, and send a boat ashore to discover the island and hoist the Tricolour, the Red, White, and Black, or the Union Jack on the bluffs yonder, we should say 'no,' and we want to have the power of saying 'no' in such a way as would overcome any objections that might be raised to the refusal."

"But you are Englishmen yourselves," said Wyndham, his patriotism a trifle nettled by the dry uncompromising tone in which the last few sentences were spoken, "surely you don't mean to say that if a British cruiser on the Pacific station were to put in here, and the captain came ashore to hoist the Union Jack in the name of the Queen, that you would offer forcible resistance?"

"Most decidedly we should," replied Adams, almost sternly, "we should entertain him hospitably, supply him with anything that he wanted, and we could give him, and then we should politely ask him to go about his business and leave us to ours. This is no part of the British or any other Empire, and it isn't going to be, if we can help it."

A little group of picturesquely clad Utopian damsels.

"But suppose," objected Sir Harry, "that he did what would be his plain duty to do, under the circumstances, and took possession of the island by force? You could hardly expect him to recognise you as an independent State. I haven't the slightest desire to speak offensively, you know, and I'm simply asking for information. He would be infringing no National rights, and, if the possession of the island were necessary to the protection of a line of British connections with the British colonies, it would be his duty to take it, if only to prevent it falling into hostile hands."

"He might not be infringing National rights," said Adams warmly, "but he would be infringing personal rights, and that we should not allow him to do. Of course, I am aware it may sound to you rather like idle boasting, but I can assure you that if he didn't take the twenty-four hours' notice to quit that we should give him, neither he nor his cruiser would ever be heard of again."

"Possibly so," said Wyndham, "if that terrible *Nautilus*

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of yours does what you expect her to do, and had all her armament on board; because I am quite aware that she could sink any war-ship that floats inside half-an-hour. But how if the cruiser turned up before she is ready for work, or while she was absent, how then?"

"It would still be done," said Adams in a tone that warned Wyndham that the controversy had gone as far as his courtesy could permit it to go under the circumstances.

"But you must pardon me if I beg you not to ask how we should do it."

This of course brought the conversation to a sudden stop, so far as that topic was concerned; and as it happened, just at that moment the *Mermaid* ran in alongside the jetty, and Violet—her trim conventional European costume looking quaintly conspicuous in the midst of a little group of picturesquely clad Utopian damsels—came down to welcome them ashore.

"Harry," she said, as her brother and Wyndham stepped on to the jetty, "this is quite a fairy-land, and I think I shall stop here. Dora here has promised to take me for a sister, and——"

"I wish to goodness she would," blurted out Sir Harry, with an unexpected abruptness that brought a sudden startled look into Miss Dora's soft brown eyes, and a bright flush to her pretty cheeks, "because in that case, you know——"

They watched the strange, swiftly moving thing

"Oh, don't talk nonsense, you silly fellow!" interrupted Violet, in time to save him from further and possibly fatal indiscretion. "Of course, I didn't mean that. Surely, you can't be presumptuous enough to think that one of the princesses of this enchanted realm is going to look with favour upon such a commonplace person as yourself. I always thought you were a modest sort of creature, but I suppose the air of this paradise has intoxicated you."

"As it apparently has you, my dear Violet," retorted Sir Harry, "or else you wouldn't talk such arrant nonsense."

"We came to tell you that dinner is ready," said Dora in such a primly demure tone that the conversation ended in a general laugh, and after that they set out for the settlement, abjuring dangerous topics for the rest of the way.

A good deal later on in the evening, about half-past ten or eleven, Sir Harry and the Lieutenant, after a long chat with Adams and Mr. Austen, who had seen them home to the door of the bungalow which had been placed at their service, started out for a stroll up towards the hills, instead of going to bed, so that they might indulge in a quiet smoke together and an uninterrupted chat over the strange adventures that had befallen them, and the still stranger things which they had seen and learned since sunrise.

The night was so deliciously cool, the landscape was softened down to such an alluring dimness by the dusk of the tropic night, and the scent of the fruits and flowers had such an inviting charm, that they wandered on smoking and chatting without any thought of how time was passing until the path which they had been following opened out on a clearing that formed the summit of a low spur of the foot-hills branching out from the chain running from Mount Plato to the northern bluffs.

There they stopped, and threw themselves down on the short soft turf to admire in leisurely fashion the beauties of the dimly star-lit picture of sea and land, mountain, vale and plain that lay spread out before them.

"Yes, truly," said Wyndham, "it is a lovely land, and much to be desired, even if it is somewhat of a land of mystery. I can't say that I blame friend Adams for wanting to keep it out of the hands of Empire-makers and land-grabbers with patriotic designs, even if they happen to be British. Hullo, what's that? Look, Milton, look!—over yonder, above that line of hills!"

The last words were uttered in a half-whispered tone of intense astonishment and almost of awe, and, as he spoke them, Wyndham grasped Sir Harry by the arm and pointed to where the ridge of the opposite line of hills, about two miles away, was sharply defined against the star-lit sky. Sir Harry's eyes followed the direction of his finger, and soon saw a sight that made him catch his breath and hold it in dumb amazement.

Something was moving swiftly along the ridge of hills about five hundred feet from its summit. The night was too dark and the distance was too great for them to make it out very distinctly, but, as it swept along, apparently at an almost incredible speed, they could see the stars behind it blotted out and reappear.

With straining eyes, and without a word spoken between them, they watched the strange, swiftly moving thing. Suddenly it doubled on its track. It had been moving towards the sea, and now it turned in a wide, graceful sweep. It followed the curve of the mountain, crossed the valley, as it seemed, in a single majestic leap, and then turned again and swept down out of the dusky distance, so close to where they were lying that they could hear a soft whirring, whistling sound as it clove the air. It passed within three hundred yards of them, turned again, and then, making a magnificent upward curve, soared over the ridge of hills, and vanished into space beyond them.

"Great heavens!" almost gasped Wyndham. "I was right in calling this a land of mystery, and Adams was right when he said that they could hold the island against all comers. Good God! they might terrorise the whole world, if they liked. That was an air-ship. The great problem is solved at last!

"Look here, Milton, if they find out that we've seen that thing, they'll never let us out of this island alive, good fellows and all as they seem, so we'd better keep our mouths shut until we can see what's to be done. Poor old England! She won't be mistress of the seas much longer if a colony of irresponsible Socialists can raise a fleet of ships like that thing."

"I'm afraid not," said Sir Harry, in a tone of unwonted seriousness. "I wonder how the deuce they got hold of a secret that all the world has been hunting after for centuries. Let's go home, and sleep on it, for, as the Russians say, the morning is wiser than the evening."

(To be continued.)

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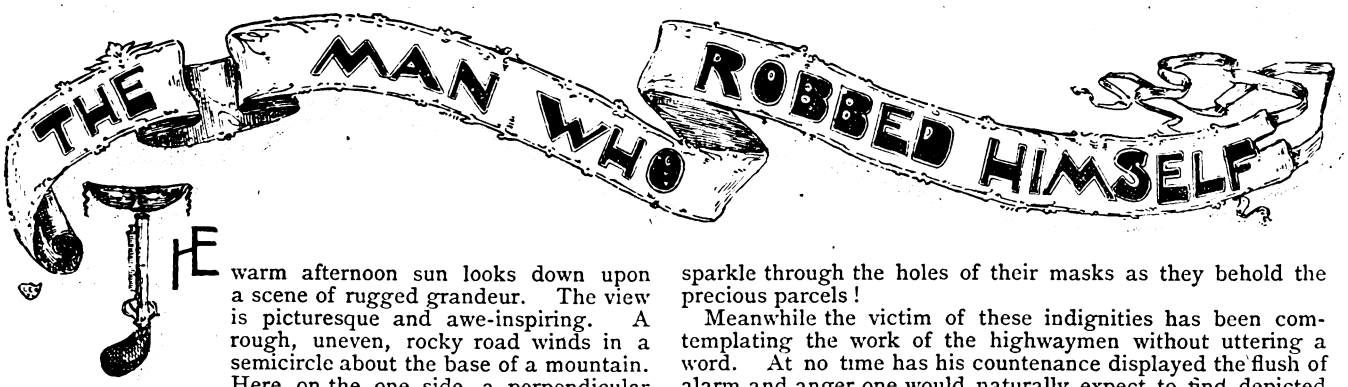

THE warm afternoon sun looks down upon a scene of rugged grandeur. The view is picturesque and awe-inspiring. A rough, uneven, rocky road winds in a semicircle about the base of a mountain. Here, on the one side, a perpendicular wall of rock looms up to an amazing height; on the other are hills, with here and there a few scattering clumps of undergrowth. It is Scotland many years ago.

A rumbling sound breaks the quietude, and a moment later the lumbering mail coach comes in sight. As the driver cracks the long lash of his whip, urging the horses to increased speed, the vehicle sways to and fro in a manner which must prove uncomfortable to its passengers. Now it gives a greater lurch as it swings sharply to the right, round a projection at the base of the mountain, and an unlooked-for thing occurs.

"Halt!"

The peremptory command has an unmistakable ring of determination, and the sight of half-a-dozen pistols levelled in his direction causes the surprised driver to pull up his horses to a sudden standstill.

Conscious that something unusual has occurred, the passengers within the vehicle exchanged alarmed glances. There are two of them—both men—and they are an oddly assorted pair; one is a bronzed and bearded fellow, whose looks, speech, and general air indicate that he is a Highland peasant; the other a refined and dignified man, attired in the conventional black of a clergyman. He is young, and no doubt unused to his present surroundings and mode of travel.

Understanding the hasty glance his companion has shot him, a look of dismay and indignation flashes across the clergyman's face, and he makes a quick movement with his right hand in the direction of his hip pocket. With a significantly imperative gesture the other promptly checks the action.

"'Tain't no use," he says hastily but decidedly. "It's Dangerfield, the gentleman highwayman."

The words of caution have the desired effect; the look of anger on the face of the clergyman immediately gives way to one of surprise. The man who has spoken notices the change and is unable to account for it. Whether the bandit's name is familiar to him, or whether the mention of the word "gentleman" gives him assurance, the peasant is at a loss to know.

He is about to make a further remark, but the door of the coach is flung open with a bang, and an ugly-looking pistol is thrust through the aperture.

"Get down and out," orders the desperado who holds the weapon, in a voice sternly authoritative. "Hurry along, parson. Be quick, and no harm will come to you."

There is nothing to be gained by disobeying, and the clergyman clambers out of the coach, following upon the heels of his fellow-passenger. As they reach the ground the muzzle of a pistol is thrust into the face of each, and Dangerfield's command of "hands up" is obeyed without a word.

Hastily relieving both passengers of their weapons, Dangerfield secures the minister's gold watch and chain, then proceeds to search his clothing, prosecuting the work with a thoroughness and despatch which bespeak his experience in such matters.

He is not long in discovering that several packages are securely sewn up within the lining of the clergyman's vest, and it is the work of but another moment to ascertain that they are packages of bank notes. How the eyes of the robbers sparkle through the holes of their masks as they behold the precious parcels!

Meanwhile the victim of these indignities has been contemplating the work of the highwaymen without uttering a word. At no time has his countenance displayed the flush of alarm and anger one would naturally expect to find depicted upon the face of one who is being relieved of a fortune. A frown mantles his fine features, but it amounts to little else than a look of contempt.

"The money is not my property," he says, addressing himself to the leader. "It was entrusted to me for delivery to its owner, whose whereabouts I have been seeking to discover."

"I think you have found him," returns Dangerfield, sententiously, and the remark elicits a hearty laugh from the other highwaymen.

"In this instance might is right," the clergyman responds, looking fixedly into the robber's eyes. "Yet the heart-broken mother who entrusted to me the care of that money, bidding me to deliver it to her wayward boy, would hardy be satisfied with the transaction."

Dangerfield starts slightly, but answers carelessly:

"You have done what you could, so console yourself with that thought. As for the boy, no doubt he is a rich man by this time, and does not need the money. We make fortunes fast in these days."

"So I perceive," says the other, dryly.

Dangerfield turns away with an impatient movement. While this conversation has been going on the remaining passenger has been standing by, gazing upon the scene in open-mouthed wonder. He is next searched, after which the light baggage of both men is overhauled. Nothing, however, is taken except a large envelope tied about with red tape, which Dangerfield finds in the clergyman's bag. Without stopping to examine its contents, he places it in the inner pocket of his coat.

Apparently satisfied with the result of their work, the bandits toss the firearms belonging to their victims into the coach and the leader orders the pair to clamber in; then the driver is commanded to "let 'er go," and the cumbersome vehicle goes rumbling down the rough road, followed by several harmless pistol shots.

"They got but little booty from me," ventures the peasant when the scene of the robbery has faded away in the distance, "but you!" he broke off inquiringly.

"Well," replied the clergyman, with an air which does not exhibit much concern, "I do not mourn my loss, under the circumstances, as much as I regret some other matters."

He does not volunteer an explanation, and the first speaker is disinclined to question him, though greatly mystified by his inexplicable conduct. To all appearances the minister has become deeply interested in the beautiful landscape without, and with an almost inaudible expression of wonderment, the other lapses into silence.

Dangerfield and his comrades are not long in mounting their horses and leaving the scene of their latest depredation.

On and on they ride, now travelling at a brisk pace through beautiful valleys hemmed in by massive walls of rock, now making their way cautiously over dangerous mountain passes; on and on until the sun has sunk from sight, and its golden glory has faded from the western sky.

At last the party comes to a halt in the very heart of a wild and desolate region. A skilfully hidden aperture at the base of a cliff leads to a subterranean cavern, whither the men betake themselves, after dismounting and turning their horses loose in the valley below.

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"Well, boys," says Dangerfield, who had been gloomy and silent throughout the journey, "let us have supper, for I am as hungry as a bear! Then we will attend to business."

In a remarkably short space of time a fire is lighted, and a few minutes later the evening meal is prepared. It is a meagre spread, but the hungry men eat heartily and with evident relish.

Dangerfield is a young man, possessed of a clean-shaven, pleasing countenance, though one that bespeaks weakness of character, well built, and dressed in a suit of some black material, which has not seen much service. The others are not so neatly dressed. They are rough, bearded fellows, whose speech and manner set them in decided contrast with their leader; it is easy to perceive that the latter is looked up to and admired by his comrades, and is a favourite with them.

The meal concluded, the plunder which has so easily fallen into the hands of the band is produced. The packages of bank notes are first given attention, surprise and delight beaming from every countenance as the money is counted. It is scarcely ten minutes before the work is finished.

"Now, men, listen to me," says Dangerfield, when the first noisy congratulations are over. "We've made enough money to-day to enable us to live honest lives. Suppose we break up and once more turn respectable? I, for one, am tired of this sort of thing, and want to get out of it. What say you all?"

No one speaks for a few moments; then Jake Hawkins, the son of a Lancashire miner, slowly answers:

"Well, cap'n, we'll think of it overnight. Ye see, we're old hands, and it's hard to do what we know nothin' about. You're different from the rest; you have friends in London—a father and mother, perhaps—and came to us because you were starved out, and were ashamed to write to 'em. I saw the words of that preacher chap touched ye. I'm about right, I reckon?"

Dangerfield answers with a nod—speech seems impossible.

"All right, we won't hinder ye. Leave us if ye wanter; but we can't promise anything in a hurry, can we, boys? Say no more just now, cap'n. Leave us to think about it; and you'd better think too. Now, who's for a game of cards?"

Dangerfield says nothing further; but he will neither play nor drink, and soon stretches himself at full length upon a blanket and sinks into a light, dream-haunted sleep.

Some hours after he awakes with a start; his thoughts revert to the events of the day. He is unable to account for the strange indescribable feeling which possesses him. What did the clergyman's significant words and manner mean?

"The papers!" he exclaims, springing to his feet as a sudden thought occurs to him. "Why did I not think of them before?"

The candles have burned to their sockets and gone out leaving the place in darkness. Dangerfield lights a fresh one and sets it on the table. Then he takes from his pocket the packet of papers found in the minister's bag, unties the ribbon which secures it, and brings to light several legal-looking documents, and a small envelope, securely sealed.

"Frank Dangerfield!" he falters, reading the name written in bold characters upon the envelope.

"Am I dreaming or have my senses forsaken me?"

He throws himself into a chair, and hurriedly but with trembling hands breaks the seal and draws forth the contents of the package—two sheets of note paper closely written, and blotted here and there. One glance at the chirography and the man recoils as if dealt a mortal blow, clutching desperately at the table before him. His face is deathly pale, his breath comes in laboured gasps, and his eyes fill with tears as he reads the following:

"My dear lost Son,—I am told that I am about to die, but I shall try to write a letter to you, in the hope that it may some time be delivered into your hands. Your sudden departure was a severe blow. Your poor father survived it but a few days, and I—I have waited for tidings of you in vain. May you, my dear boy, never know the torture I have endured during the past months! Frank, how could you bring such trouble upon us because a silly, frivolous girl proved false? We have loved you all your life, she had but for an hour, yet you broke our hearts for her sake. My boy, I tremble for one who has shown himself so weak; how can you withstand temptation! But neither reproaches nor grief will bring you to me, and I must try to be strong.

"I want to say this: All the property shall be yours; I shall turn it into money, and leave it in the care of a distant relative. I sent for him, and he is here. I have asked him to find you if he has to search the whole broad country over, and pray God you are still in that Highland district that this may reach you. He has promised me, and a great burden is lifted from my heart. My dear, my only son, I cannot see to write more. You will be alone in the world, but I commend you to the keeping of God. May He comfort and help you to be strong and do right. A kiss, and good-bye.—Your devoted and heart-broken MOTHER."

With a face which seems to have suddenly grown old, Dangerfield sits at the table, gazing fixedly at the letter. His mother dead—his kind, patient mother, whose only fault was her overfondness for him! He could not believe it. Oh, to live the past over again!

For an hour he sits there; then with a look of sudden determination he rises to his feet.

"I must leave here at once!" he says. "It is not too late. I may yet redeem the past. Mother, mother, your prayers shall be answered!"

He glances about him. His companions are sleeping soundly, oblivious of what is transpiring. The sight seems to bring to his thoughts another aspect of his misfortune.

"I have shared my fortune with them," he mutters, "given them thousands which rightfully were my own. Shall I acquaint them with my story, furnishing proof of its truth? No—the money may help them to lead honest lives, in spite of Jake's words. They have risked what I have risked, braved dangers as I have braved them. We have shared the spoils as we shared the dangers equally. The money is theirs."

The envelope addressed to himself has fallen from his nerveless grasp to the floor of rock beneath his feet. He gathers up the letter and other documents without further examination, and hastily thrusts them into his pocket. Then, with an expression of unspeakable sadness upon his face, he casts a last lingering look about him, dons his hat, and quits the cave.

The pure mountain air cools his aching head and seems to revive his drooping spirits, but his step is as the step of an intoxicated man. With little difficulty he finds his horse, and in a moment he has adjusted the saddle and bridle; then, in the grey light that heralds the break of day, he mounts the animal and turns his face towards the south. He has been waiting these many years for his father's fortune, and now he has robbed himself of his lawful due, and with his own hands given it away.

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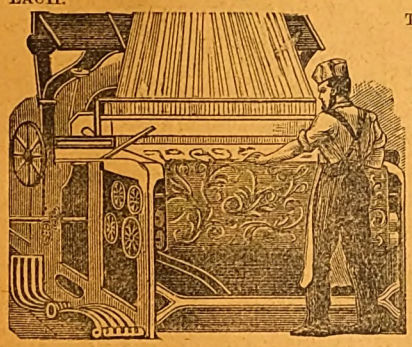

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26 GUINEAS (*Net Cash Price*).

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 301. *FOR THE WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 6, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

EVERYBODY knows the story of Orpheus, and nobody believes it! I hold that everybody is wrong. If there is anything incredible in that story, it is that the son of Oeagrus should have preferred death to the love of the Bacchantes, who were beautiful creatures, if we may believe the paintings which represent them.

I have always believed firmly in the wonderful power of Orpheus's songs to charm beasts and even make the rocks weep; for I have seen the spell wrought by music on a larger scale than one sees every evening at the opera, and the thousand witnesses, brothers in arms of the modern Orpheus, whose history I am going to relate, could affirm the same thing.

In 1830, Hussein-Pasha, the Dey of Algeria, in an impatient manner, easily explained, perhaps, but decidedly blamable, slapped the face of our Chargé d'Affaires with his fly-flap. He was dethroned by France, who took possession of the provinces of Algeria, Constantine, and Oran. Nothing could be more natural or more just! But twenty-five years later, in 1855, we had not yet been able to make the Kabyles understand it.

They absurdly maintained that they were not responsible for the acts of the Dey; that if he had been a little hasty it was not their fault, and they did not see why their country should be invaded and a tax levied on their cattle; or that they should pay tribute, especially the tribute of blood, to assist the Christians against their own Mahommedan brothers under the fallacious pretext that Hussein-Pasha (whom the greater part of them had never seen) had struck M. Arago in the face with a small bunch of feathers—which really could not have hurt him very much!

But France maintained that behind the material fact were the consequences, behind the gesture was the insult, that her honour demanded her to kill a hundred thousand men on both sides and conquer Algeria, if it were only to teach good manners to these barbarians and compel them to pay tribute.

It was precisely this which the Kabyles would not understand, and that is why we set out for Constantine—ten thousand infantry, cavalry and artillery—with the intention, as charitable as civilised, of enlightening them as to the reality of our rights and the superiority of our institutions.

But if the Kabyles are dull of understanding, they have a quick eye and are prompt to act. If they were not our enemies I should say that, while leading the simple life of pastoral people of olden times, they have retained their virtues, preserved the pride and courage of free men, and are formidable in combat when one dares attack them in their own mountains. We soon experienced this. Scarcely had we passed the Oued-Rummel when the struggle began. For a month our march was only a succession of skirmishes and night attacks through the passes which furrowed this mountainous country, encounters in which we always lost more men than the enemy.

In the plain we were suffocated with the heat and died of thirst; on the mountain we froze, and often had to open up a road through the snow. As soon as our columns separated, in order to pass a defile or a ravine, a discharge of musketry burst above our heads; from every crevice in the rock came a shot; the brushwood crackled under our feet. Our sharpshooters, the Zouaves, climbed the rocks to dislodge the Kabyles, but they bounded like chamois from crest to crest, returning the fire of our soldiers, whose bodies rolled from top to bottom of the ravine, almost under our horses' feet. Sometimes it was an Arab who fell in our midst, and expired crying, "There is one God." If he could not speak, he fixed on us a look grave and menacing, raised his finger to make the supreme profession of faith, and his brave soul took its flight towards his one God.

We had been a month on the way to Constantine, advancing slowly, on account of the enormous convoy which followed us, the men almost exhausted by incessant skirmishes, and the General, anxious perhaps as to the result of the expedition, decidedly in a bad humour. The principal cause of delay in a march, which ought to have been as rapid as possible over the mountains, was a flock of five thousand sheep; therefore the General resolved to abandon them. In order that they might not say he had lost them, he decided to leave them in charge of one of the Zephyrs. He chose a man from this corps, because he was convinced, as we all were, that the poor devil would be killed, and the sheep would be carried off as soon as we were gone. He preferred to sacrifice a Zephyr to a Grenadier or a Zouave.

The battalion of Zephyrs, whose real name is the African Battalion, is formed exclusively of scapegoats. It is not composed of robbers or murderers, but all the undisciplined or insubordinate of the army are sent to the Zephyrs, or "Joyfuls," as they call themselves. They are usually intelligent, and if it be true that a Zouave is as brave as one lion, it may be said that a Zephyr is as brave as two! In a profession where discipline and passive obedience are the first requirements of order and the essential conditions of success, these independent natures, indifferent to punishment, for they often avenge themselves by a cutting witticism, are considered dangerous, so they are sent to the African Battalion. On account of their reputation for bravery, they are always placed in the front rank during any particularly dangerous engagement.

Thus the hundred and twenty-three men who defended Mazagran for three days against an army of eight thousand

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Arabs, who were unable to gain possession of the village, were Zephyrs, commanded by Captain Lelièvre.

We were about to resume our march, after passing the night in a valley covered with the long, furze-like grass peculiar to this country, when the General called the Commander of the Zephyrs, and told him to appoint a man from his battalion to tend the sheep, which he had decided to leave in this spot until our return—in three months! "Give him," he added, "an ample supply of biscuit, rice, and coffee, and he can kill a sheep when he needs it; we will call for him on our way back."

I do not know whether there was irony in his remark, but I am loath to believe it, for it would have been cruel. The Commander could not repress a smile, but he made no observation, saluted, and rejoined his battalion, which was awaiting the order to march.

He passed slowly in front of his troop, looking at each man as if asking on which the choice should fall, for he believed he was condemning to death the one he selected. At length he stopped and called "Fusilier Carette." A boy of twenty-two or twenty-three years, tall but solidly built, with short

Halting in front of the officer, he presented arms.

nose, square chin, large forehead surmounted by light curly hair, mischievous blue eyes, and laughing mouth, stepped out of the ranks and replied "present." Halting in front of the officer, he presented arms and stood looking him full in the face.

The latter delivered the general's order, and in spite of the ordinary harshness of his manner, he could not conceal a certain emotion which touched the soldier. When his comrades heard the order given, a murmur of insubordination ran from right to left of the company, and whispered protestations, which the officers feigned not to hear in order not to punish. They might have expected it! Carette, for numerous reasons, was greatly beloved by all his companions. Among the "Joyfuls" Carette was the joyful *par excellence*. In his youth, which had been very varied, he had first been one of a troop of mountebanks, then he had travelled with a dentist, and thanks to his wanderings with this charlatan, he had made a considerable collection of puns and jokes which had an enormous success in Africa. He also pretended to certain surgical knowledge, and his talent as a prestidigitator delighted the Zephyrs.

Moreover, he had a fine voice and played the hautboy in a manner that the "Joyfuls" pronounced remarkable, especially when it constituted the orchestra at one of the soldiers' balls. In short, not one among all this undisciplined band was more unruly than Carette. His repartee, often clever, always saucy, enlivened the whole battalion, and when any joke was organised, Carette was always the author or instigator. It was probably for all these reasons that the commander honoured him with his choice.

When the column began its march more than one among these fearless men was moved when he took leave of this gay comrade, and each one wanted to shake his hand and say farewell in some form or other. "Good-bye, Carette." "Good-bye, old man." "You're a sharp fellow," said another, "but keep your eye open."

"Have no fear," replied the poor boy, greatly touched by these proofs of sympathy, "you will find me here when you come back."

But when the last waggon had passed and the last man had disappeared in the ravine, when he found himself alone, surrounded only by the sheep, dreary thoughts began to assail him.

He had a vague intuition of the grandeur and sacredness of duty and understood the necessity of discipline, that mystic bond which united all his companions in an invincible whole whilst he remained alone, isolated, probably lost for having discarded, like a heavy yoke, the necessary order and discipline.

But "Joyful's" mind could not long remain occupied with serious thoughts, so raising his head, he said with a smile, "Won't the others be surprised if they find me here with my sheep when they come back? And the Commander," said he, laughing heartily, "how astonished he will be." Then looking at the sheep scattered on the plain, grazing like Madame Deshoulière's lambs on the tranquil banks of the Linod, he added, "All the same, I shall be confoundedly bored here for three months." Suddenly a bright idea occurred to him; he would train one of his pensioners and make a learned sheep of him! Afterwards he busied himself in preparing a shelter for the night, which he tried to make as solid as possible, propping the *gourbi* (a hut made of branches and brushwood) against a rock, and strengthening it as well as he could with the materials at his disposal. This took some time. When he saw the sun sink on the horizon, he made a tour of the little plain where he had been abandoned. Seeing nothing to make him anxious, his mind was at ease, and he began to prepare his evening meal, whistling gaily.

The night had come—a calm night, silent and serene, such as one only sees in the desert; there was not a cloud in the sky, and the moon, which on account of the purity and transparency of the atmosphere, appears larger and more brilliant than any other part of the earth, seemed enthroned in the midst of a host of stars, also more numerous and brighter than elsewhere. Obedient to an instinct common to all domestic animals, the sheep collected for the night around their shepherd. They covered the plain for a great distance towards the east.

At the extreme west of the rock against which the Zephyr had erected his *gourbi*, was a ravine, not very large in that spot, but deepening towards the north and south. At the north it disappeared between slopes covered with cactus, roses, and Barbary fig-trees, whose interlacing branches offered to the reptiles and animals of that region haunts impenetrable to man. At the south the ravine bordered upon a valley, in which was established the *douar* or Arab village, which had furnished our latest aggressors.

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The poor soldier, ignorant of the existence of these redoubtable spots, hearing no sound, seated himself on a rock and began to dream.

It will be impossible to enumerate all the memories which his thoughts evoked, some touching, even poetical, others simply gay or guilty, but all full of charm to him at that hour, and in such circumstances. After a hasty look on his past, a look which embraced his childhood, his wanderings and his success as a mountebank, his escapades, his love affairs, he began to think of the severity of his chiefs, of the council of war—which had sent him to the African Battalion, of his popularity among his comrades, and finally of his present situation.

The result of all this retrospection was a melancholy look addressed to heaven, and these few words: "It doesn't matter, but it would be strange to die on such a beautiful night." With a versatility peculiar to these badly balanced brains, he struck the ground with the butt end of his gun and cried, almost gaily, "Bah! I have my *flingot* (gun) and my cartridges, everything is quiet, and it will be light to-morrow." In order to drive away the ideas that saddened him and weakened his courage, he took his hautboy and prepared to give a little concert.

However, he was mistaken; everything *seemed* quiet, but there is for every man a night without a morrow, that of death, and it seemed to have come for the poor Zephyr, for two enemies, equally formidable, the lion and the Kabyles were advancing silently in the shadow.

The king of the mountain, whom the Arabs call "Said," had just awakened in his den, his eyelids still heavy with the day's sleep; he had had a long yawn, lazily stretched himself, rose and went to the entrance of the cavern to inhale the air, as if to ask on which side he should direct his steps. He was not one of those lions, long-legged and bald like those of Cape Colony, or slight and angular like the American puma, which seems no more formidable than an ordinary domestic mastiff.

He was a real lion of the Atlas, whose imposing and terrible aspect was calculated to weaken the stoutest heart. He moved without haste, his head high, his step free and sure, scenting without hesitation or fear every obstacle on his path, exploring with a tranquil air the shadows cast by the rocks, bounding with grace over the chasms which opened before him.

When he reached the summit of a hill, or one of those escarpments which the moon inundated with her rays, his grand silhouette animated and filled the landscape. On arriving at the entrance of the ravine he stopped, took breath, and, with the same majestic and quiet step, turned towards the Zephyr's encampment.

The rock upon which the soldier was seated did not rise more than fifteen feet above the bottom of the ravine, so that with a single bound the lion could have reached the top. He came steadily on in the shadow thrown by the little eminence, raised his head to measure the height, crouched as if ready to spring—but, instead of doing so, straightened himself again and seemed to listen.

The sheep, not very intelligent, as everyone knows, reassured, as men often are, by numbers, slept quietly, suspecting no more than their guardian the approach of the enemy. The Zephyr at this precise moment was playing the most joyous waltz in his repertoire; he displayed in its execution a sentiment, a sweetness of tone which ought to have charmed the king of the mountain. Perhaps he was not very hungry just then, unless the proverb which says "Hungry stomach has no ears" be false. However that may be, after two or three movements betraying great uncertainty, the terrible beast ended by lying down at the foot of the hillock, supported his great head on his outstretched paws, and, with half-closed lids, seemed to listen—which proves that the story of Orpheus is not a fable.

Now the abandonment of the sheep was known to the neighbouring *douar*. Its inhabitants, supposing that the infidels had left a guard, or a number of soldiers sufficient to defend the flock, decided to await the night to reconnoitre. As all the warriors or men from the "great tents" were away, the old Caid, who commanded the tribe in the absence of the Sheik, thought it best to do this. At the hour when the lion left his den, ten men, the Caid and a young boy, almost a child, son of the Sheik, also left the *douar*, and marched in silence towards the plain, hoping to surprise the Christians and carry off their cattle. Being ignorant of the number of the enemy they were to encounter, the Caid recommended his men to advance with great caution, either that the surprise might be complete, or, in case it seemed best not to attack, that they might retire without raising the infidel's attention.

They approached noiselessly, arms in readiness, finger on the trigger, with the Roumi (the Sheik's son) some steps in advance, for even in the desert *noblesse oblige*. His old kinsman, the Caid, was proud of the child's courage and followed his every movement with a look in which could be read mingled solicitude and admiration.

They were nearing the end of their expedition when the lion, who scented their approach before seeing them, opened his large eyes, knitted his brows and rose. A hyena would have fled like a coward, a panther would have lain in ambush to surprise them later, but the lion advanced proudly to the middle of the ravine. He sniffed at the earth, then with swinging tail, which swept the ground from side to side, with bristling mane and sparkling eyes, majestic and terrible, he paused.

It was at this moment that the Zephyr saw him. The hautboy, from which he lately drew such sweet sounds, slipped from his hand and for half a minute he remained petrified with stupor; but soon recovering his presence of mind and his courage, he seized his gun, cocked it, and took aim. He was just about to fire when a noise, which he could not explain at first, prevented him. Almost at the same instant he heard a voice with an accent of profoundest terror cry "Caid." It was the Roumi, who had just perceived the lion. Seized with the horrible fear which that animal always produces on the Arab, he turned and ran towards his companion. All saw him then; the Caid, forgetting the Christians whom he had come to surprise, commanded "Fire." Ten musket shots rang out in the night, lighting up the ravine, but the lion remained standing. He gave a roar which was echoed like thunder on every side of the mountain, then with one prodigious bound he fell on the Sheik's son.

The lion was holding the Roumi under his heavy paw, his claws were digging into his flesh, whilst with open mouth, panting breath, his eyes blazing with ferocity, he seemed ready to devour him. It was at this moment that Carette fired. The noble beast, struck in the temple, gave a second roar, but it was only a death rattle this time, and he fell to rise no more. Meanwhile, not knowing that he was dead, the soldier jumped into the ravine and advanced bravely to the ferocious beast, whilst the Arabs, in spite of their incontestable courage, rested on the defensive, not daring to approach to dispatch the lion, or to raise their young comrade. It was the Zephyr that lifted him and placed him upon a rock. I have said that Carette had travelled with a charlatan and pretended to certain medical knowledge.

If his pretensions were not fully justified they were in a measure, his master taking about with him a skeleton and some anatomical plates, which he exhibited to the public. His pupil had often examined them; and he had, in addition, a lightness of touch, a dexterity acquired in prestidigitation during another phase of his adventurous youth. This explains how he staunched the blood, bandaged the wounds, and tended the Roumi with a skill which gave the Arabs an exalted idea of his talents.

When his nephew came to himself the Caid, who until then had not spoken, went up to Carette and thanked him, without much effusion, but in the grave tones peculiar to the men of the mountains, which, if it is less expressive, is always more sincere than the loquacity of the Greeks. The Zephyr, who spoke a little Arabic, like most soldiers who have passed some time in Africa, expressed to the Caid his desire to live on good terms with them in so earnest a tone that his new friends could not doubt his sincerity. From that day he was, so to speak, adopted by the tribe of Beni-Hammers, and

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almost lived with them. The sheep were guarded by the men belonging to the *douar*, to which the Zephyr had rendered a service. During this time Carette tended the sick, played on the hautboy, ate hot dishes, swallowed yatagans, and juggled for everybody.

As he did not kill many more patients than our qualified doctors, and as his hautboy and his sleight-of-hand tricks had still more success with the Beni-Hammers than with the Zephyrs, his popularity became so great with these simple people that they often wondered what was to become of them when the stranger went away. In order not to grieve my readers, I will not speak of the young girls; I will merely say that the waters of the spring, from which they filled their pitchers, preserved for a long time a peculiar taste on account of the tears they shed when speaking of the departure of the "Joyful."

Four months later we returned to the plain where we had abandoned the sheep. The expedition had been gone longer than we at first supposed, but it ended happily. Kabylia was subdued; the Douars had surrendered; the tribute had been discharged, and the Kabyles, who had received us with musket shots at the beginning of the campaign, returned to our ranks, deserting as they neared their own villages.

When the advance guard emerged from the mountains on to the plain and saw it covered with sheep, browsing quietly, a great cry arose, and the news spread with the rapidity of a telegram from head to foot of the column. "Carette and the sheep! The sheep and the Zephyr! Impossible! But, look, there they are!" These phrases, and others like them, were repeated from left to right of our little army, and reached the General, who, not finding it credible, put his horse to a gallop, in order to confirm such a miracle with his own eyes. The Zephyrs, more interested than anybody in the matter, as it was to them an affair of honour, raised a "hurrah," and broke into a run. At last we were compelled to yield to ocular evidence.

The sheep were there, and Carette, leaning on his gun, smiling, but with something grave in his eyes, waited our arrival with dignity.

Then the drums beat, the bands played their gayest, and for an hour the brave Zephyr was the object of a veritable ovation.

Here, perhaps, I ought to end this episode, of which I can attest the truth, being an eye-witness, but I am a conscientious writer, and believe I shall satisfy my readers more by telling them what eventually became of Carette. If he had not belonged to the African Battalion it is probable that he would have been decorated, but his artistic antecedents forbade his having that distinction. At least, so thought the General, who gave him, instead, a hundred francs. On their side, the Beni-Hammers had prepared the lion's skin, as they know how to do it in the desert, and when we entered Constantine, Carette found himself rich. He sold the skin for three hundred francs. As soon as he was in possession of that sum he took a "stretch" (illegal absence) of three days with two comrades. This escapade cost him what the regiment calls "eleven and four"—that is, eleven days in prison and four in the black hole.

"Sic transit gloria mundi."

I met him precisely at the moment when they were taking him to the "carcere duro," and the interest I felt in him prompted me to remonstrate with him on the past. "Bah!" he replied; "if, instead of giving me a hundred francs, the General had given me a handshake, it might perhaps have made me reflect; but no, he gave me the money. What could I do with it? Buy a house?" He shrugged his shoulders.

"It was to have a spree with, wasn't it? That's what I did, and now they lock me up! Ah, well, it is not just! Because, you see, the General never would have got clear, as I did, with five thousand sheep on his hands, and a lion, and all the Bedouins—men and women. I would like to have seen him in my place!" He gave another shrug, showing his disdain for the General, after which he went off with the corporal to remain under lock and key for fifteen days.

The man seemed determined to enter.

. . . . . .

Ten years later I had left the army, and settled in the country.

One day, hearing a lively altercation outside the grating, I opened the window to find out the cause. It was my servant, opposing, most energetically, the entrance of a man, an ass, a woman, and a little girl. The man seemed determined to enter, in spite of all remonstrances. I recognised him at once by his sly air, his blue eyes and curly hair. It was Carette!

I confess that I was rather pleased to see him again, not only for himself, but for all the memories evoked by his presence.

I called to the servant to let him in, and ran out to meet him.

The ass and the indescribable baggage which he carried, were put in the stable, and I made Carette and his family come into the dining-room. Then he told me that he was married, and that he travelled in turn as musician, dentist, and prestidigitator; that, thanks to his triple industry, he lived well, and was content with his lot.

"But all the same," he added, with a sigh of regret, "I have never had, and never shall have, such a good time as during the four months I spent with the Beni-Hammers."

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MR. MITTGAR.

BELL was speaking.

"Oh, please, dear Mr. Mittgar, do sing! Sing that favourite of yours; what is it? 'When other lips'; yes, that's it. Oh, do please."

She stood before his chair, playfully clasping her hands in supplication, with a mischievous twinkle in her seventeen-year old brown eyes. A sad smile lit up his thin yellow face when she stopped, and he rose to his full six foot of skin and bone, and strode over to the music case to hunt up Bell's favourite song, while she, convulsed with laughter in anticipation of the sport to come, retreated amongst her friends and pressed her handkerchief over her mouth.

It was always great fun to ask Mr. Mittgar down for the evening and to get in some friends to hear him sing. Framed in his broken English, the most solemn songs became to the audience more humorous by a long way than the most humorous song written.

No one knew much about him, except that he had been

"Oh, please, dear Mr. Mittgar, do sing!"

introduced at some bye-gone period by a friend of Bell's father. The family did not worry their heads about his pedigree. He had come over from Switzerland, and was something in the city of London; what, it didn't much matter to anyone.

Beyond his powers of singing he had no personal attractions, if the inharmonious notes that escaped his lips in illogical sequence may be called an attraction. In any case, it proved the key to many a fashionable drawing-room, where the funny young man palled on the company, and his humorous songs fell flat.

Of all those listeners who had split their sides with laughter behind his back, none were so boldly and daringly hypocritical as Bell Davies. She egged him on to sing, she fawned over him, and complimented him on his unparalleled abilities, all of which he honestly believed to be genuine, not for a single moment doubting the sincerity of her praises; and then she laughed behind his back.

He was a tall, lean man of thirty or thereabouts. A thin beard grew from a chin that had never felt the razor, and a pair of large, sentimental eyes were set one on either side of a rather large and delicate-looking nose.

In his own way, he was a braggart. He would entertain a dinner table for an hour at a time with anecdotes of his travels abroad, and the coolness and presence of mind which he had invariably exhibited. In fact, it seemed as if no anecdote were complete without some reference to his physical bravery.

But, for all that, he was an honest, good fellow, "horridly polite" to Bell and to all ladies, as is the custom of male continentalers, and with a large opinion of his own vocal powers. He loved to be applauded; his big eyes would glisten and his thin face flush with pride when the guests clapped and cheered in pure derision and mock admiration at the result of his efforts.

And so on this particular evening, when he had wailed the last long-drawn note of his favourite song, he turned with a low bow to the enthusiastic audience, and strutted with a degree of pride to his seat.

"Oh, that was perfectly delicious!" half-screamed Bell, struggling to keep back the laughter which nearly choked her. "Thank you so much. We——." Then the bursting frivolity found vent in a peal of laughter, which she cut short with an effort, by asking her right-hand neighbour to "tell Mr. Mittgar that awfully good joke. He would like it so."

"I do luff to zing zat zong: 'Ven oder leeps.' Weminds me of mine Sweetzerland, mine land. It is a song beautiful, and ze vords are magnifique."

At such times he would relapse into quietude for a few moments, and the room, with its merry-faced guests, would be oblivious to him, as his thoughts wandered back to the tiny *châtel* on the sloping sides of the snow-capped Alps, where in his memory still dwelt a dainty little maiden, whose lips he had felt against his own long years ago when he had set out for London to build his fortune.

The din of the chatter would give place to the gentle tinkle of the sheep bells far up the mountain side, the boisterous shouts of the vivacious Bell and her companions would be drowned in the quiet laughter of little Gretchen as she played with him as a boy. Then the news came to him of the death of his parents, to whose funeral he was unable to go, for the fortune was still in the air, instead of in his pocket. And not long after he wrote to give the honest reason, he heard that Gretchen was gone, and had married a watchmaker's assistant in Geneva.

This blow drove all ambition from his soul. He was a simple-minded man, very simple-minded, and he had loved once, and would never love again. Gretchen had deceived him; that was enough.

He was roused from his reverie by the restless Bell, who stood before him, with one arm round a girl-friend's waist, and the other holding a dish of oranges. At first he shook his head and said that he did not want any, but she pressed him, and, rather than in any way give her the slightest cause for offence, he took one—one that she pointed out as being ripe and sweet.

His discovery that it was an imitation one of soft dough, that stuck to his fingers and messed his dress coat, was the signal for a further burst of merriment, in which he joined, half-heartedly, but wretchedly miserable at heart in the knowledge that this, his only evening suit, was spoiled.

He was not rich. But appearances had to be kept up, for without them there would be no dinners and no parties, and without these he could have no opportunity of displaying his vocal ability, which was the one delight of his weary existence.

A week or two later he was at the house again, on the occasion of Bell's eighteenth birthday, and by her special request he sang "Ven oder leeps" twice during the evening. Had she enjoyed a keener perception, had she given a moment's thought to his appearance and his manner, she would have perceived that the thin cheeks were a trifle more sunken, and the quavering, unmelodious voice a trifle weaker than it had been when she last had listened to that song.

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And had she given him further attention, she would have noticed that his walk was not so brave nor so steady as it had been on previous occasions, and that he rested one hand on the frame of the piano while he lifted up his voice, and that he seemed glad to get to his seat when it was over.

Then, again, at dinner he was less loquacious, and spoke less frequently of his exploits, while he ate almost ravenously, and was more often than not sitting with half-closed eyes, thinking.

But Bell was neither perceptive nor thoughtful, and so she teased him ruthlessly, as she had always done, and hypocritically praised his singing. It was the happiest moment of the whole evening for him when she drew her handkerchief away from her full red lips, and told him that she thought, if anything, his voice was improving. He believed her. He had no cause to doubt her sincerity.

January came on apace, and one bitterly cold afternoon Bell and her mother were driving home from Piccadilly through the gathering gloom of the lamp-lighted streets. They were passing along a side thoroughfare out of Oxford Street.

"Listen, mater; that's funny, isn't it?"

The mother bent her head. From the middle of the road some distance ahead, and drawing nearer, came the wail:

"Ven oder leeps an' oder hearts ——"

"Why, that's—that's——" She raised her hands in horror.

"Good gracious," Bell answered, looking inquiringly at her mother's perplexed face. "It can't be Mr. Mittgar. It *can't.*"

She let down the window and peered out into the road. In the long lean figure, with the rusty black frock-coat buttoned up round his throat, and the straggling beard and gaunt face, she recognised Mr. Mittgar, and sank back in her seat horror-struck.

"To think that he should have the audacity——!" she gasped.

"*Who*, love? Is it he? Is it really that—that scoundrel, Mr. Mittgar, singing in the streets; and to think that he should partake of our hospitality while participating in this vulgar occupation. The—the villain."

Business had gone from bad to worse. There was nothing for it but to try to make a few honest pence with his voice. It was so good, so full, so pure. He knew that. Miss Bell had often told him. She had often said that he would take the world by storm some day. And yet, the people did not seem to appreciate it much. Perhaps it was too cold for them to open their doors and windows and to throw out coppers as evidence of their recognition of genuine merit.

He might have pawned his dress suit and his white shirt and socks and boots, as he had done the rest of his wardrobe; but in that case he would have been denied the privilege of singing in the drawing-rooms of his friends' houses, where he loved to pose as the lion of the evening.

He was too proud to make known his financial distress to Bell's father or any of his friends. For many a long week he had almost starved, and still he kept his clothes and sang to please Bell. There seemed now no signs of work ever being obtainable; besides, there was no dishonour in showing the British public what real meritorious singing was, even though the concert platform was the kerbstone.

Next day he received a curt letter from Mrs. Davies: he was prohibited to place his foot inside their door again. He did not know the reason—he could only guess; and he was sure that whatever this woman thought, or whatever her husband thought, it was no fault of their daughter's that he was refused admittance to the house. She had always held him in high esteem, and appreciated the natural gift which a good and kind Providence had bestowed upon him.

The receipt of this letter was his death-warrant. No more would his voice resound through the sweet-scented drawing-room, crowded with eager and appreciative faces; no more would he bow his thanks, too overcome with emotion to give expression in words; no more would Miss Bell coax him to sing that dear old song.

It was a hard, bitter world. Unconsciously his thoughts reverted to the old days on the Alps with Gretchen, and, for an hour after he first read that note, he sat with his shaggy head resting on his emaciated arms, lost to the world, and back again in the old home.

When he raised his head, he dropped it again heavily. There was no strength in his body, and his brow got hot and cold rapidly by turns. He staggered to the truckle bed and threw himself on it. He felt that unless matters altered very, very considerably in his favour shortly, he would have to curl up and die.

There was the dress suit. It was of no use now. It would never be worn again by him at all events, and there seemed no reason why he should not pawn it. But, what if he did? What would be the result? It would bring him the wherewithal to exist a few days longer, and then there would be an end of it; he would be in the same position exactly as he was to-day. No, he would keep that intact.

Towards the luncheon hour next noon, Bell Davies received a dirty note from the butler, into whose hands it had been put by a woman at the door.

"Pardon my intrusion, Miss Bell," it ran, in a shaky, small foreign hand, "I am sick very, and it is you who I would care to see if it would please you to come for a short moment. Only for a short moment. Yours humble, Leon Mittgar."

"What is it, child?" demanded Mrs Davies, adjusting her pince-nez.

He staggered to the truckle bed.

"Nothing; nothing, mater." She was sorely tempted to answer this request. Mrs. Davies took it out of her hand and read it with difficulty; then, turning to the man, she commanded him to send the woman away at once, with no reply.

"Insolence! Low vulgar wretch!"

Her dignity was hurt for the time. Bell felt sorry for the poor man for a few moments, and then forgot his existence.

"There ain't no arnser; 'ee tried ter shove me down the bloomin' doorstep, the flunkey did, darn 'im." The dignity of Mrs. Groggins, his landlady, too, was hurt, and folding her arms she contemplated the dying man serenely. "She hated corpses in her house; it wasn't in no wise likely to make her respectable house popular."

When she left the room Mittgar tossed about on his bed. She would come, ah, yes! she would come, would Miss Bell, so good, so appreciative. She had always been his champion when he used to visit the house, and she would never forsake him now, nor refuse to grant this very modest request of his. Modest? Was it modest, after all? Had the note been offensive to her? He grew troubled in spirit at the thought,

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and it worried him sadly, so that although he wanted to sleep, he could not.

What recompense could he make to Miss Bell, if this note had really offended her finer feelings? It was audacious, perhaps, to request her to come and see him as he was, but he had not stopped to think; he would like to have seen her once more.

Then a sudden thought entered that burning brain, and, struggling bravely to his feet, he staggered over to his little table, and sank on the chair in front of it. He must send her some reward for her kindness, some token of his last moments to her, so kind, so sensible. The little ivory *châlet* that Gretchen had given him had gone, the tiny model of the church at Geneva had gone, the many little treasures that he had stored up for years and years in remembrance of his happier days in that home away over on those lovely Swiss mountains—all had gone, gone for ever.

Next day, Miss Bell Davies received a roll by book post. She opened it. It was a well-fingered and rough-edged copy of "When other lips." On the top right-hand corner were inscribed the words:

"To Miss Bell Davies, from one she loved to hear sing this song,—LEON MITTGAR."

And the landlady declared, when she came in with the doctor in the morning and found him cold beside the dress-suit laid out on the bed, that her slumber had been interrupted during the night by erratic and untuneful singing from that room.

HER REVENGE.

MISERABLE wet day. Time, the year of grace 1783. Scene, an old château in Brittany. The young Vicomte de la Sainte Cour was horribly bored. All the morning through he had lounged in the dim old library, some of whose dusty volumes had not been stirred from their places for nigh a whole generation, and certainly contained no matter sufficiently interesting to the mind of the gay young Parisian noble, fresh from the festivities of the Court of Marie Antoinette and the make-believe rusticity of Le Petit Trianon.

Poor Raoul! he felt himself much to be pitied in this, his self-imposed exile at his aunt's château; but circumstances over which he had no control—*i.e.*, certain pressing and too-clamorous creditors—had necessitated a hasty, not to say somewhat undignified, retreat to the Château de Saint Jean in the heart of Brittany, where he hoped to secure his aunt's assistance in repairing his shattered fortunes.

That she was deeply shocked and offended he knew, but he also knew that the childless old lady dearly loved his handsome scapegrace self, womanlike, perhaps never more so than when she had most cause for anger.

He had arrived at the château the previous evening, and his reception had been anything but cordial, and all this morning he had awaited an audience with his much-offended relative, who had at last sent him word that she desired his presence at dinner at four o'clock.

"Thank Heaven it is almost four!" ejaculated Raoul, as, wearied and bored beyond expression, he wended his way to the apartments of the Marquise, from which she rarely, if ever, stirred.

He reached the ante-chamber of the salon, and glanced at the Dresden clock on a gilt console. Bah! It wanted ten minutes to the hour, and Raoul knew the old lady's rigid notions of etiquette, and felt sure that the sin of arriving too soon for dinner was as great, in her eyes, as that of arriving too late.

Well, there was nothing for it but to wait the prescribed ten minutes and enter the apartment exactly on the stroke of four; so, for the one hundred and twentieth time that day, the Vicomte gazed listlessly out on to the great court of the château, wet and streaming in the never-ceasing rain.

A patter of high-heeled shoes, a rustle of silken skirts, and Raoul turns from his contemplation of the dreary courtyard to encounter surely the daintiest little waiting-maid that ever carried a dish. Her lace cap is perched coquettishly on her soft brown hair, her robe of pink silk is caught back over a petticoat of palest green, short enough to reveal her feet and ankles and her clocked stockings and crimson high-heeled shoes. Her bodice, cut low, after the fashion of the day, displays a neck that, for roundness and whiteness, a Court lady might envy, while, in her hand, she carries a tureen of soup.

But her face! Raoul forgot all else after one glance at it—like a rose in its flower-like tints, and lighted up with a pair of hazel eyes, which, in passing, flash swiftly for a moment at the handsome young Vicomte, of whom all the household is talking.

Raoul is seized with a sudden mad impulse. Quick as thought he springs from the window and places himself before the door of the salon in such a manner as to effectually bar all further progress of the pretty maid.

She stands irresolute; then, glancing timidly at the handsome, mocking face before her, exclaims:

"Will you permit me to pass, monsieur?"

"Not yet, ma belle; it is not often such a vision of loveliness gladdens my eyes. You must stay a moment and talk to me. Tell me how it happens that I, who have been shut up here nigh two days, have never discovered you before."

An angry flush crimsons the girl's fair face, to be succeeded by a sudden gleam of mischief in her eyes, as, repressing the sharp words that rise to her lips, she says again:

"Will you permit me to pass, monsieur? Madame la Marquise is waiting for me."

But he does not quit his position in front of the door, although the little feet begin to drum impatiently, and already the clock is on the stroke of four.

"Madame does not like to be kept waiting," she begins, when Raoul interrupts her.

"Let madame wait," he says; then, seeing a look of genuine distress on the lovely face, he continues, "Come, my fair prisoner, on one condition will I let you pass. Let me but kiss those tempting lips—let me——."

She draws herself up with a stateliness of a duchess.

"Monsieur, you mistake," she begins haughtily; but Raoul's quick ears catch the sound of approaching footsteps.

She can offer no resistance, embarrassed as she is with the tureen, and, before she quite realises the act, the audacious young noble has claimed his toll, and actually kisses her, then, throwing open the door, stands aside, bowing to her deeply as he would to his aunt herself.

One flash of the hazel eyes, and he hears her mutter beneath her breath, "Some day, my fine Vicomte, I will make you pay for this"; and the pretty waiting-maid passed into the Marquise's presence, followed closely by the scapegrace Raoul

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Needless to say, he wins the old lady's full forgiveness before he has been five minutes at dinner; only once he makes an unlucky remark which almost imperils his hopes.

"Madame, you have a little maid here whose face would have been a model for an artist. Who is she?"

The old lady scrutinises him keenly with dark eyes which age has not robbed of their fire.

"Raoul, remember, if I find you meddling with my maids, pretty or otherwise, you may expect no further grace from me."

Raoul maintains a discreet silence and merely bows in answer to the Marquise's warning, but he mentally ejaculates —"Gad, I hope the little minx will tell no tales."

Evidently "the little minx" did not, for two days later the Vicomte starts again for Paris with ample means to satisfy his creditors and continue his gay life at Court, and, if at first a flower-like face and a pair of flashing hazel eyes haunt his dreams, other fair faces claim his thoughts, and as time goes on, the pretty serving-maid at the old château becomes only a dim memory.

Ten years after. Gone is the gay Court, gone the beautiful queen who presided over its revels, gone all that was bright and gracious; and in its stead reigns a red-capped tyranny, whose motto, indeed, is "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity," but whose argument is chiefly guillotine.

Citizen Danton sits in his room busily writing.

A tall, well-made man, with brown hair, unpowdered and brushed carelessly off his forehead, and a lion-like head, he is a refreshing contrast to the dandy, yellow-faced Robespierre and the brutal Marat, his colleagues.

A member of the National Guard enters the room; Danton looks up sharply.

"What is it, citizen?"

"The citizeness Valerie wishes to see you."

"Let the citizeness enter," he says gruffly enough, but bends his head quickly over his writing, that the man may not see the rare pleasure her coming gives him.

A moment after the citizeness enters, and from the cordiality of their greeting it is easy to see that they are old friends.

"To what lucky accident may I ascribe the visit of the adorable citizeness?" he says, in the florid language so much in vogue.

"The adorable citizeness," a lovely woman of seven-and-twenty, who well merits the title of "adorable," shrugs her shoulders and laughs.

"Still as complimentary as ever, citizen. Well, I will not waste your time in unnecessary guessing. I have come to beg a favour."

"Which is granted already, lovely one."

"Take care, citizen—I shall keep you to your word." Then, the careless gaiety disappearing from her mobile features, "You have on your list of 'suspects' the name of one Raoul, sometime Vicomte de la Sainte Cour. You must give him to me."

This latter with a pretty air of command.

Danton's face grows grave. He takes up the list. Yes, there was the name included in to-morrow's list for the guillotine. He glances keenly at the fair petitioner. She catches the glance and understands it perfectly.

"Have no fear, citizen. It is but to repay a long-cherished vengeance of which his death will deprive me, that I beg his life." Danton takes up his pen irresolutely, and Citizeness Valerie's eyes gleam with a quick flash of triumph—she has won. "What would you have me do, citizeness?" "Strike his name from the list and send an order for his release, together with a private note telling at whose intercession he has been released. He will, without doubt, come to thank me to-morrow; and then—ah! then we shall see," and her brilliant hazel eyes flash with an ominous light that bodes ill for the unlucky Vicomte.

Danton smiles grimly as he writes the order and draws the pen through Raoul's name on the list.

"Citizeness, excuse a somewhat worn simile; but you women are uncommonly like cats, and treat us poor men very much as that interesting feline animal treats a mouse. To a man the idea that one's enemy was about to be executed would be ample revenge; but, no, you must have the unfortunate wretch in your power, to tease and worry, to alternately torment and coax until your sense of wrong is satisfied. Excuse the dissertation," he added, handing her the order; "nevertheless, you must acknowledge its truth."

An odd smile curls the lips of the beautiful woman as she rises to make her adieu.

"Citizen, I cannot thank you sufficiently; only know that this morning you have placed in my hands a revenge for which I have waited ten long years. Whether you will admire the manner in which I pursue it is another question; but of this rest assured—of all the many favours you have bestowed on me during the years you have known me, you have conferred no greater than this boon."

A smile, a rustle of silk, and the next moment she is gone, leaving behind her a subtle perfume of roses, which seem strangely out of place in an arch-republican's room, and, glancing down, Danton sees lying on the floor a little lace handkerchief.

He takes it carefully in his great hands—how small and dainty it seems to him—smooths it carefully out, then, looking round, as if he expects to see her return and claim it, he places it with tender care in an inner pocket in the breast of his coat. And, for a moment on his rugged face there shines that wondrous light that "never was on land or sea," for dearer even than she guesses is the Citizeness Valerie to this great man, who holds in his hands the fate of France.

Who is the Citizeness Valerie? The Citizeness Valerie is a beautiful actress, whom all Paris raves about, and whose beauty and sparkling wit draw crowds to the theatre, in spite of the grim terror reigning supreme. No one knows anything about her; no one has ever heard of her until, two years ago, she had risen suddenly on the dramatic horizon, a star of the first magnitude.

The wildest stories are told of her. Some say she is a young aristocrat who has lost all her kindred by the guillotine; others, that she is a true daughter of the people, and has been seen with the women who have sacked Versailles. Be it as it may, however, aristocrat and democrat alike agree in worshipping at her shrine, and over all her power seems illimitable.

Danton, perhaps, can tell more about her than most people; but Danton, when questioned on the subject, is undeniably grim, and Danton, when grim, is a lion to be approached with utmost delicacy and care.

On this very day, when, according to his forecast of events yesterday, Raoul, *ci-devant* Vicomte de la Saint Cour, should have yielded up his head to the Republic, he is a free man—free to go whither he will. He can hardly credit his good fortune. And where, indeed, should he go but to the woman who, for some unknown reason, is sufficiently interested in him to preserve his head, for the present, on his shoulders.

He has aged considerably since, ten years ago, he sought refuge in the old Château de Saint Jean. Is it only ten? To Raoul it seems nigh a hundred. Somehow, as he walks slowly in the direction of the Citizeness Valerie's house, his thoughts dwell on that visit of ten years ago.

Poor old Marquise!—luckily for her, she died before all these troubles fell so thick upon "La Belle France," and left all her wealth—which was not inconsiderable—to her much-beloved nephew Raoul.

Not much of that wealth remains, he thinks grimly, save the old château in Brittany, which has escaped the general destruction of the châteaux, owing to the pious memory in which the late Marquise de Brillac is still held, high and low, for miles round.

But her nephew dare not claim his own, and he is on his way to thank this woman who has thought fit to save his worthless life. That done, he will raise what money he can by the sale of a few jewels that yet remain to him; then he will take ship to England, there to await the dawning of better times.

His reflections have brought him to the house of the Citizeness Valerie, where he is evidently expected, for no sooner has he given his name than a groom of the chambers, in rich livery, comes forward to conduct him to the salon, where the citizeness will receive him.

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Raoul gazes curiously on the unmistakable signs of wealth that meet his eye. The costly furniture, the pictures, the rich liveries of the servants; verily, he thinks this actress lives as well as, ten years ago, did a princess of the royal blood.

The servant conducts him to a spacious apartment, furnished with all the extravagance of the period, and informs him that the citizeness will receive him without delay.

Left alone, unconsciously Raoul's thoughts fall back into the train in which they ran during his walk hither. Once more he goes back to that dreary afternoon ten years ago, and before him rises, as many a time it has risen, a lovely flower-like face, and angry, flashing hazel eyes. He puts the vision from him with a bitter laugh. Surely his troubles have turned his brain, that the face of a pretty waiting-maid should haunt him so. Then comes the uneasy doubt that has often perplexed him before. What if, after all, she was no serving-maid, but one of his own rank? Bah! it all happened ten years ago, and a kiss is no such crime after all.

The door opens and he goes forward to meet the citizeness, who enters. Clad in a pale pink gown of some soft, clinging material, she looks her loveliest to-day; but Raoul starts back, for surely those hazel eyes and that soft brown hair are the same which have so often haunted his dreams. The roundness of the girlish face, and the slenderness of the girlish figure are gone; but, save that her beauty has blossomed into a glorious maturity, there stands before him the little maid of the château.

She sees his start, and smiles.

"I fear I have disturbed your meditations, monsieur."

She drops the Republican "citizen" in speaking to this aristocrat.

Heavens, the very voice! Raoul, bewildered beyond expression involuntarily draws his hand across his eyes as though to convince himself of his wakefulness. Then his ever ready wit comes to his assistance.

"I have been so long exiled in La Vendée that the glory of the goddess of Paris somewhat dazzles me," he says, bowing low over the white hand she holds out to him.

She flushes, but whether in pleasure or anger he cannot tell.

"Madame, let me convey to you my sincerest thanks for having deigned to intercede for my worthless life," continues Raoul, half unconscious, but holding the little white hand in his own, browned and hardened by sun and exposure.

She draws it away quickly, and her face pales and crimsons again with some sudden emotion.

"The poor actress, Valerie, should deem herself too highly honoured if she be in any way instrumental in saving the life of a Sainte Cour," she begins bitterly, then stops suddenly, as she meets the eyes of the Vicomte fixed reproachfully on her.

"Nay, madame, do not undervalue your own gift; what you have done for me to-day has rendered me your slave for ever."

A gleam of the old merriment flashes in Valerie's eyes; quick as thought she decides how to act.

"No more thanks, monsieur; I take you at your word, and enrol you as 'my slave for ever.' Is it not so?"

"No fair mistress owned a more willing slave," he responds eagerly, for this woman has set his heart beating and his pulse dancing as no one has done before, not even in the old far-away days of Versailles.

"One boon, only, I crave," he continues; "that is, the name of the fair lady I serve?"

For an instant a shade passes over the face of the actress; but only for an instant. With a gay laugh she says:

"I am the Citizeness Valerie to all now; once, long ago, I was——." Then, noting his eager anxiety, she interrupts herself and cries gaily, "Come, monsieur, I want your help in a little comedy I am rehearsing; perhaps, after that is given, I will tell you who I was once," and she adds, in a lower tone, as if addressing herself, "if you will not already have remembered it."

"I am your slave in everything," says Raoul, thinking what a mercurial woman this actress is—so rapid, and, withal, so charming, are her transitions from grave to gay.

She laughs an odd little laugh, which has a ring of mockery in its tones.

"The scene of the comedy is laid in an old château. The time, ten years ago. The *dramatis personæ*—well, for convenience sake, we will say you and I."

Raoul feels his heart beat with a strange sense of expectancy.

"You will have no need to change your character," she goes on. "You are a young noble on a short visit to the château, and bored to death with dulness. I—well, I am a waiting-maid—or, perhaps I should say, a young friend of the old marquise (did I tell you the chateau belonged to an old marquise?), who, out of sheer ennui, masqueraded as her waiting-maid. Her name—let us say her name is Valerie le Clère—though, perhaps, the name makes no great difference. Let us suppose this corner of the room to be the ante-chamber to madame's salon. Enter the young noble."

She speaks quickly, trembling with excitement, and Raoul catches the fever of her words, for back from the dim memories of long ago comes this odd comedy, the first act of which was played out ten years ago.

"Yes," he says, "I know this scene—enter myself, and shortly afterward, enter the so-called waiting-maid, with a tureen in her hand—so, madame," catching up a piece of porcelain from a neighbouring table and placing it in Valerie's hands.

Then, throwing himself before the door with all his old easy grace, he looks at her with the fire of a fierce, new-awakened love burning in his eyes.

Slowly a ripple of laughter breaks from her as she raises her hazel eyes to his brown ones.

"Well, monsieur, as you know this comedy so well, what then?"

What does Raoul see in those changeful depths, that, heedless of the delicate porcelain she holds, he springs forward and catches her in his arms, forgetful of all that has passed in these ten years, kissing her, not once, but again and again?

Valerie does not seem displeased at such a proceeding, nor does she seek to free herself from the prison of his strong embrace; only, a few minutes afterwards, she says:

"Ah! M. le Vicomte la Sainte Cour, ten years ago I told you I would be revenged. I've made your noble self fall in love with the actress, the Citizeness Valerie. I have given you 'tit for tat.'"

For answer, he holds the slender figure closer in his arms, and gazes with untold love at the lovely, laughing face upturned to his.

"You have made me fall in love with the noblest woman this earth possesses—a woman who knows the highest manner of revenging herself," he says passionately; and Valerie is silent, for at last her vengeance is complete.

In the gallery of the old Château de Sainte Jean hangs the portrait of Valerie, Vicomtess de la Sainte Cour, and beneath it, on a velvet bracket, is a quaint china tureen, in white and gold porcelain. Strangers often wonder what connection there is between the porcelain and the picture, but their curiosity is seldom, if ever, rewarded. The portrait was painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds, one of the latest and best, during the stay of the Vicomte and his wife in England, which lasted from 1793 until after the Restoration in 1815.

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By George Griffith,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," &c.

SUMMARY.

Max Renault, the leading spirit of the Anarchist "Autonomie Group No. 7," meets his colleagues in a club near the Caledonian Road on the eve of President Carnot's assassination. He shoots a traitor who has almost betrayed the Group and so saved Carnot's life. Then he tells them that he is about to emigrate with a society of Socialists, one of whom, Frederick Austen, a wealthy engineer who has been converted to Socialism, takes out with him a working model of an aerial vessel. This air-ship Renault determines to steal when complete, and use for the purpose of bringing about an Anarchist reign of terror. Meanwhile, Franz Hartog is to steal a very fast torpedo-boat destroyer, which is to be built at Elbing for the Russian Government, and, with her, to levy blackmail on the Atlantic, and so raise funds to build an Anarchist aerial fleet.

On Christmas Day, 1898, the *Calypso*, a steam yacht belonging to Sir Harry Milton, sights an island in the South Pacific, from which an electric launch, the *Mermaid*, puts off and tows the yacht in. Frank Markham, in command of the launch, tells Sir Harry, with whom are travelling his sister, Violet, and Herbert Wyndham, a lieutenant in the British Navy, on sick leave, that the island is Utopia, a Socialist colony, founded some three years before by emigrants from England. On the island Sir Harry finds Frederick Austen, an old friend of his father's, who introduces the visitors to Edward Adams and Max Renault and the rest of the Utopians, and after lunch tells them the story of Utopia. Later on, Lieutenant Wyndham describes the outrages committed by the vessel Hartog has stolen from Elbing,—on the Atlantic, and Mr. Austen vows that if no one else can sink the *Destroyer* the Utopians will. Wyndham inspects the *Nautilus*, which he finds to be a novel but most formidable craft, and on board of which he offers to serve for the purpose of hunting down the pirate *Destroyer*. The offer is accepted, and late that night, when the Lieutenant and Sir Harry are taking a stroll upon the hills, they are astounded by the apparition of an air-ship soaring across the mountains in the interior of the island.

CHAPTER VII.

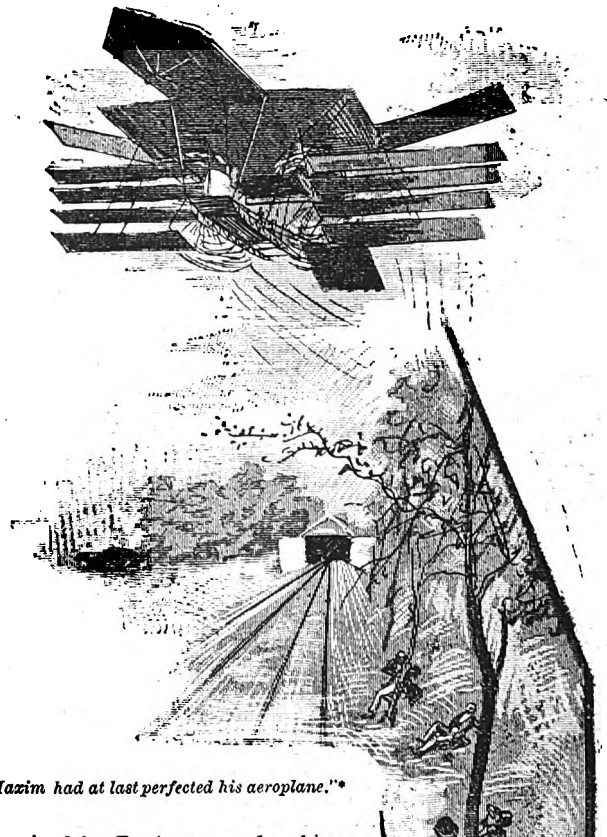
A Very Serious Matter.

As may well be imagined, there was very little sleep that night for either Sir Harry or the Lieutenant. All the way home they discussed the startling and terrible discovery which, as it were, had been forced upon them during their stroll.

Sir Harry looked upon it chiefly in its more romantic and marvellous aspect. To him the mysterious craft that they had seen flying so swiftly and so gracefully through the gloom of the midnight was a triumph of art and science which commanded his wonder and admiration, rather than excited his apprehension; but to Wyndham's disciplined and practical mind the fact that the Utopians possessed a navigable air-ship assumed both darker and larger proportions than it did in the eyes of his civilian friend.

They were abroad again before sunrise, after two or three hours of vain attempt to sleep. Violet and her maid, who was terribly scandalised at the picturesquely airy costumes of the Utopian girls, were sleeping down in the settlement as Dora Merton's guests, and so the two friends had still an hour or so in which to once more discuss their discovery before they were obliged to finally make up their minds as to what course they were to pursue.

Sir Harry was rather inclined to get the *Calypso* repaired as quickly as possible, find an excuse for not joining in the



"*Maxim had at last perfected his aeroplane.*"*

pursuit of the *Destroyer*, and making the best of their way over to England, leaving the Utopians to their own devices, while he and Wyndham set to work with the assistance of the best experts that money could engage or ambition inspire, to construct a similar air-ship to the one that they had seen speeding over the hills of Utopia.

"What these people have done we can do," he said, when he had explained his project to Wyndham. "We have more money, and we surely ought to be able to command higher skill. Added to that, we shall start with the knowledge that the thing is really possible, since we have actually seen the

* The above illustration is drawn from a photograph given by Mr. Maxim to the Author, who believes it to be the only absolutely correct picture published of the fameus aeroplane as it will appear in full flight.

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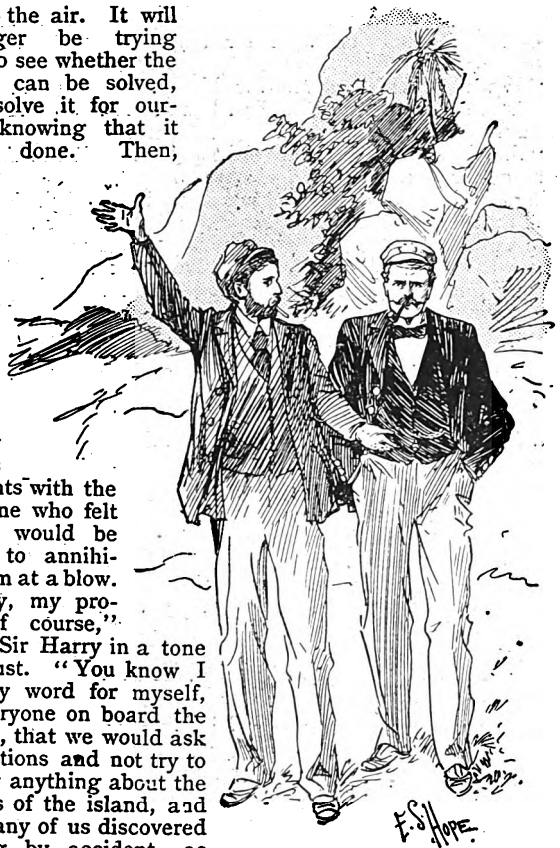
vessel in the air. It will no longer be trying simply to see whether the problem can be solved, but to solve it for ourselves, knowing that it can be done. Then, again—oh, confound it, I forgot that!"

"Forgot what?" asked Wyndham, who had been listening to his arguments with the air of one who felt that he would be obliged to annihilate them at a blow.



"Where would the fleet be?"

"Why, my promise, of course," replied Sir Harry in a tone of disgust. "You know I gave my word for myself, and everyone on board the *Calypso*, that we would ask no questions and not try to discover anything about the defences of the island, and that if any of us discovered anything by accident, as you and I did last night, we would make no use of it either here or in England, and that when we got home we would tell nothing more about Utopia than the bare story of its existence."

"My dear fellow," said the Lieutenant reflectively, "you needn't allow your conscience to trouble you in the slightest on that score. You have given your word and of course you will keep it, and so shall I, just as though I had given my own. But even if you had not given it you would only produce a sensational panic by telling in England what we happened to learn last night.

"The fact of knowing that an air-ship exists would not help us in the slightest in building one for ourselves. If we had accidentally discovered the motive-power as well as the air-ship, then we should have a rather delicate problem in morals and expediency to solve. We should have to balance the keeping of a promise against the taking of the empire of the world, for, mind you, there is no burking the fact that the command of the air means, virtually, the control of the world.

"But without a knowledge of the motive-power we should just begin where everybody else has done, only with the tantalising knowledge that, while we were groping about in the dark, someone else was going ahead and building ship after ship, until they had a fleet that would make them strong enough to dictate terms of submission to the whole human race."

"Oh, come now, old man!" expostulated Sir Harry, somewhat aghast at this terrific prospect, "you can't mean all that. Really, I can't understand a sober, practical fellow like yourself talking in such a strain as that. Why, it would mean nothing less than the enslaving of humanity!"

"Goodness knows, I never was more serious in my life," replied Wyndham in a grave, slow tone. "I daresay you have never thought out seriously what the practical, workable solution of this problem of the navigation of the air really means, but I have, simply because it is part of my business, as an officer of the Navy, to take these possible developments into account, and try and realise the actual effect of them on warfare, and therefore, of course, on the relative powers of empires and states, and I can assure you, on the strength of some years' study and thought, that no other development of the art of war has brought the world face to face with such terrific possibilities as our discovery of last night tells us that humanity is now confronted with."

"What! not even the invention of gunpowder or steam navigation?" objected Sir Harry.

"My dear fellow, gunpowder and steam are not fit to be mentioned in the same breath with this, simply because it was impossible to keep the secret of them from the whole civilised world when the discoveries had once taken practical shape. With aërial navigation it is a very different business.

"You know as well as I do that, for the last hundred years and more, the brightest mechanical intellects in the world have been struggling with this problem and struggling unsuccessfully. Still, it has been solved. It's no good for you and me to attempt to deny that, and solved here in this out of the way, practically unknown part of the world. I remember hearing some months ago that Maxim had at last perfected his aeroplane; but even if that is true, it makes no difference to the facts. A simple air-ship like that one we saw could smash up any number of aeroplanes just like so many kites.

"Now," continued the Lieutenant, decreasing his pace as he became more and more didactic, "let me put the matter into a more concrete form. Here, in Utopia, is a small, self-contained colony of, say, a thousand men and women, with a proportionate number of children. They inhabit an island far out of the track of commerce, at any rate for the present, almost impregnable to any possible assault by sea, and, as far as we know, actually unknown to the maritime nations of the world.

"These people, openly despising all law and government, belonging to no nationality, voluntary outcasts, or perhaps, I ought to say, exiles from the pale of Society, possess one or more mechanical geniuses who have given them means of offence and defence against which even the whole naval strength of Britain, if it could be concentrated here on this spot, would contend in vain.

"Yes, I know that sounds a trifle extravagant, but wait a minute, and I'll make my case out. In the first place, take that *Nautilus* that we saw yesterday. It's no good hoping that she won't do what they expect her to do, because it would be absurd to believe that people who can build an air-ship to travel as fast as the one that we saw last night couldn't build a sea-going cruiser to travel forty knots an hour, and able to ram the biggest battle-ship we have, practically with impunity, to say nothing of her torpedo batteries, when she gets them.

"I saw quite enough of her to be convinced that her over-water platform and conning-tower might be knocked into smithereens without in the slightest hurting the ship herself. She would still get her ram home, and that means death and destruction to anything that floats. Then, again, no ship that floats could get within striking distance of her unless she chose. That's bad enough, you'll admit, but given the *Nautilus* in the water, and half-a-dozen of those air-ships cruising about a thousand feet over the mastheads of a hostile fleet, where would the fleet be?"

"I'll be hanged if I'd like to be on board any of the ships, now that I come to think of it," said Sir Harry seriously.

"Neither should I," said the Lieutenant, "for they would simply sink you in detail, and you could no more hit back than a boy with a catapult could reply effectively to a man armed with a magazine rifle on a cliff a thousand feet above him. That's the situation. You can't help being hit, and you can't strike back.

"And now let us go a step further. If these people can build one air-ship, they can build a dozen, a score, a hundred; and just try and imagine to yourself the position of London, or Paris, or New York with a hundred air-ships loaded up with explosives, some frightful thing, for instance, like this motor-fuel that they're going to drive the *Nautilus* with. Do you think they could resist? Not a bit of it! They would be absolutely helpless."

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"I don't quite see that," objected Sir Harry, with the air of a man driven back to his last line of defence; "there are such things as machine-guns and quick-firing cannon, which could be given plenty of elevation to catch them on the wing and bring them down like crippled partridges."

"Crippled partridges, my dear fellow," replied Wyndham drily, "are a very different kind of bird to air-ships that can travel at the speed we saw that one travel at last night. Added to that, partridges don't fly three or four thousand feet above the surface of the earth. At three thousand feet, or a thousand yards, you could no more hit one of those things than you could bring down an eagle in full flight with a bullet, and even if you could, what would be the result?

"You would simply bring down a ship-load of explosives about your ears, and get in ten seconds the concentrated effect of a couple of hours' bombardment. I tell you, either for a fleet or a city, there would be nothing for it but surrender or destruction if once a hostile squadron of air-ships got above it, as there would be nothing to prevent their doing. No fortifications would stop them, and a fortress would be as helpless as a farmyard. In a word, as I said before, those who command the air command the world, and that these Utopians practically do."

"Humph!" said Sir Harry, thrusting one hand deep into his trouser pocket, and with the other giving a pull to his moustache, "that's a pleasant sort of prospect, and the more I think of it the harder your arguments seem to be to answer. What the deuce would happen if our good friends the Utopians took it into their heads to build an aërial fleet and run amok generally?"

"Or, worse than that," said Wyndham, taking him by the arm, "what if these scoundrels who are making hay on the Atlantic in the *Destroyer* were to get hold of even this one air-ship that we know to be in existence, what then?"

"Oh, hang it, man, don't talk like that!" said Sir Harry, stopping short and pushing his cap back from his brow, on which Wyndham could distinctly see the beads of perspiration standing out, "the prospect's altogether too horrible to think about. Great heavens! Just imagine those miscreants holding up the Bank of England, and sending down a message, to say that if so many millions were not laid out for them in the middle of Salisbury Plain, within twenty-four hours, they'd come back and bombard the City at their leisure. Phew! It gives one a headache to think of it. But still, it's no use thinking, the question is, what are we to do?"

Wyndham let go Sir Harry's arm, thrust his hands deep into his trouser pockets, after the manner of Englishmen confronted with a knotty problem, and with down-bent head took several slow, deliberate strides in silence. Then he stopped abruptly, faced half-round towards Sir Harry, and said, in a tone his friend had never heard him use before:

"Look here, Milton, this is a serious matter, as I think I've shown you, and what makes it more serious, as far as I'm concerned, is that promise you gave before we came in here. First and foremost I'm an officer of the British Navy, and my allegiance to the Queen and my duty to the Service plainly demands that the knowledge I possess now shall not be kept to myself.

"More than that, I ought to add to it. I ought to find out something more. Even at the risk of my life I ought to attempt to find out where this air-ship is hidden during the day, to get on board her if possible, to learn everything I can about her, and not even to stop short at that, to capture her, if possible—by main force if necessary—and take her to England. On the other hand——"

"You are a gentleman," said Sir Harry, almost curtly, "and a man of honour, therefore you are neither a spy nor a thief to abuse the confidence of those who have made us their guests, or to steal their goods, even if the empire of the world does depend on their possession. No, Wyndham, that won't do. Patriotism is all very well to a certain extent, but a spy may be perfectly patriotic and yet you know very well that you would hang or shoot him the moment you got hold of him, and very properly too."

"Of course I should," said Wyndham, "and I should deserve just the same fate if I did what I said. Don't be afraid for me, old man. I'm not going to turn either spy or thief, but I'll tell you what I am going to do, with your permission."

"What's that?" asked Sir Harry. "You know I'm agreeable to anything a gentleman can do under the circumstances."

"Simply this I'm going to stop here until the *Nautilus* is ready for sea, and keep my eyes open in the meanwhile on things in general, and Mr. Max Renault in particular. I've seen that fellow somewhere before, and not under very creditable circumstances, but for the life of me I can't tell where it was. It was some time before I had that touch of fever in Africa, and I suppose that's wiped it out. However, that doesn't matter now. If the *Calypso* sails before the *Nautilus* and you go straight home to England, as I suppose you will, you shall take a letter from me to the Admiralty containing my resignation of my commission."

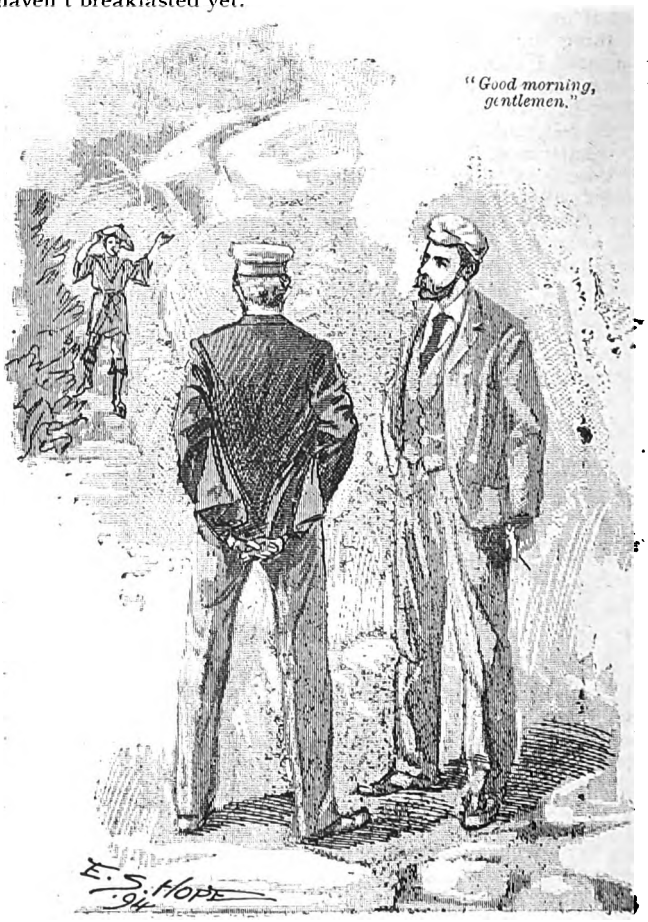
"What!" exclaimed Sir Harry, "surely you don't mean that?"

"Yes, I do," said Wyndham; "my mind is quite made up on that point. I must have a free hand in what I am going to do. I am going to join the Utopians, if they'll have me, and accept the berth they offered me on board the *Nautilus*. I couldn't do that if I remained in the Navy. There's no reason why I shouldn't be, at any rate, Navigating Lieutenant of her, then I'll take her home, get her armament on board, and hunt these piratical Anarchists off the face of the sea to begin with.

"By that time, I shall hope to be sufficiently deserving of the confidence of my fellow Utopians to be let into the secret of the air-ship, and then——"

"Hush!" whispered Sir Harry; "you are talking too loud. I believe I heard something move behind those bushes."

"Good morning, gentlemen! You are early abroad. I hope it isn't because you have slept badly. I presume you haven't breakfasted yet."



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It was Renault who spoke. Turning round the corner of a clump of acacias, about twenty yards in front of them, he sauntered towards them, his hands in his pockets and a cigar between his teeth. Whether he had heard Wyndham's words or not it was impossible to guess; so far as any outward sign went, he had not. His manner was as frank and cordial as possible, and his greeting betrayed not the slightest sign of suspicion.

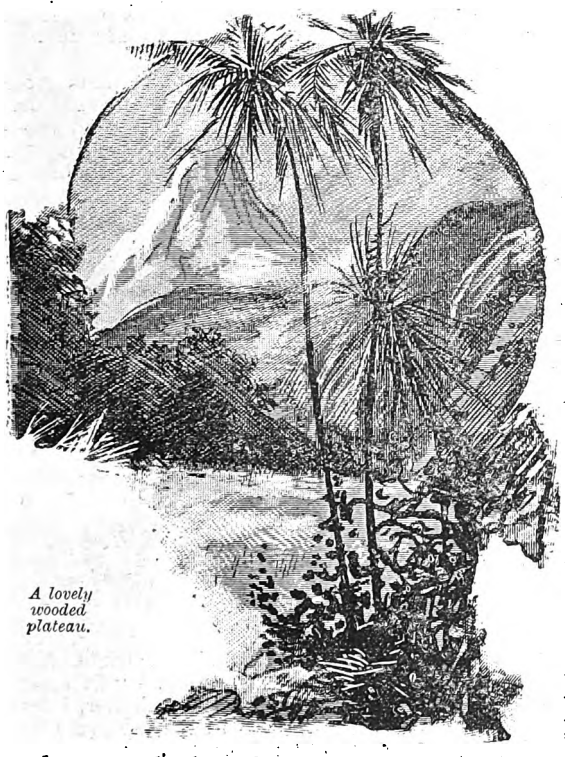
"I was just going down to the lagoon for a swim," he continued, "and I dare say you are looking for the same thing, so if you like to come with me I'll show you where the male Utopians take their morning dip. This way; the girls' bathing place is on the other side of that bluff."

So saying, he led the way round an abrupt turn in the pathway down towards the shore, followed by Sir Harry and Wyndham, who accepted his invitation as the best and readiest thing to do under the circumstances.

CHAPTER VIII.

A Picnic on Mount Plato.

A week had passed since the conversation just narrated, and during that time the repairing and refitting of the *Calypso* had made good progress and the work on the *Nautilus* had been prosecuted with such enthusiastic vigour—relays of those who were destined to be her crew literally working day and night at their tasks—that there was every prospect of its being possible to launch her within another fortnight.



A lovely wooded plateau.

In addition to this, the visitors to Utopia had been made so completely at home by the members of the Colony, and had so rapidly and so insensibly got on terms of the closest friendship with them, that they already began to look forward with undisguised regret to the time when circumstances would make it necessary for them to say good-bye. Guests and hosts mingled in the most unreserved intercourse and the more the former saw of the latter and their delightfully simple and natural institutions and mode of life, the more firmly they became convinced that they had by no means done an unwise thing in forsaking the complications and multifarious worries of what is, more in courtesy than in truth, called civilisation, for a life which seemed to give all the good that the world had to offer, with none of the discount of over or under-living taken off.

For obvious reasons, the crew of the *Calypso* were not accorded all these privileges, as it was rightly taken for granted that their intellectual and moral education had hardly progressed far enough to permit of their even temporary admission to a society that owned no laws save individual choice, and no customs save those established by the unrestrained friendliness of the people, whose perfect confidence in each other enabled them to do without the ordinary restraints of conventionality.

They were accommodated with comfortable quarters near the dockyard, convenient for going and coming to and from the work that they had to do on board the yacht, and they were supplied with everything in the way of comfort and luxuries that the island could afford, but sea discipline was strictly maintained by Sir Harry and his officers, and they were given to understand that the same rules which forbade their going into the saloon of the yacht at sea prevented their taking up quarters in the settlement, or mixing with the colonists as Sir Harry and their officers did.

It is true that one or two grumblers among them, when they got a notion of the principles of social equality on which the colony was founded, objected rather strongly to this hard and fast line being drawn, but the majority of them, with the natural obedience of good sailors to order and discipline, tacitly admitted that the yacht had been brought into harbour under certain conditions, and saw that they had not the slightest right to abuse the hospitality that was accorded to them, by infringing the terms that their employer had accepted.

Their agreement was made all the more easy by the fact that Sir Harry had promised everyone double wages during the time that they were in the island, on the condition of order being strictly maintained, and as this would have been forfeited by a single outbreak of bad manners, public opinion very soon proved too strong for the grumblers.

Nothing more had been seen of the mysterious air-ship, and, of course, Sir Harry and the Lieutenant had kept their own counsel strictly. Night after night they had taken their stroll from their bungalow, which lay nearly a mile from the centre of the settlement up towards the foot-hills, but their expectations, if they had any, were disappointed. Wherever the wonderful cruiser of the air was, she was carefully hidden from sight, and as not the slightest restraint was put upon their movements about the island, they were forced to conclude that those who were in the secret had every confidence in the security of the hiding-place.

Day after day came and went all too swiftly for the liking of the visitors, in a round of busy work and healthy, innocent enjoyment. By the time the week had passed, such good progress had been made with the work that, in accordance with the custom of Utopia, it was decided to spend New Year's Day, 1899, as a general holiday.

The dockyard was closed for twenty-four hours; Markham and half-a-dozen of his friends undertook to provide for the entertainment of the crew of the yacht, under the ordering eye of Mr. Topline; and Adams and Mr. Austen, acting on a suggestion which originated with Dora, who appeared to have, in one sense, quite carried out her promise of making Violet a sister for the period of her visit, organised a picnic of exploration to the slopes of Mount Plato.

There were about a score of sturdy Shetland ponies and as many sleek, well-fed donkeys on the island, which were both useful and properly-respected members of the community, and half-a-dozen of each of them were pressed into the service of the expedition to carry the eatables and drinkables, and to be ready, if necessary, for the use of any of the ladies—as Wyndham and Sir Harry felt bound to persist in calling them, in defiance of Utopian custom—in case, as was not very likely, they were overtaken by fatigue on the way.

A start was made just as the cone of Mount Plato was beginning to glow in the first beams of the rising sun, and the spot selected for the camping ground—a lovely, wooded plateau 2,000 feet above the sea and some seven miles from the Settlement—was reached in less than a couple of hours. Here they sat down to a second breakfast in which some choice champagne from the stores of the *Calypso* played a pleasantly conspicuous part, and then the party split up automatically into groups in accordance with individual choices and varying projects.

Sir Harry and the Lieutenant had come out with the inten-

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tion of climbing the cone of Mount Plato as the principal object of the day's excursion, and as this would take nearly the whole day, allowing for dinner and the necessary siesta after it, a separate party was formed for the expedition consisting of the visitors, Dora Merton, Lucy Summers, and Adams, who had volunteered to act as guide and general cicerone. A paniered donkey carried the wherewithal for dinner in the crater, and a pony was laden with a small tent and the necessary fittings to provide shelter in case the mountain was visited by one of the sudden storms which sometimes swept across its upper heights.

It was not very long before the party, small as it was, split up into three divisions, which made their way in somewhat extended order along the steep, narrow hill-paths which led to the summits. Adams and Lucy, for reasons best known to themselves, formed the first of these, and Sir Harry and Dora the last.

It may also be recorded that there was an interval of nearly a hundred yards between each division, an arrangement which seemed perfectly satisfactory to everybody, though, if the truth must be told, Adams would fain have changed places with Sir Harry for, in the depths of his serious, practical soul, there lurked a not very well-based hope that some day this brown-eyed beauty, who so far had contented herself with setting hearts aflame with the carelessness of a delightful unconsciousness, might accept the homage of the man whom everyone tacitly accepted as the moving spirit and virtual leader of the Utopians.

Interesting as the conversation *en route* undoubtedly was to the young baronet, it would have been even more so had it been possible for him to have asked Dora point-blank, as he would dearly have liked to have done, whether or not she knew of the existence of the air-ship, and, if yes, how much she knew or would tell about it.

He could hardly bring himself to believe that this lovely, innocent, light-hearted girl—for in just such terms did his thought describe her to him during that momentous walk—could be burdened with the possession of a secret on which the peace and security of the world might well one day depend; and yet that such actually was the case he was destined to learn before many minutes had passed. A sharp turn in the path brought them suddenly in view of a second truncated cone, about five hundred feet lower than that of Mount Plato, and lying as nearly as he could guess some two miles to the eastward of it, separated from it by a valley so deep as to give it the appearance of a distinct mountain.

"I didn't know Utopia boasted two volcanoes," he said, stopping and looking round over the magnificent panorama which now lay at their feet. "What do you call that second one yonder?"

"That," said Dora, glancing half shyly up at him with a quick flush that seemed in curious contrast with the simplicity of the question he had asked, "that is what I believe they call a secondary crater to Mount Plato, and—well, I'm afraid that's all I am at liberty to tell you about it. If I invent a suitable name for it and call it, for present purposes, Mount Mystery, you will understand me, won't you?"

"Of course I shall," replied Sir Harry, flushing in his turn, and slightly inclining his head as though in apology; "and I hope that you will understand that I trenched upon the forbidden ground quite unintentionally."

"There can be no question of that," she said with a smile, that awoke in him an unreasoning, and yet not altogether unnatural, desire to embrace the principles of the Utopians on the spot, if he could only embrace her with them, and abjure home, country, and capitalism thenceforth and for ever, for the sake of the only pair of bright eyes that had ever taught him what the magic and mystery of sex really meant.

They were walking on again now, for somehow Sir Harry had no desire that his sister and Wyndham should overtake them too closely, and by way of shifting the conversation from dangerous ground, he said, after a little interval of silence:

"Do you know, Miss Dora, I am rapidly coming to the belief that you Utopians have really chosen the better part of life, by leaving the world and all its bothers, and coming out to this paradise of yours to live, as I suppose men and women really were intended to live and would have lived, if the curse of Eden had never been laid upon them."

"Of course we have," she replied in a tone which showed that, to her at least, there could be no question about it. "I believe the curse of Eden, in its modern form, at any rate, is simply the spirit of greediness and vain-glory which makes every man want to have more and be something grander than his neighbour. Of course, Nature did not make all men and women equal. We are not by any means equal here even. Naturally, some of us are cleverer, stronger, or more—more——"

"Beautiful, for instance."

There was no mistaking the look that accompanied Sir Harry's completion of her speech, and she didn't pretend to do so. She looked him frankly in the eyes, and only a deepening of the colour on her pretty cheeks told him that she had taken his interruption as literally as he had intended it to be taken.

"Yes, Sir Harry, more beautiful, if you like to put it so. It would be absurd to expect it, and that is why we haven't attempted to bring any of the silly theories of what they call Socialism in England, out here with us. We simply believe it to be possible for people to live healthy, natural lives, and develop themselves physically and mentally as far as their powers go, without troubling their heads about all the foolish complications of Society, with its different ranks and degrees of wealth and poverty.

"Still, I must say I am rather surprised at *you* finding our life here better than the one at home. I always thought that for a man like yourself, rich, titled, young, and—well, yes—good-looking, there's your compliment back for you—the social life of England made earth as nearly Paradise as possible."

She looked him frankly in the eyes.

"Not always," replied Sir Harry, laughing outright at the direct frankness of her unconventional speech. "Of course, fellows like myself have a very good time of it, better, I daresay, than most of us deserve; but still I must say that I have found something in Utopia that I not only never found anywhere else, but never even thought of before. I can't exactly say what it is, because it's so strange to me, and yet it seems something better than anything that either money or position could buy at home."

"Perhaps it's just a healthy atmosphere, social as well as physical," she suggested. "You know we can breathe freely here; and we live, we don't play at it, or pretend to be something else than we really are, as I used to think people did when I lived in England."

"I daresay that's it," replied Sir Harry, looking at her with admiring conviction as he spoke, "only you put it more concretely than I thought it. I verily believe you will end by persuading us all to become Utopians before the *Calypso* is ready for sea again. As for Violet, you seem to have put her quite out of conceit with the old order of things already. I shouldn't be at all surprised to see her turn out, some fine morning, in that delightfully picturesque costume of yours."

"Ah, wouldn't she look nice in it?" said Dora, with an added sparkle in her eyes at the very thought of such a

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conversion. "That's all that's wanted to make her quite the prettiest girl on the island."

"Save one," retorted Sir Harry, "but then, of course, you speak unselfishly."

"I'm afraid you've brought at least one of the bad habits of fashionable Society with you," replied Dora demurely, but yet flushing rosy red again, not altogether with displeasure. "But suppose we walk a little faster. There is Mr. Adams beckoning to us. They're waiting to show you the way into the crater."

It will not be difficult to surmise, from the tone of this conversation that the young Lord of Seaton Abbey was in a fair way of meeting his fate in the far-away spot to which the Fates and his disabled yacht had brought him. What the course of his future fortune might have been, if what, on his part at least was something more than a chance flirtation, had been allowed to pursue its course in peace, can never be known, for only a few hours after they were walking, laughing and chatting thus up the mountain side, there fell, like a bolt from the blue, a swift and sudden calamity upon the little community of Utopia, which woke it with awful suddenness and violence from its dream of Paradise on earth.

The party dined together in the crater of Mount Plato, and then, as before, separated into pairs which seemed to prefer the amusement of independent exploration. Shortly before five, Adams hailed Sir Harry, and said that it was high time for them to set about returning to the plateau, if they didn't want to be left behind. Sir Harry agreed, and promptly sent forth a lusty "Halloo," which echoed round the walls of the crater, as a signal to Wyndham and Violet to join them.

There was no answer. They halloed again, this time in chorus, and only the echoes replied. Then on consultation, they learned that none of them had seen the missing pair all the afternoon. Fearing that they might have strayed away and got lost, they made a rapid exploration of the crater, and then, not finding them there, went out on to the mountain side, and continued their search, Adams and Sir Harry still hallooing as they went.

They searched for an hour without success, and then, when the four met once more at the entrance to the crater, as the sun was beginning to sink behind the opposite western wall, Adams said, "It's no use. They must have gone back to the others for some reason, and yet—I can't understand why they should have done so. Why, what's the matter, Sir Harry? Are you ill?"

"Look! Look!" cried Sir Harry, whose ruddy, bronzed face had suddenly turned to an almost ashen colour. He grasped him by the arm as he spoke, and turned him half round, pointing with his other hand to the secondary cone which Dora had rightly named the Mount Mystery. Instantly all eyes were fixed in a silent stare of amazement and horror on the round ragged hole that marked the smaller crater.

Out of the black depths, they saw, soaring swiftly and vertically upwards, the strange shape of the mysterious air-ship which Sir Harry and the Lieutenant had seen crossing the hills a week before. They thought they made out something white moving to and fro on its deck. It seemed to sway violently about for a moment or two, and then pitch headlong out of sight into the black gulf beneath. The next moment the air-ship leapt several hundred feet up into the air, and then in a long sweeping upward curve, darted away out over the sea to the north-westward.

(To be continued next week.)

WE MEET, BOW, SMILE, PASS.

I HAD been living since my birth, fifty-five years ago, in an old-fashioned house left to me by my father. It contained several apartments, the best of them rented to the family of an old schoolfellow of mine, who had seen some sad days.

A financial crisis had impoverished him, and made it necessary for him to look for less expensive quarters. Being a lonely bachelor, and feeling at home in his family, I invented some excuse for lowering the rent, and thus I kept my friend with me.

His wife and daughter seemed overwhelmed with my kindness, showed great feeling, and I had many invitations to take dinner with them. Who would not have been charmed with so much attention from two beautiful ladies?

My own apartments were on the third floor. I had cut off two rooms from them, which were rented to two sisters. One was a forewoman in a large establishment, the other a weak, gentle girl, who sewed at home, as I judged from seeing her at her window, always with a needle in her hand.

One day she was gone, but I cared nothing about them. The rent was paid promptly, and I had never seen much of them.

New Year's Day was drawing near, and, according to my usual custom, I wandered from shop to shop in search of something original and costly for my little friend, my school-friend's daughter. Little? Why, now she was a young lady, nineteen years old. Next month she would make her *début*, and I must find some pretty jewel to heighten her beauty.

I know she is rather vain and superficial, but all young ladies of her age are more or less vain—and I try to find some excuse for her. The mother, a Society woman, has had very little time to educate the heart of the daughter.

Time will help, I think, as I stop here and there to admire the exquisite gems displayed in the windows to tempt the buyers. Finally, I see just what I want—a ring of rubies and diamonds. I remember how the girl has talked about this very ring with a longing sigh. How could I have overlooked the plain hint that child has given me?

I buy the ring with a childish joy, and have stowed it carefully in my pocket. I walk out of the shop to find myself face to face with the mother and daughter, who, with an enchanting smile and friendly salute, hurry on their way.

I feel like a scholar caught by his teacher with a cigarette in his mouth, and I actually put my hand in my pocket to hide more effectually the surprise it contains.

I wander leisurely home to find the wife of my hall-porter in an excited state.

"Oh, sir, what shall we do?" she says. "The girl on the third floor is very ill, and the doctor has just left saying that she will not probably live another hour."

"She must be taken to the hospital," I answer in a very positive tone. "See to it at once."

I walk upstairs feeling in a certain measure sorry for the poor girl. But I soon forget her. She is only a stranger, and, no doubt, better dead than suffering, and the hospital is a very good place, so I have heard.

I now remember my purchase, and, admiring it again in its velvet case, I lock it in my closet to wait for the happy New Year's day.

Lighting a cigarette, I sit at my window, dreaming of days gone by, when I had thought of a plain gold ring to adorn a dear little white hand. I was only a student then, and full of enthusiasm. My father's objection cooled my warm heart, and I soon became an inveterate bachelor, and a very selfish man, with only my own pleasure to consider, and no one to care for. Some men are far less fortunate.

And so I sit and forget even time. In a week and a half it will be the New Year. I am invited to my friend's for the Christmas dinner the day after to-morrow.

The bell rings suddenly, and with an unwonted violence. Who can it be? Rose, my old housekeeper—she has been thirty-seven years with my family—opens the sitting-room door and says:

"Please, sir, a lady wants to see you."

"Let her come in, Rose." I rise to meet the visitor, but a flush of annoyance comes to my face; it is my third floor lodger.

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"What can I do for you, madam?"

"A great deal, sir. Please, oh, please, take back the order to send my sister to the hospital! I could not go with her, and it would kill her."

I look at the tall, dignified figure before me. She stands because I have not offered her a seat. Where is my courtesy? I am ashamed, and I hastily push an arm-chair toward her.

"No, thank you; my sister is ill and needs me. I have only time to come and tell you that she cannot leave the house."

Her tone vexes me, it is so decided.

"I beg your pardon, she must go, for I do not wish to have a death in my house, especially not in these days when my friends——."

But, heavens! what is that? The woman reels, and I have barely time to prevent her from falling to the ground. What a brute I am! How could I speak so carelessly about a death which would leave her all alone, and take from her her dearest and best friend. I should never, never forgive myself.

Rose is near at hand, and with her help I am soon relieved by seeing Miss Casanova open her eyes again. As soon as she is about to stand, she says, in a low but cold voice, "I am sorry. Pardon the trouble I have given you, sir," and, without another word, she walks out like one in a dream, with a terribly bitter smile on her lips.

I felt so guilty that I stood like a statue, without a word of apology. When she was out of sight I felt vexed at the part I had played in the tragedy, and to console myself I went down to my friend's to talk it over.

Just as I was about to pull the bell, the door was opened by the maid, who was letting out a messenger with some parcels. I was such an everyday guest that she allowed me to step into the drawing-room and went about her own work.

This room was divided from a second one by a portière. Hearing voices in the next room I concluded that there was a visitor there, and I sat down, busy with my own perplexity, and waited for the lady of the house. Ten minutes must have passed, when I was recalled to myself by the sound of my own name. I rose voluntarily, but no one came, and I sat down again, while the voice went on:

"I'm sure I don't mind the harmless old fool, mamma, but can't we have one New Year's dinner without him? We need another lady if you insist on having him, and our dining-room is not very large."

"But, child," I hear the mother say, "how can we offend him? I do not care to have him, but he always sends such nice presents and flowers. And then he might raise the rent. Papa says we must be polite."

Since my dear mother's death, though it is long ago, I have never felt so lonely and forlorn as now. I must go out, I must walk, I must see people. I rush down the stairs, and, in my impetuosity, nearly knock down two men who are coming in.

The hall-porter's wife directs them upstairs, and, turning to me, she said:

"The cab from the hospital."

I forget my age and my usually dignified walk, and hurry up stairs, calling all the way, "Stop! Wait! Do not go on!" And I heave a sigh of intense relief as one man turns his head. They wait, I actually believe, with a suspicion that I am out of my mind, for I hold my hat in my hand and must look almost wild with excitement.

The men accepted my explanation, thanking me politely, and depart with a lurking doubt as to my sanity. But what do I care? The poor girl is safe. I wonder how she is. Perhaps she knows of my heartlessness and dreads the arrival of the ambulance. Will Miss Casanova ever forgive me? She looks so proud—like a queen more than like a bread-winner.

Presently the doctor comes into my library. I find that he is an acquaintance of mine.

"How is the invalid?"

"She has pneumonia, but I am glad to see a slight change for the better to-night."

"Thank God!" I say with a profoundly sincere accent.

"I did not know you were acquainted with them."

"Poor girls. I do not know them, but I am sorry for the poor sufferer."

"The sufferer, as you call her, is the least to be pitied. The older one is a heroine. I knew her in Florence when she was still the much-sought daughter of the rich banker Casanova.

"He had a second wife, and a little girl by this second marriage. Do you remember his complete ruin? It was followed by his death. His wife became an invalid from sorrow, and Miss Casanova, left with two helpless people on her hands, sought in vain for paying work.

"Florence attracted her, and she decided to try a place where no one knew of her former life. She began at the very beginning, living a life of sacrifice, but soon reaching a better position by her industry and intelligence.

"The mother died, blessing the faithful heart, sure that the delicate child left in her sister's care would be safe, and I shall spare no trouble to cure her."

And these were the women I wanted to send away!

I thanked the doctor, and begged him to let me know if I could do anything for my lodger. Then, under a sudden burst of confidence, I confessed to the doctor my heartlessness, and how I had deeply regretted my behaviour. Would Miss Casanova ever forgive me?

The doctor looked almost severe, and rising, said: "Try and make amends by leaving the two ladies from this time unmolested."

He said good-bye without much cordiality.

The next day a bouquet was bought of beautiful fresh-cut roses. It was intended for my friends downstairs, but I sent it to Miss Casanova. It came back with regrets:

"The perfume might hurt her sick sister."

A proud girl, Miss Casanova. I never asked after them, but I allowed Rose to give me news, which she did so discreetly that it seemed quite her own wish to inform me, while I was really thinking of nothing else all day.

The summons came to me from downstairs, but I pleaded a bad cold, and ate my lonely dinner with gusto, to the high delight of Rose, who could hardly believe it to be true. The invalid became daily better.

New Year's Eve arrived, and I heard that all danger was passed, with as much pleasure as if she had been a near and dear relative. Rose was the bearer of the good news. Then she confessed that she had carried the sick young lady every day some broth, chicken, or mutton, also beef-tea. To-day she had broiled a little leg of chicken. I listen, then I jump up.

"And she has not refused?" I break out. "Not refused? She has accepted, Rose?"

"Yes, sir, and to-day she has gone to take some work to the shop; so I sat with the dear, sweet young lady in order that she might not be left alone."

"Oh, you dear, good Rose! Then you have softened the cruelty of your master?"

Somehow I do not care now to be alone. Of course I sent an excuse for my absence from the New Year's dinner of my old friend. I enjoy better eating by myself.

A year has gone. Where is the poor, lonely, tolerated bachelor? Alas! he is no more.

He sits gravely, a happy husband, and nods joyfully at Rose as she announces dinner.

"Doctor, your arm to Miss Casanova, and take her to dinner."

"Miss Casanova" is a dainty, delicate little damsel, for the other Miss Casanova is my own sweet wife. She has forgiven me.

Rose, all smiles, stands in the door. I really believe she is as happy as we are.

As the doctor is to be my brother-in-law, he has decided to lay down his arms, and be as forgiving as the rest. My friend downstairs is still there, but he leaves soon in order to make room for us. We meet, we bow, we smile, and pass.

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AFRAID OF HER DINNER.

"Only a coward," said General Sir Thomas Picton, "will boast that he was never afraid." These are remarkable words to come from a man like him. Whatever Sir Thomas's faults may have been, timidity was not among them, as he proved down to the moment when he fell at Waterloo. We have heard of great generals afraid to cross a narrow bridge. The famous Duke of Marlborough was afraid of his wife, and with good reason. Some folks are afraid of ghosts, and some of new ideas. Here is a lady who was afraid to eat. Most of us will face a good dinner with a fair amount of courage; but we, luckily, are not in the condition of Mrs. Lucy Booth, at the time of which she writes.

"In the spring of 1888," she says, "I began to feel weak and ailing. My appetite was poor, and after all I ate I had great pain at the chest and left side. My hands and feet were cold and clammy, and I was so pale that I seemed to have no blood left in me. As time went on I got worse and worse, and became afraid to eat owing to the pain. I got so weak that I could scarcely get about. I saw a doctor from time to time, who gave me medicine, but I got no better. I also went to Nantwich for change of air, but nothing did me any good. After suffering in this way for nearly a year, my father persuaded me to try a medicine that had cured him, called Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. After I had taken one bottle of it I felt relief, and by continuing its use a short time all pain left me, and I gained back my old strength. My husband, who had suffered from indigestion for years, has been benefited by the same medicine. Whenever we ail anything, a few doses of Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup soon set us right. You may make what use you like of this statement. (Signed) (Mrs.) Lucy Booth, 6, Union Street, Runcorn, February 9th, 1894."

After reading this story, nobody, we are sure, will criticise Mrs. Booth because she was afraid to eat. One is not a coward because he refuses to swallow poison, and that's what food soon becomes when it lies in the stomach without being digested. Cautious people frequently keep firearms in their bedrooms as a defence against intruders. Mrs. Booth is armed with Mother Seigel's Syrup against indigestion and dyspepsia, an enemy more to be dreaded than any midnight thief.

Now, lay to heart the simple thing I am going to tell you:—Nature, the wise mother of us all, never makes it hard to do what is necessary to be done. Not a bit. On the contrary, she makes necessary things easy and pleasant to do. You breathe without thinking of it; your heart beats without any supervision or care on your part; when you are thirsty she makes it a pure delight to drink; when you are tired and weary she lays her soft hand upon your face, and whispers, "*Sleep, my child, sleep, and forget the world!*" When you need food she stirs up within you what we (lacking a better word) call an appetite, and eating becomes a supreme satisfaction.

Well, then, what are we to think of ourselves when we turn from food as a woman turns from her dead baby? Why, this, to be sure: that something has outraged and thwarted nature. What has done it? The disease called indigestion or dyspepsia. "Oh," you say, "we know all about that; it never kills anybody." Doesn't it? Does famine never kill anybody? What filled the air of Ireland with wailing and keening away back in 1848? What—but, pshaw!—the point is sharp enough to prick your fingers.

Whether a man is hungry and has no food, or has plenty of food, but is prevented by disease from eating and digesting it—*he starves just the same.* "In nine-tenths of all fatal cases of disease," says an eminent medical writer, "the final cause of death is starvation. The digestion fails, and death ensues sooner or later. The human body must succumb unless constantly sustained by food."

True, and dyspepsia is slow starvation—the source of most of the other diseases that fill us with pain and misery.

As a cure, I point to the record of Mother Seigel's Syrup.

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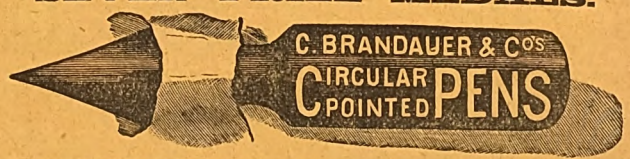

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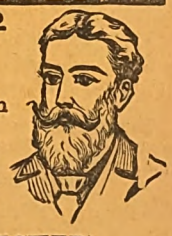

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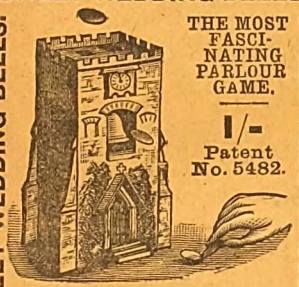

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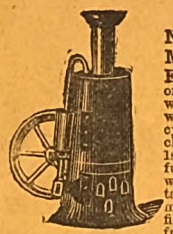

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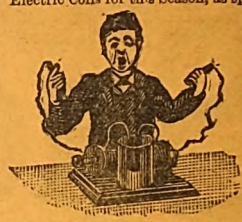

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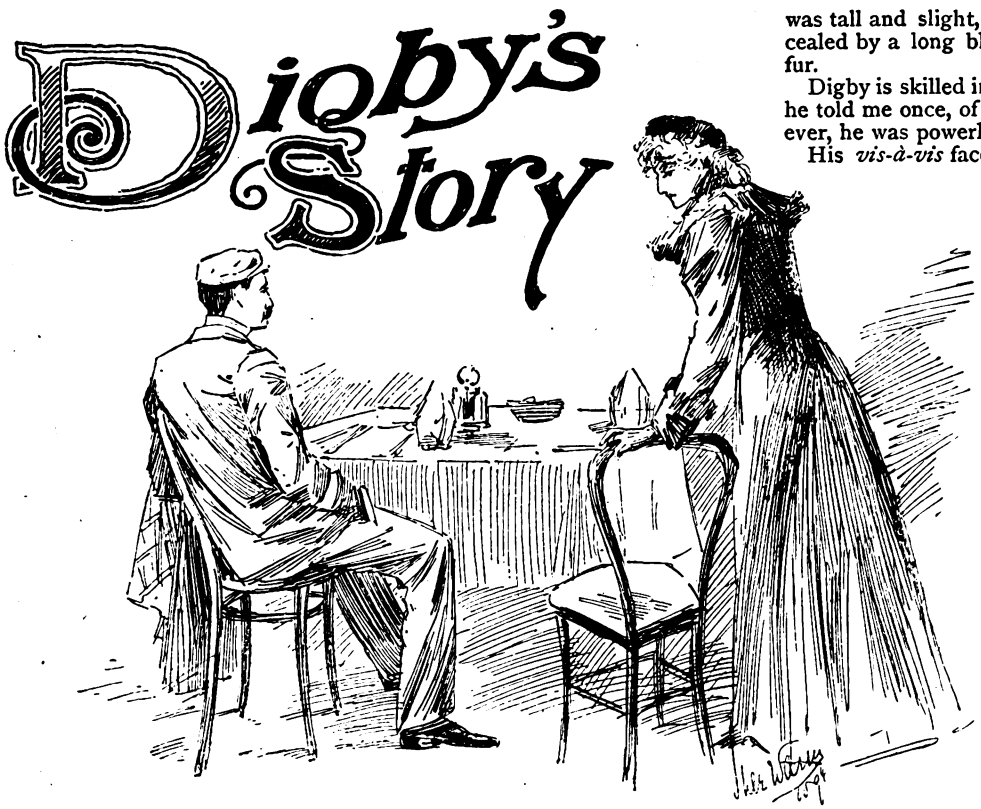
SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 302. *FOR THE WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 13, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.



WE all looked up to Digby as a journalist. He wrote leading articles for the *Times* and the *Daily Telegraph*. He was also a constant contributor to all the best monthly magazines, or at least he said he was.

Digby's masterpiece was written in collaboration with a woman. The story was drafted supernaturally. It was Sir Arthur Sullivan who said that he always composed his best things while travelling in a train. Digby said this was because music must be written on lines. Digby was a second Sullivan, only he wrote prose with the help of a synonym dictionary. His knowledge of the Muse was limited to two brief terms—Bars and Bass. He used these frequently.

Digby had settled himself down in a first-class carriage on the Paris express, with a complacent, self-satisfied air. Cannes was growing unbearable. He was tired of the dust and the constant glare of the Riviera.

Besides, the prospect of having the compartment to himself as far as Paris was a pleasing one.

At Marseilles the express pulled up. Every one got out. There was a stampede down the platform towards the dining-room. Digby hesitated. If he got out somebody else would be sure to get in. However——

One table was unoccupied near the door. He sat down and ordered soup with a bottle of white wine. There was a rustle of a lady's skirt behind him. The next moment the other seat was taken.

He glanced up and his eyes dwelt appreciatively, if somewhat presumptuously, on his companion's bewildering beauty. She was tall and slight, and her travelling dress was concealed by a long blue ulster turned down with silver fur.

Digby is skilled in physiognomy. It is an attribute, he told me once, of every journalist. For once, however, he was powerless before a human conundrum.

His *vis-à-vis* face was deathly white: her lustrous black eyes met his with a hunted, distrustful look which added to the unaccountable interest her unusual appearance had aroused. He noticed the black circles which emphasised their brilliancy, and the dusty, travel-stained appearance of her dress.

Her golden-brown hair, knotted low down on the graceful curve of her neck, escaped rebelliously from under a round cap of dark fur with such profusion that Digby felt a momentary annoyance that she did not take the opportunity to retire and make herself tidy. Ten minutes before a looking-glass, and he felt she would be one of the most beautiful women he had ever seen. Her features were small and clearly cut; her teeth perfectly white and even.

After the first, half-defiant glance, his strange companion studiously avoided looking across the table, although she was plainly conscious whenever Digby's gaze lighted on her.

The girl's refined face and manners were belied by her uncared-for appearance, and the first thing which struck Digby was that she was a lady, but certainly neither English nor French.

She paid her bill without a word, and then, as she stooped forward and picked out half-a-dozen Turkish cigarettes she gave the first clue to her companion.

"A Russian, of course," commented Digby. He wondered why he had not thought of it before. "A Princess no doubt. A refugee. A Nihilist perhaps——"

A bell rang somewhere in the station. The porters were calling out, "To your carriages; to your carriages." Everybody pushed back their chairs. The Russian lady was without her change, but she did not wait. In an instant the covered way was filled with a jostling crowd. The train appeared to be moving from the platform. For a moment there was a veritable panic among the passengers. Digby made a dash for the nearest carriage. By a stroke of luck he was in his own compartment. Two people followed him. One was an old gentleman with a very red face and white whiskers, who was stout and short of breath; the other the Russian lady.

. . . . . .

Digby wrapped himself in his rugs and took up his book with a sort of mental nod to the outside world with which he had finished for the present. To his vexation, however, the lamp burned dimly and the carriage rocked from one side to the other, making any attempt to read out of the question. He lay back on the cushions watching the beautiful Russian opposite with lazy admiration.

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She put her feet up on the cushions.

Her elbow was on the window ledge and she was staring out into the blackness of the night apparently unconscious of all around her.

Digby was a vain man, and the way in which she appeared to totally ignore his existence offended his susceptibilities. If he could have spoken Russian he would have offered her his paper. It was no good to him in that light. However, he could not speak Russian and his French was doubtful.

If ever a woman had a history written on her face this Russian lady had, Digby began to speculate. Here was something at least to relieve the tedium of the journey. Presently, as he watched, a faint smile played about her lips, and she began nodding her head as though well pleased with her own thoughts.

"What a heroine she would make for a story!" thought Digby. With himself as a hero, of course, he meant, although he did not say so in so many words. I believe it was an understood thing that Digby played a prominent part in all the writings signed by that famous name. He disguised himself, of course. He dressed himself in different clothes, and called himself by different names; and he painted his face and tired his hair—but it was always Digby.

There certainly was the foundation for a romantic story here.

Suddenly Digby started out of his lounging posture, and sat up straight and rigid. Surely he was familiar with that exquisite profile! Surely he had met that Russian lady before! Her face haunted him; her wild eyes, draggled hair, dusty but fashionable clothes! He looked round him dazed and bewildered.

Was he recalling some memory of a forgotten past. The white cushions of the carriage seemed inseparable from the recollection; even the old gentleman in the corner, who had thrown his head back and was snoring quietly, was necessary to complete the old association.

While he was pondering on this subject, an idea for a story suddenly flashed across Digby. A story of love and chivalry and pathos. The heroine was a beautiful woman escaping from Justice—the hero a chivalrous young Englishman, and they met on the Paris express. As if by some touch of magic, the story grew in his mind: the action of the brain was more like remembering than creating. What subtle influences were at work? Was this the first breath of genius? Had one soft glance from those black eyes transformed the chaos of his inner consciousness into a master's mind?

Digby assures me on his honour as a gentleman and a journalist that these thoughts actually occurred to him. He also wondered how much an editor would give him for the story. Fancy such a mercenary thought jumbled up with a psychological mystery!

In something less than an hour the story was drafted by some supernatural agency. Digby felt that it was the best thing he had ever done. I don't think this was saying much. He wondered whether the girl opposite would ever come across the story and recognise herself. At all events she would be flattered. Perhaps she would even be sorry, as she laid it down, that she had not paid more attention to the clever writer as they travelled together in the train. As far as he could tell she had not looked at him once since they sat face to face at the little dining table.

Digby felt as if he ought to thank her for supplying him with such a thrilling plot. He felt the inspiration had in some mysterious way been animated by her presence. Perhaps she had mesmerised him—only their eyes had never met.

Just then he turned and looked out of the window. He told me later that what he discovered was the softest piece of flattery that had ever brought the colour to his cheeks.

The girl was staring at *his* reflection in the window mirrored by the blackness of the night. No wonder she had been so interested. If the old gentleman in the corner had looked up after that, he would have seen two young people staring out of their respective windows, apparently unconscious of one another's existence.

"Gad, that girl's a genius," Digby reflected.

Half-an-hour later, the Russian lady smiled at the flying landscape, shrouded as it was in blackness. Digby smiled too.

The old gentleman woke up, and immediately settled himself down again for another nap. The train pulled up at a station. A porter opened the door and replaced the foot-warmers. A blast of cold air came in. Digby shivered. They were passing from summer to winter.

Presently the Russian lady removed her cap, and pushed back her hair from her forehead. Digby thought that she was the most beautiful woman he had ever seen.

She put up her feet on the cushions and seemed disposed to follow the old gentleman's example. The window was frosted now, and no longer reflected anything. For his own part Digby was annoyed at the inclemency of the weather.

Suddenly there was a loud report. The window was shattered to atoms, and a rain of shot beat against the opposite side of the carriage. If she had been sitting up she must have been killed. The escape was providential. The carriage was filled with broken scraps of glass. The old gentleman sat up with a start. The train rushed on, enveloped in a white mist.

. . . . . .

Three days after he came back from the Riviera I was smoking in Digby's rooms.

"I've sent that story round to *Fly Leaves* office," he said, rubbing his shoulders softly against the mantelpiece. "I wonder what Kendal will think of it?"

"Did you bring in the shooting incident?" I queried.

Digby left the mantelpiece and settled himself on the sofa.

"When truth is stranger than fiction, why not?" he asked, staring down at the fire. "I had mapped out a pretty story, but nothing so artistic as this bold attempt on the Russian girl, as she dashed by in the night when no power on earth could mark the hand that tried to steal her life."

When Digby begins to talk like that I always go. There are some kinds of insanity which are best treated in this way. I could not refrain from putting one question to him, however.

"What happened afterwards?"

"We changed carriages at the next station, and after that she slept as quietly as if nothing had happened until we arrived at

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Paris. I saw her having breakfast. I met her again at Calais: we travelled over in the same boat without speaking a word to one another, although she sometimes looked at me and smiled gratefully for any little attention I paid her. At Victoria, I was determined to make her acquaintance through Cook's interpreter. When I found him she was gone."

Digby broke off abruptly. I could not help feeling sorry for him. What is the good of a hero when the heroine has disappeared?

. . . . . .

A fortnight slipped by, and one morning I met Digby in Regent Street. He appeared very excited.

"Digby, old man," I asked, "what's the matter?"

"Matter? Read this!"

He put a letter in my hand which was signed by Mr. Kendal, the editor of *Fly Leaves*.

"DEAR SIR,—I should esteem it a favour if you would call on me at the office some time to-morrow. Your story—if I may be allowed to say so—is one of the best I have ever considered for insertion in my periodical. By some strange coincidence, however, the same story reached me from a different source two days previously. I feel sure that you will consider that I am only justified in asking for an explanation of the coincidence, as I understood that the story was original.—Yours,

"T. H. KENDAL."

"Sell for you, Digby," I said, folding up the letter and handing it back to him. "Jolly well serves you right. I thought the story was too good to have come from your inner consciousness. It was a translation, I suppose——"

I looked up at Digby. He was leaning against a lamp-post as white as death. Before I had time to realise what he was about to do he had sprung forward and hit me across the face.

He had sprung forward and hit me across the face.

"How dare you?" he shouted. "You coward!"

For a moment I hesitated, the blood mounting to my cheeks and forehead. Then I held out my hand.

"I beg your pardon, Digby. I didn't know——"

"It's for me to apologise," he said quickly, taking my hand with a sharp, indrawn breath. "I don't wonder that you thought badly of me. I was dumfounded myself when I received this letter. I accused myself. I ransacked my memory for some old story I might unconsciously have plagiarised. But I am innocent. I swear I am innocent. It is my story—my masterpiece!" and he turned away and began walking quickly down the street, his hat a little further back, his umbrella tightly clutched, his whole body vibrating.

. . . . . .

He presented himself at the office with a clear conscience, but positively without a suggestion to offer for the coincidence.

The editor leant back in his chair and regarded him curiously.

"Where did you get your plot from?" he asked, rubbing his fat hands together, and spreading the manuscript out by the side of another in a running feminine hand which was opened on his desk.

"It is entirely a work of imagination; the characters are from real life. One incident in the story alone is taken from an experience which I went through myself."

"I must accept your word for it, of course, Mr. Digby," said the editor rather rudely. "Only"—he got up and began pacing up and down the room with quick short strides—"the affair is—ahem! so extraordinary, that I think you will understand me when I say that I can hardly bring myself to believe that you are not—ahem!—mistaken. The coincidence is not merely in the plot," he continued, seating himself nervously in his great morocco chair and throwing one leg across the other. "The title, in both instances, is word for word, the two principal actors have the same name, the scene is identical, the ending simultaneous, so to speak."

Digby was hardly able to control himself. He was breathing hard and twisting his fingers together.

"Practically, the only difference in the two stories is that the hero and the heroine are reversed. In your novel the lady is escaping from the hands of Justice—in the other the man—hullo! What's that? Excuse me one minute, Mr. Digby," and the presiding genius of the most popular magazine of the day darted out of the room in answer to a whispered communication through the speaking tube.

Digby felt as if he was taking leave of his senses. He paced up and down the room, to and fro, to and fro.

"It is my story," he repeated vaguely, "my masterpiece."

There was a knock at the door, and someone entered rather timidly.

"Monsieur Sardou!—I beg your pardon—I thought Mr. Kendal was disengaged."

Digby swung round. There, standing face to face with him, was the heroine of his story—the Russian princess.

As their eyes met, a faint flush swept across her beautiful cheeks and suffused her neck.

Her companion felt his heart beating wildly. He stared at her quite breathless, and his face convulsed.

"Can you speak English?" he faltered. "I thought——"

The girl had quite recovered her self-possession. She lifted a little heap of proofs from a chair and seated herself, drawing off her gloves in a mechanical way.

"Speak English? Of course, it is my native tongue," with a little nervous laugh, "but you—I thought Monsieur Sardou only spoke French."

"Monsieur Sardou! My name is Digby!"

The girl's face underwent an extraordinary change, the smile died from her lips, her eyebrows contracted in evident perplexity.

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Sardou was a Frenchman, banished for political intrigue, and a murderer to boot, who was practically running the gauntlet of the police force of the world. She had heard one person at Marseilles whisper to another—

"See! There is Sardou! Heavens, what nerve the man has got!"

In an instant her interest was aroused. She had been thrilled by his presence, awed by his daring. As a journalist who had been six months in Russia as the special correspondent of the *Morning News*, she would have given her head to interview him there and then, only she could not speak French. And after all, the little romance she had built up was scattered to the winds!

"You are not Sardou?" she repeated incredulously, bending forward and looking at him curiously.

"Good heavens! Nothing of the sort."

There was a moment's silence, and then the girl rose and held out her hand.

"I feel I ought to apologise for mistaking you for that wretch. I ought to have known better. May I ask why you thought that I could not speak English?"

If Digby had been a truthful man he would have said:

"Because you were so disreputably untidy." His journalistic training, however, saved him from this.

"Because I thought that only a Russian could be so beautiful," he said, holding her hand perhaps a trifle longer than was absolutely necessary. "And—well, you know, only the new woman smokes cigarettes."

"It never occurred to you, I suppose, that those were for the porter who was looking after my luggage."

Digby honestly confessed that it had not.

Devoid of the glamour their imaginations had thrown over two very ordinary young people, they both felt disappointed, or, as Digby explained to me later: "Like a man going home at nine o'clock in the morning, in his dress clothes, after a night out."

"Then, I suppose that gun was not fired purposely at you?" remarked Digby sadly, leaning against the desk and gnawing his fingers.

"Nor at you? It's rather sickening, isn't it. To tell you the truth, I've written a story——"

Seizing her hand, and shaking it up and down.

Digby sprang forward, the colour burning high on his cheeks.

"Thank heaven!" he exclaimed earnestly. "I thought I was going mad."

She rose to her feet feeling that something was going to happen. Her legs swayed slightly.

They looked thunderstruck at one another.

"What do you mean?"

"Mean?" Digby shouted, seizing her by the hand, and shaking it up and down, as if he had known her all her life. "Why, I've written a story, too. And they are both here—here on this desk," and he sank down in a chair.

Presently he looked up.

"You called your story

'IN THE PARIS EXPRESS;
THE ADVENTURE OF A FAMOUS REFUGEE'?"

She made the sign "yes," nodding her head.

"And you got your hero's name from——"

"The label on your bag!"

"Great heavens! So did I. But the main incidents of the plot——"

"They unrolled themselves as we went along. The whole thing came to me like a flash."

"Ah, then it was mesmerism! The story was floating in the air. We both got it simultaneously."

. . . . . .

"The question is," observed Mr. Kendal, looking from one to the other, and tapping his teeth with an ivory penknife, "whose story is it?"

"Miss——?"

"Miss Tionary."

"Miss Tionary's, of course," said Digby gallantly. "If it had not been for her it would never have been written. Besides, I plagiarised from her by the force of a stronger will."

Miss Tionary laughed.

"How do you know? Possibly, I stole it from you. What a psychological conundrum!"

Mr. Kendal got up nervously.

"Perhaps," he said, taking up the two manuscripts, "if I might be allowed to suggest that you should collaborate and make a novel of it. The truth is, Mr. Digby has made the most of his heroine—Miss Tionary of her hero. Put them both together, and you will have such a story as has never before been published."

Digby looked at his "Russian Princess," and she looked at him and smiled consent. Then they both went off with each other's manuscript under their arms with an agreement to meet in a week's time and talk the matter over.

Three days later I found Digby, with a dangerous gleam in his eye, composing the following letter:

"DEAR MISS TIONARY,—On reading through your story I do not see that anything could be taken from it with the idea of improving my original plot. If such an insufferable prig as you have succeeded in depicting is your idea of a hero, I can only regret that anything about me should have been the means of suggesting his character to you.
—Yours truly, A. S. D."

The following morning he received a note from Miss Tionary, which had evidently crossed his own:

"DEAR MR. DIGBY,—The similarity between our two stories is really wonderful, only mine is better as it stands, don't you think, without any alterations? Your idea of a heroine shows how very little you really understand a woman, and I am sorry that I should have been the means of suggesting to your mind a woman at once so passionate and so weak. I may not be anything very grand, but I do flatter myself I am not quite so insipid and colourless as you make out. Perhaps we had better not collaborate. Shall I destroy your MSS.?—Yours faithfully,
"H. H. T."

. . . . . .

Of course I could not allow this sort of thing to go on. I suggested to Digby that it would certainly be better for each to write about themselves and leave the other out. Perhaps, after marriage they might understand one another better, and, by Jove! they took the hint.

The papers were silent about the shot which was fired at the Russian princess. It never seemed possible to me that it could have been premeditated. Probably some belated sportsman after little birds, or—but what is the use of conjecture?

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THE BARONESS ROSA VITA.

IN the Rue St. Marc, in the centre of the business quarter of Paris, may be found, niched in amongst lofty tenement houses where hundreds of small manufacturers carry on their occupations, a small, two-storey house, dingy and black with age, yet not devoid of a certain picturesqueness due to its antiquity and to its tumble-down condition.

It was pretty to look at in the spring, when the moss on the dilapidated roof was fresh and green, and there was a bouquet of crocuses or of violets at the window. And at all seasons there were clean curtains everywhere, for the grave old maid who lived there, all alone with her young niece Denise, was as neat and particular in her ways as anyone could be.

She was a native of Normandy, was the older woman, Marthe Durand, but she had lived so long in Paris that few of her acquaintances were aware of the fact that she had been born near Etretat, and that her earliest recollections were of the sound and the salt breezes of the grand, vast sea. She was an embroideress, and a skilful workwoman, so her services were in great request amongst the leading dressmakers.

Like Marthe, Denise was tall and slender, but her complexion had the pure white and delicate rosiness of the natives of a northern clime, and her features, though attenuated, were finely outlined, and had a stamp of distinction unknown to the severe countenance of the older woman.

A slight degree of mystery had always hung round Denise's origin. The older members of the quarter could remember her advent, fifteen years before, and how she had been brought to her aunt's house, gorgeous in velvet and embroidery, in charge of a servant in livery.

But Marthe Durand was the most taciturn of human beings. There was a dignity about her that repelled all efforts at questioning or even at gossip, so the parentage and origin of Denise remained enveloped in an impenetrable mystery.

The pretty child grew into a graceful girlhood, as carefully guarded and tended as the daughter of the highest lady of the land. She was the one creature on earth that had been given to Marthe to love, and the grave, quiet woman adored her with a deep and exclusive and all-absorbing tenderness which seemed to concentrate in itself all the affection that a woman usually bestows on her husband and her children.

Of relatives Marthe apparently had none. There was talk of a sister much younger than herself, who had taken to evil courses many years before, but those who knew anything of the matter always declared that that sister was dead. At all events, no visitors ever came to disturb the quiet course of life in the little house on the Rue St. Marc.

Denise was educated in a convent in the neighbourhood till she was past fifteen, and then her aunt took her home to teach her her own trade of embroidering. It was delicate, refined work, fit for the dainty fingers of the little maiden, and she made rapid progress, promising in time not only to equal, but even to surpass, her instructor.

It was a bright, cold Saturday afternoon in January, and the little sitting-room, despite a sprinkling of snow outside—the remains of a recent snowstorm—looked cheery and comfortable. A movable stove—a recent extravagance on the part of Marthe, who could not bear to see her darling shiver over her work on the sharp winter mornings—tempered the air with its genial warmth. Denise had just completed a splendid group of white and purple lilacs, worked on mauve satin, and was holding up her work to admire it prior to folding it up for transmission to its owner, and Marthe was bustling about setting the room to rights, when there came a knock at the door.

And without further waiting for anyone to open, the door was thrown ajar, and a superbly-dressed personage walked in, and said, in a loud, confident tone:

"Good day to everybody!"

The new-comer was tall and stout, and showy-looking—a woman not yet past middle age, but showing in face and figure the damaging effects of a life of dissipation.

The profuse masses of her elaborately-arranged locks were of a pale-canary hue, produced evidently by the application of some fashionable dye. Her cheeks were pink, and her brow and throat were white, and her lips were scarlet—not with the wholesome colouring of Nature, but through the skilled use of rouge, pearl-white, and lip-salve.

Deep bluish shadows under her eyes served to throw out their natural lustre and colouring. But her features were fine, and her walk and carriage were striking; and, above all, her dress was a model of fashionable material and elegance and stylish make, and she wore it with the ease of one who understands how to set off such attire.

Marthe paused in her occupation, and stared at the new-comer with such an expression of ghastly terror as her face might have worn had her showy visitor been a ghost, while Denise laid aside her work and hastened to bring forward a chair.

Private orders for embroideries had not been unknown to the busy aunt and niece, and were always welcomed as being more lucrative than those received from the great dressmaking establishments, and Denise fancied that in the intruder she recognised a possible customer.

"Well, Marthe, you don't seem to recognise me," said the visitor, seating herself. "Lord! woman, how old you've grown! And this is Denise, I suppose. Come here, child, and let me look at you. Upon my word, you have grown into a pretty creature. Not equal to what I was at your age, but still not bad to have been trained up by a workwoman."

"Catherine, what brings you here?" were the first words that burst from the pale lips of Marthe.

"Hush! Don't call me Catherine—the Baroness Rosa Vita, if you please. I have not answered to the name of Catherine for many a long day. You might be a little more civil, I think, to your only sister, when she comes to see you after all these years."

"But what do you want? Why are you here at all?"

"What do I want? I want my daughter, *parbleu!* and I have come to claim her!"

Marthe started forward with a hoarse cry.

"No—no! You cannot—you must not do that! When I consented to take charge of Denise, fifteen years ago, you promised me——"

"Ta-ta-ta! What are promises worth unless they are written on stamped paper and duly witnessed? Not so much as the stale crust on last week's pies. Come here, Denise, and give your mother a kiss."

And she carefully presented her right ear to the caress of the eager girl.

"Mother! So you are really my mother?" stammered Denise, longing to clasp in her arms the stout, strongly-corseted figure before her.

"Really and truly, little one. Not a good name for you, that, I must confess, so tall as you have grown. But you are fresh and childish enough to do the baby to perfection, and that is what I want."

She put her head on one side and contemplated Denise critically, and went on:

"Yes, in a straight dress of white tulle, open at the throat,

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and a Directoire sash in white crape, you'll just look a picture. I never could wear Directoire sashes myself—too stout, my dressmaker says. And to think that when I was your age, Denise, I was as slight as you are now! And do you think you will like to come and live with mamma, little one?"

"Oh, yes—yes!" cried Denise, drawing closer to this unknown and gorgeous being who declared herself to be her mother.

"You'll have a fine time of it, mademoiselle, I'll promise you. Lots of new dresses, and drives in the Bois, and boxes at all the theatres, and dances and *soirées*. And all you'll have to do in return will be to sit in my drawing-room in the evening and smile prettily at my visitors. When will you be ready to go with me? No need of packing up; none of the clothes you have here will be wanted. Come along, child. Don't stand staring there, but wrap yourself up, and we'll get into my carriage and drive straight off to the dressmaker's."

During this time Marthe had sat motionless, as though stunned, with a grey shadow like that of death resting upon her rigid features. But at that moment she started up and caught the speaker by the arm.

"Catherine! Catherine!" she said, "you must not—you cannot be so wicked! What! take Denise from me; and for what purpose! The innocent child whose life has been as pure as a snowflake. Oh, Lord! have you no pity on your own flesh and blood?"

"Now, look here, Marthe," said her sister, disengaging her arm, "no heroics, if you please. The law gives me full rights over the girl, and I mean to use them. Look here! I have a baccarat table in my drawing-room on my Thursday evenings, and so far the police have been kept in the dark about the big amounts that have been won and lost there. But my visitors are dropping off.

"Tatia Topaze has set up a rival gaming-table, and she is newer than I, though not so pretty as I was ten years ago. But I want a new attraction for my *soirées*—something pretty and unsophisticated—and Denise here is just the thing."

"You shall not take her—no, no; you shall not!" ranted the elder woman, her face white to the very lips.

"I shan't, shan't I? I'll soon see to that. You idiot of a woman, don't you know that the law gives me full control over my own daughter till she is of age? Yes, you adopted her, that's true, but altogether informally—not so much as a scratch of the pen to prove it or to give you a hold over her. And I want her now, and I mean to have her. Run alone, Denise, and get your cloak. Or, no—I'll lend you my carriage cloak till we can drive to the Bon Marché and buy you something."

With an exclamation of delight, Denise started to obey her mother's order; but Marthe, regaining her composure by a strong effort, interposed to prevent her.

"Not this evening—not just now," she said in a calmer tone. "You have the law on your side, Catherine, and I'll submit. Only let Denise stay with me till to-morrow. Remember, she has been like my own child to me all these years, and it is not much I ask—only a few hours in which to get used to the fact that I must part with her."

The girl, sweet and loving even amid the dazzle of her changed circumstances, stole to the side of Marthe, and threw her arms round her neck.

"Let it be as auntie says, mamma," she said coaxingly. "Leave me with her now, and come for me to-morrow morning."

"Well, perhaps that would be better," said the so-called baroness reflectively. "I can bring you a dress and hat, and have you trimmed up a little before we start out together. I don't exactly like the idea of driving about the streets with a girl in a calico frock and no hat on. So you can keep Denise till to-morrow morning, Marthe. I will call for her at eleven o'clock. And mind—there will be no use in your trying to spirit her away. I'll have a detective on the watch till I get back."

"No need, mamma," laughed the girl joyously. "I would not run away from you, even if auntie bade me."

"Then be ready at eleven, and take care to have your hair nicely brushed. I'll see to the rest." And the baroness left.

As the outer door closed behind the retreating footsteps of the visitor, Marthe raised her head and looked at Denise with a dull, stony stare, which the girl, flushed with excitement, did not notice.

"Oh, auntie, was there ever anything so wonderful in the world? My mamma! my own mother! and a baroness! And how many pretty things I shall have, and what a charming life I am going to lead! Drives and parties and the theatre, and, perhaps, even the opera! Do you think she will take me to the opera, auntie? But why do you look so downcast? You are not going to lose your little Denise—not really, you know.

"I shall come to visit you every day or two, and you must come and see all my new dresses. And I shall have so much to tell you. I really wanted to stay quiet this evening, just to think it all over. But where has my mother been all these years, and why did she never come for me before?"

"Be patient, Denise. To-morrow you shall know everything. It is growing late now, and we must think about dinner. It must be a little feast, as it is the last one we shall take together. Come, and we will go out and buy something nice."

The plain little deal table in Marthe Durand's living room had never before seen such a banquet as that set out upon it that evening—chicken and canned asparagus, and great hot-house strawberries and bonbons, and even a small bottle of champagne being included in the repast.

Denise, gay as a lark in the delight of her brilliant anticipations, laughed and chattered and feasted, until, when dinner was ended, and the dishes put away, she declared merrily that she felt too fatigued to sit up for another minute.

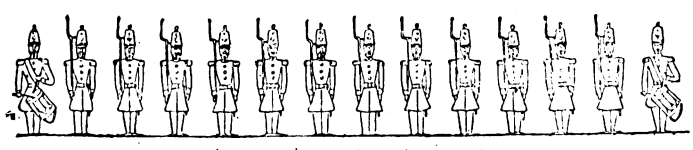
"May I have the movable stove in my room to undress by, Aunt Marthe?" she inquired. "It is so very cold, and you know this is my last evening, so you must pet me all that you can."

Without a word her aunt helped her to roll the stove into the bedroom, and to place it in the fireplace, with its pipe well installed in the chimney. A hurried undressing and a brief murmur of prayer, and then the fair young face lay back on the pillow in the sweet dreamless sleep of healthy youth. Marthe stole noiselessly to the bedside and gazed on the sleeping girl with a glance of unutterable love and anguish.

"There is but one way," she muttered. "My Denise, my sweet little one, and I must choose for you between death and eternal destruction. Your pure feet shall never tread the downward road that leads to everlasting fire. As for me, I am to stand before the Judgment Seat a murderess and a suicide. But what need I care for that? Let Hell be mine so that you may have Paradise and peace with the angels. I snatch you, my white lily, from the mire that is at hand. Sleep, Denise, sleep, and awake to-morrow in heaven!"

She laid her strong hands on the portable stove and turned it round, so that the full flow of death-dealing gas from the pipe might escape into the apartment. Then she crept into bed beside Denise, gathered the sleeping girl tenderly into her arms, and the golden head and the grey were pillowed side by side.

Once or twice a light spasm contracted the features of the older woman, but that passed away after a while, and the pair soon lay in the silence of a slumber that never should be broken till the dawn of the resurrection morning.



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THE FATAL DICE-BOX.

IT was night in the Sierra Madre of Mexico, and I swung in a hammock under the wide portico of a rude building, my home for the time being, known as the Hacienda de Carmen, although not worthy of the name; so called, however, by the people of the camp, who dreamed, as myself, of the future of reduction works and numerous buildings to be erected from the proceeds of the white metal that we were gouging so slowly from the rocky fastnesses of Nature.

The house, built on a precipitous bluff that rose abruptly from the bed of the cañon, rested on the extreme edge and commanded a view down the wild, rocky gorge that stretched away some two miles to a small, mountain-hemmed valley lying thousands of feet below.

At the foot of the bluff a mountain stream rushed and bounded round and over boulders of gigantic size, and then fell gently in cascade after cascade into some deep, still pool, only to break away and wind on down the cañon in its mad rush for the sea, seeming, in the glimmer of the moonlight, like some enormous silver snake.

With the music of the waters came the soughing of the pines, as the cool evening breeze swept gently up from the valley, bringing also a murmur of voices from the camp far below, and the shrill creaking of the whim as it revolved at the mouth of the shaft on the mountain side, where, in the glare of a pine wood fire, the dusky forms of the men could be seen as they tramped round and round, slowly winding on a massive drum a seemingly endless rope from the bowels of the earth. And as my hammock gently swayed I smoked, when—

"Buenos noche, Señor!" And I was called back to reality with a start, to find my foreman, Miguel Soza, with the report and time of the men for the day. After the accounts had been looked over, and I was about to start on another visionary excursion up the Nile, Miguel, who had been for the past few moments leaning against the house and looking down on the camp, removed the inevitable cigarette from his lips and said:

"Caramba, Señor! there is the devil to pay down in the camp. Señora Fernandez, the widow, is wild, Señor; crazy about her pretty daughter, Mariquita, and that Indian chief Romulo, who was seen with her again to-day on the mountain. Chief! Yes, chief of the Tepewanes, but where are his people? Dead; gone all but a handful; and he is so poor, Señor—no maize, no frijoles, and he too proud to work.

"Valgame Dios! It was a sad day for Mariquita when she first went to mass at the little church in Baborigame, nearly three months ago. And, Señor, it was there they first saw each other, and then he followed her here; and to think, Señor, she has been meeting him again after her mother locked her up for a whole week, and gave her nothing to eat but a plate of frijoles and two tortillas each day! And to-night, Señor, she cannot be found; she is not in the camp, and the mother—caramba! Listen, 'tis Mariquita."

And from the trail on the side of the cañon came the strains of a Spanish love song, sung in a sweet, rich girlish voice, accompanied by a guitar. The song swelled out upon the stillness of the night for a moment only, and then was broken by a woman's voice from the camp below:

"Mariquita! Mariquita! picarona, come here! Oh, God of my soul, that I should bring a daughter into the world to love a dog of an Indio! Valgame Dios! but a husband thou shalt have this night—ay, one that can give thy mother one hundred pesos shalt have thee."

"Carrajo, Señor!" said Miguel. "The old devil will sell her daughter. Well, well, I have seen it done before; but Señor, the man—the man—there is no one in the camp—caramba! One hundred pesos! No, Señor, no one man has that much. Los todos muy pobre Dios! Will she raffle her?"

As he ceased speaking a woman's voice wailed out:

"Romulo! Romulo! Love of my soul! Save!" And as we listened from across the cañon came the echo, "Save!"

. . . . . .

Opposite the door stood Mariquita.

I approached the house, a long, sprawling building constructed of poles plastered with mud, and a few Indians gathered round the door made way, with the sordid indifference so peculiar to the race, and I entered a room lighted by two crude tallow candles stuck into the necks of bottles that rested on a small shelf.

A table and a few chairs comprised the furniture, while the walls were void of ornaments of any kind, with the exception of a cheap, highly coloured print of the Madonna, and a rudely carved crucifix hanging above.

Grouped round were some twenty men and women engaged in boisterous conversation, while in a corner opposite the door stood Mariquita, a girl of about sixteen, tall and beautiful, and possessing that languid grace which belongs only to the women of the South. Her dress, a gown of soft material, bright red in colour, had become deranged, and, opening at the bosom, exposed a white chemise that only partly concealed her heaving breast; a wealth of dark hair fell in disorder far below her waist, and from a face oval in shape, and of rich, creamy complexion, flashed eyes black as night.

Her lips, carmine tinted, parted and showed little white teeth, grinding together in anger, as she stood, a child and yet a woman, receiving with silent scorn the storm of abuse which her mother poured forth in a perfect torrent of language.

As I reached the woman I asked her if she really intended to raffle her daughter—for such, from the conversation, I judged to be her purpose.

"Si, Señor—why not? Do I not find her a husband she will go with that *diablo* of an Indian, and I will lose her for ever. No man here has one

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hundred pesos, and I am poor. Raffle her! Yes, why not? True, the priest will not be at Baborigame for three months, but what matter? She can marry then; it will be all the same."

In the meantime five of the miners had managed to obtain twenty pesos each, which they were anxious to risk for the purchase of Mariquita, and the money being handed over to the widow the dice-box was produced, and on the table that had been drawn into the centre of the room the throwing began.

The first man to throw was Carios Mendoza, a tall, swarthy-looking Mexican, who stood wrapped in a *serape* of orange and purple. His immense sombrero, resting on the back of his head, allowed a mop of coarse black hair to fall over his low forehead into his eyes. Raising the box, he brushed the hair aside, and after slowly rattling the dice threw in silence —sixteen; again the dice rattled—thirteen; and again—seventeen; forty-six in all.

A murmur of applause from the spectators, and Mendoza turned toward Mariquita, but something in her look quailed him, and with a low laugh he turned to watch the throwing of his opponents.

The box passed from one to the other without avail, and was now in the hands of the last thrower. Slowly he shook the dice, and then threw—seventeen; again—eighteen. The excitement was now intense; and in the silence broken only by the heavy breathing of the onlookers, and a muttered curse from Mendoza as he drew his sombrero down over his eyes, the last throw was made; the box was lifted—two fours and an ace.

Mendoza won, and with a glad cry he sprang toward Mariquita, but before he could reach her there was a rush through the door, an arm passed round his neck and pressed his body slowly back; a flash of steel—a groan—again a flash of steel and the arm descended, and Carlos Mendoza was dead on the floor.

And there, with the knife still grasped in his hand, Romulo, the Indian, stood like a statue of bronze, naked but for a breechcloth; his limbs like polished mahogany and his eyes flashing fire from under his heavy dark hair that fell to his shoulders.

For one moment he stood; then there was a flash, the report of a revolver, and Romulo tottered and sank to the floor, his back resting against the wall.

With a cry of anguish Mariquita threw herself on her knees beside him, and, while the tears coursed down her cheeks, she wiped away with her dress the blood that flowed from his lips, and besought him to speak to her.

"Romulo! Romulo! Caro mio! Esposa mio! Speak to me! God in heaven! tell me you are not hurt! Romulo! Speak just one little word to Mariquita! Oh, God of my soul, don't let him die!" And as Romulo looked into her eyes and tried to speak, a tremor passed over him, and the blood flowed again from his lips.

With a heart-rending cry Mariquita was on his breast, with her arms round his neck. "Romulo, my life, if thou must go, take me, too!"

With a superhuman effort the Indian raised himself, clasped her close with one arm, the other raised, and the steel flashed for the third time, and their souls passed into eternity together.

. . . . . .

Romulo and Mariquita rest in the same grave on the cañon side beneath the pines, and a white stone cross marks the spot to this day.

A GUILTLESS MURDERER.

HIS is the story of a madman. It was told by Geoffrey Coombs, an insane chemist, who lives in a dilapidated house-boat up the river. He is so old that his pulse beats only forty times a minute. His skin is shrivelled, and his voice is tremulous. The cloud which hangs over his mind is the memory of a woman who never existed, and remorse for a deed that was never committed.

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"My name is Geoffrey Coombs. I am a descendant of a race of people who were civilised before other races were born. The ignorant, confident in their own knowledge, unhesitatingly assert that that which does not exist, and has not existed, cannot exist. My people have known strange secrets which have been transmitted from generation to generation.

"I am a gipsy. The stars in the heavens or the lines upon the palms of your hands are open books to me. Only once have I called upon the 'Spirit of the Nile' to assist me without meeting a prompt response.

"We are called vagabonds because we do no manual labour. We do not work in order that we may study. Books teach us nothing that someone else does not know; but in the scrolls of parchment I learned the secret of human life.

"When I left my people I began to search for the vital principle, which is the same in all forms of animal life. What cared I where my houseboat floated, so long as I had the precious treasure of knowledge before me! I travelled up and down the river.

"So familiar did I become with the parts of a human being that I could analyse them and separate the ingredients. Finally I resolved to create a woman. It seemed to me that having discovered the 'vital spark,' and being able to construct the body, I would have no difficulty in making a human being.

"The idea at first amazed me, and then I was irresistibly attracted by it. I determined to attempt the experiment. It would be useless to detail how long I worked before I obtained my materials. The number of graves I desecrated and the parts of dead bodies that I took from them at night-time and carried off to my boat are of no relevancy in this plain narrative.

"At the end of two years I had secured the various component parts which go to make up a human being.

. . . . . .

"Day after day I worked at my task. I wonder now God Almighty did not, with a bolt from heaven, strike dead the man who was trying to profane His handiwork.

"We gipsies believe in a God, notwithstanding the many assertions to the contrary. I learned to love the object on which I was working. After the lapse of another year there lay before me one of the most beautiful creatures that mortal eye ever gazed upon.

"The eyes half closed, seemed like those of a picture watching me constantly, awaiting the time when I should add the potion which would animate this human clay with the breath of life, and a willing slave would awaken at my bidding.

"Impatiently I awaited the time when the decoction necessary to complete the process would be ready. For days and nights I did not sleep, but sat gazing on the beautiful

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vision of loveliness. The love which a father cherishes for his child and the affection of a lover for his mistress were combined in one. It was no longer a question of the triumph of science with me, but it was a problem of life and death.

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"At last all was ready. The signs were propitious, and the potion was prepared. I trembled with the awful responsibility which I was about to incur. My hands shook like those of a man with the ague, and my brain seemed intoxicated with the excitement of the moment. I imagined that the whole world was watching my experiment. I felt that failure was worse than a thousand deaths. I was trembling violently when I moistened her lips with the liquid. No sign was visible, and in my haste I poured all the contents of the phial down her throat.

"My heart palpitated, and each beat seemed to be a cry of exultation. The room was illuminated; but suddenly a flame, which shot forth from the couch, lighted up the waters on each side of the boat with a terrible splendour. Then all was dark again. The pall which overspread us seemed so complete that I fancied I was suddenly stricken blind.

"Then there burst upon my vision the most beautiful sight ever vouchsafed to human being. I had summoned from his high retreat the Angel of Life, and the radiance from his crown reflected on every side.

"He stayed but a moment, but when he was gone a living breathing creature made after my own design stood before me. She was supernaturally beautiful, with a nameless grace, half human and half divine. In the ecstasy of my triumph I danced and shouted like a gratified child. This creature knew no law except my will.

"Ignorance in its most attractive form was typified in her. The cares of the world would never trouble her because she could not comprehend them, and I was far too wise to teach them to her. Intuitively she seemed to know all that was purest and best, but the commonplace details of the sordid existence of human kind was a sealed book.

"The days passed in the most perfect happiness granted to mortal man. I cared neither for the past nor for the future, for the present was a bliss which could compensate for anything that could take place thereafter.

. . . .

"But for a fatal mistake, which was the result of my own carelessness, I might now have been the companion of a being created by myself, and baptized in the divine elixir, instead of the grovelling thing that I am.

"The formula directed that, at the lapse of a certain time, I should cause to be observed certain rules. My belief in my own powers was so great, and my vanity so exaggerated, that I thought I could with impunity disobey the magnates who not only rule but who created the world.

"Selfish as I was, I neglected to do as I was bidden, and blasted my happiness like a winter's wind falling upon some saucy violet that had dared to rear its head in defiance to the snows.

"We were sitting on the verandah of the boat. The day was ended, and the glory of the setting sun seemed typical to me of the happiness of my life. Suddenly I observed a change in her. I was at her side in an instant, but she was in the throes of a convulsion against which the amulets from the heart of Cheops were unavailing.

"I watched her tenderly until it was over. Her face was as fair as usual, but there was a change. So subtle at first that I scarcely noticed it, but in the days that followed I learned that the heart of her whom I loved had been changed into the heart of a man.

"She was still a woman, but she had a man's heart and a man's ambitions. The entity which composed her being remained the same save for this change. When the realisation of this terrible thing came upon me, I loathed her.

"Measured by the strict standard of beauty, she was still a Venus, but I knew that within that lovely form there was the heart of man. Whether it was a black and treacherous one, or was as manly and honourable as that of the most just man that ever lived, was immaterial to me.

"Daily my hate grew more bitter. I tried to control myself and to remain the same, but the consciousness of the terrible thing gained a mastery over me. The same desire to kill her that induces one to kill a snake came over me. I could not sleep, and when my last experiment had been tried in vain, I fell upon her with a huge knife, cut her in pieces, and threw her into the river.

"It was murder, but I could not help doing what I did. For a time I was happy, and then a dull pain in my head began to trouble me. Now all the fiends of remorse hover about my couch at night-time, and sit by my side during the day. Photographed upon the walls of my memory is a picture of a beauteous creature which I made, and then destroyed. I suppose that I will be hanged now that I have confessed my crime, but I am ready to die."

£2 2s. FOR A PLOT.

I take it for granted that, on the whole, the readers of this paper are very fair judges of a good story. Moreover, there are undoubtedly a large number of people among them who are capable of devising excellent plots for stories, while they are not gifted with the necessary ability for working them up into readable form.

It seems to me a pity that such good material should be forced by lack of opportunity to lie dormant, and with a view to seeing what readers are capable of in this direction, I offer a couple of Guineas for what I consider to be the most striking plot for a short story.

The scene may be laid anywhere, and only a rough outline, should be given, embodied in a paragraph of not more than a hundred and fifty words. Any number of attempts may be sent by each competitor, but each attempt must be on a separate sheet of paper, with the name and address of the sender on the back. Competitions to be enclosed in an envelope marked "PLOT," and to reach this office by Tuesday, October 30th."

PASS ON, PLEASE!

If you should be so bold as to disregard the notice at the head of this paragraph, may I ask you to remember that the first issue of *Pearson's Library*—a complete novel, profusely illustrated, one hundred pages, price Sixpence, entitled, "A Girl Without a Name"—is now on sale.

If you have already purchased a copy and are pleased with it, will you recommend it to your friends? But if the needful visit to your newsagent or the bookstall has not been made, let me advise you to put it off no longer or you may be disappointed.

A single copy will be sent, post free, for Sevenpence, or the twelve monthly issues for Six Shillings, post free.

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THE OUTLAWS OF THE AIR.

By George Griffith,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," etc.

SUMMARY.

Max Renault, the leading spirit of the Anarchist "Autonomie Group No. 7," meets his colleagues in a club near the Caledonian Road on the eve of President Carnot's assassination. He shoots a traitor who has almost betrayed the Group and so saved Carnot's life. Then he tells them that he is about to emigrate with a society of Socialists, one of whom, Frederick Austen, a wealthy engineer who has been converted to Socialism, takes out with him a working model of an aerial vessel. This air-ship Renault determines to steal when complete, and use for the purpose of bringing about an Anarchist reign of terror. Meanwhile, Franz Hartog is to steal a very fast torpedo-boat destroyer, which is to be built at Elbing for the Russian Government, and, with her, to levy blackmail on the Atlantic, and so raise funds to build an Anarchist aerial fleet.

On Christmas Day, 1898, the *Calypso*, a steam yacht belonging to Sir Harry Milton, sights an island in the South Pacific, from which an electric launch, the *Mermaid*, puts off and tows the yacht in. Frank Markham, in command of the launch, tells Sir Harry, with whom are travelling his sister, Violet, and Herbert Wyndham, a lieutenant in the British Navy, on sick leave, that the island is Utopia, a Socialist Colony, founded some three years before by emigrants from England. On the island Sir Harry finds Frederick Austen, an old friend of his father's, who introduces the visitors to Edward Adams and Max Renault and the rest of the Utopians, and after lunch tells them the story of Utopia. Later on, Lieutenant Wyndham describes the outrages committed by the vessel Hartog has stolen from Elbing—on the Atlantic, and Mr. Austen vows that if no one else can sink the *Destroyer* the Utopians will. Wyndham inspects the *Nautilus*, a most formidable craft. Late that night, when the Lieutenant and Sir Harry are taking a stroll upon the hills, they are astounded by the apparition of an air-ship soaring across the mountains in the interior of the island. The next morning Sir Harry and Wyndham further discuss the problem raised by the appearance of the air-ship, and the latter determines to resign his commission and throw in his lot with the Utopians; but just as he is telling Sir Harry this, Renault appears unexpectedly and interrupts their conversation. A week later, a pic-nic is held on Mount Plato. Wyndham and Violet are lost sight of during the afternoon, and, as the others are searching for them, they see the air-ship rise from the crater of Mount Orient, and as it does so something white falls from its deck down into the crater.

CHAPTER IX.

A Double Tragedy.

In breathless silence, a silence in which wonder, fear, and horror were blended, the four spectators on the crater of Mount Plato watched the rapidly played out drama in the air that could scarcely fail to prove a tragedy which should cast a gloom over the lives, not only of the visitors to Utopia, but also over those of everyone on the island.

To Sir Harry it meant a sudden, irresistible, and agonising conviction that, somehow or other, the fate alike of his sister and his friend was involved in it. Without knowing how or why, he instinctively coupled it with the unaccountable absence of Wyndham and Violet from their party. With less reason but equal conviction he jumped to the conclusion that the chief actor in it was Max Renault, the man whom both he and the Lieutenant had insensibly grown both to dislike and mistrust.

But to Adams, and possibly also to the two girls, it meant even more than this. It meant that the air-ship, the priceless triumph of the combined genius of Utopia which was to give the Utopians the command of an empire wider than the confines of earth itself, had fallen into hands that could not be anything else but traitorous and which had taken it, with all its tremendous capacity for good and evil, away from the island to employ it in work at the nature of which they could only dimly guess.

She waved her hand to them as she swerved past.

Adams was the first to recover his self-command. Like the others he had followed the swiftly moving air-ship on her seaward course until she became a speck in the distance. Then he turned to Sir Harry and said in a tone that he vainly tried to keep steady:

"Our secret is out—and lost, I'm afraid! I can't understand it yet, but we can talk about that afterwards. There has been foul play over yonder and something terrible has happened, I am sure. Come along, we'll go over to the other crater. It's no use wasting time talking. Come along—I'll show you the way! You girls had better go back and tell the others and ask them to send up what help they can. We shall probably want it. You will know where to find us afterwards."

Dora and Lucy saw at once that this was the thing to do, and they were just starting back to the party on the plateau when Lucy stopped and without a word ran back into the crater. Hardly four minutes had passed before the others heard a clatter of hoofs and saw her come tearing at full gallop up the steep path that led out of the crater seated astride the back of the Shetland pony after the fashion of the ladies of Mexico. She waved her hand to them as she swerved past, and then went away at headlong speed down the mountain path towards the plateau.

"Bravo, Lucy!" cried Dora, following her with admiring eyes. "That was a better idea than walking or even running back. She'll be there in half the time that we could have got there together in. And now I can go with you; perhaps I may be useful."

"Yes, you will," said Sir Harry, "if what I fear has happened. I hope Lucy won't be thrown or have an accident before she gets there, riding at such a speed as that."

"There's not much fear of that," replied Dora. "There isn't a pony on the island that could throw her even without a saddle, and Grey-Legs is one of the surest-footed ponies we have. I wish we had three more here and we'd soon be at Mount Mystery—which is Mount Mystery no longer. Come along, let us get away!"

A narrow barely-defined path led down the eastern side of Mount Plato into the valley which separated it from the smaller mountain, and along this the three walked rapidly, Adams leading, Sir Harry in the middle, and Dora being at the rear. As soon as they had

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cleared the rougher ground of the crater, they broke into a trot which soon brought them to the ascent leading up to the gap which was now plainly visible in the wall of the second crater. Here their speed was reduced to a walk again, and as they were climbing the steep ascent Sir Harry told Adams how the secret of the existence of the air-ship had been accidentally revealed to him and Wyndham a week before.

"I'm afraid that may do something towards explaining the mystery," said Adams in reply. "I wish to Heaven you had told me about it at once and then we might have taken some precautions."

"What do you mean?" asked Sir Harry.

"I can't explain now," said Adams, "and even if I could I don't suppose it would do much good. Whatever harm is done is done. Here we are. That is where the air-ship was built and where it ought to have been in hiding since you came. None of us, as far as I know, knew anything about the trip that she took on the night you speak of. She has only just been completed after numberless experiments, in her present form, and her trial trip was not to have taken place until you had left the island. That means treachery on someone's part."

The body of a man.

"And that someone is your engineer, Renault," said Sir Harry between his teeth as he followed Adams down the steep zigzag path that led to the interior of the crater.

The crater of Mount Orient, to give it the name which the Utopians had bestowed upon it in consequence of its easterly position, was a nearly circular plain with a diameter of about half a mile. It was covered with an abundant vegetation which proved it to have been quiescent longer than that of Mount Plato. The dense vegetation not only covered its floor but even robed its almost perpendicular walls with a thick leafy mass of trees interlaced with long flowering creepers.

Adams led the way rapidly down the path, but half way Dora, who was still bringing up the rear, stopped and pointing with one hand said:

"Look yonder, just by the clearing! Don't you see something white up in the trees there where that big palm is, just by the crater wall?"

They stopped and looked, and there sure enough in the rapidly fading light they made out a patch of something white showing against the dark green of the foliage.

"Come along, for God's sake!" almost gasped Sir Harry. "Heaven only knows what that white thing may be."

And before the words were well out of his mouth, Adams had sprung forward and plunged into a hidden path that ran along the floor of the crater under the trees. Sir Harry and Dora followed hard on his heels, and a few minutes' run brought them out into a little oval clearing in the midst of which stood a pallisading of palm trunks interlaced with wattles and creepers to a height of about twenty feet.

A door leading into it stood open, and as Adams ran through this he paused for a moment, uttered a half stifled cry and then ran on followed by the others. In the centre of the enclosure stood a raised platform some two hundred feet long by a hundred broad flanked on one side by a row of huts which evidently served as workshops. The platform was vacant save for a light frame-work of scaffolding which ran across its greater length, and the body of a man which lay beside it face downwards with the arms spread out.

One glance was enough to tell them that it was that of the Lieutenant. Adams and Sir Harry leapt on to the platform at the same moment and raised him very gently from the planks. His limbs were limp and inert, and as they lifted him his head fell forward on his breast.

"This looks like murder," said Adams as they raised him. "Good Heavens!—to think that we must have had a murder even in Utopia. Look there under his shoulder-blade. He's been stabbed in the back!"

"Yes," said Sir Harry thickly. "It must have been that, but perhaps he's not quite dead yet. Poor Bertie! I'm afraid that scoundrel overheard us after all, and this is the result."

"Run and get some water, Dora, quick!" cried Adams. "Have a look in the store-room and see if there is any brandy or anything of the sort there. Look sharp, there's a good girl!"

Dora without a word jumped off the platform and darted away on her errand, and meanwhile Adams and Sir Harry with one impulse tore off, the one his cloak and the other his jacket, and rolled them up to make a pillow for Wyndham's head. Then they laid him on his side and Adams, whipping out his knife, cut through his jacket and shirt and laid open a small clean-cut wound just under the left shoulder-blade out of which a few drops of fresh blood oozed very slowly.

"He's not dead yet," cried Sir Harry, "or else the wound wouldn't bleed. Thank God for that! The brute's knife must just have missed his heart."

"Yes, we'll soon have a pad over that," said Adams. "Give me your handkerchief and hold his head up a minute."

Sir Harry obeyed, and he pulled his light woollen cloak from under Wyndham's head, tore it into three or four strips and then, making a pad out of Sir Harry's silk handkerchief and his own, staunched the wound and bandaged it as skilfully and as rapidly as a surgeon could have done.

"Now we can lay him on his back," he continued. "Ah, here comes Dora with the water and a bottle of brandy. Now we shall be able to bring him to, I think."

In another moment Dora was beside them with the bottle in one hand and a water-jug in the other. Sir Harry half emptied the brandy into the water and bathed Wyndham's cold, pallid face with it. To his unspeakable relief his eyes half opened and a faint sigh escaped from his lips.

In a moment Dora had poured some brandy on her handkerchief and squeezed a few drops into his mouth. His eyes opened wider, and another sigh, this time stronger, came accompanied by a slight convulsive movement of his chest. Then Sir Harry raised him to a half-sitting position, kneeling beside him and letting his body rest against his knees.

He opened his eyes fully and looked about him with a dazed expression of a man waking from an evil dream. A faint inarticulate sound came from his lips as Adams held the jug to them. He drank a little almost mechanically, and as he swallowed it a faint shudder ran through his body. He looked at them with reason dawning in his eyes, and with a painful effort whispered:

"Where's Violet—and the air-ship—Renault?" and then his head fell back against Sir Harry's arm and he fainted.

The two men looked at each other blankly for a moment, and Dora, suddenly clasping her hands together, exclaimed in a low, broken voice:

"Oh, poor Violet, I see it now! I see what happened. Renault must have taken her up in the air-ship with him and she threw herself out. It was her white dress that we saw falling and that must be her up in the trees. Carry him to the living shed and put him in one of the berths. I'll nurse him till the others come, and you go and see if you can find poor Violet. It was an awful fall, but perhaps it hasn't killed her."

It was plainly the best thing to be done, and so they did it.

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They lifted the wounded man very gently between them and carried him from the platform into one of the huts which had been used as a living room by those who had been at work on the air-ship. Here they laid him in a low, comfortable berth, first seeing that his wound had not begun to bleed again, and then, after reviving him again with a little more brandy, left him to Dora's gentle care.

The first thing Adams did was to go into another of the huts and bring out a long coil of light strong rope and a light grappling iron that had been meant for one of the anchors of the air-ship. He gave these to Sir Harry and vanished into the hut again, re-appearing this time with a couple of strong bill-hooks, a hatchet, and a bag of spikes.

"Now we're ready," he said. "Come along! If she is there we will soon have her down. I haven't been three years in Utopia without learning how to climb palm trees."

It took them nearly twenty minutes to hack and push their way through the thick undergrowth that lay between the enclosure and the tall palm by the wall of the crater which Dora had pointed out. When they got under it a single glance upwards showed them that Dora's guess had been right. Lying on the broad umbrella-like expanse of the great radiating leaves of the palm crest, more than a hundred feet from the ground, lay in a huddled heap a form which could be no other than Violet's.

The palm trunk leant outwards at a considerable angle from the crater wall, and Adams, slinging the bag of spikes round his neck and fastening one end of the rope round his waist, took out a spike and drove it in to the sloping side of the trunk as high as he could reach. Then, telling Sir Harry to keep the rope clear, he swarmed up, got his foot upon it and drove another one in about five feet above it. Then he mounted on to this one and drove in another, and so on up the tree.

Sir Harry slid and climbed with his burden down from spike to spike.

Sir Harry stood below and watched him in the dusk with straining eyes, scarcely daring to breathe in his anxiety lest the swaying of the trunk, which perceptibly increased as he got higher and higher, should dislodge Violet from the top and destroy their last hope by flinging her to the ground. Adams' last spike only carried him to within about ten feet of the top. Sir Harry could just see him stop and saw in an instant what was the matter.

"Can't you get any higher?" he shouted. "Shall I get some more spikes and bring them up to you?"

"No," said Adams, "there is no need for that. I can almost reach the top. Can you climb?"

"Yes. I can climb up there, at any rate."

"Very well then, come up. Does the rope reach to the ground?"

"Yes, and plenty to spare."

"All right, then come along and be careful."

Before the words were out of his mouth Sir Harry had got his foot on the first spike and was climbing quickly, but cautiously, up the trunk. When he reached the last, Adams, putting his arms and legs round the trunk, swarmed up until he got a hold of the root of one of the leaves.

"Now," he said, "get your foot on to the last spike, hold tight, and let me get my foot on your shoulder."

Sir Harry did as he was bidden with a steadiness that spoke volumes for his muscles and his nerves, and in another minute Adams had crawled up through the leaves and on to the crest of the tree. Sir Harry waited for a moment in agonised suspense until he heard him say:

"She's here, insensible and badly injured I'm afraid, but I don't believe she's dead. At any rate, we'll have her down in a few minutes. You stop there and get ready to take her."

Then he hauled up the rope, passed the other end round her body and made it fast in a loop under her arms. Then slowly and with infinite care he raised her from where she was lying and worked her towards the side where her brother was waiting to take hold of her. The great leaves of the palm swayed horribly, and Sir Harry expected every moment to see them both go crashing through to the ground, a hundred feet below. But Adams knew what he was about, and the expected never came.

He managed to get himself firmly planted in the crown of the tree, with his legs wedged between the leaves, and then, holding

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the slack of the rope in his teeth, he gradually pushed the body of the unconscious girl forward and downwards until her brother got his one free arm round her waist. Then, bracing himself in his seat, he took the rope in one hand, steadying her with the other, and said:

"Now, if you've got her, slide down to the next spike. I'll keep her weight on the rope. Don't be afraid of her falling."

"All right," said Sir Harry. "Lower away."

And then with a rustle Violet disappeared through the leaves. Tearing his clothes and his skin against the rough rind of the tree, Sir Harry slid and climbed with his burden down from spike to spike, Adams always keeping the rope sufficiently taut to relieve him of the greater part of her weight, until at length, bleeding and breathless, he passed the last spike and laid her on the ground.

"It's all right, Adams," he shouted in a hoarse, gasping voice. "Thank God she is safe so far, if she is only alive!"

"Good," replied Adams, at once lowering himself out of the top. "I'll be down in a minute and then we'll carry her to the shed."

CHAPTER X.

SIR HARRY'S RESOLVE.

By the time they got Violet back to the shed and laid in one of the berths, Lucy had returned on her pony from the camping ground with the news that Mr. Austen, with Mark Edwards, a young physician who had joined the colony with the second party of emigrants, and Doctor Roberts, the surgeon of the *Calypso*, a bluff, good-natured man of considerable talent and more experience, whom it has not been necessary to introduce to the reader before, were coming after her on ponies, and that her own mother and Dora's would also be there before long to take charge of either of the missing guests if any nursing was necessary.

Well, Roberts."

She was, of course, terribly shocked to learn the nature and extent of the misfortunes that had brought the day's enjoyment to such a terrible end, but, with the same promptness that she had displayed in going for help, she settled down at once to help Dora in doing what could be done for Violet before the doctors came, while Sir Harry and Adams looked after the wounded Lieutenant. In less than half an hour later the anxiously awaited assistance came, and Doctor Roberts at once took charge of Violet, who was still alive, although all efforts to restore her to consciousness had failed, while Doctor Edwards attended to the Lieutenant.

Violet had been laid in a hut by herself, and the doctor would allow no one to enter this until he had completed his examination of her injuries. Sir Harry waited outside in miserable anxiety, pacing up and down in front of the sheds with set teeth and knitted brows, thinking now of the terrible calamity which he felt sure must have fallen upon the bright young life of his only sister, and now of the scoundrel who had so wantonly wrought so much evil on those who had never harmed him.

He had not continued his walk long before Mr. Austen joined him and received from him a more detailed and coherent account of what had really happened than Lucy had been able to give him. To say that he was unspeakably distressed and bewildered by the strange and terrible events of the evening would be far from describing his true state of mind.

"I am utterly at a loss to conceive," he said after Sir Harry had told his story, "either what motive Renault could have had for committing such a dreadful crime, or what could have induced him to turn traitor to the colony, as he undoubtedly has done, and steal the air-ship from us."

"I can understand that more easily," said Sir Harry, "than I can see why such a man with a weapon of destruction like the air-ship under his command should have been content to leave the island without doing even more damage than he did. I should have thought that he could have destroyed as many of us as he chose when he was once in the air, to say nothing of blowing up the settlement and the dockyard. From what Wyndam told me, it would be perfectly easy for an air-ship to do that."

"That is very simply explained," replied Mr. Austen. "From what has happened I'm afraid there is no doubt but that he would have done so if he could, but, happily for us, we have not yet made the necessary explosives for that sort of work. You see we had no intention of using the air-ship for warlike purposes, unless, indeed, it had ever become necessary to defend Utopia against aggression or assault. We have, in fact, scarcely any weapons at all on the island, so, you see, he couldn't use what he hadn't got."

"But what about the explosive which you are going to use to work the engines of the *Nautilus*?" objected Sir Harry. "I should have thought that would have made the most fearfully effective bombs. It must be terribly powerful."

"So it is, but then it will deflagrate at no lower temperature than that of the electric spark. It would be tremendously effective in mines or torpedoes, but it wouldn't do for bombs or projectiles which had to be exploded by the shock of contact. If it did it wouldn't be safe to carry it in large quantities even on board a ship. It is just to that fact that we probably owe all our lives."

"I see; but then, as Renault knew that you possessed the secret of this explosive and of the others which I suppose you intended to use, as well as the knowledge of the construction of the air-ship, why did he not kill you before he left the island so as to be the sole possessor of secrets which would have placed the world practically at his mercy?"

"That," replied Mr. Austen, with a perceptible shudder, "is probably because in the first place he would have had to kill not only myself but Adams, Doctor Edwards, and our old pioneer Ambrose Miller, before he could have been sure of the sole possession of the secret of the motor-fuel, and again because I have no doubt but that the scheme that he put into action to-day was finally conceived and carried out on the spur of the moment.

"It is obvious that he intended to carry your sister off with him by force, and he must have seized some opportunity that presented itself this afternoon and which made him resolve to risk everything on the success of the one bold stroke without waiting to carry out the other designs which I daresay he had."

"You are probably right," said Sir Harry. "Now I come to think of it it has crossed my mind two or three times during the last week that the fellow was trying to pay more attention to poor Violet than mere politeness demanded. I wonder how long Roberts—ah, there he is at last! You'll excuse me, won't you; I must go and hear what he has to say at once."

Just as he spoke the doctor came out of the hut looking very serious, and asked Mrs. Merton to go in again with him for a few moments. Then, leaving her with Violet, he went to Sir Harry, who greeted him with:

"Well, Roberts, is there any hope for her? Tell me the worst at once because it can't be worse than what I have been dreading for her."

"My dear fellow," said the doctor putting his arm through his and leading him away from the others, "I'm not going to attempt to disguise from you the fact that the poor girl is very badly injured. Of course I've not been able to make a very complete examination yet, and I can't until I have the necessary instruments from the ship, but as far as I have been able to go I have found that the right leg is broken both above and below the knee, the collar bone is broken, and the right

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shoulder badly dislocated. So far there is nothing in that that a strong young girl couldn't get better from, but I am sadly afraid that there's serious injury to the spine as well and concussion of the brain on the top of that."

The doctor felt the muscles of Sir Harry's arm quiver as he spoke, but as he didn't speak for a moment he went on:

"So far I don't know whether or not there are any internal injuries, but of course there may be. She has evidently had an awful fall, and only being caught in the top of that palm tree saved her from being smashed out of all human shape. As it is we can only be thankful that she is alive and do our best to pull her through."

"Then that's the worst as far as you can tell me, is it?" asked Sir Harry in a hard, strained voice. "God knows it's bad enough, poor girl, even if it's no worse than that!"

"Yes, that's the worst as far as I know, but I must also tell you that there is no real reason for despairing. That young Edwards, although he's a Socialist, seems a very clever, well-informed man. In fact, he's a St. Mary's man and an M.D. of London as well, so he must be pretty good. I can't think what on earth brought him out to an outlandish place like this. Might have done splendidly in England, I've no doubt. Perhaps he had no capital, and brains won't do without that nowadays.

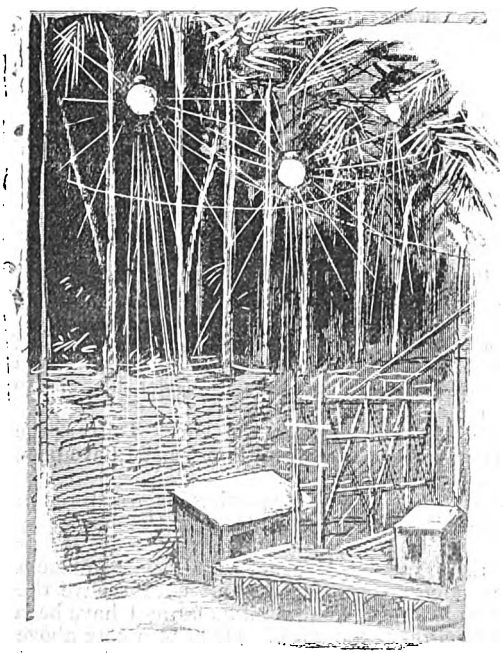
"However that's nothing to do with it. As soon as Mrs. Merton has done what I've asked her to do, Edwards and I will set the broken bones and do everything else that is necessary and can be done. For the rest we must trust to Nature and a good constitution."

"And what about Wyndham?" asked Sir Harry.

"Oh, he'll do, I think. That wound's nothing to the one he had in Africa. If the knife had gone under instead of over the rib that it struck it would have touched the heart and finished him. As it is there is nothing to stop him being about again in three months, especially in a magnificent climate like this.

"I don't think we shall have either of them moved from here, at any rate for the present. This mountain air is splendid and the valley is perfectly sheltered. Couldn't have a more perfect place for a sanatorium, so we must turn a couple of these huts into hospitals for the time being, and Edwards and I will take turns in constant attendance as long as it's necessary. You can rest assured that everything that can be done will be done."

"Yes, Roberts," replied Sir Harry, laying his hand on the doctor's shoulder, "I'm perfectly certain of that. I know you'll do your best, and God grant it may be good enough. Now can I go and see her?"



The electric lights . . . were turned on.

"No, certainly not at present," replied the doctor, shaking his head decisively. "That would do no good either to you or to her. In the first place she is unconscious still, and in the second place the moment Mrs. Merton is ready Edwards and I must set to work to reduce the fractures. Every minute is of consequence and makes successful setting harder, so you must wait until our work is done. Go to Wyndham and look after him. As soon as I can let you see your sister you shall do so. Now be off. Don't let Wyndham talk, but you can tell him that Miss Violet is still alive, and for all I know not likely to die."

So saying the doctor pushed Sir Harry gently in the direction of the Lieutenant's hut, and then entered the one in which Violet was lying.

No one left the crater of Mount Orient that night. Messengers had been despatched by Mr. Austen to the settlement and the yacht, to bring up everything that was necessary, from the doctor's instruments to provisions and tents for those for whom there would be no room in the huts. Fires were lighted, and the electric lights by which the constructors of the air-ship had worked by night were turned on. Like the other machinery used in building the dynamos were driven by water power, so the current was always ready for use.

Before ten o'clock quite a train of ponies and donkeys had arrived from the settlement, and within an hour everyone had settled down into his or her place in the impromptu camp and was doing something for the present or future comfort of the two invalids. If the welfare of the whole colony had depended upon their recovery no more could have been done for them than their kind-hearted hosts did.

No one spoke of the terrible, but not irreparable, loss that Utopia had sustained through Renault stealing the air-ship, or of the perils that might menace it if he came back armed with explosives to take revenge for his partial failure, and to destroy those who would be alone able to build a second cruiser of the air capable of opposing the one that he had stolen. For the time being the Utopians seemed entirely engrossed by the misfortunes that had befallen their guests and to have no time to consider their own.

It was a little before midnight, when Wyndham had dropped off to sleep and Violet still remained invisible by the doctor's orders, that Sir Harry, Mr. Austen, and Adams were taking a turn in the clearing before going to bed, and Sir Harry was speaking quietly, but in a voice that bespoke a resolution of no small moment;

"I have seen enough to-day and to-night," he said, "to convince me that in allying myself with you, if you will have me, I shall be doing the best thing that I can do, not only for myself and poor Violet, if she survives what she has to go through, but also for the world at large. I didn't tell you before, but I may tell you now, that when Wyndham and I first discovered that you possessed an air-ship he decided to throw up his commission in the British Navy and offer his services to you as navigating lieutenant of the *Nautilus*.

"If you can see your way to making him that when he gets well I think you will do well, for I know that he is a very skilful sailor as well as being as brave as a lion, and that he is really thought a great deal of by the authorities at home, especially after that last affair of his on the West Coast."

"Yes," said Mr. Austen, "I am quite sure of that, and I can tell you that he won't even need to ask for the command of the *Nautilus* if he is willing to take it."

"I am glad to hear it," continued Sir Harry. "Now, as regards myself, of course you know I am one of those somewhat useless creatures called gentlemen of fortune, and so I have been trained to nothing useful and know nothing useful. But I have one thing that's useful, and that's money. Happily I have plenty of that, and with your help I'm ready to devote every penny that I have got to the work of hunting down that scoundrel Renault and punishing him for what he has done to-day.

"If you can teach me to do anything else you'll find me willing to learn, but that I'm ready to do now. I can raise half a million if necessary as soon as I get back to England, and another million after that if it is wanted to build cruisers and air-ships and find the best material and talent for the work that money can buy. You can think over what I have said to-night and give me your answer in the morning."

"There's no need for that," said Adams. "If you like to join your fortunes with ours, either for good or until your object is accomplished, there is no one in Utopia who will not

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welcome you, and as for the help that you offer us in repairing our loss, that, too, we will accept in the same spirit in which it is made; so that is a bargain between us, either as friends for the time being or comrades for good."

"Lieutenant Wyndham has just woke up. He is much better and wants to speak to Sir Harry at once," said Dora, who had joined them unperceived while they were talking.

Sir Harry went at once and found his friend sitting in his berth propped up by pillows.

"How's Violet?" he asked, almost in a whisper.

Sir Harry shook his head.

"I don't know yet, old man," he said. "Roberts won't let me see her yet, but he tells me there is no immediate danger. What do you want me for? You mustn't talk too much, you know."

"I know," replied Wyndham. "But I've just remembered where I saw that fellow Renault, and I want to tell you before I forget again. It was nearly four years ago, when I was on leave in London. The police had raided an Anarchist club somewhere up near the Caledonian Road, and a friend of mine, a barrister, was retained to prosecute the fellows who were caught. Renault was one of them, but he called himself Louis Rolland then.

"Lieutenant Wyndham has just woke up."

"They found him with explosives in the house, just the things that the Anarchists use in making their bombs, and they also found correspondence which made it plain enough to my mind that he and the others had something to do with the murder of President Carnot. The case was as plain as daylight against them, but they had a very smart man for them, and because it couldn't be actually proved that they were using the explosives to manufacture bombs the whole lot got off.*

"Take my word for it, Renault's an Anarchist, pure and simple, and he has stolen the air-ship to go and join those fellows in the *Destroyer*. The Lord only knows what will happen if he succeeds."

"And Heaven only can prevent it," added Sir Harry, "for no earthly power can."

(To be continued next week.)

* [An almost identical case occurred in London only a short time ago.—AUTHOR.]

La Belle Americaine.

HER ADVENTURE WITH A SPRIG OF THE NOBILITY.

A WELL-PRESERVED elderly man, with a pleasant expression, iron-grey hair, and faultlessly dressed, might have been occasionally seen strolling along the Promenade des Anglais, at Nice, last winter. He peered a good deal under the bonnets of pretty women. But there was a demure and half-respectful expression in his glance which at once dispelled any rising feeling of resentment. His serious, sympathetic, half-smile, combined with his age, gave him a certain immunity which would not be extended to younger men. He was known in society as Mr. John P. Chase, of Chicago City.

Mr. Chase, accompanied by his daughter, arrived in the Riviera last November. He took up his abode in a small, but pretty villa on the outskirts of Nice, and signified his intention of staying the whole season. Very soon after his arrival it was rumoured that Mr. John P. Chase was a millionaire, a "king" of railways, iron, or something, rumour did not know what; nevertheless, Society received both him and his daughter with open arms. The people who benefit their health and lose their money at the Riviera are generally a nice set; so the American millionaire was soon able to number some of the best patrons of Mentone and Nice amongst his acquaintances. His conduct in public was most exemplary. That mystic word "millionaire" acted as a charm against all prejudice, and also commanded the society of a select circle of parasites.

Miss Nathalie Chase was of that type which police-court reporters would have termed "of prepossessing appearance." She was tall and graceful; too slight, it may be, to fulfil the rigorous standard of womanly beauty, but possessed a figure rounded and symmetrical as a nymph's, with the same length of limb and airiness of gesture which painters have combined to confer on those strange mythological coquettes.

They were seen everywhere. On the Promenade des Anglais in the afternoon, and in the evening at Monte Carlo, enjoying a mild game of roulette—with friends, of course. In Nice, Nellie Chase was the belle, greatly to the envy of numbers of other fair damsels who were being put up for sale in the matrimonial market by their mammon-seeking parents. The men swarmed round her to bask in her sweet smiles wherever she went, and she seemed to thoroughly relish a flirtation.

There was one youth whom she particularly favoured. He was the Hon. Bertie Mashem, whom everybody knew to be heir to the fine estates of the Earl of Slushford. He occupied one of the best suites of rooms in the Hôtel Paris, and was generally thought by scheming mothers to be a fish worth baiting for. When Chase *père* and *fille* appeared upon the scene these mothers waxed exceeding wroth, in consequence

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of the Hon. Bertie turning up his nose at their bargains and transferring his inconstant affections to the newcomer.

At first he set about to become on intimate terms with the millionaire, lunching and dining him at his hotel in princely style, and then by degrees he gradually grew friendly with the girl. In fact, it was he who had placed them *en evidence* with society, and had introduced them to all the best people.

The Hon. Bertie rather prided himself on his game of *écarté*, and, strange to say, Mr. Chase also estimated himself a player, so it was hardly a matter for surprise that they kept touch with the "form" displayed by other visitors, and frequently passed their evenings within the precincts of the much-abused Casino. Money passed very freely between Mashem and the American, and the game frequently ended by Bertie's victory, and some disguised chagrin on the part of his friend.

One evening Bertie and Nathalie were strolling along the terrace over-looking the Mediterranean. The gaming-room was crowded, and a walk under the oranges and palms was delightfully cool and refreshing after play, which had lasted several hours. Bertie had won, as usual, and left Chase, in order to obtain a *tête-à-tête* with Nellie.

They had walked some distance, when the girl said to her companion, "What a magnificent moon! We don't get such as that on our side."

"Yes," replied Bertie, "it's almost as lovely as you, my darling."

"A compliment, most truly," she said, with a smile and a mocking bow.

He paused for a moment, and raising her tiny gloved hand to his lips, said, "Nell, my darling, I love you!" Placing his arms round her neck, there in the moonlight he told her the oft-repeated story in a truly romantic fashion.

Before they again moved along over the gravelled path Nathalie Chase had promised to become the betrothed of the Hon. Bertie Mashem, and the latter had promised to "ask papa" at the earliest opportunity. They had vowed eternal affection, and the young lady had signified her intention of having "a swagger wedding," to which her adorer readily acquiesced. . . . At last she had "caught on" a good thing.

On the following morning, Bertie, after attiring himself in gorgeous raiment, and paying particular attention to the minor details of his toilet, duly appeared at the millionaire's villa, and was accorded an interview.

"Wal, you're real early this morning, Bertie," said Mr. John P. Chase, of Chicago, when his friend was ushered into the neat little drawing-room.

"Air so invigorating, don't you know. Can't sleep at night." The latter part of the sentence was quite true, for he had been awake most part of the night, thinking of the undeniable loveliness of his *fiancée*.

"Have a corpse reviver? Nellie isn't up yet, the lazy little puss."

"Aw—thanks, my dear Chase, I'll have nothing. I've come to talk to you on a little matter of business."

"Business, eh? What's up?"

"Well—er," said Bertie, as he took his seat, "the fact of the matter is, I want your consent that Nathalie may become my wife."

John P. Chase looked a little astonished, pulled his grey moustache thoughtfully, and said: "Hum! You surprise me very much. Out West they don't usually make matches as quick as this."

"True," stammered Bertie; "but I really love her, and she's willing to be mine."

"What is your position?"

"I'm heir to the estates of the Earl of Slushford, my uncle, which means eight thousand pounds a year."

"What's that in dollars?"

"Don't know. Always was a duffer at figures."

"How old is your uncle?"

"Aw, it's very nearly time he croaked, for he's over eighty."

John P. Chase gave a grunt of satisfaction over this intelligence, and was silent for a moment.

"Well, Mr. Mashem, your expectations ain't what we call tall, but I'll give my consent to the union providing you're willing to render me a **small service**."

Bertie was delighted.

"Most certainly," he replied; "I am perfectly at your command."

The millionaire **drew his chair** closer, and in a half-whisper said, with a stronger nasal accent than usual:

"Look here, I've been playing heavily since I've been in this 'ere place, **and I'm what** you may call slightly embarrassed. Only temporarily, of course, but I don't want to draw on my bankers in New York; besides it would take time."

"I understand thoroughly. Er—what amount——."

"Only a few hundred pounds."

The Honourable Bertie put his hand into his breast pocket and produced his cheque-book. His companion placed a pen and ink before him.

"Now, how much?"

"I leave it to you," replied John P.

Mashem placed his signature to a cheque, and handing it to him said:

"Fill it in yourself, my deah fellah, and don't be afraid."

The American took it with a smile, and an expression of thanks, adding that he trusted Nellie would "love, honour, and obey" him.

The Duke of Slushford's heir then withdrew, and the same evening took his future bride for a drive along the lovely Corniche road.

The next day he went over to San Remo, to make a dutiful visit to a fossilised maiden aunt, but even before he alighted from the train, he felt a longing to return to his fair American. After three days he could stand it no longer, so he returned to Nice by the *rapide*, and drove at once to the villa.

"Is Miss Chase within?" he asked of the servant who answered the door.

"No, both monsieur and mademoiselle left the day before yesterday, and have not since returned."

Bertie was dumfounded. He inquired if any message had been left, but, as none was forthcoming, he drove to his hotel.

"Any letters for me, Farren?" he asked of his man.

"Yes, sir, this one."

Bertie tore it open eagerly, and read. His face grew pale, and he sank into an adjacent arm-chair.

The letter ran as follows:—

"DEAR SIR,—Many thanks for your cheque, which I have filled up for £5,000. I shall be obliged if you will discontinue your thoughts regarding Nathalie, for instead of being my daughter she is my wife.—Faithfully yours,

"J. P. CHASE."

"P.S.—I will repay you the loan when we next meet."

Mashem at once wired his bankers to stop the cheque, but, alas! the reply came that it had been cashed. The Hon. Bertie had been "rushed."

Next morning, happening to take up *Galignani* in the hotel reading-room, his eye caught the following paragraph:—

"ARREST OF SWINDLERS.—Late last night the police arrested at the Gare St. Lazare the *soi-disant* American millionaire, named Chase, and also his wife, who were about to proceed to London. For some time past the police have kept observation upon them, and we hear their latest victim was a young English nobleman, who is at Nice. A considerable sum of money was found upon the man, who, it appears, has practised systematic frauds."

Bertie succeeded in regaining four thousand pounds, and is now very careful about his cheques—especially blank ones. The "millionaire" and his pretty wife will live at the expense of the Republic for several years to come.

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A

POSITIVE REMEDY

FOR

CORPULENCE.

Any remedy that can be suggested as a cure or alleviation for stoutness will be heartily welcomed. We have recently received a well-written book, the author of which seems to know what he is talking about. It is entitled "Corpulency and the Cure," 256 pages, and is a cheap issue (only 4d.), published by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. Our space will not do justice to this book; send for it yourself. It appears that Mr. Russell has submitted all kinds of proofs to the English Press. The editor of the *Tablet*, the Catholic organ, writes:—"Mr. Russell does not give us the slightest loophole for a doubt as to the value of his cure, for, in the most straightforward and matter-of-fact manner, he submitted some hundreds of original and unsolicited testimonial letters for our perusal, and offered us plenty more, if required. To assist him to make this remedy known, we think we cannot do better than publish quotations from some of the letters submitted. The first one, a marchioness, writes from Madrid:—'My son, Count ——, has reduced his weight in twenty-two days 16 kilos.—*i.e.*, 34 lbs.' Another writes:—'So far (six weeks from commencement of following your system) I have lost fully two stone in weight.' The next (a lady) writes:—'I am just half the size.' A fourth:—'I find it is successful in my case. I have lost 8 lbs. in weight since I commenced (two weeks).' Another writes:—'A reduction of 18 lbs. in a month is a great success.' A lady from Bournemouth writes:—'I feel much better, have less difficulty in breathing, and can walk about.' Again a lady says:—'It reduced me considerably, not only in the body, but all over.' The author is very positive. He says:—'Step on a weighing machine on Monday morning and again on Tuesday, and I guarantee you have lost 2 lbs. in weight without the slightest harm, and vast improvement in health through ridding the system of unhealthy accumulations.'"—*Cork Herald.*

Should Stout Persons STARVE THEMSELVES?

We are afraid that semi-starvation as a cure for corpulency prevails very much to a dangerous degree. Mr. Archer, the late well-known prominent jockey, was in the habit of going without food for a long stretch in order that he could ride a certain horse at its weight, and there is not much doubt that the debility resulting from this habit of abstemiousness was certainly not conducive to combating the dire attack of fever which was, perhaps, indirectly responsible for the untimely end, in the zenith of his fame, of this unfortunate but accomplished horseman. Even Mary Jane in the kitchen will eat sparingly of the food allowed her, while she will seek to reduce her fat by copious draughts from the vinegar cruet, and succeed only in injuring the coats of her stomach—the forerunner of dyspeptic troubles which will be difficult to overcome.

The Continental medicos seem to advocate this great reduction of ordinary foods, but one of these savants suggests that the stout person should eat considerably of fatty meats, in order that the appetite is appeased, and consequently less food required, so that practically this is indirectly advocating semi-starvation. On the other hand, Mr. Russell, the British specialist, takes a different course. He says, "Eat as much as you like," and as it is an acknowledged fact that under his treatment persons lose from 2 lb. to 12 lb. per week, it beyond doubt stands out pre-eminent against those so-called starvation cures "made in Germany." Some claim that Mr. Russell has to insist upon his patients drinking hot water every morning, but on the contrary he avers that it is dangerous to do so, and has, of course, never advised it. No; the success of Mr. Russell's treatment is incomparably beyond other specialists, for he resorts to no stringent dietary, and simply prescribes a harmless vegetable tonic combination which is the outcome of years of study and botanical research. We advise all those interested in this question to get his book, the price of which is only 4d. It is entitled, "Corpulency and the Cure," 256 pages, and is published by him at Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. It can be had direct, or through any bookseller.—Extract from *The Million.*

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AND THE VERDICT WAS,	COMRADES,	KNOCKED 'EM IN CHICAGO,
HAVE A DRINK, BOYS,	HALF-PAST NINE,	'GARN AWAY,
MY FAIRY MARY GREEN,	TWO LITTLE GIRLS IN BLUE,	OO-DIDDLY-OO',
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TWO GUINEAS FOR A PLOT.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 303. FOR WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 20, 1894. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

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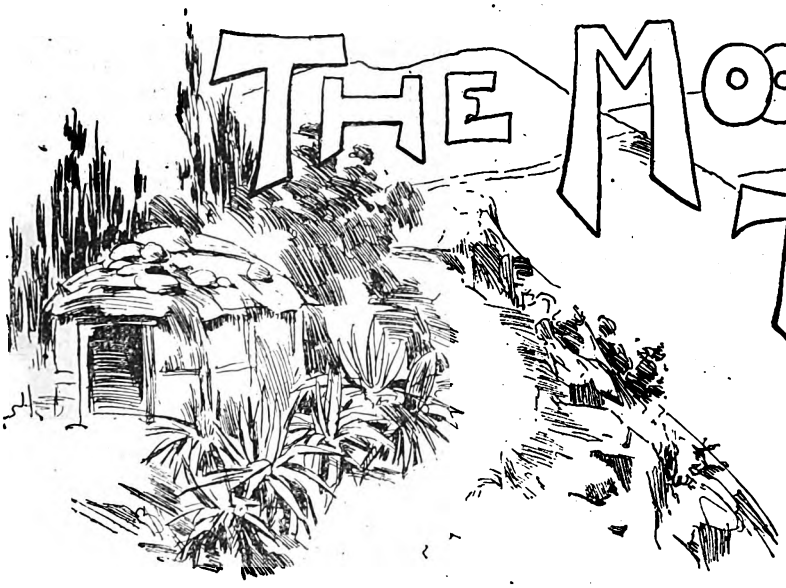
SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 303. *FOR THE WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 20, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

THE MOORISH TREASURE



FAR up the rocky slopes of the Montes de Toledo, off from the narrow donkey-path which zigzagged its tempestuous way up the mountain-side, stood a solitary hut. It was a rudely-constructed, one-roomed affair, with a roof of dirt and stones.

To render its isolation more complete, a hedge of aloes had been grown on the side nearest the trail. On the other side lay a small piece of tilled ground, and in a shallow furrow stood a plough, like the primitive one of Adam of old—the crutch of a tree. It was rudely shod, however, with iron. A small *burro* browsed beneath a clump of cypress trees in the rear.

Within the bowl-like room of the hut, upon a rude mattress, lay an aged peasant. His hollow cheeks and emaciated form told a story of sickness and suffering, and the white, pathetic face and lustreless eyes showed it was a sickness unto death. Manuel Mendez realised his end was near, and, like many another sin-burdened mortal has done, was easing his final hours by a confession of his deeds and misdeeds to a fellow-man. It was, however, more than the mere relief that comes from imparting burdensome secrets which he sought when he told the young man, who sat upon a low-backed stool beside his bed, the story of his life. Gratitude to his youthful benefactor filled the old man's heart.

An itinerant musician, whose entire worldly possessions consisted of a guitar—which he loved better than his soul—and the clothes upon his back, Juan Tejera had in his wanderings come upon the peasant while lying ill, and out of goodness of heart had remained with and taken care of him. It was to repay this labour of compassion that Manuel taxed the strength of his last moments.

"Brother of my soul," he said tenderly, "thou hast been kind to me when I had almost forgotten that man knew of kindness, so long had it been unseen by me; and befriended me when I was deserted by all others; and in recompense, thou shalt know of a treasure greater than thou hast ever dreamed of. It will make thee richer than all men. And the wealth shall be justly thine, for its owners are long since dead, and dead men have no use for gold."

He paused a moment to collect his waning strength; the young man was bending forward eagerly. Down in the valleys below them the silent forces of darkness were gathering and slowly creeping up the mountain side. As if he felt the silent forces of death were also gathering, and was fearful lest they should overtake him with his narrative unfinished, the old man hastened on with it.

"In my younger days I was noted for my skill as a stone worker, and it once happened I was brought, with a fellow-workman, to the suburb of Albaycin, to repair the fountain in the patio of the palace of the gipsy king. The trouble, we found, was at the bottom of the basin. The water was drawn off, and we had descended to make the necessary repairs. While thus engaged I discovered and called the attention of my companion to a hole at the top of the basin. It was large enough to easily admit a man, and we saw that the overhanging, fancifully carved, marble rim of the basin alike protected it from the observation of any one in the patio above, and from the water in the basin below.

"The palace had been built centuries before by the Moors, and we judged we had discovered the entrance to one of those subterranean passages which are so frequently found beneath their houses. Curious to know more about it, we procured candles and started to investigate. We found, as we had expected, a steep tunnel-like passage, down whose slippery stone floor, greased with the dampness and mould of ages, we slid with an alarming rapidity to a somewhat larger, but level, passage. Once down, the question of how to return immediately presented itself. The descent had been remarkable easy, but to slide up was another matter. Finding we were unable to arrive at any solution of the problem, we concluded to investigate further, in the hope of discovering another outlet. We proceeded along the passage cautiously, stooping low to avoid striking our heads against the rocky roof, and holding our candles before us.

"We walked thus a hundred yards, perhaps, when suddenly we came into a sort of vault, and there—ah, how plainly I can see it yet!—Dios! what a sight it was to men who knew well the pinchings of poverty. Gold! gold! gold! There, in one glittering heap, was more than we could earn in a thousand years of toil. We capered like children about the vault, hugged each other with frenzied joy, and crazily talked plans for spending our wealth.

"Then came a change. A greed possessed me. Why should I share these riches with another? I asked myself. What right had Richardo Gonzalez to the gold which I had discovered? Mine it was, and mine it should be. Like all Spaniards, I carried a knife in the folds of my woollen sash;

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"I struck him—first."

already I saw a stiletto in Richardo's hand, but too late! I struck him—first."

The speaker had half risen upon his elbow in the excitement of his recollections, but now stopped and fell back. A moment later, when Juan touched his brow, it was already cold. Death had come with the darkness, which now mantled the mountain tops, and lowered the curtain upon an ended life.

Juan rose and passed out of the hut. He was greatly agitated by the strange story he had just listened to. Wild hopes were created by it, and a life of new expectations and new objects was opened before him. He, the strolling beggar, who most of the time was in doubt as to the source of his next meal, having expectations of wealth! How unreal t seemed.

Yet he could already see himself bearing the gold upon his shoulders from the vault; setting up a princely establishment at Madrid—yes, at Madrid it should be, that home of the luxury-loving—and Carlota. Carlota! He repeated the name with ecstasy. Even now he could see the oval face, the soft lustrous eyes, the round, white neck. Was there ever another so fair? An hour since he had scarcely dared to breathe her name, so far had she seemed above him; but now he even dared hope to win the proud señora, with all her beauty and position. With wealth all things were possible.

In the midst of these rapturous dreamings came the alarming thought that perhaps there were important details of the untimely-ended story yet untold. Manuel may have removed it to another hiding-place, or others, perhaps, had found and appropriated it. But the old careless spirit which had often before comforted him under adverse circumstances again asserted itself, and forbade him meeting trouble half-way.

He was still, however, unable to entirely dismiss his fears, for when he lay down under the stars—he could not bring himself to share the hut with its silent occupant—he dreamed he sought the treasure, but found in its place the bewitching and mocking face of Carlota, who continually eluded him as he pursued her, until old Manuel, in a suit of gold coin, laid on like fish scales, came and bore her further and further from him.

In the morning Juan dug a grave beneath the cypress trees and buried Manuel. Above the little mound of upturned earth he erected a rude wooden cross, and piled stones about its base to secure it. This last service done, he invested himself with the authority of an administrator, assumed the rights of a sole legatee, and began at once to settle up the estate in a simple and satisfactory manner. From an arbour, which had been used as a sort of open-air store-room, he brought great bunches of fragrant Malaga grapes, melons cased with straw, and vegetables of various kinds, all of which he packed in the enormous pockets of the donkey's pannier, until the little brown *burro* was almost hidden from sight beneath the load. In his own pannier—the alforja, or peasant's bag, which he wore slung over his shoulder—he placed those articles so indispensable to the travelling Spaniard, even though his journey be but of an hour's duration—the garlic-pot and wine-skin. Thus equipped he abandoned the little farm, and set off down the mountain to the distant town of Toledo.

Where the donkey-path joined the main highway he came up with a farmer, who, in his great hooded, two-wheeled cart—which looked from a distance, as it went nodding along behind its tandem team of *burros*, like a monstrous old woman's bonnet—was also bound for the market, and they travelled in company the remainder of the journey. Together they crossed the long bridge leading into the city, and jointly argued with the burly revenue official at the towered gate—a dog of a man, who tumbled out every cabbage and carrot in his search for smuggled goods in spite of their pious and tearful protestations of innocence.

At the market place Juan laid his long woollen cloak upon the ground, rolling a rim, and upon this huge plate exposed his fruits and vegetables for sale. Late in the afternoon the red flannel lining of the cloak was cleared, and upon its owner's back again, while the equivalent of its former load jingled musically in his pocket. He was now ready for his journey in search of the hidden treasure.

He had learned much regarding his route and destination during the day, from a *caballero* of the noble profession of beggary, who, motionless as a statue, had been standing near him, with his hand extended in supplication to the passers-by. Prominently displayed upon the beggar's ragged cloak, along with the brass license badge of the government, hung a crest which proclaimed him to be the proud descendant of an old grandee family.

Despite his illustrious lineage and his absurd airs of superiority on that account, he proved himself a sociable and obliging fellow, especially after having been made approachable through the medium of the wine-skin, from which he drank by dexterously shooting a stream into his mouth while holding the skin at full arm's length.

Juan eagerly devoured all the beggar told him; it was all grist to his mill, and even though some of the information did confuse him and add new difficulties to those he already saw, it did not discourage him. His project was one for which he could form no plans, but must feel his way darkly, step by step. He could only observe and learn, and be freely and constantly dependent upon the inspiration of the next moment. His determination, however, inspired a confidence in himself. He had learned, among other things, that the Gipsy King was considered the best guitar-player in Spain. This was important, for, if Juan could do one thing well, it was play upon the guitar.

A long hillside, literally honeycombed with the caves of Gitanos, and dotted here and there with the dilapidated remains of an old Moorish house; irregular, tortuous streets, filled to overflowing with an ever-shifting mass of humanity; the weirdest and most filthy beggars, the loudest and most importunate tradesmen, the laziest and most dilatory workmen, manufacturing rude plates and articles of iron and leather, the ugliest and dirtiest brown women sewing and weaving cloth, all carrying on their occupations in the streets, and children, dogs, and squalor everywhere; such Juan found the Gipsy quarter and its people to be. The whole place, with its teeming population and its underground homes, reminded him of a vast colony of gigantic ants, although he thought they might emulate the industrious habits of that insect with profit to themselves. However, that was their affair, and his present business was not with the common people, but with their king.

For a week he had been in this miserable place, living among the people, keeping his eyes and ears open, and seeking an opportunity to get within the king's palace. He had thought of many plans for effecting this, but rejected them all, upon consideration, as impracticable. He even thought seriously at one time of tunnelling under the walls, and

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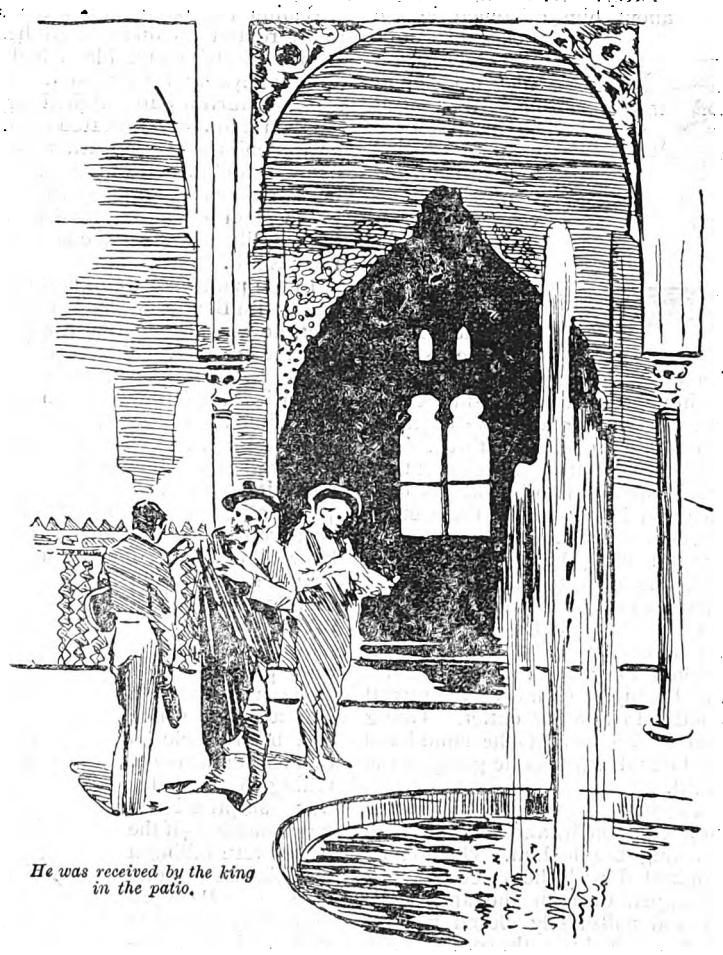
explored the ground about the palace with that object, but was unable to find a spot sufficiently secluded for his operations.

His chief amusement during this time had been playing the guitar. Your true Spaniard is always powerless to resist the attractions of his favourite instrument and will, at any and all times, postpone a journey, put off a duty or stop work—especially stop work—at the first twang of the strings. The children seem born with a knowledge and love for the national *fandango* dance, so early do they acquire it. Juan's fame as a guitarist had soon spread among the gipsies, and wherever he went he was quickly surrounded by a crowd of brown loafers who, with handclappings and exclamations, encouraged the younger ones as they danced the exciting *fandango*. His fame had even penetrated to royal ears, and it was in answer to a summons from the palace that he was now on his way thither.

The imperial residence had at one time been a stately structure, rich with ornamentation and architectural beauty and a pride to its Moorish builders; but time and man had, through successive years, despoiled its beauty, until it now appeared, upon the outside, little more than a group of graceful columns and a reddish stone wall supporting a roof of earth, stones and rubbish. Inside the small spike-studded door, however, more traces of the old-time beauty appeared. Floors inlaid with red and blue tiles, arranged in pleasing mosaics; walls adorned with graceful and ingenious arabesques; doorways with the superb horse-shoe arch above them and with borders of stone coloured differently from the walls and inscribed in letters of azure, crimson and gold with the religious precepts of the Arabs. But even in the most beautiful parts Juan found dirt and squalor to prevail, and fowls roosted on the handsomely carved ornamentations.



He was received by the king in the patio.

He was received by the king in the patio. It may be easily imagined that he regarded with much interest the fountain which played in the centre with a soft murmur, serenely unconscious of the secret which it guarded beneath its rippling waters. Unversed in kings, he had expected a certain amount of ceremony would be connected with his reception, but he was unprepared for the democratic freedom which characterised the court of this gipsy ruler, if the three or four out-at-elbow hangers-on who loafed about the patio could be called by so dignified a name. Their time seemed taken up with their cigarettes, wine-skins, and garlic pots, to the exclusion of any mere matters of state.

When Juan presented himself, the king said simply: "I have heard from many sources that thou canst play upon the guitar with excellence. I have sent for thee; for if thou art as skilful in thy performance as I have heard of thee, thou canst be of service to me. Let me hear thee play."

Presently, as Juan played, there came through a doorway at the end of the patio the five daughters of the king in gaily coloured dresses, with castanets and tambourines, pirouetting and dancing. There was an incessant clapping of hands, and clatter of castanets and rattling of tambourines and stamping of heels upon the tiled floor, accompanied by a low, mournful wail and an agonised twisting and swaying of their bodies as they danced their wild, weird dance.

Among the dancers was one tall, dark woman—Benita, he afterwards learned her name to be—who often swept close to him, flashing a daring look from her black eyes over her shoulder as she passed. To this language of the eye he was not slow to respond in kind. To himself he excused this little faithlessness to Carlota on the ground that it was but a means unto an end—an end with Carlota—and meant nothing. He was of necessity bound to accept every opportunity that offered itself to ingratiate himself in the royal household, he reasoned, for to strengthen himself here was to strengthen his chance of obtaining the treasure, and to obtain that was to obtain Carlota. Looking at it in this light he felt quite virtuous. The dancers filed out, Benita venturing a last look as she disappeared, and he ceased playing.

"Caramba!" exclaimed the king, "my people have spoken truly; thou dost play well indeed. To-morrow my daughters dance in Granada for the pleasure of a party of English travellers, and thou shalt again play for them."

Juan had to be careful lest he betrayed too great an eagerness in expressing his pleasure at such an arrangement. The first, and what he thought to be the hardest, step was now accomplished. He was installed upon a certain footing at the entrance to the hiding-place of the Moorish treasure, and he was not the man he thought himself to be if he did not soon possess it. That night he remained within the palace walls.

He determined to make his first attempt that very night. He could see nothing to be gained by waiting—indeed, the night seemed specially favourable for his project. A thunderstorm was noisily rolling and rumbling up in the mountains, and a strong wind was rising. This would aid him by drowning any accidental noise, and his impatience made him think lightly of ordinary risks. Once with the gold actually in his possession, he would snap his fingers at this patronising king of a race of beggars, build a palace that would put his dilapidated old pile to disgrace, and kick any itinerary musician out of doors who presumed to call him brother.

As soon as the quietness about the palace assured him that its inmates had all retired, he stole out into the patio. He had long ago provided himself with candles and matches and a coil of light rope, with a hook fastened in one end, in anticipation of this occasion. He shut the water off from the foundation and watched it sink in the basin until the marble bottom was exposed, then, leaping down, eagerly felt in the darkness under the rim for the opening. It was an anxious moment. Ah! it was there.

Profiting by the experience of the first explorers, he fastened his hook over the end of the hole, boldly climbed in, uncoiled his rope, and, hand over hand, let himself down the steep

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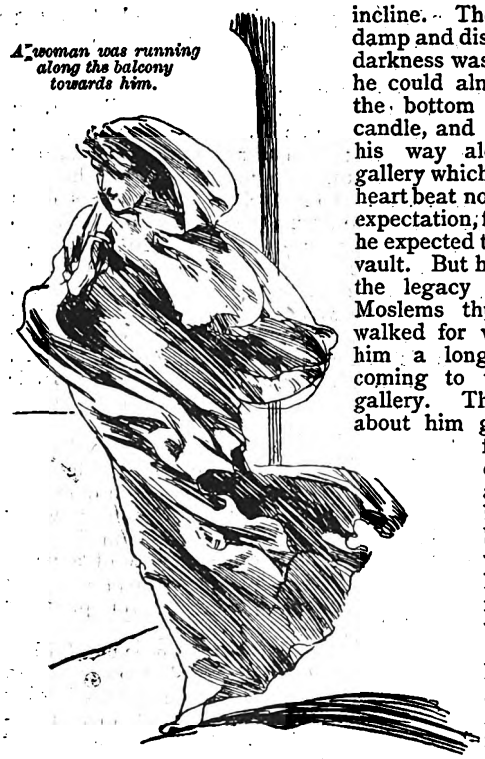
A woman was running along the balcony towards him.

incline. The place smelled damp and disagreeable. The darkness was so intense that he could almost feel it. At the bottom he lighted his candle, and carefully groped his way along the rocky gallery which he found. His heart beat now with hope and expectation, for every moment he expected to come upon the vault. But he was not to win the legacy of the ancient Moslems thus easily. He walked for what seemed to him a long way without coming to the end of the gallery. The damp rocks about him glistened in the flickering light of his candle, and an occasional bat, frightened by this unwonted visitor, startled him as it darted from some crevice.

Suddenly he heard a quick, angry hissing. At the same moment he saw a large snake coiled upon the stones before him. Under ordinary circumstances Juan was not lacking in physical courage—in fact, he prided himself upon his fearlessness; but when he counted, rising in rapid succession about him, one, two, three, four, five hissing and venomous heads, fear drove all thoughts of further search for the treasure from his mind, and his only concern was for his safety. Already he saw one of the reptiles writhing toward him. He turned and ran. A stone tripped and threw him violently, extinguishing his candle. Now utterly panic-stricken with terror, he arose and dashed forward in the darkness, nor did he slacken his speed until he reached the end of the gallery. There he felt about for his rope. To his surprise he could not find it, but, in its place, a ladder, which felt like iron, and seemed to mount a perpendicular shaft. He concluded that, in his flight, he must have turned into a side passage which led into another outlet. Going back was not to be considered for an instant—he shuddered when he thought of what was behind him—so he grasped the rusty rounds and started upward.

When he had climbed some distance he felt one of the rounds yield slightly as he stepped upon it, and a draught of cold, damp air revealed an opening beside him. Outside he heard the noise of the storm, mingled with the voices of men talking excitedly. As he stepped through the aperture a stone moved up behind him and noiselessly closed it. He found himself upon a gallery overlooking the patio. The storm was now raging violently and the rain falling fast.

To his alarm he saw that many of the household were moving about the patio with lights. He wondered, anxiously, if they had discovered the empty fountain, and if they were searching for him. A woman was running along the balcony towards him. By the light of the hissing and spluttering torches below he saw it was Benita, and he caught her as she came up.

"What has happened?" he asked, at a venture.

She clung to him affrightedly, and looked pale and scared.

"I do not know, I heard an awful crash," she said. Her answer was reassuring to Juan; at least, he was not the cause of the trouble.

At one end of the balcony one of the curtains—which ran on wires from one side of the palace to the other and served as a roof to screen the patio when the sunshine became too fierce—was not fully drawn, and offered a protection from the storm. He drew her beneath this shelter. There they learned, from the conversation of the men below, the crash had been caused by the falling of an already dilapidated outside wall, which the wind had blown down.

The alarm ended, Juan drew his companion further into the shadow and tried to quiet her fears, for she still trembled with excitement.

The household had again settled down into quietness, and the storm abated before he crossed the patio on the way to his room, and turned the water again into the fountain. Above him, standing in a doorway, her tall, graceful figure in silhouette against the light of the room behind her, he could see Benita waving a kiss into the darkness to him.

His hopes had receded far in the past two hours, but he had at least strengthened his position, for he knew that Benita loved him.

. . . . . .

Behind the palace, upon the hillside, a dismantled watch-tower reared its dilapidated head, a mute reminder of the scenes of strife and bloodshed which the surrounding hills and valleys had witnessed. There, centuries before, the Moslem warrior had watched for his Christian enemy.

Upon a low stone, seated at the entrance of the tower, Juan and Benita sat one afternoon, about a week after his unsuccessful attempt to find the secreted gold. Below them lay the swarming gipsy town, and, further down, the beautiful green plain of Vega, dotted here and there with little white houses, like pearls set in emerald, and bounded by the gleaming river Xenil.

In the past week Juan had made much progress in his love affair with Benita, but little towards the object of his travels; in fact, he was further from it now than he had been at any time since his arrival. That very day he had been turned from the palace by the king, who had discovered the love of his daughter. A musical adventurer was all very well in his sphere, but, in the opinion of the gipsy ruler, his sphere was not that of his daughter's suitor. The daughter, however, thought differently, and, while the father in his palace below indulged in his afternoon siesta, she and her lover planned an elopement. Not that Juan had given up hope of finding the treasure, and was going to leave it. His one object was still to possess it. But he knew his only hope of regaining an entrance to the palace was as Benita's husband; therefore he desired to marry her.

As they talked, he idly picked up a stone, and tossed it into a cavity which had been disclosed by a part of the tower falling away. He was surprised to hear sounds as if the stone were falling a considerable distance. Benita noticed it, and said: "There is a tradition that this tower is connected with the palace by an underground passage, but no one has ever been able to discover it."

This was enough to excite Juan, and in a moment he had entered the cavity, and, candle in hand, was descending the steep passage which he found, closely followed by the

The senorita had come out upon the balcony.

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astonished Benita. Unlike the other gallery he had been into, this one was perfectly dry, and soon became high enough to allow them to walk but slightly stooped. They went down, down, until they felt sure they must be under the palace. Suddenly Benita clutched his arm. In the dust beneath them were footprints, and then, a few feet further on, they came upon the white bones of a skeleton. The sight filled Juan with a wild delight. "I have found it! I have found it!" he cried, hurrying forward, dragging his companion after him, at the imminent risk of breaking both their heads.

In a moment the passage widened into a circular room. There, as the dying peasant had told, lay the golden treasure of the Moors. Benita sank upon her knees and piously crossed herself. Juan touched it: first, as if it were something to be feared, then ecstatically gloated over it, running his hands through the pile of shining, jingling pieces, fondling them and murmuring, "Mine! mine at last!"

Taking Benita's shawl from her shoulders, they piled the gold upon it and gathered the four corners together. It made a load so heavy he could scarcely carry it alone. Between them they carried it up to the watch-tower. There, he said to her softly, "At midnight, my beloved, meet me here, and to-morrow we shall be one in name and soul."

He waited until darkness began to gather, and then, as the stars were taking their places one by one in the clear sky above him, he fled—alone.

. . . . . .

A cavalier was serenading his señorita beneath her cross-barred and balconied window. The music was Juan's, but the player was hardly recognisable in the broad-brimmed silky beaver, the fine broadcloth cloak with its crimson velvet lining, and the slashed trousers which he wore.

The señorita had come out upon the balcony to answer his song with one of her own as sweet as his. At last his dream was realised. The low music filled him with rapture, for it was Carlota's song he heard.

Suddenly a tall dark figure confronted him—a knife-blade gleamed an instant in the moonlight.

"Holy Virgin! Benita! Have mercy!" But once—twice the long blade is quickly buried in his breast, and the swooning señorita above sees only the ghastly face of her cavalier fixed in death.

A TURKISH HYPNOTIST

"You are all alike, you English; really you believe that all sciences, all curious discoveries emanate from your brains, when often you only bring to light what was once known. You spoke of the remarkable progress which occult science has made in England the past few years. Well, if you would like, I will tell you an absolutely authentic story, which will prove to you that one hundred years ago hypnotism was not only known in Turkey, but even practised advantageously."

I accepted, and my friend Hamed Pasha began:

"No one has ever seen a similar epistle to that which the Pasha of Kars sent, one hundred years ago, to His Highness the Sultan Selim, third of that name. It was not written upon vellum nor upon parchment; it did not bear a wax-signet, nor any seal whatever, but when the gracious Padishah received it he fell backward upon the thick carpet formed of the skins of Nubian lions.

"This strange missive was composed of eight signs, which, taken together, formed two words of terrible signification, causing the Sultan frightful anger upon reading it. These two words were given out in the morning, at sunrise, by the Pasha of Kars, and at evening, when the last rays of the setting sun gilded the high minarets and the golden domes of the Mosques at Stamboul, like so many gigantic scarabees, the glorious Selim received the fearful message in his palace of Yidiz-Kiosk. How could these eight letters cross in a day the distance which separates Kars in Armenia from the Bosphorus? How could the missive of the Pasha in a few hours reach his august majesty, when the best cavalier, mounted upon the most rapid horse, could not accomplish the distance in less than eight days?

"It happened that my ingenious ancestor, before the invention of the telegraph, contrived means of rapid communication. In the afternoon, by order of the Pasha, the sentinel who stood steadfast upon the highest battlement of the fort took in both hands his long black mantle and waved it once in the air. The soldiers on duty upon the rock of Muzurdagh made the same movement with their mantles, and from point to point, summit to summit, the entire length of the chain of Akdagh, as well as in the plain of Kyzyl, Irmach, and Scutari, one series of black mantles waved once in the air. The scribe of the Sultan, who stood attentively upon the highest tower of the palace watching the horizon, upon seeing this sign wrote, with the end of a pointed reed which served for a pen, a B upon the open parchment before him.

"The sentinel at Kars reversed his mantle, and waved it again, showing the lining of a brilliant red. In less than an hour, from the Caucasus to the Golden Horn, several hundred mantles were waving the red signal. The scribe of the Sultan wrote an A upon the parchment. For an hour the mantles continued to wave from the summits, sometimes red, sometimes black, following the code. At evening, when the muezzins were calling the faithful to prayer, the scribe of Selim wrote upon his parchment the last letter of the winged message from the Pasha of Kars.

"'BARUT JPL' ('Powder given out'), said the Pasha.

"The news was serious; for if the Pasha had no more powder how could he repulse the assault of the Russians? He would have to surrender, and Kars, the key of the Caucasus, would fall into the hands of the soldiers of the great Catherine. The poor secretary of Selim thought of the consequences of the news, and slowly and timidly approached the apartments of his master. The unfortunate scribe had reason to fear, for scarcely had the Sultan glanced at the parchment when, as a messenger of bad news, the scribe received forty blows—five for each letter.

"'Happily,' said the faithful servitor to himself, with that resigned philosophy which forms the Mussulman character, 'the Pasha of Kars confined himself to a telegraphic style, for if he had used the usual formula: "Glory of the Universe, Master of all Sovereigns, of all Power, thy Enchained Slave, striking his humble forehead, the lowest before thy brilliant throne, which touches Heaven," etc., etc., I would be dead.'

"This brutality only slightly appeased the anger of the Sultan, who now summoned his Grand Vizier. He was called Ibrahim, an old and ugly man, but very intelligent. When he entered, bent in executing the many salamaleks prescribed by etiquette, the amiable Padishah, instead of saluting, hit him on the head. This did not forebode an agreeable conversation, so he prostrated himself still lower to escape the storm.

"'Ah, rascal! Miscreant!' roared His Highness, greatly

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exasperated. 'Is this the way you watch over my army? I am no longer astonished that the cursed Muscovites check our brave soldiers if all my generals are in the same predicament as my captain at Kars! Without powder, indeed! But explain how it happens that a fort so important as that of Kars should want ammunition.'

"'Probably it has burned its last cartridge,' humbly suggests the Grand Vizier without daring to rise.

"'You are an imbecile, Ibrahim. I have a mind to throw you in prison at once. If the Pasha has no powder, he probably has no money to buy it; so to-morrow morning, at daybreak, you start out a caravan filled with a thousand purses of silver.'

"'I have the purses, Gracious Majesty, but where shall I get the silver to fill them?'

"'That does not concern me. Apply to my Green banker, unless you prefer to ask the Persian financier, who lent me money the other day.'

"'Your orders shall be obeyed, your Majesty,' replied Ibrahim with humility. 'To-morrow a thousand purses will set out for Kars.'

"Happy to have escaped so easily, the Grand Vizier left the palace and proceeded slowly to the residence of the brave Hassan, from whom he expected to borrow the necessary money. This cunning Persian was a man of precaution, and never allowed a sum of money to leave the bank without at first deducting an honest interest of twenty per cent. Thus, instead of one thousand purses, Hassan counted out only eight hundred; but the Sultan wanted a thousand, so the Grand Vizier signed a note for two thousand and received sixteen hundred.

"Reaching home, the faithful Ibrahim took the superfluous six hundred and hid them under the mattress of the divan, then sent for the Khaznadar Pasha (Treasurer General), to confide the care of sending the silver into Asia Minor.

"Ibrahim was a true Turkish functionary, and the sight of the little purses, methodically arranged on the carpet, made him reflect:

"'You pretty silver things! You are destined to be devoured by the cannon! The noble metal of which you are made will go up in smoke, and shall I do nothing to stop this vandalism? No, Allah would not pardon me if I did not make the attempt. If I cannot save you all, at least it is my duty to protect some of you. Since the Pasha wishes to kill the Russians, he should put in two shells in each cannon, thus using only half as much powder; consequently he does not need but half this sum.'

"Thanks to this subtle reasoning, Ibrahim, finding his conscience at peace, hurried to put away five hundred purses under the mattress with the others.

"What is most astonishing, when the Khaznadar took possession of the remaining five hundred he reflected also:

"'O Allah,' said he, 'if the Pasha was not an imbecile he would know how to spare his ammunition. Instead of sending useless balls and bullets great distances, he ought to let the enemy approach, then massacre them with cartridges. Why should I prevent this brave Pasha from giving proof of his bravery? It is my duty to furnish an occasion for it. Then, here are two hundred and fifty purses for him and the same for me.'

"The Karavanbachi (chief of the caravan) said in turn:

"'Two hundred and fifty purses are too heavy for one camel, and too light for two. I know I ought not to maltreat an animal, the Koran forbids it. My duty is, then, to divide this sum evenly.'

"It was done.

"The janizary who set out with some soldiers to escort the camel loaded with the one hundred and twenty-five purses unceremoniously helped himself to half the load, deeming it useless to trouble his subaltern mind with ingenious reasoning.

"Reaching Kars unimpeded, he placed the sixty-two and one-half purses at the feet of the Pasha.

"'Sixty-two purses and a half,' said the captain to himself, 'That is very little to buy ammunition. What will I do? Ah! I will give it to my secretary, who complained just now of having no more sand to dry his writing. In this way one of us, at least, will have what is wanting.'

"He called his secretary, and said to him: 'The Sultan, our glorious sovereign, is a master who lets nothing escape him. He has learned you needed sand for your writing, and he has sent you sixty-two purses and a half, full of white pieces, with which you can buy sand and fill your office for several years.'

"Eight days later, the Pasha of Kars sent to his majesty the Sultan Selim, a new winged message, laconic and terrible. The mantles of the sentinels were not waved very long from the summits. Three signs sufficed to transmit the fatal news: 'Taken.' Kars was taken.

"The unfortunate Pasha was sent at once to Constantinople and thrown into prison. During the several days which were spent in the dungeon the ex-Governor of Kars had the pleasure of reflecting upon his situation, and of preparing his defence. One morning they brought him before His Highness. The Pasha allowed the reproaches which his master heaped upon him on entering to pass unnoticed, then, when he judged the anger of the terrible Sultan had subsided somewhat, he began to plead his cause boldly and frankly.

"'You say, Light of the Faithful, that you sent me one thousand purses to enable me to buy some powder. Now, if I had received them, I would have been able to check the Russians. Kars would still belong to your Majesty. I swear upon the Koran I received only sixty-two purses and a half. Here is a mystery which at first appears incomprehensible, but upon reflecting a little the explanation is easy. If you will permit your faithful servant to give it, you will speedily see that he is not guilty. You sent one thousand purses, but only sixty-two and a half reached me; it is because the sum has been divided by two four times. In other terms, you have been robbed four times, glorious Padishah. Now, if you desire to know the names of the robbers, nothing would be more easy. They are those through whose hands the money passed:

"'The first is surely the Grand Vizier, who pocketed five hundred purses; the second could only be the Khaznadar, who took two hundred and fifty; the third would be the Karavanbachi, who carried off one hundred and twenty-five; and the fourth must be the janizary of the escort, who kept sixty-two and a half. See, great Seigneur, how simple that is.'

"During all this discourse the Sultan Selim remained quiet, then spoke in a perfectly composed manner:

"'Very well, Ali; you are a good soldier and a loyal servant, who has not yet learned the art of lying. You will re-enter my good graces, and I will return all your grades and privileges. As for this miserable Ibrahim, the first and greatest robber of the four, he will pay dearly for his infamous action. I will teach him what the Sultan Selim does to a Grand Vizier who has the audacity to rob his master. You go, my faithful Ali, and find him this evening, before the hour of prayer, and present to him this noose of red silk. He will understand. Go!'

"For the first time in his life Ali Pasha paled upon hearing this sentence of death pronounced in so tranquil a tone. To strike an enemy in the face with arms when he could defend himself; to struggle with a warrior who was armed as well as he, was for him only pleasure; but to send someone into the other world with a little silk cord revolted him. However, the order of the Sultan was absolute; he must submit. So the brave Ali left the palace, wondering how he should execute the sentence.

"In his sumptuous palace of Ortakoe, whose terraced gardens descended to the sea, the Grand Vizier Ibrahim reposed, leaning against a pile of pillows, fingering his amber beard; before him, in a basin, burned a perfumed mixture, whose fragrance filled the place.

"Suddenly the heavy hanging which concealed the door lifted, and Ali Pasha entered. Upon seeing before him one whom he believed was still in prison Ibrahim felt a sinister presentiment.

"'Let your last hour be happy,' said Ali in a grave voice, standing in the doorway.

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"Ibrahim did not misunderstand the sense of these words; he knew by the salute that Ali could only be a messenger of death, and that he held concealed in the folds of his cafetan the terrible silken noose. Still the face of Ibrahim remained passive; his eyes burned a little bright. Slowly he said: 'Allah wishes it! Allah is powerful! We are at his feet only miserable worms of the dust. Let his will be accomplished. Render me this last service of waiting a moment, and let me finish my ablutions and my prayers. You know Mahomet has proclaimed sacred the vows of the dying.'

"'Your pardon,' replied Ali; 'but my orders are absolute. I cannot lose you from sight a moment. Moreover, what good would it do you to leave the room? Look out of the window! There are more than a thousand janizaries surrounding your palace. Do you not hear the clash of arms? They are the guards of His Majesty who have invaded your palace. You see it is in vain to try to escape.'

"'Of which I never dreamed,' replied Ibrahim. 'Reassure yourself, Ali, I will not keep you waiting long. Please be seated.'

"He struck his hands three times, and two Nubian slaves appeared. They tremblingly brought in an ewer and a basin and a prayer-rug.

"Ibrahim then raised his mantle, and slowly made his ablutions. No one would have thought, seeing him so calm, that in a few minutes the fatal cord would encircle his brown neck. Outside, upon the high minarets of the city, the muezzins intoned their soft and monotonous chant announcing to the faithful the decline of day.

"When the Grand Vizier plunged his head in the basin, Ali, thrusting his hand under his cafetan, drew out the cord of red silk, and placed it in the hand of one of the slaves. The slaves understood.

"Upon delivering this deadly noose, which he would receive again only after its mission was accomplished, the soldier trembled. He had seen thousands of men fall upon the battle-field without flinching, but upon contemplating this full, plump face, which in a few minutes would be only an inert mass, he was horrified. Ah! a terrible business that of an executioner.

"While Ali Pasha was thus sadly reflecting the Grand Vizier finished his ablutions. With slow, measured, and majestic step he advanced toward the prayer-rug, upon which he stood with his head high and proud, his body erect, in order to isolate himself from the rest of the world, so that no terrestial noise should interrupt his ecstatic meditations.

"The Grand Vizier very slowly raised his arms, and placed the palms of his hands over his ears. His large black eyes, burning with a strange fire, rested upon Ali Pasha. The brave captain, nervous and troubled, did not know how to account for this singular attitude. Why did not the doomed man say his prayers like a good Mussulman? Why did those eyes, which gleamed in the dark like the dagger of an assassin, rest upon him?

"The poor Pasha did not seek the key of the mystery very long; little by little, a strange, inexplicable happiness overcame him; it seemed to him that his body and his mind, detached from terrestial things, floated in the pure regions of ether, softly cradled by perfumed zephyrs. Slowly his eyes closed, his head inclined upon his breast, and, leaning against the divan where he had fallen, he slept.

"Ibrahim, finally abandoning his meditative attitude, approached Ali, and raised one of his eyelids—the eye was without expression or life.

"'He sleeps,' cried the Grand Vizier with a triumphant joy. Then, seating himself gravely upon the divan in front of his victim, whom he watched constantly, Ibrahim began the following recital, articulating each word slowly, as if he wished to thoroughly engrave the words upon the mind of his auditor:

"'When I first delivered the fatal news, he made his ablutions, then prayed prostrated as the Koran prescribes. His prayer finished, he seated himself upon a divan, and, taking from the slave the cord, he made a sliding knot, passing it round his neck. He looked at me for the last time, crossed his arms upon his breast and made a sign to the slaves, who seized each an end and drew it with all their might. It was a horrible sight; his face swelled out, reddened, then grew purple; his eyes left their orbits; his tongue hung out of his mouth black and lifeless. The slaves redoubled their efforts; one would have thought the soul hesitated to leave its earthly habitation. Finally, a last jolt, a supreme convulsion, the head fell back, the arms dropped inert; it was over. One of the slaves detached the cord. What a horrible black mark it left in the flesh! They covered the corpse with a mantle. Your justice was satisfied, O Sublime Selim.'

"When Ibrahim had finished his recital, he extended himself on the ground, one of the slaves covered him with his mantle, then approaching Ali Pasha, he struck him twice upon his face.

"The brave Captain opened his eyes and looked round as though he had had a painful dream. The slave, inclining profoundly before him, returned the red noose. This movement completely recalled to his mind the order of the Sultan, and seizing the fatal cord Ali concealed it in his breast. Then, rising he glanced furtively upon the human form stretched under the mantle, and advanced toward the door.

"'Pardon, noble Pasha,' said the slave, 'would you not like to see him?'

"'Never, unfortunate one,' replied Ali, with horror. 'I should never sleep again.' He went out, and signed to the officer to retire with his men.

"'Death has no need of a sentinel,' said he. The chief of the janizaries and Ali mounted horses and set off in the direction of Yidiz-Kiosk.

"'Peace be with him,' said the faithful servant to the gracious Sultan Selim, when reciting the details of the death of the Grand Vizier.

"'You say the agony was very long?' added the Padishah.

"'Terrible, your Majesty,' responded Ali. 'One would have thought he had seven souls nailed to his body.'

"'Glorious Majesty,' added Ali, 'I am your faithful slave; I am ready to suffer death for you. Say the word and I will meet death, without trembling, in the midst of shot and shell, but, I beg you, never send me on a like mission.'

"'Be tranquil, my brave Ali, thy prayer shall be answered. But thou art my faithful servant. Another might have let this cunning rascal escape; he was a great knave, between you and me. The clemency of Allah descend upon him,' added Selim in a funereal tone.

. . . . . .

"At midnight, when the moon concealed his silver disc behind the mountains, a fine 'tartan,' with its dark sails, glided rapidly and silently upon the gentle waves of the Bosphorus. Upon the deck the ex-Grand Vizier Ibrahim, surrounded by his wives and children, was seated.

"'Confess, my sweet Kadite,' said Ibrahim to the eldest of his companions, 'that it would have been too beastly to die for five hundred purses of silver. Once again have I cause to know that I made a good purchase when I bought you at the market at Cairo. It was you that revealed to me the secret of the women of Egypt, this secret, thanks to which one can put to sleep his neighbour. It is not at all difficult, and I am astonished there are so few who know how to practise this precious art.

"'To put that poor Ali to sleep was only child's play. I would like to know what punishment His Highness will inflict upon him when, wishing to proceed with my interment, he will perceive that I have fooled them. Poor Ali! what a pity he is so honest! I could have taken him with me. The Tsarine would have made him a colonel, as she will make me a general. The great Catherine is a good and hospitable person, especially to Turks, particularly when they know the secrets of all the strong places of the Danube.'

"With these hopeful words Ibrahim stretched himself upon the mats and slept the sleep of the just."

. . . . . .

"Well," said my friend Hamed Pasha, after finishing his recital, "do you still pretend that hypnotism is a recent invention, improved by nervous Englishmen? And do you think we Turks need the experiences of your doctors in order to probe the secrets of suggestive science?"

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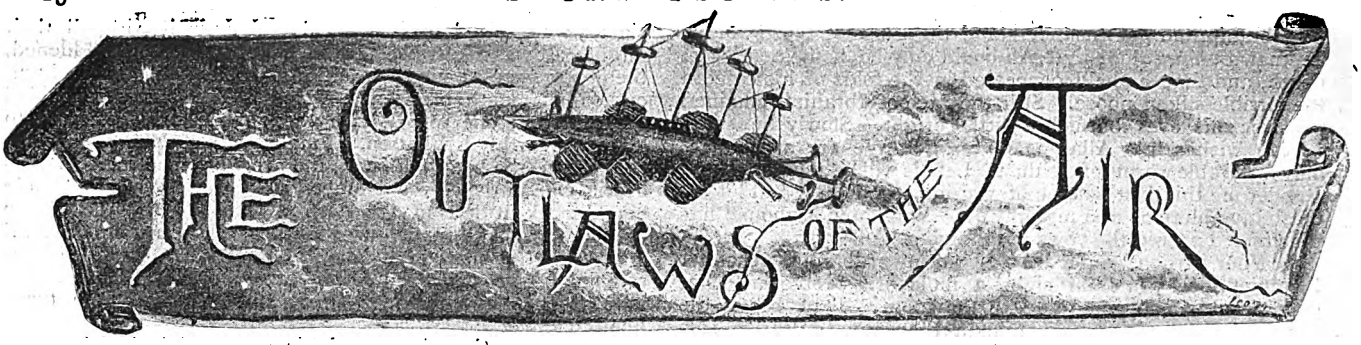

By George Griffith,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," &c.

SUMMARY.

Max Renault, the leading spirit of the Anarchist "Autonomie Group No. 7," meets his colleagues in a club near the Caledonian Road on the eve of President Carnot's assassination. He shoots a traitor who has almost betrayed the Group and so saved Carnot's life. Then he tells them that he is about to emigrate with a society of Socialists, one of whom, Frederick Austen, a wealthy engineer who has been converted to Socialism, takes out with him a working model of an aerial vessel. This air-ship Renault determines to steal when complete, and use for the purpose of bringing about an Anarchist reign of terror. Meanwhile, Franz Hartog is to steal a very fast torpedo-boat destroyer, which is to be built at Elbing for the Russian Government, and, with her, to levy blackmail on the Atlantic, and so raise funds to build an Anarchist aerial fleet.

On Christmas Day, 1898, the *Calypso*, a steam yacht belonging to Sir Harry Milton, sights an island in the South Pacific, from which an electric launch, the *Mermaid*, puts off and tows the yacht in. Frank Markham, in command of the launch, tells Sir Harry, with whom are travelling his sister, Violet, and Herbert Wyndham, a lieutenant in the British Navy, on sick leave, that the island is Utopia, a Socialist Colony, founded some three years before by emigrants from England. On the island Sir Harry finds Frederick Austen, an old friend of his father's, who introduces the visitors to Edward Adams and Max Renault and the rest of the Utopians, and after lunch tells them the story of Utopia. Later on, Lieutenant Wyndham describes the outrages committed by the vessel Hartog has stolen from Elbing—on the Atlantic, and Mr. Austen vows that if no one else can sink the *Destroyer* the Utopians will. Wyndham inspects the *Nautilus*, which the Utopians are building, and which he finds to be a novel but most formidable craft, and late that night, when the Lieutenant and Sir Harry are taking a stroll upon the hills, they are astounded by the apparition of an air-ship soaring across the mountains in the interior of the island. The next morning Sir Harry and Wyndham further discuss the problem raised by the appearance of the air-ship, and the latter determines to resign his commission and throw in his lot with the Utopians; but just as he is telling Sir Harry this, Renault appears unexpectedly and interrupts their conversation. A week later, a pic-nic is held on Mount Plato. Wyndham and Violet are lost sight of during the afternoon, and, as the others are searching for them, they see the air-ship rise from the crater of Mount Orient, and as it does so something white falls from its deck back into the crater. Sir Harry, Adams, and Dora go to Mount Orient to investigate, while Lucy Summers rides back for help. Wyndham is found stabbed in the back on the platform on which Adams tells Sir Harry that the air-ship was built, while Violet is discovered suspended in the top of a great palm-tree on to which she has fallen in throwing herself out of the air-ship in which Renault has tried to carry her off. They rescue her, and find her alive though still unconscious. Meanwhile the rest of the party have arrived at the crater. Sir Harry tells the Utopians that he has determined to devote his life and fortune to punishing Renault, and when Wyndham recovers consciousness he remembers when he last saw Renault in England—in the Dock at Bow Street charged with being an Anarchist.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

CHAPTER XI.

A Soliloquy in Mid-Air.

"'Monarch of all I survey.' Ah! I wonder what poor old Cowper would have made Robinson Crusoe say if he could have imagined him in such a position as this. 'Free as air' is not the word for it, for the air isn't free, because I am its master. No, riding on the wings of the wind—that is more like it, and yet even that doesn't do, for my wings are my own by right of, well, we'll say conquest, though I suppose respectable society would find another name for it, and the wind—the tamed, subjugated wind—only holds them up like the passive, conquered slave that I have made it!

"No, there are no words to describe it. It is too glorious, too transcendent for words, this conquest of the air really achieved at last, the realisation of all the dreams of flight from the days of Dædalus until now. Look, look, my eyes, for you have never beheld such a scene as this before nor have the eyes of any mortal man before me, *moi, Max Renault, véritable roi des airs!* For what is mere commonplace ballooning to this when you know that your balloon is but the slave, the plaything, of every breath of air that blows, a mere helpless straw floating about without will hither and thither in the currents of the ocean of atmosphere?

"Bah, what is that compared with this? A touch on one lever or another and I fly to right or left, dive to the surface of the sea or soar beyond the clouds, just as my turn of fancy may suggest. And look at those islands down yonder, those snow-ringed gems of emerald set on the sapphire shield of the sea, look how they rise in front of me and go dropping away behind me, and how those few fleecy clouds that I could leap over with a single bound come flying towards me as if to greet their new comrade of the air!

"Ah! a hundred miles an hour, with another twenty or thirty in hand for a pinch, and an ocean of which I am the only navigator stretching above me and below me, in front and behind and on either hand, wider than the wide world itself, open and free and all mine, mine alone among all the sons of men. I, the Magellan, the Columbus of the new world, the realm of air that I have conquered; I, to whom land and sea and air are open; to whom the most secret places of the world, where no human foot has trodden, must be open as the daylight; whose gaze, if I but will it, may explore even the unseen solitudes of the Poles; I, who can outsoar the vultures and outrace the storm.

"Glorious! glorious! and yet, alas! not quite so glorious as it might have been. Ah, *ma belle Violette*, why were you such a misguided little fool as to go and break that pretty neck of yours on those pitiless rocks instead of being sensible and coming to share this empire of the air

"The unseen solitudes of the Poles."

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with me—with me who loved you, for the time being at any rate, better than Anarchy itself, or even Lea, the proud and fair, herself—fairest of the Daughters of Destruction?

"*Peste*, what a fool the girl was to lose her life and a share of the empire of the world, for a silly superstition called honour, and because she thought she loved someone else, as I suppose she did. And that Lieutenant, *qui le diable l'emporte*—as he possibly has done by this time.

"I think I struck home, for he went over like a stuck sheep—better, in fact, for he never gave a kick—and he deserved it, for if it hadn't been for him I could have worked that beautiful scheme of mine out to the end, and shouldn't have been forced to come away in a hurry like this without a bomb or a gun or an ounce of ammunition on board, except a rifle and a couple of revolvers, and a few hundred cartridges.

"I wonder what evil twist of fate brought him to Utopia, just him—one man out of the few dozens that were in the police-court that day and saw me in the dock from which British justice so kindly released me. He must have remembered sooner or later, and then I suppose he would have denounced me as an Anarchist and member of Autonomie Group No. 7, and then—malediction!—he might have spoiled everything, for those virtuous Socialists might have believed him, and requested me to leave—without the air-ship—or, anyhow, they'd have watched me so that I couldn't have got her.

"No, I think I was right to take Fortune by the forelock when I did. At any rate, I have got the ship, and that's the main thing, and as soon as I can get her armed, with the able assistance of Franz and the others, I'll go back to Utopia and make a wilderness of it. I wish I'd had a chance of killing old Austen before I left. I wonder whether he has told the secret to Adams or anyone else; but if he hasn't, he's bound to do so now, and I'll have to wipe the lot out before they can build another air-ship.

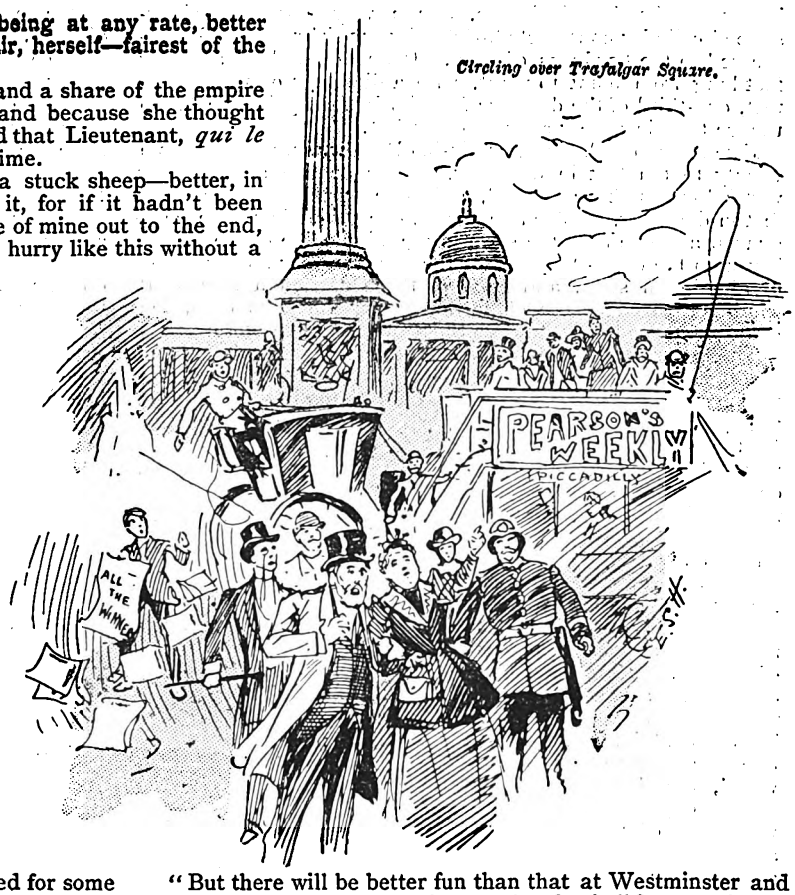
"I don't expect they'll get the *Nautilus* launched for some time if that battery that I connected with the fuel reservoir only works properly. I think the clockwork was all right, and would make the connection at the proper time. If it does, it will blow half of her into the basin, and not leave much of the other half together. Pity I had to do the work in the dark, but if I'd showed a light some prying fool would have been sure to see it, and then—phew! they'd have hung me like a dog, and I suppose in one sense I should have deserved it!

"Ah, well, I must look for the best, and get back there as soon as I can. What a scare there must have been in Utopia last night. By the way, what shall I call my pretty cruiser of the air? They were going to call her the *Volante*, but I think I must have something a bit more appropriate than that.

"Yes, that will do; I'll call her the *Vengeur*, since she is to be the first instrument of my revenge upon the accursed society that guillotined my French father for strangling a thief of a lawyer who had ruined him and drove my English mother to—bah! there is no use in troubling about that now. The day of vengeance will soon come now, and when it comes, *sacre!* what fun there will be when Franz has made me some guns and some of those pretty little projectiles that he used to talk about!

"Imagine my beautiful *Vengeur* being sighted some fine morning circling over Trafalgar Square, or the Place de la Concorde, or Broadway, or the Nevski Prospekt. Ah! I can fancy how the crowds will collect under me, how the people would rush out of the houses and the shops, crawling about, like the earth-worms that they are, and pointing up at me and wondering what I am going to do.

"And then think of the fun of a little aerial artillery practice at their expense. The bombs bursting in the middle of the crowds and scattering them, mostly in pieces, in every direction! Think how they'll run shrieking and raising their arms aloft for mercy until they were knocked over just as helpless as a flock of sheep would be in front of a machine gun.



Circling over Trafalgar Square.

"But there will be better fun than that at Westminster and over the Chamber of Deputies on the Quai d'Orsay. Think of the effects of a nicely planted projectile through the windows of what those English call their gilded chamber! A charge of gun-cotton will make a nice mixture with the contents of the Woolsack, and the fragments of M. le President flying about the Chamber of Deputies will be a sight for all the oppressed of the earth to laugh at.

"And it is possible now, all possible! The Queen of England in Windsor Castle, or the Tsar surrounded by all his slavish millions will be no safer from me than the man who is walking along the street. What will the trifling, though meritorious, work of Vaillant and Henri, of Ravachol and Santo, be to what I shall do, flinging my thunderbolts from my aerial throne? Yes, it is splendid, this realisation of the long dreamt-of ideal of human flight! Splendid, splendid!"

Thus mused Max Renault, now no longer a mere conspirator against society, lurking in slums and by-streets, and passing under false guises among his fellow men, but master of an engine of destruction which, if the remainder of his plans only succeeded as his first venture had done, would enable him to bid defiance to the world from the unattainable altitudes of the air; and, more than that, to hurl death and destruction, to which no effective reply could be made, wherever his fancy bade him strike his blows.

Somewhat bombastic as his soliloquy would no doubt have sounded had there been other ears than his own to listen to it, yet, when stripped of the rhetoric with which his French blood endowed it, it was nothing but sober fact. He had boasted of nothing that he could not accomplish. For the time being he was master of the air, and therefore an enemy that the mightiest State on earth would have good reason to fear, since he alone of all its enemies would strike straight at its heart, paralyse its directing will, and reduce its organisation to chaos in a few days or weeks of terrorism, as the case might be.

The craft that was bearing him through the air at a speed of a hundred miles an hour, two thousand feet above the sun-lit

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bosom of the broad Pacific, was a very elongated cigar-shaped cylinder constructed of *papier maché*, rolled and compressed to the hardness of steel. It was a hundred and fifty feet long from point to point, with a diameter of twenty-five feet, one-third of the distance from its forward point, and from thence tapering away astern to four feet.

Five horizontal helices, or six-bladed screws, ranging from twenty to ten feet in diameter, worked on five short strong vertical masts above the hull, and three propellors, each seven feet in diameter, revolved on shafts, one projecting from each quarter and one from the stern in the middle line of the vessel. Through the cross-diameter of the hull ran four hollow shafts of aluminium steel, and each of these carried a somewhat wing-shaped aeroplane of lattice work, the slats of which could be opened and shut like those of a venetian blind.

The upper part of the hull was fitted with long windows of toughened glass, covered with external blinds to moderate the light in the interior or to keep off the too intense heat of the sun when necessary. In the sides and bow there were other windows which, on emergency, could be protected by slides of aluminium steel, which gave an uninterrupted view ahead and on either side of the air-ship.

Forward of the foremost mast was a conning-tower of oval shape, seven feet by five, and projecting three feet above the hull. This contained the steering wheel, the lever which controlled the slats of the air-planes and the switches which regulated the speed of the engines, together with a compass, barometer, and a speed-gauge, which indicated at the same time the velocity of the ship and the pressure of the wind on her air-planes.

Renault saw the harbour and city of New York.

It was in this conning-tower that Renault was sitting, with windows on every side of him, commanding an uninterrupted view in every direction as he indulged, as men are wont to do when they are as absolutely alone as he was, in his soliloquy on the prospects that were visible from the extraordinary situation in which he found himself. He had locked the steering wheel and the levers, and the air-ship was speeding along through the uninterrupted ocean of air independently of his attention, needing no further control until it should be necessary to increase her elevation, in order to rise out of sight from the sea or to pass over mountains on land.

It was a couple of hours after sunrise, on the 2nd of January. He had been in the air for a little more than twelve hours, and in that time had traversed over a thousand miles on his way from the Pacific to the Atlantic, across the Isthmus of Panama towards which he was now steering. He had brought away provisions that would last him for a month and there was sufficient supply of motor-fuel on board the air-ship to carry him a distance of twenty thousand miles, or nearly double the distance that he expected to travel before getting into communication with his friends in the *Destroyer*.

The engines of the *Vengeur* were of the same type as those of the *Nautilus*, but, of course, of much lighter build. They were capable of exerting a total force of three thousand horse-power, and were so arranged that the power of the two side engines could be diverted from the quarter propellors and concentrated on the lifting helices when it was necessary to raise the ship vertically from the ground or propel her at such a low speed that the air-planes would not support her of themselves.

The machinery was situated mostly amidships, with the saloon and twelve living cabins forward of it. The hull was pierced for eight guns, two pointing ahead, two astern, and two on each broadside; and there were also five apertures in the floor of the hull for vertical-firing tubes, through which projectiles could be launched at objects directly underneath. All these port-holes were now, of course, covered by aluminium steel slides, and even when the vessel was fully armed none of her armament would be visible until the time came to run the guns out and open fire.

Always flying at the uniform rate of a hundred miles an hour, the *Vengeur* passed north-eastward over the Pacific, across the Isthmus of Panama, at an elevation of six thousand feet, sped unseen over the West Indian archipelago, and then, swinging slightly to the northward ran up the Atlantic, until, on the morning of the fifth day, Renault saw the harbour and city of New York through the breaks in the sunlit ocean of rolling billowy clouds which lay between earth and sea in the serene and cloudless atmosphere in which the *Vengeur* was floating.

CHAPTER XII.

On the Scene of Action.

In reaching New York in command of the air-ship, Renault had carried out the first and most important part of his scheme, but from this point his plans were necessarily rather vague.

Before he could do anything definite it was absolutely necessary that he should put himself into communication with Franz Hartog, on whom he would now be obliged to look as his right hand in carrying out the designs on the peace and safety of society at large which had been shaping themselves in his brain for the past three years.

He had accomplished the first and greatest achievement of the war which had already been definitely declared against the established Powers of the world. He had assisted Mr. Austen to work out and put into material form the ideas which his son had conceived, but which he had been destined never to see realised. He had improved upon these, and he had assisted in the working out of every detail with an anxious care which the Utopians had taken as pure zeal for the welfare of the colony.

With his own hands he had worked at the building of the air-ship and the construction of her engines and equipment, and then, when everything was complete, he had made the

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bold and successful stroke which had deprived those who had trusted in him of the fruit of their joint labours and placed him in possession of the only machine in existence that was capable of navigating the air.

This was much, very much, but more had to be done before the *Vengeur* could become the irresistible engine of destruction that he intended her to be. He knew that, skilful and far in advance of his age as he was himself in mechanical genius, he was but as a child in comparison with the eccentric little German who was all brain and no heart, and who, before his departure to Utopia, had furnished him with the plans and designs which had enabled him to pose before his late fellow-colonists as a mechanical inventor of the first order.

He knew that to Franz Hartog, and to him alone, he would have to look for the guns and projectiles which would form the offensive armament of the *Vengeur*. Without his aid she was merely an aerial pleasure cruiser; with it she could be transformed into a war-ship of such terrible power that neither fleets nor fortresses could offer her any resistance worth the mentioning.

Beyond all question Hartog was absolutely necessary to him. So, too, would be a crew of at least eight men to work the ship and man the guns in time of action if the *Vengeur* was to be brought up to the highest possible point of efficiency. There was no doubt about this; but with the conviction of this necessity came an uncomfortable doubt about the possibility of trusting to anyone save himself—yes, even to Franz Hartog, faithful and all as he be eved him to be.

As commander of the *Vengeur* he would occupy an absolutely unique position, a position never before paralleled in the history of the world. He would be above and beyond the reach of all human laws, the wielder of such a power as the earth had never trembled at before, a power which would offer the most dazzling and perhaps irresistible temptation to the usurper who might aspire to reign in his stead.

The buccaneers and pirates of past ages had, with more or less success, held control over their lawless crews, partly by force of personal influence, but chiefly because in their case failure meant capture and capture meant either death on the high seas or a dance on nothing at Execution Dock. Hence, as a rule, the rank and file had preferred to trust themselves to the guidance of the master spirit lest worse might befall them; but there would be no fear of this sort before the eyes of the crew of the *Vengeur*.

To be in possession of the only air-ship in existence meant at once the impossibility of failure and the certainty of escape. There could be no pursuit, and so no capture. The most inaccessible parts of the world would be open to them, and they could take their choice of refuges in a thousand places where no man could follow them.

To command a crew and to keep them disciplined and faithful under such circumstances would mean the exercise of qualities which he might or might not be proved to possess when the hour of trial came. To possess them meant the command of an empire such as no man had ever ruled over before; to be found wanting would mean death by assassination and the ignominious failure of all his splendid and far-reaching plans. That was the alternative, and in the long hours of leisure that the flight of the almost automatic *Vengeur* had afforded him, he had deliberately faced the contingencies in theory and made himself ready to meet them in practice.

And now all there was to be done was to pick up the *Destroyer*, in whatever part of the ocean she might be cruising, accompany her to the secret stronghold which by this time her crew must have discovered, and there elaborate the plans for future action. There was only one course which made it at all possible to arrive at this result, and that course he took.

"This is Saturday morning," he said to himself, "and therefore the very day of all days in the week that I ought to be here, except perhaps Wednesday. Most of the big boats will be leaving New York for England to-day, and if Hartog is still playing the same game, I ought to stand a good chance of falling in with him if I pick up one of the big ones as she passes Sandy Hook and follow her across.

"It'll be rather slow work for a craft like this, but still I can amuse myself running about a bit and seeing if there's any other game in sight. I don't suppose concealment matters very much now, and I may as well go down and see what there is to be seen."

So saying, he left the conning-tower, and went to the engine-room and turned the power of the port and starboard engines on to the horizontal fans. These were so constructed that when they were not in use their blades, working on hinges, fell down beside the masts like the ribs of an umbrella when closed, and could be locked in that position so as to offer the least possible resistance to the air. As soon as they were unlocked and the masts began to revolve they opened automatically and spread themselves out, and the higher the speed at which they revolved the more rigidly they were retained in their proper position.

Revolving at half-speed they just sustained the weight of the air-ship without the assistance of the air-planes. With the midship engine driving the vessel at forty miles an hour, the air-planes would sustain her without the assistance of the helices. From this it will be seen that the *Vengeur* possessed an ample margin of power to suffice for the performance of any possible manœuvres.

With the suspensory fans revolving at half speed, and the midship propellor working just fast enough to give steering way to the vessel, Max dropped her gently through the clouds, and in half-an-hour was hanging close under them, and about fifteen hundred feet over New York Harbour. Every part of the *Vengeur* was painted a dull neutral grey, and he felt pretty well satisfied that at that altitude it would be quite impossible for anyone on land or water to make him out against the grey background of the clouds.

The wharves of Hoboken, Jersey City, and Brooklyn were already busy in preparation for the departure of the out-bound liners, and Renault, with a pair of powerful field-glasses, watched them carefully for the first signs of the big ships putting to sea. The morning, though cloudy, was a good one for seeing, and he could easily make out the distinguishing funnels of the different liners as they lay alongside their wharves.

He saw the red funnels with black tops and two black lines under them of a big Cunarder; the black funnels with the horizontal white stripe of a ship of the American line; the plain yellow funnels of a North German Lloyd boat over on the Hoboken side; and the black-topped yellow funnels of a huge White Star liner on the New York side.

All these had the Blue Peter flying, showing that they were ready to put to sea as soon as the tide suited. Nine o'clock came after he had waited nearly an hour and a half, and then one by one they began to cast off and work out into the stream. They steamed away slowly at first, but with ever-increasing speed, past the Battery, between Brooklyn and the Statue of Liberty, through the Narrows, and so on round Sandy Hook. Huge as they were, they looked little more than toy steamboats floating on the surface of a lake at the altitude from which Renault watched them.

Gradually one of them, a great three-funnelled

"Hullo, what the deuce are those things out there?"

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White Star liner, began to draw ahead of the others, fast as they were now going.

"Ah, I suppose that's the White Star boat *Gigantic* that they were building when I left England to beat the *Campania* and *Lucania*," said Renault, as he put the *Vengeur* after them, keeping her close up under the clouds. "It doesn't matter which the others are, she's my game for the present. I can't go very far wrong in keeping her in sight, but I daresay they will keep pretty much together for the rest of the day. They are travelling pretty fast, considering the great lumbering floating hotels that they are.

"The *Gigantic*, if it's her, is not making much less than twenty-five knots, but what's that to the forty the little *Destroyer* can do, or the hundred and forty that I could make the *Vengeur* fly at if I was in a hurry! If I only had her properly armed and could pick Franz up out in mid-Atlantic, we'd hold the whole crowd up between us, as the Yankees would say, and—*tonnerre de Dieu*—what tons of plunder we'd get out of them! We should have to collar one of them to take it home with us, wherever home may be for us.

"Hullo, what the deuce are those things out there? A couple of cruisers as sure as I'm lord of the air! Yes, and a brace of torpedo boats in attendance on each of them. That means a convoy. Bravo Franz! You must have made it pretty hot for them on the Atlantic to make anything like that necessary, and it also means that you're expected, so I suppose we shall see some fun before we get across.

"Oh, that I only had my guns and ammunition on board, and then I wouldn't mind if they had a fleet waiting for you!"

Renault had drawn his conclusions correctly. The terrorism exercised by the Anarchists afloat on the Atlantic had reached such a pitch that the American and British Governments had been compelled to enter into an agreement in virtue of which an American squadron of fast cruisers and torpedo boats convoyed each flotilla of liners from New York to a midway station on the Atlantic, where they were met by a similar British squadron which convoyed the liners into English waters. In addition to this precaution all the liners had themselves been converted into cruisers and fitted with quick-firing and machine guns so as to be able to take care of themselves in an emergency.

To within 800 feet of the masthead of the "Gigantic."

As soon as they were picked up by the liners the cruisers stationed themselves one on each side of the line which they formed at a distance of about four miles. Two of the torpedo boats ran out a couple of miles ahead as scouts and the other two brought up the rear about the same distance astern, and so, apparently secure from any attack save by an overwhelming force which under the circumstances could not possibly be brought against them, the flotilla proceeded on its way.

There was only one weak point in the arrangement, and that was due to the inevitable rivalry of the competing lines. The Blue Ribbon of the Atlantic was still as jealously coveted and as eagerly striven for as ever, pirate or no pirate. The *Gigantic*—for such the White Star liner really was—had been built to cross the ocean in five days, and she was expected to do it, so she took up the running and gradually forged ahead.

When the second morning dawned, Renault, looking down from the clouds, saw her over fifteen miles ahead of the other liners and about ten miles ahead of the foremost cruiser, with the two torpedo boats some four miles off either quarter. Behind the cruiser came the Cunarder, and far away astern he could just make out the smoke of the Lloyd and American liners and the two torpedo boats that were bringing up the rear of the long procession. Another twenty-four hours' run would bring the White Star boat within touch of the British squadron, and two or three hours after her the others would come up.

Every now and then other liners, with here and there a cruiser and a torpedo boat or two, were met coming in the other direction. In fact, as Renault said to himself, the Atlantic looked more as though half the nations of Europe were at war rather than an ocean highway in time of perfect international peace.

The second night came down dark and misty, but on a moderately smooth sea, and Renault, showing no lights, ran down to within eight hundred feet of the mast-heads of the *Gigantic*. She was now nearly twenty miles ahead of the rest of the flotilla. He could make her out easily by the lights that were gleaming from her decks and port holes, and he recognised that if Franz was on the war-path on the Atlantic track and had any designs upon her, as he probably would have, seeing that she was the fastest, biggest, and richest prize of the lot, he would have to act before morning, for by daybreak the British squadron would probably be in sight, and he would also have to run the gauntlet of the more numerous convoys and other warships that might possibly be cruising in the more crowded waters of the Eastern Atlantic.

Considering the force that was within such a short distance,

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Max, in spite of his anxiety to fall in with his comrades, half hoped that they would keep out of the way. Perhaps they were not on that part of the Atlantic at all. They might be on the African coast in the track of the Cape steamers, or down South waiting for some of the South American liners bound to Colon or Monte Video, or even away in the Indian Ocean playing havoc among the east bound steamers.

Thus, turning over the chances in his mind, he kept in touch of the *Gigantic* until close on midnight. The two torpedo boats were now about eight miles astern of her and the cruiser five miles behind them. Suddenly a beam of light shot up out of the ocean astern, then vanished, and was repeated again three times in quick succession. Renault didn't understand it, but those on board the *Gigantic* recognised it as a danger signal which meant "stop and close up."

"Ah, that means something," said Renault, "I'll go back and see what it's all about."

He had taken what sleep he needed during the day, so that he could spend the night on watch in the conning-tower, for he felt sure that if anything happened it would be under cover of the darkness. He swung the *Vengeur* round, and, quickening her up to sixty miles an hour, darted back towards the cruiser which had shown the signal. Less than fifteen minutes brought him over the war-ship, which was now flashing her electric rays rapidly in all directions over the water. He stopped and watched for a few minutes, circling slowly overhead, and soon their light revealed a strange spectacle to him.

The two torpedo boats, evidently badly rammed, were fast settling down, and the cruiser was rushing up to them at full speed, still flashing her search-lights ahead and to both sides of her. Just as she came up with them, one of the long beams fell upon a grey, low-lying, swiftly-moving object in the dark water to the south-east. Instantly a storm of thunder and flame burst from her decks, and a tempest of projectiles swept over the waves in the direction of the fast flying assailant that had done her work so silently and with such terrible effect.

(To be continued.)

BROWN BREDD.

JUST as sure as a man is mentally lopsided, just so sure is he, sooner or later, to ring my doorbell. I am his Mecca; and he travels in my direction with a degree of persistency which has at times been appalling.

John Brown Bredd was one of this sort. He was the most pathetic and simple-hearted creature I ever saw. The first time he called on me he brought a picture for sale.

"I don't claim to be an artist," he said in plaintive tones, as he uncovered the picture for my inspection; "but I hope to be. That, at any rate," and he sighed profoundly, "is my dream."

I couldn't say much to encourage him, for the work was badly done.

"No, it's not worthy of a place on your walls," he continued, in a broken voice. "Ah! that is a Leighton. And that is a Herkomer, and here is a Solomon."

He stood for several minutes examining these pictures without saying a word. "I think I had better take my canvas away," he moaned at length.

"Some time, perhaps, you may be willing to purchase an example of my work; but," with a shake of the head, "not now—not now. I am convinced of that."

I couldn't stand the man's tragic manner and thrust a £5 note into his hands.

"Oh, no," he cried, in broken tones, "not that. Please don't offer me charity, I couldn't endure to take money from a stranger." He placed the note on the table, looked at it for an instant as though his heart would break, and then turned abruptly away.

Of course, I bought the picture. I would have done so if it had taken my last shilling. Poor Brown! He had no more power to cope with the world than a child has to wrestle with a giant. In stature he was a man; in all other respects he was a baby in arms.

The constant hunt for something to eat was his torment. "When I get to heaven," he piteously said, on one occasion, "I shall have a body minus digestive organs. That is something I look forward to with very high anticipations. Just think of it! We shall not need to eat! What a glorious prospect!"

And yet Brown had an aspiration, and because of that aspiration I thought him a crank.

One day we sat together in his studio, talking. I had visited him quite a number of times, and was getting to be fond of the unpractical fellow. My interest in him had warmed his heart, a smile lighted up his face, and he became communicative.

On the easel was a portrait which I had never seen before. It was really a superb piece of work, and I wondered where he had borrowed it. Indeed, I hinted as much, but he replied:

"No, I painted that myself. I have been at it now for four years and six months. I don't believe I shall live to finish it. Do you like it?"

"Why, Brown," I answered, "you've got genius. Nothing but the 'divine afflatus' could account for what you have done. As for these landscapes——"

"Don't mention them," he broke in, with strange impetuosity. "They are nothing. I earn my bread with them; but I hope, some time, to earn fame with this."

"That flesh tint is really fine," I said with enthusiasm. "And those eyes——; but tell me, Brown, is it an ideal or a portrait?"

"A portrait," he answered, and I noticed that his lips trembled. "Ah, I can never do her justice. She is beyond my skill; and yet, you see, I am trying my best."

"You must introduce me when she comes to sit," I suggested. "Such a beautiful creature is worth knowing."

"She is beautiful, isn't she?" Then he laid down his pipe. "So—so—so very beautiful!" and he fell into a reverie.

"May I not see her?" I asked.

"In good time, perhaps," he answered.

"Pray when, my dear fellow? You see I am beginning to get excited."

"After death; not before," he replied, with solemn emphasis. "Then you shall pay us a visit. She will be glad to see you, and grateful for what you have done."

"But her name?" I asked.

"I don't know; I have forgotten," he replied; and a profound shade of sadness fell on his face. He sank into a chair, heaved a deep sigh; and it seemed to me that there were tears in his eyes.

"I don't know her name, my friend; I have really forgotten it."

"And you don't know anything about her, Brown?" I inquired, with marked surprise.

"Yes, I know something; but not much."

"And you will tell me?"

"Certainly, if you wish to know. She is my wife."

"Come," I said, going to his side and placing my hand on his shoulder—"come, Brown, your nerves are unstrung. Get out of this dingy hole into the fresh air. It will brighten you up. You've been working too hard, and it has told on you."

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He looked up at me wearily. "No; I don't need fresh air. I get all I want here. I need to die, that is all. This life is my nightmare. I shake myself a dozen times a day to wake myself up. In vain. I must work the problem out as best I can. But"—and he rose to his feet and stood facing me, white as snow—"but no man longs for death as I do. The galley slave looks forward to the time when his chains will drop. He plies the oar with a bleeding heart, and yet there is a ray of hope in his life. I am that slave. I have that hope. By-and-bye I shall really wake up, and then I shall begin to live."

I was too astonished to speak.

"Can I tell you a secret?" he asked.

"Of course, Brown; tell me everything," I answered.

There was a wild gleam in his eyes, like that of a hunted deer, which touched me to the heart. "They call it catalepsy, but it isn't. I tell you on my honour, it isn't. They don't know what they are talking about. They are all fools, to whom the mysteries of the other life are incomprehensible."

"You have been talking with a doctor, then?"

"Yes, yes; a dozen of them," he answered impatiently, and with a gesture of the hand as though he brushed them all aside. "They are interested in my case, and tell me it is unlike anything in the books."

"Catalepsy, Brown?"

"Bah!" he cried with disdain. "What do they know about it? I tell you it is not catalepsy. On the contrary, it is the only thing that makes my life endurable. I wouldn't give it up for the right to pawn the Koh-i-Noor."

"But tell me about it," I cried. "Give me the details, and let me judge for myself."

"Sit down, then," he said, very gloomily. I noticed that his lips were twitching, and he had no rest for a few minutes before he could begin the recital of his strange experiences.

"You will hold this secret sacred?"

What a pathos there was in his tones. He seemed like a man pleading for his life.

"I couldn't tell everyone," he said slowly, almost under his breath, "but somehow I feel safe with you. I can't keep it to myself any longer, for fear——," and he hesitated.

"For fear of what, Brown?"

"For fear I might be buried alive!" and he shuddered. "You will see that that never happens to me, won't you?"

I assured him that I would take charge of his body if anything that resembled death should supervene; and he breathed more freely.

"You see," he continued, "I have had these alleged attacks for nearly five years; it will be five years on the fifteenth of next month. They come regularly twice a week, and last on an average four hours, though once in a while much longer."

I nodded my head, and he went on:

"When I fall into this state my soul is wide awake, but my body becomes entirely useless. I am like a man who has been chained to a ringbolt in the floor. I tug at my bonds, and, so far, have always managed to slip my hands through them. Until I have done that I suffer agonies which can't be described. But when I am free, when I have got away from my body, oh, how beautiful it all is!

"My dear friend, it may seem incredible to you, but my real life is the one I then enjoy. This, which you call life, is a dreadful nightmare. I don't belong here, I belong there. The moment I get out of my body I find myself at the garden gate of my other home, and am met by my wife and our three children."

I opened my eyes in wonder. What was coming next?

"Yes," he went on mournfully, "there is no reason why you shouldn't be like the rest of them and vote me a maniac. Still, I am telling you the exact truth.

"My estate over yonder is a very valuable one; it is situated on the banks of a river, which a few miles further on stretches out into a lake. My orchards are rich in fruit, and from their character, I judge that the house is situated somewhere in the Tropics. I have orange and lemon trees in large abundance, and pomegranates and figs, and everything that the appetite can desire. Poor as I am while here, I am rich the instant I get there.

"The hours during which my catalepsy lasts are changed into weeks on the further shore. And how I enjoy them! wandering along the highway with my little ones climbing the hill-tops to get a glimpse of the far-away mountains, sitting during the placid and heavenly evening with my dear wife, reading some favourite author or discussing some favourite theme."

"And that?" I said, pointing to the easel.

"That is a portrait of my wife," he answered, growing pale as he spoke, and heaving a deep sigh. "But it doesn't do her justice. The poor pigments with which I work lack brilliancy of colour, and the genius in my finger-tips is too—too meagre. Ah, you should see that woman, my friend—you should see her!"

There were tears in his eyes.

"I am sure you will like her," he continued; "and she would certainly like you, both for yourself and for what you have done in my behalf.

"When my respite is at an end I hear distant bells ring; and the family go with me as far as the walls which limit our property, and bid me good-bye.

"I come back to the dingy apartment, and crawl into my half-worn body. My eyes open, the past returns to me like a dream, and I take up once more the dull routine of an unhappy life."

"But, my dear Brown," I asked, "when you are once away, and in such a glorious environment, why don't you stay away?"

"I dare not," he answered. "It would be a crime. I have been tempted to do so; but no, it wouldn't be right. For some reason beyond my ken, fate dooms me to return. There will come a time, however," and his eyes glistened—"there will come a time when fate shall say, 'Go back no more'; and then, shall I not be glad?"

"And you wish me——," I asked.

"To keep guard over my body until it is quite certain I shall not return, and then see that it is properly buried. Look, here is a second key to my room. Come when you please, and if I, my soul, am not here to greet you, do for me what I would gladly do for you under like circumstances. I know I am asking a great deal, but there is no one else in whom I can confide."

I gave the required promise and went home.

Three days afterward I saw him, and said jocosely: "Well, Brown, you are still here."

"Yes," he replied, "but I don't believe it is for long. The picture is well nigh finished. It is not what it should be, but it's all I can hope to make it. That done, I shall go."

"Cheer up, my dear fellow, cheer up. There's many a year for you yet, and perhaps good luck besides."

But I couldn't move him to a smile. "I shall cheer up," he said, "when I feel that this strange servitude to the flesh is over, and I can be permanently with those I love. That, my friend, will be good luck indeed."

I visited him frequently. He chatted very freely about the other home, told me of various dimly-remembered incidents which had occurred in his family, and seemed, on the whole, to be getting into a brighter mood than in the old days.

This cheerfulness increased perceptibly. He reminded me constantly of a man who is packing up his worldly goods and making ready for a glorious meeting with those from whom he has long been separated.

The last time I saw him he was decidedly jovial. "It is done," he cried, pointing to the portrait. "I have laid the brush to the canvas for the last time."

"And now, what will you do with it?" I asked.

"My hope of being remembered by my kind," he answered, very impressively, "rests on that picture. It is my life's work. You have been kind enough to say that it shows genius. If others agree with you, I am satisfied; yes, much more than satisfied. I shall go hence with the consciousness that I have not lived in vain."

He hesitated, and for a moment seemed absorbed in meditation. Then, looking up, he continued: "I would like, if it is possible, and if I am not present at the time, to have you take charge of it. Perhaps the committee at the Academy

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may be willing to accept it. Then you will see that it is properly hung."

I was deeply touched by the poor fellow's manner and by his modesty. The picture was certainly worthy of exhibition, and I had very little doubt that it would attract popular attention.

I recalled a line written by Richard Crashaw more than two hundred years ago—one line, which keeps his memory green. It is embedded in the memory and the admiration of mankind. It runs thus :—

"The conscious water saw its God and blushed."

That line is immortal; it cannot die. So long as this language lasts it will be repeated. Two centuries have not dimmed its lustre. Twenty more will pass, and these words will retain their beauty. The ordinary scholar knows little of Crashaw, and cares less.

He did not fill a large place in the literature of the world; but he left one line, eight wonderful words, which will give him a warm place in our hearts until the sun sets for the last time. He wrote very extensively, and it has all some degree of merit; but his fame is held secure by that line alone.

My good friend Bredd, I thought, displayed no genius in his other works; but this one—well, it is a miracle. It ought to make him known; and I will use my best endeavour to afford him fair play with the public. It was easy for me, therefore, to promise that I would urge his claim at the Academy.

He took my hand in both his and said, in a choked and broken voice: "Sometime I will tell you how grateful I am. It is not for my sake, however, that I desire this, but for hers. Yes," he added slowly, "I think it will please her."

"Well, my dear Brown," I said, "there is one thing more."

"What is that?"

"I would like to know what final disposition you would like made of that picture. The exhibition will be open for only a few weeks, and then?"

"What would please me best——" he began, and then stopped.

"Well? Lay your heart bare, Bredd."

"What would please me best would be to know that it was hung on the walls of some public gallery where people might see it. And yet——"

"Speak your wish, my dear fellow, and if it is within the range of my personal influence, it shall be accomplished."

"I know it—I know it," he replied. "If you won't think me presumptuous——"

"Go on, tell me all. You may not have another chance."

"True, very true. Then, if you are willing to accept the picture as a token of my regard, I should like to think of it on your walls in company with the great artists whose works are already there."

"What! Do you mean that you will give the picture to me?"

"For the term of your natural life, yes. After your death, perhaps, you will bequeath it to the National Gallery, or some other institution of that sort. Will you accept it?"

I confess that the fellow nearly broke my heart with his tenderness and gentleness, his plaintive tone, and the air of sadness which seemed to envelop him.

"Accept it!" I replied eagerly. "With a thousand thanks, and a thousand more when those are done. But, see! You have forgotten to put your name in the corner."

With a few deft strokes of the brush he wrote on the edge of the robe which fell from the shoulders of the portrait, Brown Bredd.

"Now then, my work-day is over. As for these traps," turning to various pictures scattered over the room, "I don't care what becomes of them. Let them go. But this one——"

"Shall be my chief treasure," I said.

He nodded his head, and the subject was dropped.

That was on Wednesday. Two days later I received a scrawl from him. It was evidently written with a trembling hand, and the signature could hardly be identified. He was apparently labouring under some great excitement. The note said:

"Bring your key and come into my studio to-morrow about sundown. I think I shall not return this time; but I may be mistaken. If I do, I shall be glad to greet you; if not, God bless you and good-bye. Remember my last wishes; and, when you leave, take the portrait with you."

"After all," I said to myself, "this is a mere hallucination. Brown Bredd is an interesting crank, nothing more. These travels of which he has spoken are beautiful delusions. They are, of course, the result of some nervous disease, and he's just as likely to live as I am."

Still, when I knocked at his door I was not surprised to receive no answer. Then I knocked louder; but there was no response. After fumbling over my bunch I found the right key, and with it effected an entrance.

Looking towards the bed, on which he usually lay when these curious attacks came on, I saw that it was empty. I shrugged my shoulders, with the feeling that I had been duped, that my sympathy with the painter had run away with my common sense.

Almost instantly, however, I saw a sight that made my heart stand still. There, in the high-backed chair, directly in front of the easel, sat Brown Bredd, his face as white as the snows of December. He was leaning back, as artists frequently do when critically examining a new picture; and his eyes were half shut, apparently to get the full effect of the work.

His hands hung at his side, from one of which had dropped the brush and from the other the pallet. On his lips was a pleasant smile, as though he were in the act of bidding some one good morning.

It was a strange and thrilling spectacle, and it seemed almost gruesome to be alone with him in the deepening shadows of that room. I couldn't believe my eyes at first, and so cried: "Well, Brown, how goes it?" He did not stir. I put my hand on his brow! It was stone cold.

That wonderful story that he had told me came vividly to mind with painful violence. It was true, after all; and after all Brown Bredd was not so much a crank as I had supposed.

The portrait now hangs in my room, the souvenir of a very odd experience. And every time I look at it I say: "Brown is happy now with his family amid the orange groves of that other shore."

£2 2s. FOR A PLOT.

I take it for granted that, on the whole, the readers of this paper are very fair judges of a good story. Moreover, there are undoubtedly a large number of people among them who are capable of devising excellent plots for stories, while they are not gifted with the necessary ability for working them up into readable form.

It seems to me a pity that such good material should be forced by lack of opportunity to lie dormant, and with a view to seeing what readers are capable of in this direction, I offer a couple of Guineas for what I consider to be the most striking plot for a short story.

The scene may be laid anywhere, and only a rough outline should be given, embodied in a paragraph of not more than a hundred and fifty words. Any number of attempts may be sent by each competitor, but each attempt must be on a separate sheet of paper, with the name and address of the sender on the back. Competitions to be enclosed in an envelope marked "PLOT," and to reach this office by Tuesday, October 30th.

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A TRAPPER TRAGEDY.

THE first gleam of dawn quivers in the eastern sky over the snow-covered plains that stretch away to the cities. The settlement by the shores of Lake Winnipeg lies hushed in sleep. Not a voice nor a footfall breaks the cold silence that reigns over the few log cabins, where live the grave-faced trappers of the lakes.

The snow has ceased falling, but a few feathery flakes hover in the chilly air, sinking slowly, swayed from side to side by the soft current of air that is too weak even to move the snow-laden branches of the pines.

Hark! An angry voice!

A fierce hubbub follows, shrieks and cries rend the air for a few moments, and then all is silent.

The trappers come out of their log cabins one by one and hurry towards the spot where lies the victim of this, the first murder that has ever sullied the record of the settlement.

They gather round the little form, whose life's blood is staining the trodden snow by her side. They carry her tenderly into the nearest hut and lay her before the log fire, staunching the blood with their handkerchiefs and bathing the wound with warm water.

Poor little Nell! There was not a man among them who would have spoken a harsh word to her, much less have raised his hand to strike her. She had brought sunshine into their thankless, dreary lives, and to her they had shown all the tenderness of which they were capable.

The rugged faces that stared in through the narrow doorway were graver than ever, and more than one pair of eyes glistened with a brightness that betrayed the presence of unwonted moisture. To lose Nell was to lose a loving friend the world could never replace in their hearts.

But what of the murderer? He stood defiantly in the midst of a group of hard-visaged men, awaiting the sentence which all knew must come. The mad rage which had prompted him to do the deed still burned in his heart, and every rude buffet and bitter word was met with low mutterings, the significance of which was fully understood.

He was not one of them. Only the day before had he come into the settlement with another trapper, and on the morrow they were going on their way. But only one of them would go, the other would stop; the grim, hard-faced men who stood about him would answer for that.

There seemed to be no motive for the foul deed. Nell, poor little Nell, shared a cabin with Mother Samson, and was the old woman's pet. Mother Samson, when she came on the scene, declared solemnly that she had seen Nell into her bed the previous night, and that everything about the house was snug and in order, and that there was no obvious reason whatever why she should have gone out during the hours of darkness. The door was ajar when she got up, and Nell must have gone out that way.

Had this blackhearted villain, this Donald, as he was called, induced her to leave her home and escape with him to the cities? And had she repented at the last moment, and attempted to return to her home, while he, in a paroxysm of rage, had fallen upon her and murdered her? Or had he entered the cabin and stolen her from her bed, killing her when she awoke and cried for help?

They removed him to an empty hut and locked him inside, one of them mounting guard over the door with a loaded gun, primarily with the object of preventing his escape, and secondarily for stopping any one of their number who, through feelings of humanity, might be tempted to let him go free and unpunished.

During the next hour, as dawn broadened into daylight, anxious inquirers were continually passing to and from the log cabin where little Nell lay slowly dying; for all knew too well that the terrible gash across her fair throat was her death wound.

Nor were they mistaken. Before another half hour had passed the news flew from mouth to mouth that their little friend, the cheerer of their rugged hearts, the sunshine of their lives, little Nell, had passed away.

Under the shadow of a great pine, close to the frozen waters that fringed the banks of the great lake, they dug a little grave in the snow, and laid to rest the last remains of her who had come out from the Old Country years ago, and grown up and lived amongst them, beloved by all.

Then, sad at heart, the little group tramped over the crisp snow back to the settlement, the sorrow in their breasts, as they neared the presence of the murderer, becoming smothered by a yearning for revenge, a longing desire to satiate their anger on the body of the brute who had taken from them their little Nell.

At the prison door they paused.

What form should the punishment take? This they had not yet decided.

"I be for shootin' 'im, right thar," said Denvers, a grizzled old trappist, fingering his Colt.

"Yes, rope 'im up with a dozen yards, an' let 'im dodge the slugs."

"Two shots apiece at fifty yards."

"Agreed."

They opened the door, looked inside, and found Donald lying peacefully sleeping in a corner, on a heap of straw.

He was seized and led along the open way between the two rows of huts that in any civilised village would have been called a street.

Several of the men dropped into their cabins as they passed to get their revolvers, in anticipation of the sport to come.

Mother Samson came to her door with the express purpose of shouting her last maledictions upon the head of her darling's murderer. She was a forcible woman at all times, and now the men who formed the body-guard had some difficulty in preventing her from attacking the doomed Donald, who walked defenceless in their midst.

A stake was driven through the snow, into the hard ground beneath, and to this the victim was fastened by a thong round his neck, with a sufficiently lengthy piece of rope to permit his moving freely in a circle of about five yards radius.

Then the whole band moved off to a distance, and prepared to shoot.

The victim stood resolutely facing his torturers, his eyes fixed steadily on all their movements.

Denvers, by reason of his age and experience, invariably took the lead in all the combined movements of the settlement, and selected himself to take first shot.

Stepping forward in advance of his comrades, he levelled his revolver, and aimed at Donald's legs. The shot struck the ground a few inches to the left, sending up a shower of fine snow, and ricocheted away over the plains.

Donald started and moved quickly aside, with a frightened look in his eyes. Before he had time to realise the horror of his helpless situation, a second shot struck him in the chest, and leaping into the air, he fell with a dull thud on the hard, crisp snow.

A pause. Then an irregular volley from a dozen revolvers; a little cloud of snow as the shots strike the ground about the prostrate body; a murmur of approval among the men with the smoking weapons; and little Nell is avenged!

But it really is not so very dreadful, after all, because, you see, Donald was a Scotch collie, and Nell a little Irish terrier.

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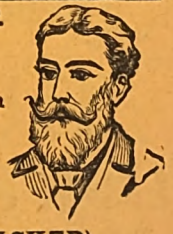

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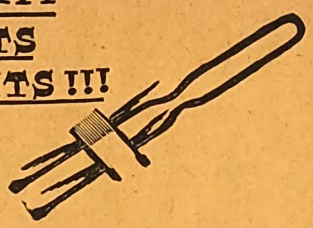

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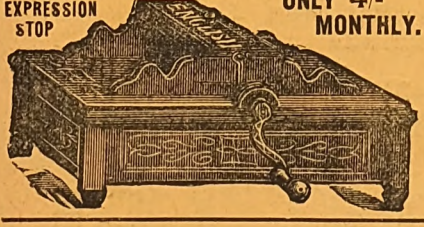

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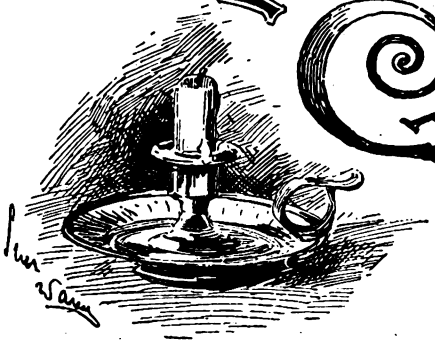
SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 304.] FOR THE WEEK ENDING OCTOBER 27, 1894. [PRICE ONE PENNY

A BIT OF CANDLE



IT was truly a most agreeable surprise. Benton and I had not set eyes on one another since we were hobbledehoys at school together. And now to think that, after fifteen years of almost antipodean peregrination, we should suddenly find ourselves *vis-à-vis* at the dining table of a Melbourne hotel.

Of course, we had a world of matters to discuss; and that we might do it uninterruptedly Benton asked for a private room. The apartment into which we were shown was on the ground floor. It was comfortably furnished, and looked out upon a wide verandah. Here we sat and chatted and smoked cheroots until ten o'clock, when a startling thing happened. We were both engineers, and up to this time our conversation had been largely of a shoppy character; but at last professional experiences seemed to be exhausted, and we had branched off into annother theme.

"Married yet, Benton?" I inquired.

"My dear fellow," he replied, his eyes kindling with enthusiasm; "I've got the most precious little wife this side of Paradise. She——but wait a moment, that reminds me——"

The window-shade was only two-thirds drawn, and Benton rose to pull it completely down. As he did so a bullet crashed through the glass and, barely grazing his shoulder, buried itself in the opposite wall of the room. Benton's look as he stepped back was one of disgust rather than surprise.

"That fiend of a Spaniard again!" he cried. "I sincerely trust the fellow will soon tire of his amusement. It is becoming positively annoying."

"Amusement."

"Yes, the game of revenge the blackhearted scoundrel calls it. That is the fourth attempt on my life in two years. A big price to pay for a wife, is it not?"

"I doubt if the best woman in the world is worth it," I responded; "but explain. How on earth, my dear Benton, did you come to get Nemesis for a mother-in-law?"

After describing his assailant to those who had rushed in on hearing the report, and desiring the landlord to place the matter at once in the hands of the police, Benton lit a fresh cheroot and related the following peculiar experience:

"Two years ago," said he, "I was commissioned by the mining company for which I worked to look closely into the condition of several of their Mexican mines. After making a considerable circuit, I came at last to Palos de Santa Fé.

"This was a picturesque little village situated in a luxuriant valley. Looking from it up the mountain one could see the entrance to the mines, suggesting to the mind so many rat-holes in the hillside. One would scarcely have imagined, gazing over this peaceful valley, that a terror had for years sat brooding above it. Yet such was the case, and it was to find out whether or not there was any immediate danger of that terror stooping to clutch its victims that I had been sent there.

"In plain words there was known to be stored somewhere among those mountain peaks incalculable masses of water which our workings, if we continued them, were bound to tap sooner or later, and involve the destruction of hundreds of human lives. Such, then, was the state of affairs.

"I should tell you, by the way, that since we were at school together I have added to my profession of engineer that of geologist. I was stopping at a little posada, perched a mile or so above the village.

"It was kept by one Diez, an old Spaniard with a villainous face and a record that was far from enviable. This posada was a sort of meeting-place for the miners, and when the rough fellows became aware of the nature of my errand, they looked upon me with rather an unwelcome interest.

"As my work progressed and I saw it would be necessary to advise the immediate closing of the mine, my position among these reckless miners grew more and more unpleasant. On my report hung the prosperity, nay, the very existence of their village, and as for my landlord, Diez, he would have to shut up shop, and, like the miners, make a livelihood elsewhere.

"To be such an important factor in the success or ruin of hundreds of rough, revengeful miners entailed, as you can well understand, great personal responsibility. Of course, I had no intention of taking them into my confidence as to the real condition of things, and on this fact I counted for my safety.

"Unconsciously, however, I must have let out my secret; indeed, it was a very easy lesson in physiognomy, for the anxiety and worry on my face grew deeper and deeper as the conviction impressed itself upon me that my report must doom the village and cast its dwellers out of employment.

"Why otherwise, they argued, should I be anxious and worried. I believe I am not a coward, yet a fear for my life took possession of me, and I was careful to be continually armed, and avoid anything that looked like a trap of the enemy's.

"Now Diez, my landlord, had a daughter, a beautiful girl, as sweet and innocent as her alleged father was sour and villainous. Her mother she had never seen.

"On my previous visit to Palos on less important affairs I had always put up at this posada, and as I watched the girl develop from childhood to womanhood, my interest in her grew stronger than I would have cared at the time to confess.

"Juanita had always been extremely attentive to my necessities, and we had become fast friends. As for looking upon the girl as a sweetheart, that I would not permit myself to do, seeing her father intended for her an alliance with his nephew Antonio.

"It was easy to be seen, however, that Juanita did not favour his suit. She had no smiles for Antonio and she repulsed his attentions at every opportunity. So at any rate it appeared to me for a week or two after my arrival.

"Latterly, however, she seemed to have changed towards

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him. Hitherto she was rarely to be seen behind the bar where Antonio attended, but now she lingered about the room apparently with no other object than to be in the young man's presence.

"Then, too, to his great delight, for the fellow really loved her, she submitted shyly to his caresses. A close observer, however, might have seen enough to make him suspicious of her sincerity. As for me, I was pained to observe that she shunned my presence and treated me with considerable coldness. One day, finding her alone, I ventured to address her in words of reproach.

"'Hush!' she exclaimed, laying her finger on her lips warningly, 'You must have patience. I cannot explain just now, but, oh, be very careful!'

"And with a look mysterious, but yet not unfriendly, she hastened from the room.

"At length my stay drew to a close. My report was finished, and early to-morrow morning I should be off. I was in better spirits that evening than I had been for weeks. The prospect of soon being relieved from my terrors lifted my heart into a freer atmosphere. Still my pleasure was tinged with two regrets. The first was that I should be the instrument used to depopulate this peaceful little village, and the second concerned Juanita. The girl was absent somewhere. I had not seen her pretty face for a whole day. In vain I tried to drive her out of my mind; the thought intruded itself that I might never see her again.

"'Shall I have the privilege of saying good-bye to señorita?' I inquired of Diez, after paying my bill, so as to be ready for an early start in the morning.

"'I fear not, señor, my daughter will not return until late to-morrow. Cannot señor wait a day longer?'

"'Impossible,' I said, 'I must be off in the morning, so you will please convey to señorita on her return my message and regrets.'

"'Will señor do me the favour of joining me in a bottle. I would esteem it a mark of parting goodwill?'

"I assented, and a bottle of his best champagne being brought, we drank health and prosperity to each other in several glasses. The old villain, to think that all the time he had murder in his heart, and was but preparing his victim for the slaughter. This parting interview took place on the verandah. The evening was dark, and scarcely a breath of air was stirring. It was about 9.30. Presently I rose to go to my room, the door communicating with which was at the further end of the house, and round the corner some forty feet away.

Laying her finger on her lips

"'One moment, señor,' said Diez, entering the house, 'I will bring you your light.'

"The champagne had made me quite lively, and I whistled a merry tune as I waited for his return. In a minute or two he returned, bearing a short stump of candle in a socket. This candle he at once proceeded to light.

"I was too unsuspicious at the time to take much notice of the fact, but I remembered afterward that his hands trembled and his face showed ghastly as the gleam fell upon it.

"'There is no air stirring,' he said by way of excuse for lighting it; 'and besides, the verandah is somewhat littered and señor might stumble. Good night.'

"'Good night,' I said, taking the candle. 'Don't forget to——.' On looking round I discovered that my worthy landlord had taken a most unceremonious departure.

"'Oh, well, it's no matter,' I said to myself; and resuming my merry tune, I whistled my way along the verandah toward my room.

"What's the matter?"

"I had just turned the corner when suddenly the white-robed figure of a girl with pale face and startled eyes confronted me, and without a word snatched the candle from my hand and with a swift movement hurled it over the railing into the ravine below.

"'Juanita! You here! What's the matter?' I cried, considerably startled.

"There was no need for a reply, for just then came the sound of a loud explosion from the place into which the candle had fallen.

"'Come away!' she said, seizing me by the arm. 'They had sworn to kill you. Let us go quickly.'

"Without a minute's delay we fled down the steps and out into the darkness. Travelling all night, the dawn of the morning saw us safe and sound within a convent on the other side of the mountain.

"On the way the brave girl told me how it was to save me she had loitered round the bar listening to the plottings of the men.

"They had decided to do away with me by means of a candle, hollowed out underneath so as to make room for a small dynamite cartridge. A minute's burning of the treacherous affair, and the bearer of it would be hastened into eternity.

"The horrible plot became known to Juanita so suddenly that unwittingly she gave utterance to an exclamation which aroused the suspicion of the conspirators, and she was confined in the outhouse of a distant corral, so that she might not prevent the accomplishment of the dastardly deed.

"How she struggled to escape from her prison her dear fingers show to this day, but the precious little woman never looks regretfully at the scars, for you see they always remind her of how she saved her husband's life.

"As for the other gentleman who has left his card upon the wall yonder," said Benton, pointing to the mark of the bullet, "you have doubtless by this time guessed that his name is Antonio."

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"SEND Mr. Harding in."

The managing editor irritably dropped the speaking tube, and exclaimed half to himself, "Why couldn't those confounded Lancashire miners have taken some other time to air their grievances?"

The managing editor did not mean to be unreasonable; but he did wish that the pitmen had not chosen for their strike a time when every news-field was overcrowding the paper, and when an unusually active political campaign was beginning.

He drew his hand wearily across his forehead with the gesture of a man whose brain is overworked.

At this moment an alert and very young man scarcely more than a boy, clear-eyed and frank in appearance, looked in at the door.

"Come in, Mr. Harding. I shall have to send you away on special work. Those everlasting miners have struck. I want you to get up there by the first train to-morrow morning. You know upon such a matter it won't do for the *Magnet* to be beaten; and I needn't tell you that the *Magnet* wants the whole truth about it. That's one reason why I send you."

"Thank you, sir, I shall be glad to go."

"I'll put some one else on that matter of Colonel Benson's murder. And, Harding——"

"Yes?"

"Return to-morrow night, if you can. If you cannot, stay on; but see it through, if it takes a month."

Harding was full of enthusiasm in his work. He exulted boyishly in the important assignment thus committed to him, for he knew that a good performance of such a duty would contribute to his advancement.

When the *Daily Magnet's* special correspondent alighted from the morning train, the coal mines were deserted, and angry and discontented miners were gathered round the pit mouths.

All that day Harding went from place to place, winning the confidence of the owners by his frank and gentlemanly bearing, and that of the leaders of the strike by his evident fairness and desire to get at the exact truth.

He found that he could return on the evening express; and when he took the train at a quarter-past seven, his report of the matter was already nearly completed.

Under the dim swaying oil lamp he scribbled on industriously, sure of triumph. The other newspapers, he had found, were depending upon inefficient local correspondents for their accounts of the matter.

The train rushed through the gathering darkness. The sparks swept back from the throbbing engine in golden showers, like the tail of a comet. Harding worked on, concentrating all his energy upon writing a graphic account of the strike.

The lights of the town of Bedford were shining, only two or three miles distant, when the whistle sounded a wild, shrill note of alarm. Then came a crash, the splitting and shattering of timbers, the snapping of iron and steel, and above all other sounds the cries of human agony.

The express train with its burden of people, crushed, mangled, dead, or dying, lay piled upon the line, a ghastly wreck in the summer night.

It was the old story. Some one had blundered, and the fruits of the blunder were reaped in human lives.

Tom Harding was stunned by a broken board, but only for a short time. He roused himself with a half-dazed consciousness of disaster, that left no room for an immediate sense of pain. He thought of his mother—then of his newspaper.

This thought roused him to a consciousness that he had work to do; and in the sudden awakening to the realities of the situation, he became aware that his legs were so pinioned that he could not move, and that pains were darting through his body—unaccountable pains growing constantly more intense.

He moved slightly, and would have cried out, but that the piercing screams about him kept him still from very shame. His nervous grasp tightened on the note-book and pencil which he still held in his hand.

Men approached with lanterns. He called to them, and they came and relieved the pressure about his legs, waiting for him to climb out of the wreck.

"I don't know what's the matter," he said, painfully, "but I'm hurt somewhere. I can't move alone. Will you help me?"

He was raised and laid at one side upon the ground wet with dew. A flask was held to his lips, and a swallow from it revived his strength.

"Where are we?" he said. "Is there a telegraph office near?"

One of the men, who had remained for a minute beside him to see what care he might need, answered, "This is Bedford near by."

"I must get a telegram to the post-office—quickly. It is of the greatest importance."

"I'd make it short. They'll be busy enough to-night. Here!" the man called to a boy from a neighbouring farm-house. "My boy, you can make yourself useful. Here's a man who's been hurt, and wants to send a telegram. There'll be other errands you can do in town. The men are all needed here."

The boy, his face white and his eyes big with horror at the scene round him, came and stood by Tom, who had written the direction with difficulty, and was tearing the leaves from his note-book. Handing them to the boy, he said:

"Tell the man to send all he can of this before half-past two o'clock certain." Then he added, "Wait," and wrote hurriedly:

"The up express leaving Liverpool at a quarter-past seven struck a luggage train just north of Bedford and was completely wrecked."

A physician approached and stopped to look at Harding.

"Are you badly hurt?" he asked.

"I don't seem to be hurt externally," said Harding, "but sharp pains keep shooting through my body, and I can't move."

The physician, grave and compassionate, knelt, and, with quick, skilful touch, examined the young man. He asked a few questions, and shook his head sadly. The eager, brave young face, drawn with pain, interested and touched him.

Meanwhile Tom had made a few rapid inquiries of the doctor about the disaster, jotting them down to fill in his message. He then said, quietly:

"How is it with me, doctor?"

"Can you bear the truth?" asked the physician.

"Do you mean that I am going? Yes; I can bear it. How soon?"

"Very soon, I fear."

"Doctor, my name is Harding—Thomas Harding. I am a reporter for the *Daily Magnet*. I was on my way to London with an account of the labour troubles in Lancashire. It must be in the *Magnet* office before half-past two. Here I have scribbled a story of this accident. You've given me nearly everything but the names of the killed and wounded—I can't get those. Doctor, will you see that my paper has those names? Can I trouble you so much?"

Dr. May knew that he had a night of anxious work before him; but he could not refuse the pleading look in the boy's

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white face. The request, conveyed in those words, wrung out suffering, appearing so singular and extraordinary, and spoken rapidly, as by one whose life was short, and whose work was very important, moved him greatly.

"Yes," said the physician. "I will see that it is done."

"Oh, thank you, doctor!" Harding's voice had almost a ring of triumph in it. "Your name is——"

"May."

Tom added a few words to his despatch.

"Can't get list killed and wounded. Doctor May will send it. This is my last message. Tell mother. Good-bye.—Harding."

As the boy took the finished lines, Harding said—

"Tell the clerk I have left money with Doctor May to pay for hurrying this through. The *Magnet* will give anything for this report."

The doctor added a word to the boy, and hurried him off through the darkness.

"Doctor, you will find in my pocket-book money enough to meet all expenses. Take it and pay what should be paid. Never mind about me. Others need you more. I couldn't do anything else just now—I might as well do the best—I could—for my paper."

Harding's voice had sunk almost to a whisper, and he caught his breath painfully. Then his breath faltered, and died away altogether.

The work of caring for the wounded and dying went on round Tom's body, now left alone.

It was two o'clock in the morning in the office of the *Magnet*. The roll of the ponderous trucks overhead told that the first formes were being rushed down to the stereotyping room.

The telegraph attendant waited at his machine. The editor laid aside the last tiresome sheet of type-written paper, and looking through the window between his own and the telegraph room, asked if nothing had been heard from Lancashire—a question he had asked several times in the last hour.

The managing editor came in with a worried look on his face.

"Nothing from Lancashire?" he said. "What can be the matter with Harding? If he were not coming back to-night he would have wired long ago; and if he were coming, he would have been here before now."

Just then a reporter brought word of a bad accident to the northern express.

"Send down at once for particulars," said the managing editor.

"I have sent."

"Hold the wire open till the last minute," was the managing editor's next order. "Harding will be heard from yet."

Just then came the office call on the telegraph instrument. The clerk answered, and began to write. The managing editor leaned eagerly over his shoulder.

Handed in at Bedford? What did it mean? It appeared to be Harding's account of the Lancashire strike.

Page after page came rapidly from under the clerk's hand. The story was vivid, graphic, and complete.

The editor read it rapidly, sending it sheet by sheet to the composing room. At last the signature was reached.

"It is a swindle!" exclaimed the managing editor.

"Probably Tom was stopped by the accident, and had to send his account from Bedford," suggested the editor.

But the click of the instrument had begun again.

"Bedford, July 14th. The up-express, leaving Liverpool at a quarter-past seven, struck a luggage train just north of Bedford, and was completely wrecked."

Then followed the brief but vivid story of the accident, read eagerly and anxiously by the strong men who stood about the operator.

"Another 'fake!'" exclaimed the editor—and then stopped, for the last page was reached.

The clerk had grown white, and his hand twitched nervously as he laid down his pen, and touched the key. The managing editor was the first to read the sheet, with the ink still wet on its brave words.

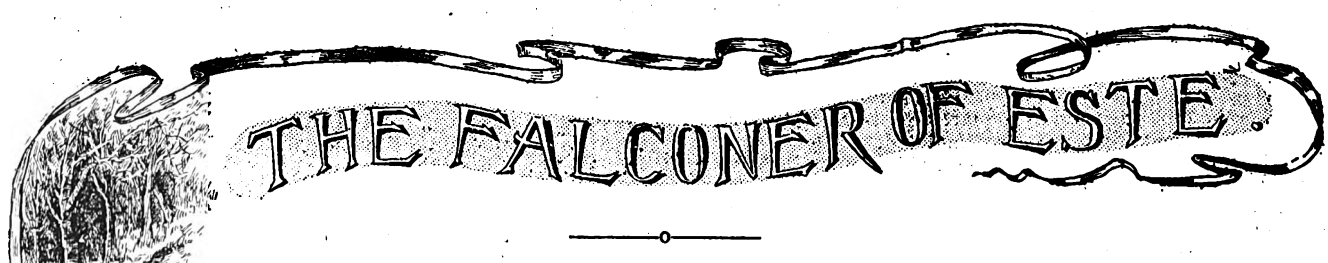
"Can't get list of killed and wounded. Doctor May will send it. This is my last message. Tell mother. Good-bye. —Harding."

The managing editor dropped the sheet and turned away.

The *Magnet* that morning contained two special reports which attracted extraordinary attention. Contrary to the usual custom of the paper, both of these bore signatures, and in each case the name signed was that of Thomas Harding.

Above the telegram telling the story of the disaster, first in the death-roll that was anxiously scanned by so many eyes, stood the name of Thomas Harding, reporter.

That was all; but the world soon learned the story.



ER name was Nerina. It was Travers' first evening in Italy.

San Remo, in the daytime, wore that look of lovely desolation which it is wont to assume after the breaking up of the winter colony. Travers, who had passed by Cannes, Nice, and Monte Carlo with scarce a regret, in his eagerness to cross the Italian frontier, paused now at the threshold of the promised land, because he had a letter of introduction from a Parisian artist friend, Lucien D'Aren, to present here.

The letter was addressed to the Count Chevandier-Waldron; but in reality the visit was for the sake of a young woman, who, while serving in the capacity of governess to the old Count's two little grandsons, was, in point of fact, a kind of adopted daughter of the house. She was Italian; but the history of her relation with the Chevandiers Travers had never learned. D'Aren had more than once intimated that her family connections in Italy were ancient and noble.

It was at a reception in the Chevandiers' Paris hotel that he had first met her, the autumn previous. He had run down to San Remo at Carnival time, some two months before the passing thither of his American friend. Now he was chained to the capital, having arrived at that critical point of his artistic career where the spark of patronage had at last faintly caught, and needed the most assiduous fanning to coax it into the promise of a comfortable surety. Hence his commission to Travers, *passant*.

That this commission was of a delicate and somewhat equivocal nature the young American comprehended; but D'Aren had volunteered few specific confidences—disappointed, possibly, that they had not been asked.

Being sufficiently occupied with affairs of his own, Travers did not avail himself of the privilege even of drawing conclusions as to those of his friend.

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Having forwarded his letter, he received at his hotel, an hour later, an invitation to a kind of informal reception to be held at the Chevandier villa that same evening as it chanced, in honour of a yachting party from Nice.

Thus he gained an opportunity to observe the Signorina herself, who had graciously acted as intermediary in the presentations.

Yes, she was beautiful, in the style cultivated by certain painters. Travers thought instantly of his friend's master, Lefebre, whose work is intensely modern, yet strongly imbued with mystic and classical suggestion. Nerina's charm, however, so far as the physical element of it was concerned, was not too subtle or elusive. It must have impressed itself upon every observer irrespective of individual predilections. She represented neither of the familiar contrasted Italian types of vaporous blonde and raven brunette.

Her complexion was a warm, bright olive colour; her rich hair was dark brown and straight; her eyes, two liquid, shining orbs, that by daylight were probably violet-grey. She was slender and rather tall, and moved with the lithe, rapid grace of a wild creature. What she wore that evening Travers could not afterwards recall, save that it was a simply-made gown of some dark, soft, clinging stuff that seemed a part of the wearer herself rather than an artificial vestment.

Here, thought Travers, was a rare type—an anachronism—an exquisite surviving product of ages of luxury and refinement, perhaps of something more sinister. Her features, her entire individuality, bore in a singular degree the cast of that pride of race, that legendary hauteur, which the young American had first observed with an involuntary thrill of admiration amongst those stately women of Arles and Avignon, who claim descent from antique Rome and Greece.

A Mascagni waltz drew most of the party into its bewitching vortex, and Travers found himself gliding with the rest over waxen floors. This was the providential prelude to a turn in the garden, which needed not even to be intimated by a word, for Nerina was his partner; and a moment later they were alone in the myrtle-bowered paths, beaconed rather than illuminated, by Chinese lanterns hanging here and there like glowing fruit amongst spicy laurel-rose shrubberies.

Paused to read the letter by the crimson light of a paper lantern.

Then, in her low, monotonous tones, yet with something of the delicious impetuosity of intimacy, she asked:

"Tell me what he said—Lucien, your friend. You have left him——."

"The day before yesterday, in Paris. Permit me—he can best speak for himself."

He gave her the letter, which, not to be intrusted to the hazards of the regular post, had been placed in his hands for safe delivery into her own. She touched it to her lips, then paused to read the letter by the crimson light of a paper lantern hanging in one of the dense laurel-trees overarching the path.

Travers was more than content to stand awhile in contemplation of the picture, keeping, at the same time, a watchful eye in the direction of the house, so as to be on guard against a possible interruption. Finally he said, for want of something better to break the spell:

"This is indeed *sub rosa!*"

Lifting her eyes from the letter, she regarded him fixedly, and answered, mixing as usual an Italian word or two with her somewhat halting French:

"He speaks *molto bene* of you."

"Thanks!" Travers cried joyously. "Do try and believe it. Lucien is the most charming fellow in the world, and deserves to be, as now I know he is, the happiest of men."

"He thinks of me sometimes?"

"More than sometimes. And it is *thinking*, with a difference."

"Then he has told you much about me?"

"Not so much. I am speaking now on my own responsibility."

"He will be coming here," she continued, glancing again at the letter. "And you, how long shall you remain in San Remo?"

"Only until to-morrow morning."

Something like a sigh accompanied this declaration. What sudden determination prompted it Travers could not have explained, nor why the utterance of it caused him a feeling of relief.

They were now at the open window-door of the salon, having retraced their steps as other promenaders came into the garden. It was necessary merely to show themselves for a moment indoors, and exchange a word or two with the host and those about him, then the pair were at liberty to resume their interview *al fresco*. This time they continued their walk to the foot of the garden, where a marble seat was placed in a dusky bower amidst a clump of pines and acacias.

"The attractions of San Remo then, are so quickly exhausted?" she asked, as though there had been no break in the conversation.

"On the contrary, it is the seduction of the place that I fear. If I were to yield to it now, perhaps I should never get any further; and there are some other places in Italy that I had set my heart upon visiting."

"Ah, yes! You will go to Florence——"

From the shadowy acacias a bird's nocturne gushed forth in such a rapture of melody, that the girl's own kindred voice as suddenly ceased its flow.

"There!" exclaimed her companion, at the fall of a cadence. "There is an example now of the fatal fascination to which a susceptible stranger is exposed here. That nightingale——"

"Oh, no!" she interrupted laughingly, "it is not the nightingale. That is the *caponero*—our little Italian fauvette, with the black bonnet and the golden throat, who makes many sweet songs for which the master-singer gets credit. That is unjust, for the nightingale has gifts and glory enough of his own. Now I will teach you to distinguish between them."

And forthwith she began imitating, in a sort of warbling whistle, the song of the bird in the acacias—so perfectly, that it seemed a continuation of that which had at first fallen so sweetly upon the dreamy darkness.

"And now," she continued, animated by her own ecstatic roulades, "you shall hear how the nightingale discourses. He doesn't repeat set phrases—he talks, improvises. He begins by coaxing you to listen, and then pours out his whole heart—so!"

It was indeed the nightingale's song, but with a soul in it

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that she gave. Then she imitated the haunting cry of the owl and half-a-dozen other birds—

"Most musical, most melancholy."

The performance of Nerina seemed really as marvellous as it was unique, and Travers scarcely knew how to express his appreciation and wonder.

"You are like the mocking-bird of the Southern wilds, in America," he said. "What an original accomplishment! I can't imagine how you came to acquire it."

"Oh, the birds taught me. We used to be neighbours, once upon a time. I understand them intimately."

"Do they understand you, I wonder?"

She arose quickly—not in consequence of his involuntary query, but, as he now perceived, because somebody was passing their nook. It was a solitary person, evidently, as his footfalls were almost inaudible, and the only visible indication of his passing was the glowing spark of a cigar-end. Yet the girl seemed to see clearly enough, or else it was intuition.

"It is M. Chevandier the younger—the old Count's son," she whispered. "He has just arrived from Nice. We must go in."

Travers was formally presented to M. Chevandier *fils*—the father of the two boys under Nerina's care. This virtually ended the visit, as it was plain that there would be no more *tête-à-tête* with the signorina that evening. She gave him, as he fancied, a significant pressure of the hand at parting.

He returned to his hotel to write to D'Aren, and could not but wonder at the unwonted restraint he felt in reporting to his friend the incidents and impressions of the evening. Early the next morning he took train for Genoa.

"Angel or syren?" was the query that kept reiterating itself in his mind. "Who knows—and who cares? Not I, forsooth. Whatever the burden of her song, my ears are sealed to it—not, indeed, as Ulysses' were, but with the ringing in them of the magic name—Italy! Italy!"

The olives shimmered in silver and grey shade. Here and there a sentinel cypress rose like a velvet plume. The breeze bore a strange thymy odour, and the sound of running waters was joyous, like singing. San Miniato, the Viale dei Colli, Fiesole, Vallombrosa, all that cluster of idyllic mountains which environ Florence and outline the Val d'Arno, lay lilac in light and purple in shadow, so softened, so transfigured in the gold-suffused atmosphere of the late afternoon, that the pale-faced villas on their terraced slopes, were more like phantasmal bits of cloud than realities of common day.

The point of view was the Bellosguardo, whither, in company with Professor Fiske, Travers had climbed to visit a renowned old Tuscan convent-fortress, the Certosa d'Ema.

Professor Fiske had been the most popular member of the faculty at University, in the young man's student days. With the tastes and habits of a scholar, he enjoyed the independence of wealth, so that of late years he had turned Florentine, to the delight of the cosmopolitan colony in winter, no less than of certain stray Britons in summer.

The two had paused by the grey ruined wall of Monte-Ajuto, that ancient stronghold of the Templars, when suddenly the Professor made a gesture enjoining silence, and whispered:

"I'll wager, there's Bebbo. The cunning rascal! Yes, it is he, sure enough."

"Who? What? Where?" asked the startled Travers.

"Bebbo, the bird-catcher. See—yonder, in the grass, by the big cypress-tree."

Travers looked in the direction indicated, but at first could perceive nothing animate save the innumerable little bright-eyed lizards that darted about or peered curiously out from the luxuriant herbage. Then suddenly he became aware of the figure of a man, crouching, or rather lying full length, amongst some weed-grown fragments of carved stone, a few rods distant.

"He is well worth your attention," continued the professor, "for he is a character unique in Florence, and, so far as I know in all Italy. He is a bird charmer, is Bebbo—a veritable *uccelliere* of the middle ages—*a birdsman*, of a race practically extinct for centuries past, who lives solely by birds, *with* and *for* birds. Thanks to his diabolical snares and nets, his silent spring gun, his trained wolfish dog of the Maremma, his imitative whistles and calls, and I don't know how many other marvellously ingenious contrivances of his own, this fellow has wrought more devastation among the game and singing birds of the country hereabouts than any hundred ordinary fowlers."

Travers' curiosity was piqued, and he imitated his friend's caution as they approached the spot where Bebbo lay.

Bebbo was not asleep; on the contrary, he was intensely awake, though motionless as a graven image.

"Good-day to your lordships," he said courteously, but without raising his eyes or relaxing the fine cord which, wound thrice about his hand, passed along the mossy turf and out of sight in the distance. Nor did he drop the spray of aromatic flowers held between his teeth, and upon which he gently ruminated, as another might have done with a cigar or pipe. In place of a hat, the cowl-like hood of a *lucco*—the classic Florentine head-dress—covered his iron-grey curls and mysteriously shadowed his face.

And what an extraordinary face was that! Travers was at a loss to define the singular impression the sight of it made upon him, until the professor said, later:

"You see in Bebbo a direct descendant of the falconers of the House of Este."

Again there flashed across the young American's mind the thought of that occult, avatar-like transmission of physical, no less than psychical, traits across the abyss of centuries, which he had more than once fancied he discovered in these old lands of romance and mythology. This inscrutable birdsman, with his slight, lithe frame and keen features, his hook-nose, like the beak of a vulture, and the fascinating fixity of his large, round, *yellow* eyes, was he not the living embodiment of the Greek faun, or satyr? Doubtless his hood concealed a pair of pointed ears.

When Bebbo replied to the badinage which the Professor, with the freedom of long acquaintance, presently directed against him, it was with a keen, Attic wit, coupled with an almost insolent imperturbability; while his language, far from being flavoured with the local *patois*, seemed actually Archaic in its purity. It was, the Professor declared, like his signature, which, scrawled in great Gothic characters with an eagle's quill, resembled the sign-manual of a grand seigneur of the fifteenth century.

"And how is it with the birds to-day, Master Bebbo?"

"Dio mio! the birds? There are no more in Italy, Signor Professore. Ah! it goes very badly."

"No more birds, eh? Well, and who is to blame for that, if not yourself? But, of course, you are lying, as usual. Let us see what you have caught."

"Oh, nothing at all, signor; nothing worth speaking about."

"Show us, at all events," insisted the Professor.

"Gesù m'aiuta! Wait a moment. Keep quiet, gentlemen; don't stir. Look! the net, yonder. Via!"

Bebbo gave a sharp pull at the cord he was holding, and lo! a hundred yards distant, a net which the two strangers had not hitherto perceived closed upon the ground like magic, enmeshing a whole flock of downy, fluttering creatures.

"That makes eleven more," he said, looking up with his malevolent smile.

There were, in fact, just eleven birds—mostly linnets and goldfinches—in the net; and Bebbo removed them with the utmost adroitness, transferring them one at a time, without ruffling a feather, to the compartments of a pair of large cages which he kept covered with a russet basket. Here were scores of other winged captives of various species, including finches, fauvettes, redbreasts, larks, and some less familiar birds, known only to their captor.

"The pity of it!" exclaimed Travers; and his companion repeated his remark in Italian.

"Oh, it is not at my hands they suffer," retorted Bebbo. "I don't blind them."

"Blind them? Is it possible such barbarous cruelty can be practised upon these poor little creatures?"

"*Dio mio!* such is the custom—and custom, you know, goes

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a long way in this country. Yes, the best singers, such as the nightingales, are often deprived of their sight, as otherwise it would be difficult to make them sing in captivity.

"In fact, the grand seigneurs of former times used to cause them to be *stimulated* by having musical instruments played in their hearing. You remember, Signor Professore, the engravings of Tempesta and of Villamena, in my rare edition of Pietro Olina's 'Uccelliera,' Roma, 1622? The prick of a red-hot needle, or a drop of boiling oil in the bird's eye, and it's all over. Thenceforth, your nightingale can sing to his heart's content, night or day, always fancying himself in the deepest shadows of the forest *Ecco!* You have heard the Pope's choir in the Sistine Chapel, eh? But, as for me, I am content merely to catch the birds and teach them pretty airs. And then, after all, I must live, *poverino Bebbo!*"

"*Poverino Bebbo*, indeed! Why, you scoundrel, how about the two houses they say you own and let? And your vineyard down the Arno, yonder?"

For all the answer, the falconer of the East turned to his bird-cages and began to whistle ironically, imitating successively the singing blackbird, the thrush, the red and the grey partridge, the skylark, the cuckoo, the aziola owl, the nightingale, and, finally, the *caponero*—all with amazing ease and fidelity.

Travers recalled the "lesson" of Nerina at San Remo, and asked his friend:

"Is this sort of think a common acquirement in Italy?"

"Hardly," was the Professor's reply. "In fact, it is safe to say that, in his mastery of this, as of the other branches of his profession, Bebbo is unique."

"But I have already heard another such performance of bird imitation, and, in my judgment, it was not less perfect than this of Bebbo's."

"Then it must have been by a pupil of his; for in the domain of bird-lore there can be but one—the original and inimitable Bebbo. You shall decide for yourself, if I can draw him out a bit."

By force of judicious compliments and leading questions, Professor Fiske succeeded in breaking through the professional reserve of the Florentine, who explained the construction and operation of some of his most effective nets, the trapping of birds with the aid of a decoy, etc. He said, moreover, that the trouble of catching the birds was as nothing compared with the subsequent care and rearing of them—the putting in cage, watching their moultings and maladies, "stimulating" them to sing, preparing their *pasta*, and a hundred other attentions demanding science and skill.

At the same time, Bebbo was plainly becoming restive under the questionings of his visitors, and cast frequent glances in the direction of the net, which he had promptly reset. The hour, too, was growing late.

The professor and Travers turned their faces cityward, and, as they descended the winding route, the former resumed:

"I always endeavour to hold converse with Bebbo in something like his own fashion—it is the only way to get on with him. And yet, although we have been acquainted now for several years, I have never been able to make any further progress with him than what you have just witnessed. Perhaps, as you say, he is a belated faun, a sort of surviving devotee of Pan. Certain it is that he passes his time, for the most part, as we have just seen him, roving from hill to hill, from *boschetto* to *boschetto*, from the Arno valley to the top of the Apennines. And he appears to possess a physical constitution quite distinct from that common humanity, rendering him superbly indifferent to changing skies and seasons, to midnight moons and moistening dews, to all the innumerable hazards of his calling.

"Yet all this represents only one side of his complex character. Dreamer, sceptic and voluptuary that he is at heart, he has accumulated a fund of cynical-philosophic reflections which furnish him with sharp and ever-ready repartee. You remember his observation to-day, when I taxed him with cruelty: 'Cruel—barbarous?' he repeated. 'No more so than the gardener who cuts his roses, the farmer who reaps his grain, *or the king who mows down men!*'" His erudition is such that he can quote you epicurean verses from Ovid and Horace, or cite approbatory texts from the Uccelliera of Pope Gregory XV.—'Given at Rome, at Santa Maria Maggiore, under the seal of the fisher—*sub annulo piscatoris*—the eighth day of November, 1521, of our Pontificate, Anno I.'

"What with his field-craft and bird-lore, his knowledge of nature and men, and his independent habits, Bebbo has lived well and joyously, not to say voluptuously. If certain old women's gossip hereabout be true, our bird-charmer has been a wild gallant in his day. In fact, the romance of Bebbo's daughter comes down to my own time here in Florence—and a sinister enough romance it was, too."

"Bebbo's daughter! He has a daughter, then?" questioned Travers, who had listened with growing eagerness to the Professor's narrative.

"He *had* until about three years ago. That is to say, there was a superb, spirited young creature whom Bebbo had mysteriously brought to Florence as an infant. She was generally known as his daughter. He occupied himself with her education—it was his only extravagance. The crafty birdsman saw in the girl a rare decoy; and she would have been sold—that is to say, married—to a rich old sybarite, the Prince D——, immediately upon leaving her convent, had she not suddenly taken flight. She was a match for Bebbo himself in wit and *finesse*, and she found a protector—some say a lover—in a distinguished family of *forestieri* who was ministering here. Since then, not a word, not a trace of her. But Bebbo's vengeful hatred, none can doubt, will last as long as he does."

"What would he do, if he were to find her?"

"He would kill her—perhaps do away with her by means of one of those subtle and deadly poisons he knows so well how to distil. She would have no more chance for her life than a bird in his snare."

The Professor said this with such an air of settled conviction, and it formed so startling a climax to the preceding revelations, that Travers excitedly confided to him the story of Lucien D'Aren's love affair, and his own encounter with Nerina at San Remo.

"Now, what ought I to do, under the circumstances?" he asked in conclusion. "If I should go and tell D'Aren?"

The elder man looked into his eyes before replying—

"My dear boy, M. D'Aren is your friend, and you are mine. I couldn't think of interposing an offhand opinion, in a case like this. Reflect over the matter by yourself until the next time we meet, and then tell me if you really want it."

Two days later, Travers, on the eve of departure from Florence, sought out his friend and thanked him cordially for the advice he had *not* given.

"It is clear enough to me now," he said. "The fact that I have stumbled upon a combination of circumstances is no reason why I should never mention the falconer of Este. Yet, surely, Professor, this dilemma is a peculiar one for a loyal friend to be placed in. I never heard of anyone else adopting precisely this course."

"Naturally. You hear of it only when they do the reverse. Leaving heaven out of the count, there are more things in this world, Horatio, than ever were dreamt of in your social philosophy. Adieu! You will find compensation for your forbearance, it may be, in watching your mystery work itself out."

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THE OUTLAWS OF THE AIR.

By GEORGE GRIFFITH,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies, &c."

SUMMARY.

MAX RENAULT—leading spirit of Anarchist Autonomie Group No. 7, who has joined the Utopians (a Socialist colony on an island in the South Pacific) in order to steal the air-ship they are building, which he succeeds in doing.

FRANZ HARTOG—a German engineer, in league with Renault, who steals a very fast torpedo-boat destroyer from the Russian Government to levy blackmail on the Atlantic.

SIR HARRY MILTON—a wealthy young English nobleman, who by chance comes across the island of Utopia, and subsequently devotes the whole of his fortune to hunting down Renault and Hartog.

HERBERT WYNDHAM—a lieutenant in the British Navy who is travelling with Sir Harry for the benefit of his health, and who resigns his commission and couples his energies with those of Sir Harry in destroying the Anarchists, on account of the fact that he has been stabbed by Renault when the latter attempts to carry off Violet in the air-ship.

FREDERICK AUSTEN—the inventor of the Utopian air-ship, who shares its secret with Edward Adams, Dr. Edwards, and Ambrose Millar, three other Utopians.

VIOLET MILTON—Sir Harry's sister, and Lieutenant Wyndham's sweetheart, is permanently crippled by throwing herself out of the air-ship on which Renault has tried to carry her off.

DORA MERTON—a fair Utopian, who has made an impression on Sir Harry.

LUCY SUMMERS—another fair Utopian.

Max Renault has made his way to New York Harbour on the air-ship and sees four huge liners start in a fleet, under convoy of two cruisers and four torpedo boats. He follows them, and on the second night Hartog appears upon the scene in his fast torpedo boat, the *Destroyer*, and commences to attack.

With the flames showing a yard above their funnels.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE "DESTROYER" AT WORK.

IT was of course impossible for Renault to see whether or not the broadside fired from the cruiser had taken any effect on the flying *Destroyer*, given that the assailant who had so mysteriously disabled the two torpedo boats was, as was most probable, the now famous pirate craft. Moving, as she would do, at a speed of some twelve hundred yards a minute, the searchlights had no sooner picked her up than they lost her again, and, as the night, although calm and cold, was now rather thick, the electric rays had only a short range, and a very few moments would take her beyond their radius.

For nearly half-an-hour he watched with interest that fast intensified into anxiety as nothing further happened. The *Gigantic* had slowed down, and he could see from the moving lights on her deck that she was getting her own guns ready for action. The cruiser, after picking up the crews of the sinking torpedo boats, had overtaken her and exchanged signals with her, and the other members of the flotilla were rapidly coming up astern.

Still cursing the lack of weapons which made him a helpless spectator of the drama which had already become a tragedy, he was just beginning to fear that the war-ship's broadside had blown the *Destroyer* out of the water when he saw a quick, pale flash to the northward, followed by the outburst of a sphere of brilliant flame on the cruiser's deck. By the momentary blaze of light he saw human forms hurled in all directions prone on her upper deck. Then came, almost immediately afterwards, the short, sharp bang of the explosion.

Then long streams of flame burst out from her side and the roar of a second broadside mounted to his ears. Hardly had it died away than another pale flash gleamed out from the northward, fully a thousand yards from where the first had shown, and a moment later a second shell burst on the cruiser's deck, this time square between her funnels.

"Bravo, friend Franz!" cried Max in his conning-tower, "they haven't hit you yet and you've hit them twice. That's something like shooting! There goes another broadside. Missed him again, of course. Who could hit a thing they can't see and which doesn't stop in the same place two seconds together? Fancy the little *Destroyer* tackling a big cruiser and a couple of torpedo boats like that. It's just the sort of daring that commands success.

"Ha! there's the other fellow coming into action. They'll try to head him off between them, I suppose. I wonder what the other two torpedo boats are up to. Ah, there they are, running out to the northward full speed, with the flames showing a yard above their funnels. Good to shoot at that, I should think; and Franz hasn't shown a light or a spark of flame yet except from his guns.

"Ah, there he is again! That second cruiser's searchlight just got him for an instant. Cæsar, what a speed he's going at! Forty knots if it's a yard. Another broadside—blaze away, *mes amis*, you're only firing into the sea. Hullo, what's that? One of the torpedo boats gone. He's rammed her, I suppose. Only one lot of flames now. Bang—there goes the other one. Blown her clean out of the water.

"I wonder what those shells of Franz's are. He doesn't need to strike twice with them, anyhow. I'd give something for a handy gun and a few of them up here. Wouldn't I give those two cruisers fits, firing down on their deck without their being able to send a shot back! Yes, that'll be something like business when we can do that. I wonder what he's up to now. Vanished again. He's picked his night well with this haze; those search-lights don't show anything half a mile off, and that gun of his carries a good two miles.

"Ha! there he is again, south of them now. He's sailed

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half round them while they've been wondering where he was. That was a nasty one for cruiser number two. Smashed up her forward funnel, as far as I can see. That'll knock a knot or two off her speed. I'll be hanged if I don't think he'll smash the pair of them up before daylight."

Extraordinary as it seemed, the running commentary that Max kept up in describing to himself the fight that was going on beneath him was not very far from the sober truth. Overwhelming as the numerical odds were against him, the pirate had one enormous advantage over his adversaries. In the nature of the case they were forced to keep their lights going to guard against a sudden rush and a torpedo attack, which, if successful, would send them to the bottom in ten minutes.

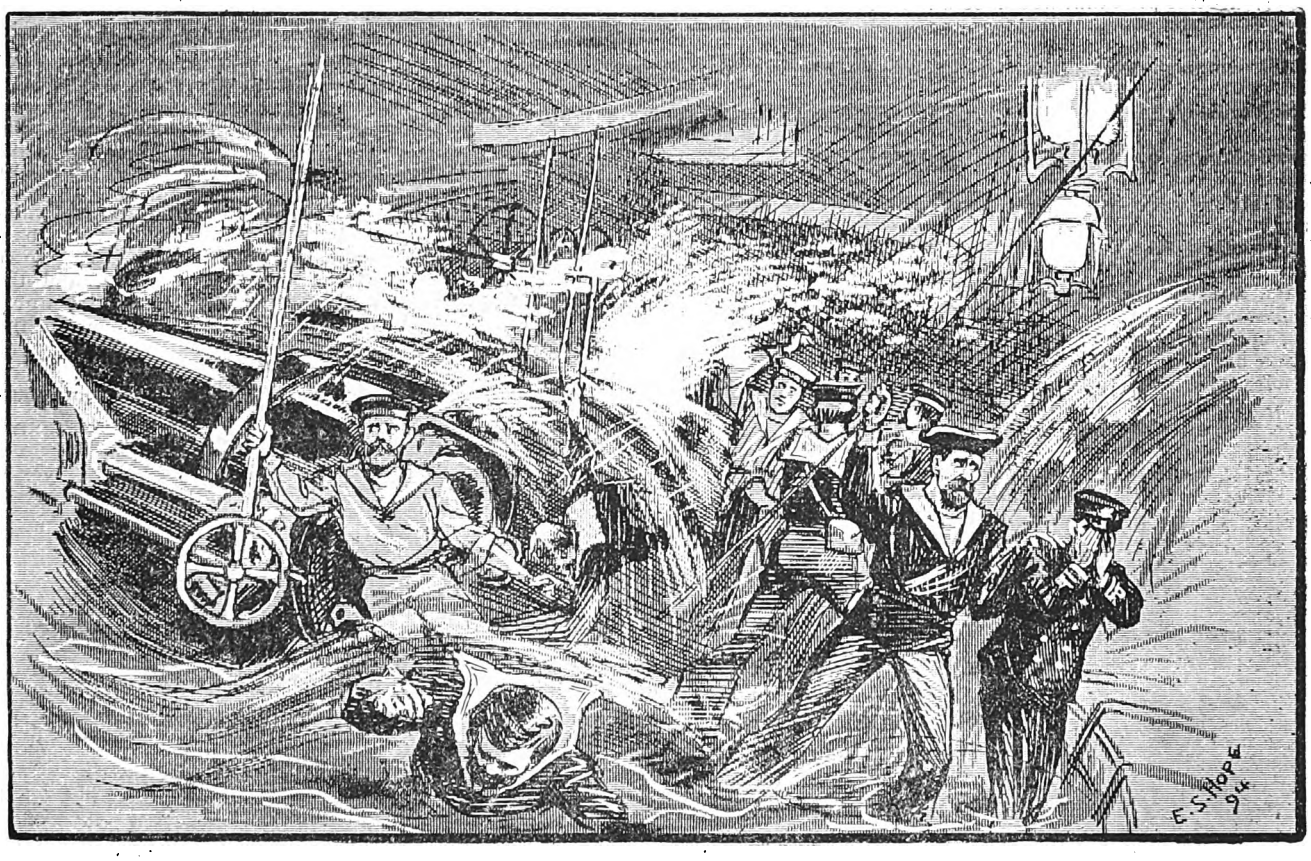
This made them conspicuous marks for his guns, which were evidently of considerable range and wonderful accuracy, while he, showing no lights, and moving through the water at nearly twice their highest speed, could laugh at their heavy broadsides with impunity. It was, of course, exasperatingly humiliating to the commanders of the warships, but there was no help for it. Shell after shell of tremendous explosive energy, considering their size, was fired into them, never twice from the same position, and they could only shoot at random into the darkness in reply.

None of the liners had been touched, but before the fight had been going on for an hour the two cruisers were practically *hors de combat*. Their decks were little better than shambles, their funnels and steam-pipes were twisted and battered into uselessness, and, worse than all, their searchlights extinguished. One after the other the well-aimed shells had smashed the projectors to atoms and left the warships defenceless against the deadliest attack of all.

"There goes a torpedo home at last!" cried Max in a tone of savage exultation as a dull roar came up from the surface of the water and the few remaining lights of the first cruiser swerved slowly to one side and then one by one disappeared. That was all he saw, but it meant a tragedy in which five hundred gallant fellows lost their lives in the space of a few minutes, most of them drowned like rats in a trap as the great ship went down nearly broken in two by the explosion of the terrible missile which had come out of the darkness to strike its irresistible blow.

The second cruiser was now near enough to see the catastrophe that had overwhelmed her unhappy consort. Her searchlights were instantly concentrated in a broad fan of light which overspread the area of swirling eddies sprinkled with life-buoys, hen-coops, overturned boats, and odds and ends of flotsam and scores of struggling forms of men making a last struggle for life.

In two minutes her boats were in the water and pulling hard on their errand of mercy. But here they had reckoned without the pitiless ferocity of their invisible assailant. This was just the opportunity that the pirates had counted on to enable them to complete their triumph in the strangely unequal battle in which speed, cunning, and dexterity had so hopelessly outmatched a force apparently so vastly superior.



Most of them drowned like rats in a trap.

No sooner did the searchlights betray the position of the second cruiser than shell after shell came up out of the darkness, never twice from the same point of the compass, and burst in her upper works, shattering her projectors, and spreading death and ruin about her decks. So rapidly did they come and so widely distant were the points of fire that it seemed as though the pirates numbered three or four instead of only one vessel Before the work of rescue was nearly accomplished the cruiser had been put into total darkness, and was unable to show a single ray of light that would have enabled her crew to guard against the last deadly assault that was now inevitable.

Rashly enough, the American liner began to use her projector in the hope of picking up the pirate and making it possible to pour the united fire of the five vessels on her,

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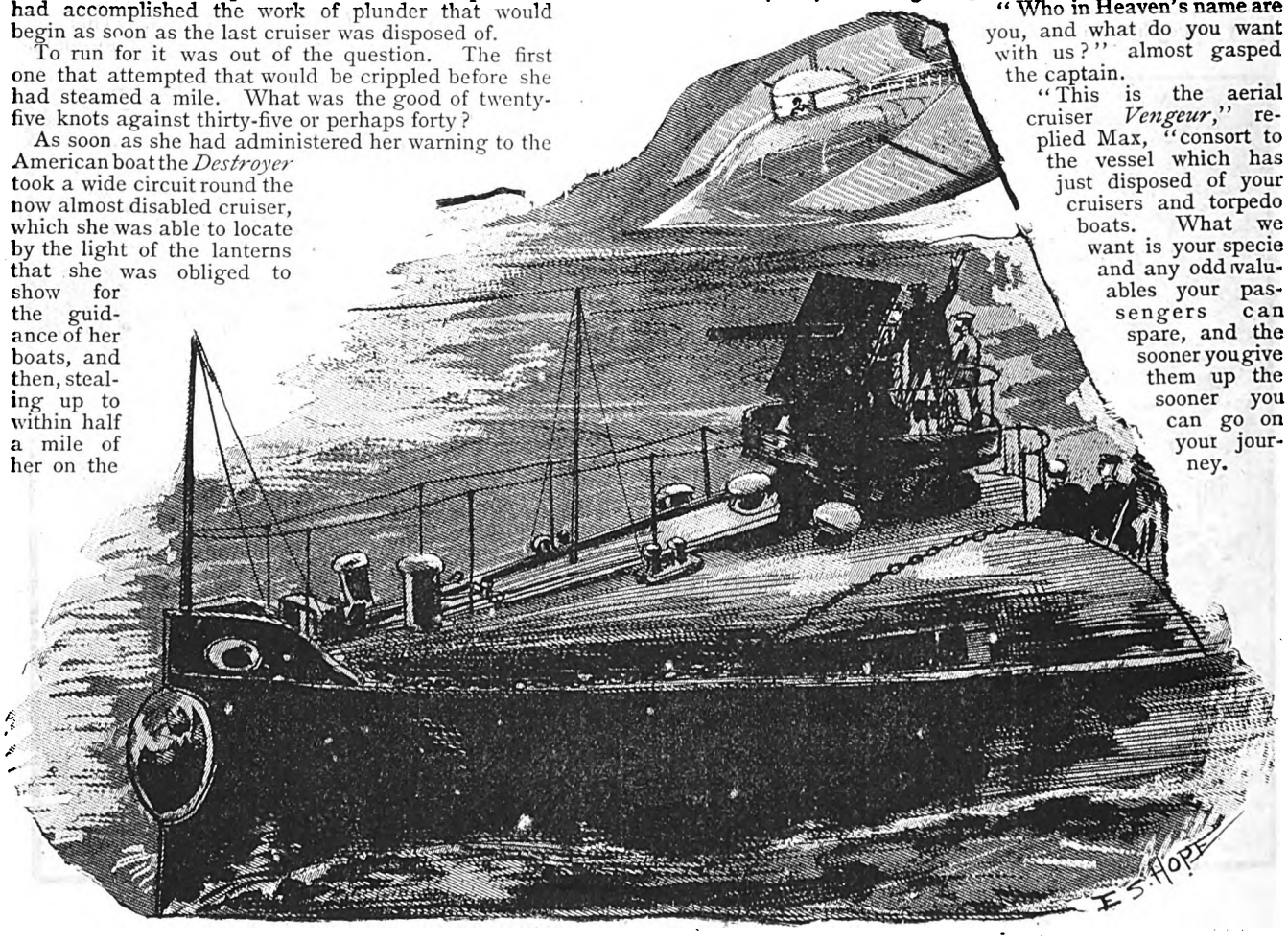
but the moment the electric ray gleamed out a shell, fired almost at right angles to the beam, pierced her thin plates and exploded, as ill-luck would have it, in her engine-room and burst the steam-pipe of her starboard engine. A moment later a hail of six-ounce shot from a machine gun crumpled up her projector, and the other boats, taking the hint, abstained from showing their lights.

It was hard, but it was necessary. Armed and all as they were, it was quite impossible for the liners to fight under the circumstances. The captain of each of them was responsible for more than a thousand lives, and the unseen enemy had by this time conclusively proved that he could sink them one by one without giving them a chance to retaliate. All they could do was to wait and hope that the morning would bring help that would compel the retreat of the pirate before he had accomplished the work of plunder that would begin as soon as the last cruiser was disposed of.

To run for it was out of the question. The first one that attempted that would be crippled before she had steamed a mile. What was the good of twenty-five knots against thirty-five or perhaps forty?

As soon as she had administered her warning to the American boat the *Destroyer* took a wide circuit round the now almost disabled cruiser, which she was able to locate by the light of the lanterns that she was obliged to show for the guidance of her boats, and then, stealing up to within half a mile of her on the opposite side, turned round, backed slowly up for another hundred yards or so, and deliberately discharged her two stern torpedoes at her.



"'Destroyer,' ahoy!

The aim was carefully taken, and both the missiles took effect, one under the quarter and the other under the side. The roar of the combined explosions told those in the boats and on board the liners that the last fatal blow had been struck, and that the four big ships, with all the lives and treasure on board of them, now lay practically at the mercy of the pirates.

"Splendidly fought, *mon brave Franz!*" exclaimed Max as the sorely stricken warship literally doubled up and went down like a mass of iron plunged into the water. "That ends the fighting part of the business, I should think. Now I fancy I can do something for you. A little timely bravado will make those four liners deliver themselves into our hands as tamely as though they hadn't a gun on board."

Five minutes after he had said this to himself the officers and crew of the *Gigantic*—all the passengers had of course been sent below long ago—were almost paralysed with amazement, not altogether unmixed with fear, by the apparition of a huge floating shape which suddenly dropped from the clouds and darkness over their heads and flashed a blinding dazzling ray of light down on her deck. It moved to and fro for a moment or two and then stopped over the bridge on which the bewildered captain was standing staring upwards in the midst of a group of his equally bewildered officers.

"Steam to the northward and signal to your consorts to do the same at ten knots. Quick, or I'll sink you where you lie. Do as I tell and every life shall be spared, and when we've done with you, you shall go in peace."

"Who in Heaven's name are you, and what do you want with us?" almost gasped the captain.

"This is the aerial cruiser *Vengeur*," replied Max, "consort to the vessel which has just disposed of your cruisers and torpedo boats. What we want is your specie and any odd valuables your passengers can spare, and the sooner you give them up the sooner you can go on your journey.

"Now which is it—surrender or fight?"

To those on board the *Gigantic* the question was the merest mockery. How could there be any possible alternative to surrender for them now that the terrible assailant that had destroyed their protectors one by one had been joined by this mysterious and seemingly still more terrible auxiliary from the air? For all they knew some at least of the shells which had crippled the two cruisers had been hurled upon them from the clouds by this hitherto unseen enemy.

But even more potent than this conviction was the bewilderment, amounting almost to stupefaction with which they found themselves confronted under such fearful circumstances and without the slightest warning by the greatest mechanical triumph of all the ages, that wonderful machine of which men had dreamt vainly for centuries, in the hands of the avowed enemies of society.

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"Fight!" exclaimed the captain of the *Gigantic*, in a tone in which wonder and disgust were about equally blended, "how can we fight? Make the course north, Mr. Thomson," he continued to his chief officer. "It's no good. We must think of the lives of the passengers first. That fellow could blow us to bits at his ease and we couldn't touch him with a shot. A whole fleet couldn't fight an air ship, and that's one, there's no doubt about it. It's horrible, but there's nothing else to do. We're helpless. Put the helm over."

"I'm glad to see you take such a sensible view of the situation, Captain," said Renault, as he saw the great liner swing round to the northward in obedience to his order. "You have saved a needless slaughter that I should have regretted very much. Can you signal to the others to follow you, as I asked you to do?"

"No," shortly replied the Captain, "I can't; and if I could, they mightn't obey me."

"Very well," said Max, "then I'll go and tell them what to do myself. Keep due north, and mind, if you fire a gun or attempt to make a signal I'll blow you out of the water."

While this conversation was going on the *Destroyer* had prudently kept out of sight. Franz Hartog, who was in command of her, startled as he at first was by the sudden and unexpected appearance of the air-ship, was not long in coming to the conclusion, from what he saw, that she could only be the long-expected craft which Max had promised to bring from Utopia nearly four years before. Why he had taken no part in the battle until now he could not understand, but he was quite content to wait for an explanation, and that he very soon got. He exhibited a flash-light for an instant, and Max, divining his intention, swooped down to where he was lying a couple of miles astern of the *Gigantic*.

"*Destroyer*, ahoy!" he sang out as the *Vengeur* sank gently down to the surface of the water alongside the dim grey shape of the pirate craft, "Is Franz Hartog on board?"

"Ja, mein lieber Max, he is here," replied a familiar voice. "And is dot you at last mit der air-ship? I always said you vould come some time, but you haf been der teufel's own time coming, and vy der donnerwetter didn't you help us to smash up dem cruisers ven you haf a beautiful air-ship like dot—and, mein Gott, she is a beauty, vot I can see of her?"

"Because I couldn't, Franz," laughed Max in reply. "I haven't a gun or a shell on board. I had to come away in a hurry with this thing or I shouldn't have got her at all. I've nothing better than a rifle and a revolver with me, and they wouldn't be much good, but those fellows don't know that, so I've told the big one to steer off due north at ten knots and not fire a shot or make a signal or I'll blow him to bits. He believed me, and he's doing as I told him. Now I'm going to tell the others the same thing. Can you spare me a few shells just to convince them with in case they don't see the force of the argument?"

"Ja, mein friend, you can haf as many as you like," replied the little German, delighted at the idea of Renault's ruse. "Dere is nothing like cheek in fighting—unless it is goot machinery and guns. By tam! they could haf clipped your wings for you, if they had only known. Come as close as you can and we vill pass you der shells up. Gott, vat a beautiful ship! Ven ve gets a few more like her ve vill gif someones fits and no mistake."

Max brought the *Vengeur* down lower still until a sliding door in her hull amidships was level with the bridge of the *Destroyer*, and through this a couple of dozen twelve-pounder percussion shells were rapidly passed to him.

"Do you vant a man or two to help you?" asked Franz, when the operation had been completed.

"No, thanks," replied Max, "they wouldn't be any use yet. They wouldn't understand the way of working things, and I do. Good-bye for the present. I think we'd better run these fellows due north till daylight to get them out of the track of the other ships and then unload the stuff at our leisure where we shan't be interrupted. What do you think?"

"Ja, dat is goot," said Hartog approvingly, "I haf been wondering all night how der teufel ve vas going to do it, but now you haf come it is all right. I tink ve had better take one of dem with us. Ve vant a transport to carry ze plunder. Dot North German boat vill be useful, she can steam twenty-two knots in a hurry."

"Very well," replied Max, "we can arrange that later on. Now I'll get away and start them off. Good-bye for the present."

"Goot-bye—auf wiedersehn!" cried Franz, as the *Vengeur* slowly soared upwards, and melted away into the gloom. "Mein Gott, vat a beautiful ship! Vait till ve get a fleet like her, and donnerwetter, vont ve vake de vorld up a bit and make it see some snakes! Ah, dot vill be a goot and a glorious time. Half speed ahead dere, and let us get dose fellows into marching order."

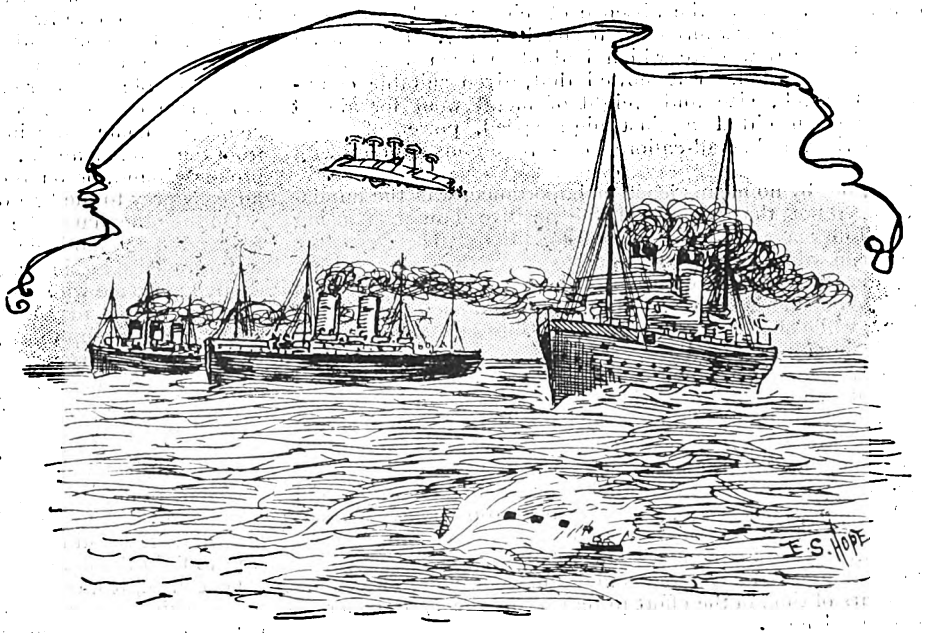
CHAPTER XIV.

THE EXPLOIT AND ITS MORAL.

HALF speed with the *Destroyer* meant something like eighteen knots an hour, so it didn't take very long for her to run round the other three liners, the crews of which had already been thrown into a condition bordering on panic by the astounding vision of the air-ship coming towards them with her single brilliant ray of light projected almost vertically downwards.

The first on whose decks it fell was the Cunarder *Morania*, a big boat built on the model of the *Lucania* and *Campania*, but with triple screws and a speed of twenty-four knots, or rather more than half a knot less than that of her huge rival the *Gigantic*. The same orders were given to her as had been given to the White Star boat, and perforce obeyed under similar compulsion.

Then the *Vengeur* visited in turn the American and North German boats, and within twenty minutes the four captured liners were on their way northward at ten knots, the highest speed that the crippled American boat could make, with the *Vengeur* flying to and fro in a zigzag course over their mast-heads and the *Destroyer* bringing up the rear about half a mile astern. No lights were permitted, and, of course, none were shown by the captors.



The liners were halted.

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It was now a few minutes after one in the morning, and therefore, as the sun would not rise till ten minutes past eight, they had seven hours' steaming before daylight, enough to carry them well northward of the winter tracks of all the Trans-Atlantic lines, excepting that of Halifax to Liverpool. Twenty miles south of this track the flotilla was halted, and the American boat was ordered to transhipher specie and valuables to the North German liner *Bremen*, the smallest of the four, but a fast, handy boat, which the pirates had decided to take as their transport for the time being.

The *Destroyer* put a dozen men armed to the teeth on board the American boat to watch the transhipment of the specie and to collect the money and valuables which the passengers were compelled to surrender. The fate of the *New York* was still too fresh in their memories for anyone to dream of resistance. The transfer was rapidly and quietly effected, and then the half-disabled boat was dismissed to make the best of her way to port. The other three were then ordered to resume the northward course at the highest speed of which the *Bremen* was capable—that is to say, about twenty-two and a half knots.

Morning at length broke grey and dull and cold over a sea on which not a sail or a smoke cloud was visible. By mid-day on the 6th they had reached a region which is totally unfrequented from the beginning of the winter to the end, and which is only traversed even in summer by the Greenland whalers and a few adventurous yachts.

Here the liners were halted and ordered to bank their fires, so that as little smoke as possible might show from their funnels. The specie and everything that was worth taking was transhipped from the *Gigantic* and the *Morania* to the *Bremen*, and the passengers and officers of the North German boat were divided between the Cunarder and the White Star liner, and these two, after their guns had been rendered useless, and their ammunition taken out of them, were allowed to depart in peace, which they promptly did at full speed to the eastward.

Thus was accomplished, as the newspapers put it when the amazing story was made public, the greatest, the most daring, and the most successful act of piracy ever perpetrated on the high seas. A single small vessel had deliberately waylaid four of the swiftest and largest liners on the Atlantic, convoyed by two powerful cruisers and four torpedo boats. She had rammed three of the torpedo boats and sunk the fourth with a well-aimed shell, and, after practically disabling the two warships, she had torpedoed and sunk them.

This astonishing result had been achieved by pure skill and daring assisted by far superior speed, straight shooting, and dexterity of handling, combined with the enormous advantage of invisibility due to the absence of either smoke or flame from the *Destroyer's* furnaces, if she had any. It formed a lesson in naval warfare which had often been taught and mainly disregarded, for it showed that, given suitable conditions of attack, size and weight of metal went for almost nothing when pitted against high speed, power of rapid manœuvring, and small-calibre long-range guns handled with precision.

Last, but by no means least in importance, was the unmistakable proof that it gave of the positive danger of using searchlights save under very special conditions. The *Destroyer* had been able to cripple and to sink the two cruisers one after the other simply because she had been able to remain invisible outside the range of their lights and shell them at her leisure, while she herself remained invisible save for the brief pale flash of her guns.

But even this last exploit of the now dreaded pirate was of secondary interest to the world in comparison with the story which the two liners took home about the appearance of the air-ship which had come upon the scene of action so opportunely for the pirates.

For several years past the problem of aerial navigation had been assuming larger and more definite proportions. It had advanced from the realm of dreaming and theory into that of practical work. Eminent scientists had soberly discussed it, and distinguished inventors had spent thousands of pounds and years of time in the effort to reduce the theory to concrete mechanical form.

Quite recently distinct and undeniable success had rewarded their efforts, and now—to the dismay no less than to the disgust of everybody; of the inventors who saw themselves outstripped in the race; the public, which accepted with all the avidity of alarm the newspaper forecasts of calamities to come; and the Government whose permanent officials had jealously and doggedly thwarted and discouraged all attempts to obtain the encouragement and support of the State for the most important of all warlike researches—the world was suddenly and without the slightest warning confronted with the realisation of the long-sought ideal in the shape of an almost irresistible engine of warfare in the hands of the most implacable enemies that Society had ever bred in its slums or let loose from its goals.

The pirates, or Anarchists, as they were variously called in the papers of the day, had proved themselves more than sufficiently formidable with the one incomparable sea-going craft which had just inflicted its last and bitterest humiliation on those who had undertaken to safeguard the Atlantic traffic. But what, asked the leader writers of a hundred journals, from the *Times* itself down to the suburban local with its circulation of five hundred copies a week—what was to happen now that, having proved themselves uncatchable, and to all intents and purposes irresistible upon the water, they had invaded and conquered the regions of the air as well?

What new reign of terror was Society about to be subjected to? What was to become of crowded centres of population when their swarming millions should lie helpless beneath the indescribable horrors of a bombardment from the clouds by an enemy that could be expected to obey neither the rules of modern warfare nor the promptings of common humanity? Was there a weapon or a machine in existence that would enable Society to effectively reply to the attack which might now be made upon it any day without warning?

The question was asked universally and had to be answered with a direct and unanimous negative. The nearest approach to anything like an air-ship was Mr. Hiram Maxim's aeroplane. Indeed, saving the mysterious craft in the possession of the Anarchists, it was the only flying machine that had ever taken a flight through the air and come down again safe and sound.

But as soon as its actual performances came to be contrasted with what had been actually seen of the *Vengeur* from the decks of the liners, the difference between the mere flying machine and the really navigable cruiser of the air became strikingly and ominously apparent.

The aeroplane would rise from the earth, but only after a lengthy run on railway metals or quite level unobstructed ground. Its flights had been limited in height and confined to a comparatively small radius by conditions of fuel. It was totally unable to hover or soar, and the moment it ceased to move at a certain speed it began to descend; and, lastly, it could only come down in certain places if it was ever to rise from the ground again. To descend in a forest or on rough broken ground, or on the water, meant to stop there and fall an easy prey to the first enemy that attacked it.

On the other hand, the *Vengeur* could soar vertically, remain suspended and motionless in the air, sink to the surface of the water and rise again, and fly to and fro at such a speed that it easily kept pace with the liners steaming at twenty-two knots an hour, flying to and fro over their mastheads, and occasionally soaring up to a height of two and three thousand feet to search the horizon for vessels.

Of the efficiency of her armament, whatever it was, no proof had, it is true, been given, but even if she was only armed with tubes for dropping bombs and a few machine guns, she was obviously so far superior to the aeroplane that it would be sheer madness to pit it against her as an adversary. Thus, as a weapon of defence, the flying machine could only be ignored. To match it against a craft like the *Vengeur* would be as absurd as it would be to send an old-fashioned ten-gun sailing brig to fight the newest type of torpedo destroyer.

Of course, it was impossible for the newspapers to refrain from asking, as none of them had ever thought of doing before, how it was that, with the exception of a few trumpery

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Breaking into exclamations of irrepressible delight.

balloon experiments the results of which would now be of less use than ever, the War Office had never given the slightest encouragement to the inventors who had spent their time and money in tackling a problem of the highest national importance?

Hundreds of thousands of pounds had been thrown away in the rashest experimentalising with ships, guns, and armour which were found to be obsolete almost as soon as their first unsatisfactory trials were over. Thousands more had been frittered away in tinkering with uniforms and playing at mobilisation, but not a sixpence had been spent in any attempt to solve the problem which everyone admitted must one day be solved, and whose solution by the enemies of Society now left the Governments of the world looking at each other in helpless disgust.

It is always the unexpected that happens. In this case the unexpected had happened with a vengeance, and all the resources of civilisation stood confessedly impotent to defend it from the enemy whose hand was against every man. It was the old story. Officialism laughing complacently at the dream till individual genius and enterprise replaced it by the deed; but in this case there was this difference. The air-ship was not for sale as the guns, the armour, and the machinery of the past had been. It was to be used as a means of plunder and terrorism, and the nations, armed from head to heel against each other, stood defenceless before their common enemies.

While in Europe and America the exploits of the *Destroyer* and the *Vengeur* were being thus anxiously and angrily debated, the chief actors in the ocean tragedy were securing their enormous booty and laughing over the discomfiture of their plundered foes.

In a deep rock-bound creek on the north-west coast of Africa, between Cape Bojador and Cape Garnett, protected seaward by reefs and shoals, and landward by the illimitable wastes of burning sand which none but a few wandering Arabs ever thought it worth while to cross, lay the *Destroyer* and the *Vengeur* with their treasure-laden prize.

The sailors and firemen and engineers of the *Bremen* had been compelled under pain of immediate shooting to work the vessel to within two hundred miles of the coast. Then they had been given her boats with sails, provisions, weapons and ammunition, and £50 a man for their services, and told to make the best of their way to the Canaries. This had been done just before night-fall, and the next morning there was not a trace of the pirates or their prize to be seen.

The inlet was one of a dozen equally well-chosen refuges which Hartog had picked out in different parts of the Atlantic, and he had so far followed the traditions of his predecessors in piracy that in every one of them he had concealed treasure to a very large amount. He had been very careful never to visit the same hiding-place twice in succession, so that, in case of his being seen entering one of them and information being given to the warships on the look out for him, it would be no use for them to go and lie in wait for him there.

In half a dozen secret depôts on each side of the Atlantic he had laid up stores of ammunition and the condensed petroleum fuel, treated according to a secret process known only to himself, which was burnt in the smokeless furnaces of the *Destroyer*, and the positions of these had been so skilfully chosen that he was never more than a couple of thousand miles from a refuge that was at once a hiding-place and a depôt.

As the *Destroyer* could steam four thousand miles at full speed, and over seven thousand at half speed, without refilling her fuel bunkers, his capture was to all intents and purposes an impossibility, unless a collapse of the machinery or some very improbable accident put him at the mercy of his enemies.

Heartless and soulless as the little engineer was with regard to all other subjects, he was something more than an enthusiast where machinery was concerned. He was wont to say that his heart only beat properly while his engines were working. He loved them with an affection surpassing the love of man for man, or even for woman, and it is probable that if he had been confronted with a really perfect machine he would have fallen down and worshipped it as the best possible substitute for the Deity in whose existence he did not believe.

To attempt to describe his raptures when Max, on their trip to the inlet, took him for his first flight above the clouds in the *Vengeur* would be to attempt the impossible. He himself totally failed to give it utterance. The new sensation of skimming hither and thither at will through the yielding air, of soaring or sinking as the fancy took them, and of travelling at a speed that reduced even the forty knots of the *Destroyer* to the merest crawl, filled him with emotion which for the time being struck him dumb with sheer rapture.

He went from end to end of the craft, examining everything, stroking and caressing the framework of the vessel and the metal of her engines as though they had been the sentient frame of some adored human mystery, muttering incoherently to himself, and every now and then breaking out into exclamations of irrepressible delight.

He was all eagerness to get the *Vengeur* into commission, as he put it; and before even the brief voyage was ended he had designed an armament for her which, if it did anything like what he promised for it, would render her terrible to her enemies beyond Renault's wildest dreams of destruction.

"I tell you, friend Max," he said as they were sitting together in the air-ship's saloon, a thousand feet above the inlet, on the evening of their arrival, "dat ven I haf done mit dis craft she vill be a holy terror to all der vorld both on land and sea, and ven we haf built a score or so like her, as ve vill do pretty soon, you shall do vat you like mit der earth and der fulness dereof.

"And now, I suppose you vant to hear vat ve and der comrades haf been doing all dese times you haf been away. Very well, dot vill be a bit of a long story, so ve vill haf some more drinks and smokes, and den I vill tell you all about it."

(To be continued.)

£2 2s. FOR A PLOT.

I take it for granted that, on the whole, the readers of this paper are very fair judges of a good story. Moreover, there are undoubtedly a large number of people among them who are capable of devising excellent plots for stories, while they are not gifted with the necessary ability for working them out into readable form.

It seems to me a pity that such good material should be forced by lack of opportunity to lie dormant, and, with a view to seeing what readers are capable of in this direction, I offer a couple of Guineas for what I consider to be the most striking plot for a short story.

The scene may be laid anywhere, and only a rough outline should be given, embodied in a paragraph of not more than a hundred and fifty words. Any number of attempts may be sent by each competitor, but each attempt must be on a separate sheet of paper, with the name and address of the sender on the back. Competitions to be enclosed in an envelope marked "PLOT," and to reach this office by Tuesday, **October 30th.**

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THE HANGMAN'S DAUGHTER.

SINCE the death of Calcraft, the notorious public executioner of England, the press has contained numerous incidents and anecdotes of his strangely isolated life and unenviable career; but I have only the barest mention of his daughter's name, whose unhappy love-story constituted, perhaps, the one real and familiar romance of interest connected with his personal affairs.

I knew the odd, shrinking, white-bearded, little old man very well, and, being a near neighbour of his, frequently visited his house a number of years ago. I almost always found him in the flower-garden attached to his suburban residence in London. He was passionately fond of flowers, and our common botanical tastes had much to do with the pleasant relations that were in a short time established between us.

I frequently saw his daughter Millicent, an only child, wandering among the cramped, but admirably kept, parterres in his company, but my entrance was always the signal for her instant retirement.

She was a pale and very pretty girl, about two and twenty, and, from the brief interviews into which I managed to surprise her, it was easily seen that she possessed both natural refinement and educational requirements considerably above her position in life, while her father's doting love for her was apparent from the first. But she was a prey to hopeless melancholy, and I don't think I ever saw her smile.

I had heard that she had been crossed in love, chiefly through the stigma resting upon her father's profession, and more than once hinted to him a desire to know her story. It was only after repeated requests that he at length consented to give it to me, and I will present it to the reader, as near as I can recollect, in his own words:

"It was several months after my execution of Mrs. Manning, the notorious murderess," said he, when we were seated in his little summer-house one day, "that I began to notice a change in my daughter. You remember the Manning case, don't you? No! She was a woman of gentle breeding and captivating manners, but no one questioned the justice of her conviction, and she was sentenced to be hanged. She preserved her sweetness of disposition to the very last to every one but me.

"During my few preliminary visits to her cell, she evinced only a shuddering, loathing fear of me, which would have been natural enough, but that it was accompanied by a violent personal hatred, at which I was as much grieved as mystified.

"'Headsman,' 'cut-throat,' 'paid assassin,' 'legal murderer,' 'blood-stained tool,' and 'master hangman' were amongst the epithets she would hurl upon me; and she would repeatedly hiss out between her clenched teeth:

"'I have one son in the world, Calcraft—just one—whom I have taken pains to notify of the services I am to owe to you, and he will avenge me. Oh, you wretch, he will seek you out when I am no more. He will strangle you in your bed, as you are about to strangle me on the scaffold! Then, Calcraft—then will my phantom rise out of my ignominious grave to mock and jeer at you! It will gaze upon your starting eyeballs and your swollen tongue—it will caress the clutch that fastens on your throat—it will curse, curse, curse you to the end!'

"I tried my best to reason her out of this absurd and unjust prejudice against me, but in vain. The expostulations of the chaplain, to whom she was otherwise quite tractable, had no better effect. Finally, as the day drew near, I ceased to pay any attention to her threats. I had good reason to believe that her vituperations were nothing more than insane ravings, merely calculated to strike me with affright, for it was generally understood that she was childless.

"When, at last, she stood upon the scaffold, and my final attentions were required, she did not, it is true, venture to abuse me openly, but her cold, grey eyes still rested upon me with the burning, deadly hate that I knew would only be extinguished with her life.

"You, who know me so well, must, of course, be aware that I did not reciprocate her sentiments towards me. On the contrary, I pitied her from the bottom of my heart, as I have always pitied every person in a similar position. She looked so white and horrified, indeed, when, after adjusting the noose, I was about to pull the black cap down over her face, that I whispered a few soothing words into her ear.

"How do you think she rewarded my kindness? She merely hissed out the word 'Remember!' and then she bit through the cap and through the ball of my thumb to the bone. The next instant the trap fell, and she was launched into eternity.

"You can see the cruel scar which she left me for remembrance," continued my narrator, after a moment's pause, during which he showed me the thumb of his right hand, upon which the livid impress of four teeth was distinctly visible.

"Well, I had forgotten all about the affair, and it was three or four months afterwards that I noticed the change in my daughter that I have spoken of. From being gay and cheerful, she became melancholy and dejected, and would pass hours in sombre reverie. She had looked upon me as her confidential friend as well as her father from the time when she lost her mother in her infancy, but now she grew shy of me, as though fearing I would read her thoughts.

"At last I became convinced that she must have fallen in love. I told her as much, and besought her to unbosom herself freely.

"'You know that I have nothing but your future happiness in view, Milly,' said I. 'Much as I should grieve to lose you, I am not blind to the fact that you are now a well-grown young woman, full of youth and hope, and, if you found a lover in a good man and true, and one who will make you a worthy husband, heaven knows you are welcome to my blessing, as well as to the snug little dowry I have put away for you. We have lived so long alone together, under the same ostracism entailed upon us by my unfortunate profession——'

"'That is just it,' she cried, interrupting me with a sudden burst of passionate weeping. 'He loves me—loves me to adoration—and yet I dare not tell him what you are; I dare not even tell him my last name!'

"After much difficulty, I obtained the story of her trouble. While walking in the public square, according to her custom, some weeks before, she had met a young man, the mate of a vessel in the East India trade, whose acquaintance had gradually grown to intimacy, and thence to mutual love and esteem.

"Her lover gave his name as Pitt—Mr. Pitt—which, however, he confessed to be only his Christian name. He had for ever abandoned his surname, he said, on account of a dark stain having been cast upon it by a member of his family.

"When, therefore, Millicent had persisted, in her turn, in the concealment of her own surname, he had only laughed, and said that Millicent was in itself an all-sufficient name for him to make love to, but that it would be convenient to know her family in order to press his suit for her hand in due form.

"You see, he already wished to marry her, and declared

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that he only desired her family's acquaintance for the sake of expediting the matter, and having them inquire into his character and business prospects, which he represented as unexceptionable.

"Millicent had, however, though in love, persisted in her secrecy, and it was this dilemma that had occasioned her unwonted sadness. She now wished me to let her have her lover come to see her at the house, while I still kept him ignorant of my name and vocation. I laughed at the absurdity of such a thing, and at once tried to reason her out of it.

"'Why, sooner or later, your Mr. Pitt must find out our name from some one of the neighbours, at all events,' said I. 'You know there are busybodies enough to give him hints as to my name and its significance. Why not honestly avow the truth, when, if he loves you, he cannot fail to continue doing so? Besides, there is no stain upon our name, as he confesses there is upon his; but on the shadow cast by prejudice.'

"No; she wouldn't listen to it. She would have him visit us under the distinct understanding that he should make no inquiry into our surname. Then, after she was perfectly sure that a knowledge of it would make no difference in his sentiments towards her, she would herself make known the secret, and abide the issue.

"For a long time I would not listen to her proposal, but her requests were so tearful and vehement, she implored and intreated me with such forlorn, desperate earnestness, that at last, in a moment of weakness, for which I have never forgiven myself, I consented.

"The next day Millicent brought her lover and introduced him to me in this garden, and not far from where we are now sitting. He was a fine-looking fellow, with all a sailor's proverbial honesty in his talk and bearing.

"I liked him from the first, and certain subsequent inquiries that I made at the East India offices having been answered very satisfactorily concerning his character and prospects, he presently came to see us almost every day. He had been assigned to permanent shore duty on the docks belonging to the shipowners, for whom he had been previously employed in the capacity of ship's second officer; the position was a lucrative one, and, moreover, gave plenty of time to devote to his love-making, at which he was about as industrious and absorbed as any young fellow I ever saw.

"Millicent became as happy as a butterfly in the sunshine. I was present at many of their interviews, and it really did brighten my old heart to see how thoroughly and prettily they revelled in each other's love.

"At last there came a day when the young man boldly said to me, in the presence of Milly:

"'I say, Mr. Blank'—as he was in the habit of addressing me—'I am in a quandary that you must help me out of. I want to marry Milly as soon as possible, and you have already given your consent. But how is it to be done, unless I know her name and yours? It won't be exactly legal to marry her as Miss Millicent Blank, will it?"

"'Hardly,' I replied. 'But I washed my hands of the entire affair at the outset. I must refer you to her.'

"'Let the secret rest for just one month,' cried Milly, with a nervous laugh, which could not conceal from me the anxiety she was suffering.

"'But you promised to become my wife within six weeks,' said her lover.

"'Well, then,' answered my daughter, 'on the day before the banns are published I will tell you my surname.'

"'All right,' he exclaimed, kissing her. 'So long as you finally become Mrs. Pitt, it's little matter to me what name you may have borne before, my darling. Let it be Smith, Brown, Jones, or Robinson, or fifty times commoner, it'll be all the same then.'

"But he was not destined to wait a month, or even a week, to have his curiosity satisfied.

"The very next day, while Milly and he were sitting in this self-same arbour, the catastrophe came upon us like a thunderbolt out of a blue sky. I had left the house by the street door yonder, and, seeing them sitting here, was turning the corner and strolling towards them through the laburnums, when one of my neighbours, who chanced to have something important to communicate, leaned over the front gate there, and shouted after me, at the top of his voice:

"'Calcraft, a word with you. Hullo, Calcraft, I want to speak to you.'

"Without thinking anything of the circumstance at the moment, I returned to the gate, disposed of my neighbour, and then proceeded towards the lovers. No sooner, however, did I set eyes on Milly's lover, than I saw that he had overheard my name, and that it had a terrible effect upon him.

"He had half risen from his seat, and Milly, pale as death, was grasping his arm, as he stood, crouchingly, as though in the act of springing at my throat, with a horrible expression of mingled astonishment and fury wrinkling his face, and such a look of hate and revenge leaping out of his eyes as I had never encountered before.

"'Did I hear aright?' he gasped. '*Calcraft!* Is that your name?'

"'It is,' I replied, 'and if I had had my way, you would have known it from the first.'

"'Great heaven! And you are——'

"'The public executioner of England, at your service!' I filled in.

"He sprang towards me as though to clutch my throat, but then recoiled, glaring at me, but with his hands still threateningly extended, the fingers hooked like the talons of a bird.

"'Murderer of my mother!' he almost shrieked. 'Hangman! Blood-stained slave! Do you know that, if I would obey her dying injunction, I should this moment dye my hands with your coward blood?'

"'So,' said I, drawing a long breath, 'you are, then, the son of Mrs. Manning?'

"'Ay; and bore her name until the first whisper of the crime for which she died—died at your hangman's hands—compelled me to abandon it for ever!' he yelled. 'I did not intend to pay attention to her dying injunction; it reached me on the ocean, far away, and with the knowledge of her shameful death. But now—now, when I see how you have cheated me, the trap you have set for me—I could tear you limb from limb!'

"'I have neither trapped nor cheated you, sir!' I exclaimed, thoroughly provoked, and ready to defend myself from any attack he might meditate. 'Remember that you initiated this foolish mystery with my daughter by concealing your own name. You have surely more cause to blush for it than I have for mine.'

"Then I believe he would have sprung upon me, had not Millicent at that moment rushed out of the arbour, where she had been sitting in terrible agitation, and thrown her arms round him.

"'Speak to me, darling—speak to me!' she cried. 'He is my father, and good and gentle, as he is honest and worthy. Am I not still the same to you?'

"'You?' he shouted, casting her from him. 'What! the hangman's daughter? Ha! ha! ha!'

"And then, with a wild, hysterical laugh, he rushed out of the garden like a madman.

"We never saw him again. Millicent swooned away, and then had a terrible brain fever, which lasted for months. She recovered her bodily health, but has been plunged in hopeless melancholy ever since. She will be quite well off at my death, but I do not think there is any probability of her ever marrying."

"But the recreant lover—what became of him?" I asked, after Calcraft had remained silent for a long time.

"The body of Mr. Pitt Manning was taken out of the Thames on the following morning with a bullet in the breast," replied my informant, in a low voice. "There is little doubt that he first shot himself, and then plunged into the river.

"Poor Millicent! The shadow of her father's vocation has been terribly visited upon her beautiful and innocent head."

So I thought at the time, and so I still think. She survives him, I believe, but there can be little more of joy or peace for her in this world. And such was the one romantic episode in the career of Calcraft, the hangman.

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OLD SHIPMATES

IT does not seem natural for an old warrior to die outside the scene of actual strife. Nelson in Hardy's arms, Wolfe on the plains of Abraham, fulfilled their destiny; but to die in bed, after escaping the storm of shot and shell, the perils of flood and field, that seems puerile.

Yet there was nothing puerile about the Admiral as he lay dying on the great canopied bed in that sunny room. There was no pallor on the ruddy face—the sun of sixty years and every clime had burned its mark too indelibly for that—and the great grey eyes were fearlessly open.

Then there came a rumbling word or two sounding somewhere in the front of the house. The landlord's voice was heard in reply, and then more rumbling. Then a pause, followed by the landlord's footsteps on the stairs.

"He says—it's a stranger to me—his name's Huckins, he says," came in strangulated whispers from the landlord to the doctor, "and he wants to see the Admiral."

The doctor made a frowning gesture of dissent.

"Yes, I know—I told him *that*," returned the landlord, shuffling uneasily, "but he won't go 'way—said he'd walked fourteen mile just to see the old man—that's what *he* called him," he hastened to add, apologetically.

"Tell him——" began the doctor.

"What is it?" asked the Admiral, turning his head.

"A man—Huckins," explained the landlord.

"Know me, does he?"

"Says he does. Yes, sir. Says he was a sailor—got sailor's clothes on."

"A sailor! Well, well," said the Admiral shortly, "if he wants to see me, why not?"

The landlord looked at the doctor; the doctor nodded acquiescence, although with a frown, and the landlord faded away.

The clock ticked a few more noisy minutes, and then the door opened to admit the sailor. He was an old fellow, with scanty hair brushed neatly, clean-shaven face, showing a square jaw, big blue eyes, and a skin like old sole leather—tough, brown, and wrinkled. He wore a man-o'-war's man's suit, faded, but brushed as clean as a lady's glove, and his shoes were polished like mirrors. A bright white knife lanyard crossed his shirt front, and there were a few faded letters on his cap, which he whipped off on entering.

The Admiral lifted his eyes slowly and looked at him.

"Well, my man?" he said at length, with the same intonation he had used a thousand times at sea.

The sailor brought up his hand in a salute.

"It's him," he said in a hoarse voice that smacked of fogs and salt air; "it's Old Blue!"

The doctor and the nurse looked shocked, and the landlord shivered. On the Admiral the effect was electric.

"I says to myself when I hears of you bein' here," continued the sailor, coming closer, "it's Old Blue for a hundred pounds; and it is! I'd a knowed them powder-marks on your neck among a thousand. And I walked fourteen mile to see you, and see if you remembered Bill Huckins, as was master-at-arms on the old *Pioneer*?"

"Huckins?" the Admiral raised himself on his elbow with a mighty effort. "Ah, yes, I remember you now."

He held out his hand, and then sank back on his pillow.

"You came to see me, Bill?"

"Yes, sir. Heard you was on the sick-list, and I come to cheer you up a bit. I was laid up last winter myself with a crick in my back."

"You are in some sailors' Home, I suppose?"

"Home? Bless your heart, sir, no! I raked up these togs for old times' sake—seemed more natural-like. I've got a boy that's makin' his £2 a week, and I've got a pension of 30s. a month. That's for a rap I got from a shell nigh thirty year ago."

"When was that, Bill?"

"Same day you got them marks on your neck from the breach of No. 2 gun. Don't you remember when we steamed up to the fort, when the guns was double-shotted and slappin' into us every ten feet? That was on the old *Vincent*."

"Yes, I remember," assented the Admiral, with glistening eyes.

"You was captain then, and when Lieutenant Fifer says to you, 'You go aft,' says he, ''cause there's sharp-shooters behind that ridge,' you says, says you, 'You go to the devil!' I was workin' a six-pounder near by, and I laughed right out at that, although 'twasn't no laughin' times then."

"No, indeed; no, indeed. But we silenced the fort, didn't we, Bill?"

"Didn't we, though! Knocked it clean out of sight! You couldn't play with the *Vincent that* trip. And two months later, d'ye remember how we sunk the *Rouen*, in the Gulf, after a runnin' fight of a day and a night?"

"Ah, Bill, those were famous times," said the Admiral, gazing fixedly into the air with his great eyes.

"Warn't they, though! And when we went up the Straits together in the *Eagle*, when you's just got your Commodore's pennant and took charge of the squadron—seems like it was always my luck to be shipmates with you, and I didn't want nothin' better."

"And here you are again, Bill," said the Admiral.

"Yes, sir, here I am, on deck again. When I heard you was here, I said to Tom, my son, 'I'm goin' to see the old man once more.' And Tom—he's never been to sea and don' know much—he says, 'Sho! he won't see you.' And I says, 'He was a shipmate of mine for mor'n fifteen years, and I always did my dooty. I could take my tod with any blue-jacket, and more'n once it took the whole marine guard to get me over the side, but I never shirked, and if Old Blue ain't got a good word for me, he ain't the Old Blue he used to be.'"

"Right, Bill, right," said the Admiral, smiling through the wave of pain that rippled across his face. "You were always a good sailor, Bill, but you're an old hulk now, like me."

"Sure enough, sir, we're laid up in ordinary now, sir; but there ain't nothin' can wipe out them old days from the log-book, if they have gone by."

The Admiral closed his eyes and murmured, "Gone? Ah!"

"Yes, they're gone, and we're goin'," said Bill, his voice thickening, "but we did our dooty, a' no man can say 'no' to that."

"Yes, we did our duty, old shipmate," said the Admiral, in a voice that had become thin and weak.

"Where are you, Bill? It is getting dark——"

Bill's cap dropped on the floor, and he seized the Admiral's hand in his. The others drew back without a word.

"Shipmate," said the Admiral, once more.

"Ay, ay, sir!"

"I'm on my last cruise, Bill."

"God bless you, sir, you're comin' straight into port, but you ain't dropped anchor yet."

"Just going to, shipmate," said the Admiral, while the great grey eyes stared straight ahead.

"Stand by," said the sailor-man softly.

A convulsive clasp of the withered and the brawny hand, a sigh, and Bill's grizzled head sunk on his breast.

The long voyage was over, and the Admiral had dropped his anchor.

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Should Stout Persons STARVE THEMSELVES?

We are afraid that semi-starvation as a cure for corpulency prevails very much to a dangerous degree. Mr. Archer, the late well-known prominent jockey, was in the habit of going without food for a long stretch in order that he could ride a certain horse at its weight, and there is not much doubt that the debility resulting from this habit of abstemiousness was certainly not conducive to combating the dire attack of fever which was, perhaps, indirectly responsible for the untimely end, in the zenith of his fame, of this unfortunate but accomplished horseman. Even Mary Jane in the kitchen will eat sparingly of the food allowed her, while she will seek to reduce her fat by copious draughts from the vinegar cruet, and succeeds only in injuring the coats of her stomach—the forerunner of dyspeptic trouble which will be difficult to overcome.

The Continental medicos seem to advocate this great reduction of ordinary foods, but one of these savants suggests that the stout person should eat considerably of fatty meats, in order that the appetite be appeased, and consequently less food required, so that practically this is indirectly advocating semi-starvation. On the other hand, Mr. Russell, the British specialist, takes a different course. He says, "Eat as much as you like," and as it is an acknowledged fact that under his treatment persons lose from 2 lb. to 12 lb. per week, it beyond doubt stands out pre-eminent against those so-called starvation cures "made in Germany." Some claim that Mr. Russell has to insist upon his patients drinking hot water every morning, but on the contrary he avers that it is dangerous to do so, and has, of course, never advised it. No; the success of Mr. Russell's treatment is incomparably beyond other specialists, for he resorts to no stringent dietary, and simply prescribes a harmless vegetable tonic combination which is the outcome of years of study and botanical research. We advise all those interested in this question to get this book, the price of which is only 4d. It is entitled, "Corpulency and the Cure," 256 pages, and is published by him at Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. It can be had direct, or through any bookseller.—*The Million.*

A POSITIVE REMEDY FOR CORPULENCE

Any remedy that can be suggested as a cure or alleviation for stoutness will be heartily welcomed. We have recently received a well-written book, the author of which seems to know what he is talking about. It is entitled "Corpulency and the Cure," 256 pages, and is a cheap issue (only 4d.), published by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. Our space will not do justice to this book; send for it yourself. It appears that Mr. Russell has submitted all kinds of proofs to the English Press. The editor of the *Tablet*, the Catholic organ, writes:—"Mr. Russell does not give us the slightest loophole for a doubt as to the value of his cure, for, in the most straightforward and matter-of-fact manner, he submitted some hundreds of original and unsolicited testimonial letters for our perusal, and offered us plenty more, if required. To assist him to make this remedy known, we think we cannot do better than publish quotations from some of the letters submitted. The first one, a marchioness, writes from Madrid:—'My son, Count ——, has reduced his weight in twenty-two days 16 kilos=*i.e.*, 34 lbs.' Another writes:—'So far (six weeks from the commencement of following your system) I have lost fully two stone in weight.' The next (a lady) writes:—'I am just half the size.' A fourth:—'I find it is successful in my case. I have lost 8 lbs. in weight since I commenced (two weeks).' Another writes:—'A reduction of 18 lbs. in a month is a great success.' A lady from Bournemouth writes:—'I feel much better, have less difficulty in breathing, and can walk about.' Again a lady says:—'It reduced me considerably, not only in the body, but all over.' The author is very positive. He says:—'Step on a weighing machine on Monday morning and again on Tuesday, and I guarantee that you have lost 2 lbs. in weight without the slightest harm, and vast improvement in health through ridding the system of unhealthy accumulations.'"—*Cork Herald.*

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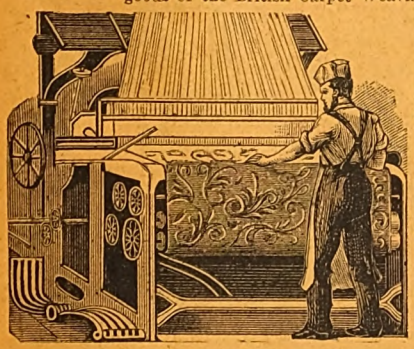

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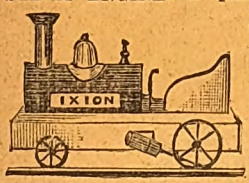

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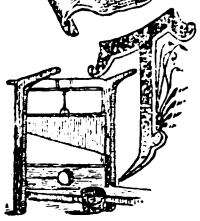
SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 305.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 3, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

RIPE FOR THE GUILLOTINE



"TWO bad boys don't make a good one," I said to my two youngsters, with whom I had been arguing this interesting point, "any more than two bad jokes make a good one."

"Well," replied Leonard, the elder lad, with a half smile, "but two good boys don't make a bad one; and I don't see why you should conclude we are going to do something bad because we want to do it together."

There was a humorous force in the retort which one could not but admit; but it had not, at the moment, the slightest influence with me. The fact was they had just been making me such an extraordinary request, that I did not feel it necessary to discuss the matter at all. It was holiday time, and they had suddenly come and requested my permission to go off to Paris together, "only for a few days."

The idea of allowing two lads of fifteen and seventeen to run away on a jaunt to Paris alone was one which, I considered, no reasonable parent could entertain; and they knew that business engagements at that time made it quite impossible for me to accompany them. Certainly, they had both been there before, with me; and my younger boy, Antholin, was a remarkably good French scholar; but that made no difference to the absurdity of their present petition.

"Well, there, get away," I said; "I'm busy, and we'll talk about it in the morning."

"But, please, we ought to start in the morning," urged Leonard—"by the boat train at eleven o'clock."

Antholin's face bore a look of anxiety that vexed me. Why on earth did they say "we *ought* to start"?

"Nonsense!" I exclaimed, "you must not bother. I have to go out directly. Wait till to-night, anyhow."

I left the house shortly after; and in passing down the Cromwell Road, where we lived, I ran against an old American friend, Captain Hawkes, whom I had not seen since I was across the ocean some years before; and he greeted me very cordially.

"Why, this is quite a lucky *rencontre*" (ren-counter, he called it)—"I've only been in your city two days, and am off to the Continent to-morrow."

"To the Continent!" I said; "and where are you bound for?"

"Pa-wris" (American for Paris), he replied; "eleven o'clock from Victoria; a boat train, they call it."

"The eleven o'clock!" I answered, as a thought flashed into my mind. "Would you mind doing a little kindness for me?"

"Any amount of 'em, inside of ten thousand dollars."

I laughed at the characteristic answer.

"No, no, I'm not broke yet. You don't know my two boys by sight, do you?"

"No, sir."

"Well, you can't mistake them, they are so nearly of a height, though there's two years between them; and Antholin, the youngest, is the image of his mother, whom you do know. They are going over together for a few days, and I want you kindly to keep an eye upon them, as well as you can, and just let me know how they get on. But I want you to do it without making yourself known. I have a reason."

"Well, that's a freak," laughed my friend; but I saw that he thought it nothing peculiar. "I'll look out for them on the boat, and write you."

I walked on, with my thoughts turned upon business affairs, and on a little domestic annoyance which had occurred to me just then. A youth of Spanish extraction, whom I had taken into the house on good recommendations as assistant to my butler, had fallen out with me the day before about some trivial matter of his household duties, and I had had occasion to speak to him rather sharply. The next morning (the same day of which I write) he had disappeared—apparently for good. But as he took nothing away with him except his own property, I was not much troubled, and rather looked upon it as a good riddance. It was inconvenient having to replace him; but it never occurred to me to connect the matter with any other events of the moment. I thought it likely he would turn up penitent in a few days, and get his final dismissal.

On returning home, as I passed down the hall, I heard the boys' voices in my study, apparently in earnest conference. As I entered I said:

"Well, boys—no more news of Sanchez, I suppose?"

"No, papa, not a trace," replied Leonard.

Antholin came close up to me, with that same curious expression of suppressed anxiety on his face which I had never seen there until now. His voice quavered slightly as he said, "Dad, dear, we don't want to worry, but have you thought any more about our going to-morrow!"

"Well, I don't know," I replied, "perhaps you might go to the Baronne de Marcuard; she wouldn't mind having you for a few days. But, of course, you ought to have written first."

Antholin's face lightened as he saw that he had gained his point; yet he did not look like himself.

"Can we go by that train then?"

"Yes, I suppose so. What money shall you want?"

They both looked at me gratefully, but seeming to say mutely that, though they knew I was mystified, they could not enlighten me. I provided them with the necessary supplies, and they prepared methodically for their visit.

The following morning, which was a cold and dreary one, I saw the boys off from Victoria, and they started with seeming contentment, though without any of the boyish delight which would usually accompany such a trip.

. . . . . .

The boys wrote to me soon after their arrival in Paris, in a satisfactory tone generally, but without saying much of what they were doing, and without fixing their date of return.

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I saw the boys off from Victoria.

When the eighth day after their departure had passed I was getting uneasy, and had made up my mind to write decisively and call them back. But on the morning of the ninth day I received the following letter :—

"Hotel Continental, Paris.

"DEAR SIR LEONARD HARSTON,

"Your two chaps are all right, so far as I know, but they have the quaintest notions of spending a holiday I ever saw. I talked to them (as a stranger) on the boat coming over, and again when I met them here; they seem to be staying at a house on the Avenue de la Grande Armée, which, according to the directory, belongs to a Baroness Somebody-or-other. They don't seem to go to any of the show places, nor to have any fun, yet are always on the run, as if the business of the state depended on them. I didn't write sooner, because I know you have heard from them; but yesterday I met them on the Rue St. Roch, with a solid, respectable-looking Frenchman, who, I hear, is a distinguished sergeant of police. Just what they are after I can't give you an idea; but, by their looks, it certainly wasn't any amusement, and I am sure it can't be any harm. I thought you might like to hear; but probably by this time you know more about it than I do. It seemed odd, because that officer is said to be specially engaged on the trial of the Anarchists. I shall come to see you on my return.

"Respectfully,

SIMEON HAWKES."

I could make nothing of this but further mystification. I knew well enough the boys could be doing no intentional mischief. They were all safe with our friend the Baronne; and a well-known police officer could surely mean them no harm. But what trouble they might get into innocently it was impossible to foresee, and my anxiety increased. I was utterly puzzled how to act in order to relieve it. What on earth could it all mean?

I could not fix my mind upon anything else, and remained in my study all the morning, fidgeting about, straightening things up and putting them crooked again, in a state of nervous agitation. Just as I was trying to reach an old hat-box which someone had placed upside down on the top of a book-stand, a servant entered and put into my hands a telegram from Paris, which I anxiously tore open. It was written in French, to this effect :—

"Father, do not fail to lock the study instantly, and let no one go near it until I see you. Will be back to-morrow.

"ANTHOLIN."

I shall be excused if I thought that either my boy or I myself must have gone crazy. Yet the earnestness and urgency of this strange instruction seemed unmistakable. Lock up the study? In the name of patience, what for? But if I knew my boy at all, he meant what he said—and meant it more than seriously. I threw myself into my chair to consider for a moment whether I should apparently make a fool of myself by obeying his order. The room was always open to the family; and how should I account for such an unusual and seemingly idiotic proceeding?

As I pondered, the morning paper lay on the table before me, and my eye fell upon this paragraph :—

ARREST OF THE ANARCHIST ROQUELIN.

The man Roquelin, who has passed by the names of Calverley, Sanchez, Montano, and other aliases, was at last arrested this evening on the Boulevard Mont Parnasse. He arrived last week from London, where he had lately taken service in a private house, which he made an attempt to wreck by violent means. His purpose is said to have been frustrated by the efforts of two young sons of the family, who succeeded in tracking him to Paris; but the details of this story are not yet confirmed.

The names suddenly fixed my rambling attention. Sanchez! Could this have been my hot-tempered under-butler? And the "two young sons"—good heavens, was the mystery explaining itself in this way? It seemed almost absurd to connect the two events, and yet the double coincidence was singular. I am not usually of a vacillating turn, nor yet given to hasty conclusions; but within two minutes I had risen from my seat, left the room, turned the key in the lock, and put it in my pocket. Meeting the upper housemaid in the hall I told her that I wished some things in the study to remain undisturbed for a day or two, and would keep the door fastened.

Then I forcibly turned my attention to other matters, and put the best curb I could on my impatience. My wife arrived home from the north in the evening, and we discussed the whole question anxiously, but without result. The boys were coming home; and my trust in them was supreme.

If I were restless the previous night, it was nothing to the apprehension which kept me wakeful now. At an early hour the following morning we were again in the drawing-room, talking over the mystery and trying to decide on some plan of action. Just before the breakfast hour the door opened and Leonard rushed in.

"It's all right, papa—we have found it out!"

Before we could reply, Antholin followed. He was not, as a rule, a demonstrative boy; but now he passed before his brother and threw himself into my arms with a single sob of mixed excitement, anxiety, and relief.

"Oh, dad—you are safe up to now! Don't punish us—we couldn't manage it any other way."

"My dear boy, I am not thinking of punishing you," I answered, "but you must explain at once what all this means."

"Is the study all safe?" he asked breathlessly.

A telegram from Paris.

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"It is locked up since I had your message."

Antholin sighed, and recovered himself partially.

"You tell the story, Lenny," he said, under his breath.

"Well, papa," said Leonard—"but you had better send for the police first. You will want them, anyhow."

I thought there was sufficient reason, and did so at once. In ten minutes an inspector was announced from the nearest station.

"Now go ahead and tell your tale, Leonard," I said, when the officer had been shown into the room.

"Well, father, you must know that very early on the morning when Sanchez ran away, Antholin went downstairs to get some matches, and he heard Sanchez talking very loudly in the small pantry, and being answered by a strange voice. And the first thing he said was that he had fixed up something in the study which would send you—and he called you a horrid name—into everlasting shivers. He said that in English; and then he went on in French, and told how he had arranged to go to Paris, *en prince*, by the club train the next day 'in this get-up'; and Antholin peeped in at the door, and saw what the disguise was, so that we knew him again. And then we talked about it together, and decided we would go too, and we made you let us; and we had an awful scramble to keep out of his sight at Victoria. We tracked him in Paris to a place in the Quartier Latin, and a man told us he was one of the Anarchist people; then one of the police came to us at the Baronne's, and we told an American gentleman we had met on the steamer about it—after he saw us with the sergeant; and he helped us ever so much, and we went together and got into a room next to the one where Sanchez was telling three other men about you, and so we found out at last what he had done."

"And now—now," put in Antholin, with all a boy's eagerness for a suitable *dénouement*, "if you come down to the study, we can show you where it is—but you will have to be terribly careful!"

The police inspector listened to all this hurried description with a grave smile, and, after asking the boys a few pointed questions, he turned to me:

"Will you please wait an hour, Sir Leonard, while I communicate with headquarters; and then we shall be ready to investigate the matter and place your house in safety. Meanwhile keep your study carefully secured. This was the man who was wanted in Paris for——" and he named a recent catastrophe which had stirred the indignation of the whole world.

We breakfasted quietly, listening to the boys' story in full detail; and in less than an hour the inspector returned accompanied by two other officials, one of whom I found was a chemist. A few more questions followed, after which we proceeded to the study, and I unlocked and opened the door. Antholin walked boldly in; but my wife being present, the rest of us held back—I must confess with some trepidation.

"Now," said Antholin from the middle of the room, "do you know what I am looking at?"

I followed his gaze, which was directed to the top of a bookcase where there happened to be an old valise and hat-box of mine—the latter of which I have mentioned before.

"Great Heaven—not the hat-box?" I exclaimed, as a pang of recollection shot through me.

"Yes," replied my boy, looking at me with some surprise; "you had better take it down, now; but for your life don't turn it over!"

The chemist approached the bookstand, and mounting a chair, carefully lifted the hat-box down without changing its position, which, as I said before, was bottom upwards. The cover was loose, and he pulled it open downwards. The mouth of the box was stuffed with some crumpled newspaper, and this he gently drew out. Inside, and resting on the paper, was a common round tin case, such as people keep tea or tobacco in, also placed with the lid downwards. Antholin instinctively drew back towards us.

My heart thrilled as I thought how narrowly I had escaped turning the hat-box over (thinking it had been inadvertently upset) when the opportune arrival of Antholin's message had so strangely held my hand.

Placed the tin in a full basin of water.

"We will examine this now," said the chemist. "Have you some water?"

We led him into the adjoining lavatory, where he placed the tin in a full basin of water, and then carefully worked the lid off. As he did this, a brownish liquid ran out into the water. "An acid," the chemist said, dipping his finger and putting it to his tongue.

The case was divided inside by a tin partition which had been soldered in, and pierced with a few small holes. Above this was a quantity of yellowish white powder.

I told them how nearly I had turned the hat-box right side up, the previous day.

"Had you done so, Sir Leonard," said the expert, "you would not have been here now. The box was evidently so placed in order to induce anyone who noticed it to turn it over. In which case this acid would at once have filtered through on to the powder, and——"

We shuddered as he left us to picture the consequence. The two boys pressed to my side, and Antholin squeezed my hand silently.

"But," I exclaimed presently, "why on earth——." I paused suddenly, for the truth was dawning upon me. But I finished my sentence.

"Why on earth didn't you tell me all about this at once, when you had heard what Sanchez said? Think of the awful trouble and anxiety it would have saved!"

"Why, papa," said Antholin, with moistening eyes and a smile—his mother's own smile—"if we had come and told you there was danger somewhere in the study, and we didn't know where it was, *what would you have done?*"

I could not answer. Of course I knew perfectly well that the first thing I should have done would have been to go ramping round the room, turning everything inside out and upside down to find out where the peril lay!

I could not but feel the deepest admiration for the astuteness and forethought with which my dear lad, in the presence of an urgent danger to all of us, had restrained his impulse, and courageously followed out the only course which was likely to ensure protection to our home. His knowledge of French had indeed stood him in good stead, for when Captain Hawkes had succeeded in gaining access to the haunt of the conspirators, they had heard Roquelin describe every detail of the arrangement to his fellow rascals; and without this happy chance the mystery would only have been solved at a cost terrible to think of.

A few weeks later the penalty was paid. The head of the wretched Roquelin fell under the knife reserved for it at the hands of M. Deibler.

If the tie of affection between myself and my younger son could possibly have been strengthened by anything, I would say that it was now rendered eternal by the fact that I owed him a life—if not more.

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CONSTABLE CHISWICK'S FORTUNE

OH, yes! a policeman's luck's 'ard enough, and as that hoperatic fellow says, speakin' up for the sympathetic portion of the public—which it allus appeared to me was a mighty blamed small contingent—'is lot ain't an 'appy one. But there's welcome breaks occasionly—things happen wot encourages a man, and although they don't happen to hisself, leads 'im to 'ope as how they may one day, if fortune ain't right dead agin 'im."

In this wise a guardian of the peace on a Regent Street beat some little time ago. I had failed to catch my last 'bus home, and at one o'clock in the morning I was slowly driving shanks' pony in a westerly direction.

It was lovely weather and the streets were tranquil. The big city of London seemed wrapped in the happy thrall of its beauty sleep. The surrounding quiet, the balmy air, and—a circumstance which it would be unfair to a gracious goddess to omit to mention—the presence between my teeth of a pipe in whose bowl a plug of navy cut was slowly undergoing fragrant incineration, all combined to induce a meditative frame of mind, which would have continued until I had arrived at my own distant doorstep, no doubt, had I not in turning into a bye-thoroughfare launched suddenly into a lonely constable, whose stalwart form had been hidden in a dense shadow thrown by the building against which he had been leaning.

"Where are you a-goin'?" he asked, as he courteously picked up my pipe, which the force of the collision had projected into the roadway, over which the scattered and burning ashes forthwith chased each other playfully. I explained; he tendered certain good-humoured advice, which I laughingly promised to follow exactly, and then we dropped into a friendly conversation, which, in due course, led up to the two or three remarks which combine to form the introductory paragraph of this narrative.

"Now, for instance," he continued, pulling vigorously at a cigar I had given him, and which he had lit, after assuring himself that neither sergeant-in-charge nor inspector was at hand, "there's Jack Chiswick, an' 'is little experience, as comes forcibly to my mind just now."

"Ah!" I queried, feeling interested, "and who was Jack Chiswick?"

"Well, Jack was a copper, you know—same as me, when I furst knowed 'im, and through bein' on beats as adjined Jack's very often, I becomes very familiar with 'im in course o' time. If you said we wus pals, you wouldn't be far out. Lor' bless you, I recollects it all so clearly, it might a' 'appened yesterday, but it didn't. More'n three years 'as travelled since Jack made 'is fortune."

It is so very seldom—more's the pity!—that one hears of a constable making his fortune, and when one does hear of such an occurrence it is such a dead certainty that the fortune has been attained in some altogether extraordinary way, that I encouraged my friend, the policeman, to proceed.

"Jack was workin' the beat over there," he went on. "It runs from that block"—which he pointed to with his index-finger, and which was plainly discernable over the way—"to yon corner, and then down Trevelyan Street until you gets to Chalker's Open, where the tenements are. He'd bin on it a fortnight, and was glad that 'e was goin' to 'ave a change I dessay—anyhow, *I* allus felt glad when the change had come, when I've been workin' it—for there are so many tip-top shops and stores, and there are so many thieves' dens lyin' scrooged up again' them, that a policeman feels very anxious while 'e's doin' duty there, and jolly satisfied when the orders come for 'im to be took off.

"Course, I'm talkin' about night duty. A kid could keep things going durin' the day. It was Sunday night, the last o' Jack's fortnight, and as Sunday is allus very quiet he considered, I suppose, that he was about as good as done with Number 10 (which is the number of the beat), and looked forward to takin' things in a easy way. It appears that he was a-standing at yon corner Trevelyan Street, ye know, yonder: see?—just about this time, too, when 'e 'ears a cry of 'Murder!' comin' from the direction o' the tenements.

"Jack was allus impulsive, or he might 'a' got the man who was workin' this beat to go along with 'im. But no, off 'e rushes hisself, drawin' 'is baton as he gets near the place from which the shouts was proceedin'. There seemed to be a downright scuffle goin' on, from the row, and as Jack turned into Chalker's Open he comes a-top o' the scrimmage—slap, bang! Somebody was yelling 'Murder' for all he was worth; but it was a dark night, and although Jack could see there were four or five men tussling, he couldn't rightly say all at once which was the fellow as wus doin' the screamin'. However, he soon found out—trust Jack for that!—an' started in. He let 'em have it as well as he knew how, and fought 'is way through the gang until 'e got at the man who was bein' stuck up—for it was a clear case o' robbery from the pusson, and the gang 'ad evidently pounced upon the gentleman as 'e was parsin' the Open. The toff was lying on the ground, with another feller grippin' 'im, when Jack let sling with his baton.

"The baton struck something that giv' out a ring-like metal, and sent a knife swingin' through the air. 'Oho!' thought Jack, 'this is attempted murder, and 'e blows his whistle, and then as 'e rolls the footpad from atop of the toff 'e gets a staggerer over the skull with a crowbar, an' that's the end o' Jack Chiswick for the time bein'. When the other men got up they found both the gent and Jack lyin' unconscious, the former with every valuable gone, and off they trundles 'em both to the nearest 'orspital. They wus both bad, an' no kid, but Jack was the wurst o' the two. The blow was a stunner, there wus concussion o' the brain, and for a long time it looked as if he wus a-going to lose 'is life. 'Owsumnever, he comes round, an' in a month or so they thinks 'e's able to leaves the 'orspital, an' they packs 'im off to 'is own friends.

"There ain't many men as wud 'ave taken the same interest in a policeman, even suppose 'e 'ad saved their lives, as the gent did in Jack. He sent 'im calves-foot jelly, and chickens, and port wine, and all sorts o' delicacies while 'e wus in the 'orspital, and after 'e left continued to visit 'im now an' then, an' take 'im out for short walks in the park. One day, Jack an' the gent wus a-sittin' together on a seat in Regent's, when the talk turned upon clever criminals. Jack thought that England could show about the cleverest blackguards unhung; but the gent, whose name was Walter Jordan, and who belonged to Australia, would not give in to this, an' 'eld as how Melbourne could give London or any part of the British Hempire a start an' a beatin' in that very respect. Then 'e began to mention cases of which he knowed, and among others told Jack the following story:—

"'For cool audacity,' says this 'ere Mr. Jordan, in the way as educated gentlemen talk, for he was educated an' very clever, 'I don't think you can easily match the crime I am going to tell you about in your English records. A few months ago, just before I left Australia, a man walked into the shop of a manufacturer of rubber stamps in Melbourne, and ordered a stamp. The inscription to be put on it was merely this, "Goldtown Tramway Company, Limited. Scrip in Office." "We want this stamp," said he to the attendant, "as quickly as possible. Our present one is old and worn out, and there are a lot of share transfers, which require to be stamped

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without delay." The stamp was made, and the same person called for it on the following day and took it away. Then the young man began to transfer hundreds of shares in the Goldtown Tramway Company—marking the transfers with this duplicate of the official "Scrip-in-office" stamp—and to receive hard cash for them. Inside of a week he had negotiated advances to himself of £15,000 on shares, and got the money, when, as a matter of fact, he was not a shareholder in the company at all. The transfers were sent into the head office of the company to be cleared, and then the gaff was blown. But the thief had disappeared, and, although the detectives were put on his trail, they didn't catch him. In an up-country town, lying close, he amused himself for days reading the newspaper accounts of his little swindle. And then the chase grew less hot, and he got out of the country, coming to England at his convenience. How does that strike you for nerve?'

"Jack laughed, an' giv' the opinion that the bloke wus sharp enough to cut sausages.

"'Well, since he arrived here,' went on the toff, 'rewards amounting to £3,000 have been offered for his apprehension, and,' the gent went on in a quiet tone o' voice, 'if you want to do a good thing for yourself, I can put you in the way of earning the money.'

"Jack 'ad been listenin' very interestedly to Mister Jordan's story, an' 'e says, ''Ow?'

"'All you've got to do,' continues the gent, 'is to arrest me, because I'm the man who forged the transfers.'

"Jack looks at 'im in a dazed fashion, an' rememberin' 'ow kind Jordan 'ad bin to 'im in 'is illness, motioned with 'is 'and as though he didn't want to be told any more. But Jordan keeps 'arpin' away on 'is guilt, an' finally says, 'Jack Chiswick, if you don't arrest me, I shall go out of this park, and give myself into the hands of the first policeman I meet. I'm sick of being here in this strange country of yours, where I know nobody. I have determined to go back to Melbourne. I shall get five years, I know, but I shall go back and serve it, and I have good friends who will look after me when I come out again. I am determined that you shall have those rewards. You saved my life; I've got very little money left—none that would be an adequate recompense. You shall, therefore, have the £3,000 which those who take an interest in me are willing to pay to see me back among them again.'

"Well, wot was Jack to do? Off they marches to the nearest police-station, Jordan goin' on ahead, and Jack laggin' behind, as if he wus the prisoner and not the uther. Jordan tells his yarn, gives Jack the credit of the arrest, and they locks 'im up. In course of time, when Jordan 'ad got back to Melbourne, an' was comfortably stowed away in a stone jug, the three thou' comes over here for Jack Chiswick, and 'e is a made man to-day, standing behind 'is own little bar in the Edgware Road, on the highway to unlimited prosperity. These are the things that only 'appens once in awhile, but they do 'appen, an' may I be the next to fall on my feet is the 'umble prayer of yours trooly."

I questioned whether the risk involved in a broken head was not too great to be undertaken even if three thousand golden sovereigns were of an absolute certainty at the end of a sojourn in the hospital ward, but my friend the policeman was perfectly satisfied that it was not too great, and emphatically expressed the pleasure it would afford him to have an opportunity of bringing his belief to the touchstone of practical experience. With an admonition to him to be very careful, as the force could ill spare a fine fellow like himself—a compliment which seemed to afford him some gratification—I re-lit my pipe, bade him good-night, and resumed my reverie at the point of interruption.

I WAS sitting in a large and comfortable easy chair opposite my old friend Garston in front of a cheery fire that burned in the grate of his snug library. Outside, the large flakes were silently falling, shrouding the road and housetop in white, while the low tinkling of the sheep bell from the neighbouring farm across the road broke intermittently upon the intense silence which at that moment pervaded the room.

It was close upon one o'clock.

Both Garston and I were feeling drowsy, and, at each pause in the conversation, our heads gradually dropped on our breasts, and Morpheus pressed his soft fingers on our eyelids.

That afternoon I had arrived at his house after an absence of a year, and, even in this comparatively brief interval, we had found that his excellent Burgundy roused our memories, and supplied us with sufficient talking material to last for six consecutive hours.

Between us, on the tiger-skin hearthrug lay Garston's bulldog, a magnificent creature, for whom I felt a strong attachment directly I saw him. I am a lover of dogs, and appreciate a good specimen when it comes under my notice.

As the clock chimed the three-quarters, Garston raised his head suddenly.

"It has just struck me, Lingley, that I forgot to tell you about a most exciting experience we had only a week ago with a couple of burglars, who got into the house while we were in the town. The wife and I had been to see some friends, and had left the house in the care of the housemaid, who has not been with us very long, and when we came back we were considerably surprised to see a couple of men coming out of the front door carrying an enormous bundle each, which they let drop, and ran away.

"I skipped out of the dog-cart and caught one of the beggars, and he is doing time in the county gaol; but yesterday I received a letter from the man who appears to be his accomplice, intimating that, before the week is out, I shall be cold meat, or words to that effect.

"The police have got the letter, which I think is only bluff. What do you think?"

"I should say ditto," I replied. "The game wouldn't be worth the candle. It would mean the gallows for the chap, and brotherly love among backguards of that profession is not so powerful as to induce one of them to run his neck into a noose for the other."

"That's what I say. But my wife is dreadfully nervous about the matter. She was glad when you came, for that reason."

"Oh," I said. To tell the candid truth, this new light on the state of affairs did not tend to enchance my peace of mind, because it struck me that perhaps this desperate burglar, whoever he may be, might after all attempt to carry out his threat, and that in a way which would imperil my own personal comfort.

I thought of my room, and remembered that it was on the ground floor, and had a couple of French windows leading out into the orchard, and that, after all, so long as somebody suffered for the indignity imposed upon the captured thief, it would not matter whether the master of the house met with his death or anyone else connected with the establishment.

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My throat got dry, and I reached out for my glass, but it was empty. Garston noticed this, although he had nearly dropped off to sleep.

"Fill up again, old boy; don't be afraid, there's more in the cellar."

But the bottle happened to be empty; I got three or four drops out of it, and then banged it on the table, a little aggravated, for I was tremendously thirsty.

"I'll get some more," said Garston, raising himself on the arms of his chair.

"No, no, don't trouble, old man," I said, putting up my hand as an indication for him to sit down again. But, ignoring my half-hearted and insincere protest, he got up, stretched himself, yawned, and went out of the room.

He closed the door behind him, and I heard his soft footfalls die away.

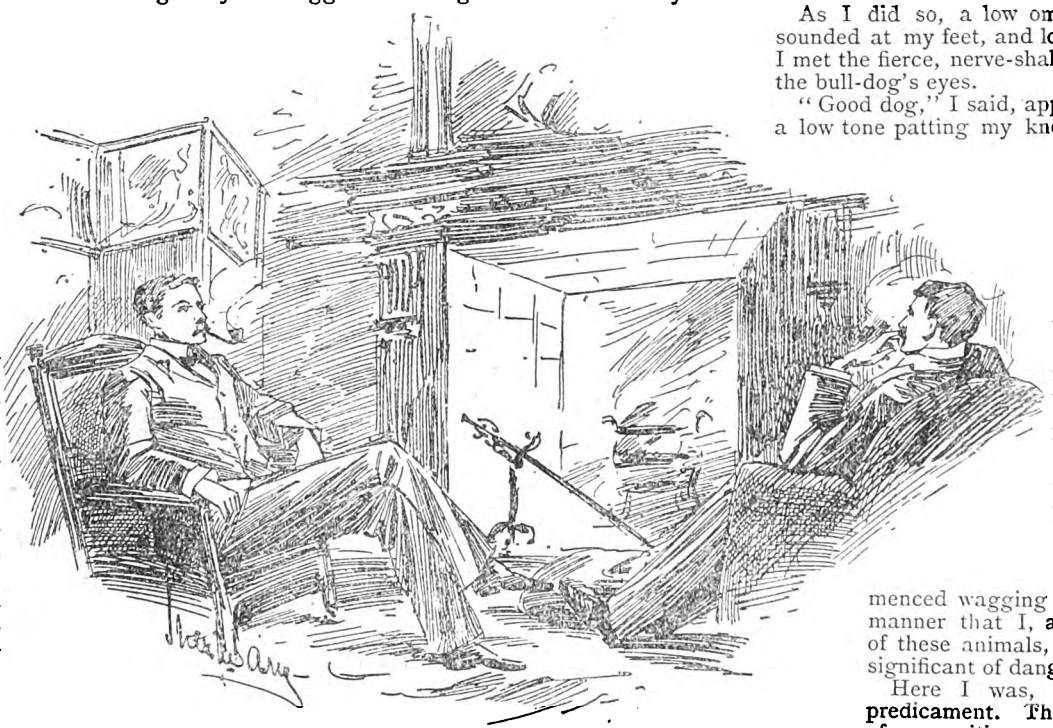
Everything was intensely silent. It was a silence that oppresses one, a silence in which the nerves become highly strung, and the whole frame seems on the alert.

I leaned back in the chair, staring at the flickering flames, with my pipe resting lightly between my fingers, puffing thoughtfully, and turning over in my mind the likelihood of my being assassinated that night by the aggressive burglar. Under the glamour of good Burgundy, the brain becomes highly imaginative. At least, that is the effect it has upon me.

A slight burring noise, and then a sharp bang!

I started up with a jump. A cold perspiration broke out on my forehead, and the pipe tumbled over my legs to the floor. Then I fell back, and forced a laugh.

It was only the clock, which had struck one.



"My wife is dreadfully nervous about the matter."

Stooping, I picked up my pipe, and, knocking the ashes out, commenced to refill it, slowly and deliberately; but my hands still shook with the effects of the silly fright. The dog, which had raised its head and growled at my erratic movement, once more placed its nozzle between its fore paws, and closed its eyes.

The pipe comfortably filled, I felt for a match, and struck it. Again the dog raised its head and looked at me fiercely.

Then I lay back and began to think. Not until then did it dawn upon me that Garston was still absent on his errand, and a strange foreboding took possession of me. What on earth had kept him so long? He certainly ought not to have been gone more than five minutes, or ten at the outside, and it was now close upon a quarter of an hour.

Again, after a moment's thought, I laughed to myself.

"Faugh! What a fool I am getting. Of course, he's only hunting about for the best bottles, and doing that with a lighted candle in a cellar is not an easy job."

But, when the quarter had chimed and sent me into the cold shivers, I began to get anxious about his safety. Could he have slipped and fallen and broken his leg in that wretched hole under the ground, where his cries for help were muffled within the four walls? Had he met with any other sort of accident that prevented his returning?

"If he doesn't come back in another five minutes, I shall go and hunt for him," I said to myself, and puffed nervously at my meerschaum.

The flames got smaller and smaller, flickering and dancing, and casting most uncanny and fantastic shadows on the wall. I saw outlined grinning heads of impossible monsters, long skinny hands with equally long skinny fingers that clutched at nothing, and then disappeared, only to be succeeded by writhing forms of lean people that danced and contorted their bodies from ceiling to wall and from wall to ceiling.

The five minutes seemed as if they would never elapse, and a dozen times I leaned forward and strained my eyes to see the face of the clock in the semi-darkness, for my own watch I had inadvertently left on the dressing-table of my room.

At last the minute-hand pointed to twenty past, and I rose, determined to search the place and discover what had become of my unfortunate friend.

As I did so, a low ominous growl sounded at my feet, and looking down I met the fierce, nerve-shaking glare of the bull-dog's eyes.

"Good dog," I said, appeasingly, in a low tone patting my knee affectionately. "Poor old boy! Good dog!"

The sound of my own voice echoed through the silent chamber, and sounded fearfully unnatural. The gentle creature, however, refused to be appeased, and rose to his four feet, and commenced wagging his tail in a manner that I, as a student of these animals, knew to be significant of danger.

Here I was, in a pretty predicament. The realisation of my position sent a thrill of trepidation through my already slowly chilling body, and I sat down to think. As I did so, the dog resumed his former position.

Not a sound broke the stillness, save the ticking of the clock and the occasional shifting of an ember in the dying fire. A cold wind seemed to drift in under the door and through the joints of the window, and chill me to the bone.

My pipe had gone out, and I was too nervous to relight it, lest the performance should arouse the anger of the dog and cause him to attack me. I placed it very quietly in my pocket, then gave myself up to propound impossible theories to account for Garston's prolonged absence.

I do not know why the idea had not occurred to me before; but when the gist of the piece of news he had imparted to me before going out suddenly came into my head, my heart stopped beating altogether for a second, and my teeth literally chattered with cold and fear combined.

Fool that I was, why had I not thought of it before? The dread message contained in that letter had probably been carried out only too well, and my poor friend might at that

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moment be lying with a knife in his heart, while the perpetrator was miles away.

I conjured up in my imagination a picture of poor old Garston lying in a pool of his life's blood, the victim of a cowardly assault. For all I knew he was within a few feet of the door, perhaps outside on the very mat. The deed could have been perpetrated absolutely without noise. A blow, and all would have been over.

"Heaven help me, I *must* make an effort to rouse the household," I muttered. But the dog raised his head and, so thoroughly unstrung were my nerves, that I literally cowered before his gaze. If I shouted, he would spring upon me, and I knew too well the result of an attack from a bulldog. It would avail nothing, so I kept silence, racking my brain for a way of circumventing him.

The burring and sharp twanging of the clock made me start once more, and, in a fit of desperation, I rose and stopped it altogether. A continuation of these sudden jars would turn my hair grey in another hour.

But, when I had sunk back into my chair, and tried to continue to think, the silence was even greater than before, and I missed the amiable ticking of the pendulum. The dog, which had jumped up savagely when I touched the clock, now sat grimly watching me, fully wide awake, and prepared to resent any further attempt on my part to move away from the chair on which I sat.

I tried coaxing, speaking in a low tone, fearing to hear my own voice; and then I threatened him. I commanded him to lie down, to get out of the room, to seize an imaginary person at the door, until I scared myself more than I did the dog.

It was awful. Bravely as I strove to dispel the idea which had rooted itself in my mind that anything had happened to Garston, it was in vain. Instinct told me only too well that my old friend had gone to his last account, and by the hand of an assassin. Gladly would have I gone in his stead. I was a bachelor, with only a maiden aunt left to me among my relations, while he was a rising young fellow with a sweet wife and a little girl, a little angel, whose lips would never form themselves to say "daddy" without sending a pang through the widowed mother's heart.

All this I thought of, and began to feel hysterical. I wanted to cry, and yet I had a desire to laugh at my own fortunate escape. After all, what was Garston to me, that I should wish to die in his stead? He was a young man, full of life, and with prospects. So was I. Moreover, he had been the means of bringing misery and sorrow on a fellow creature, while I, so far as I knew, had not. And he, in addition, was guilty of possessing a bulldog that I would have given a ten pound note to have the means of shooting there and then.

He got up and stretched himself.

The fire had gone completely out. The wind was rising, and began to moan weirdly round the house. The dog shivered once or twice, and got nearer the dead embers, trying to extract a little warmth from them, and, finding them cold, began to walk about the room, always keeping his eyes on me. I could not see his body, but the two green orbs shone with awful distinctness, moving here and there, now disappearing behind a chair, now appearing close to my side.

Gradually I fell into a fit of shivering. My brain became numbed with the cold, and where my fingers touched the chair I could not feel. I had no idea of the time, for had I not stopped the clock? To me it appeared as if the whole week had dragged itself out, but I knew that perhaps I had been there only an hour.

I saw dimly through the darkness the figure of a woman.

Morning would bring the servants. I should hear their footfalls on the stairs, and their shrieks of horror as they caught sight of the bleeding corpse of the master. I should——

Someone was moving outside.

The dog growled, and walked in stately dignity to the door, sniffing.

The growling ceased, and the door opened. I saw dimly through the darkness the figure of a woman. His wife, perhaps, come to find why he had not yet gone to bed.

I tried to speak, to tell her her husband's awful fate, but a guttural sound was the only result. She cried out, and fled, the dog after her. Nerved by his departure I ran out, crying insanely, looking about in the passage for the corpse.

At the top of the stairs appeared the figure of a man. Ha! The murderer, the assassin. I bounded up towards him, shouting that I would avenge Garston, and he turned and fled into a room, I following closely.

The force with which I struck the door burst it open from its lock, and I stumbled into a bedroom.

"What in heaven's name is the matter with you, Lingley?" shouted a familar voice, as a familar form stood before me, armed with a brass candlestick.

I remember the room swimming round, and then I fell.

Garston told me all about it afterwards. He was most profuse in his apologies, and this ring on my finger is a little gift with which he sought to propitiate me.

It appears that he went upstairs to fetch the keys of the cellar from his bedroom, and saw a copy of *Home Notes* which his wife had left on the dressing-table. He had first glanced at it, and, as something of interest caught his eye, he read the article. When he had finished, he had entirely forgotten his errand and my existence, and had, tired and worn out, slipped off his things and got into bed, where he immediately fell asleep, waking only at the shrieks of the servant.

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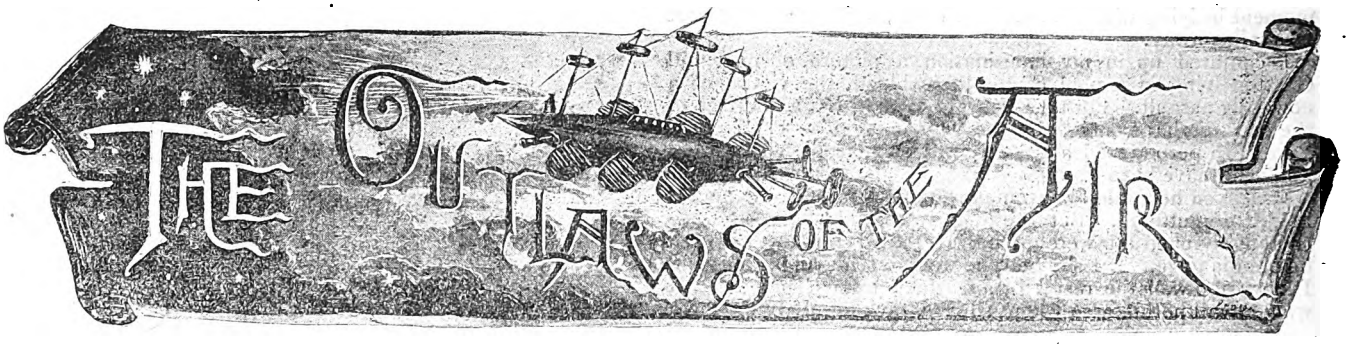

By George Griffith,
Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," &c.

SUMMARY.

Max Renault—leading spirit of Anarchist Autonomie Group No. 7, who has joined the Utopians (a Socialistic colony on an island in the South Pacific) in order to steal the air-ship they are building, which he succeeds in doing.

Franz Hartog—a German engineer, in league with Renault, who steals a very fast torpedo-boat destroyer from the Russian Government to levy blackmail on the Atlantic.

Sir Harry Milton—a wealthy young English nobleman, who by chance comes across the island of Utopia, and subsequently devotes the whole of his fortune to hunting down Renault and Hartog.

Herbert Wyndham—a lieutenant in the British Navy who is travelling with Sir Harry for the benefit of his health, and who resigns his commission and couples his energies with those of Sir Harry in destroying the Anarchists, on account of the fact that he has been stabbed by Renault when the latter attempts to carry off Violet in the air-ship.

Frederick Austen—the inventor of the Utopian air-ship, who shares its secret with Edward Adams, Dr. Edwards, and Ambrose Millar, three other Utopians.

Violet Milton—Sir Harry's sister, and Lieutenant Wyndham's sweetheart, is permanently crippled by throwing herself out of the air-ship on which Renault has tried to carry her off.

Dora Merton—a fair Utopian, who has made an impression on Sir Harry.

Lucy Summers—another fair Utopian.

Max Renault has made his way to New York Harbour on the air-ship and sees four huge liners start in a fleet, under convoy of two cruisers and four torpedo boats. He follows them, and on the second night Hartog appears upon the scene in his fast torpedo boat, the *Destroyer*, and destroys the warships and torpedo boats. After the action, Renault makes himself known to Hartog. The specie on board two of the liners is transhipped to the third, her crew are turned adrift in boats, and she is brought to Hartog's hiding place on the North-West Coast of Africa.

CHAPTER XV.

Anarchy Up-to-Date.

"In de first place," said Franz, settling himself to his narrative after he had lit a long black cigar, through the smoke of which his little eyes twinkled almost merrily at Max, "you must understand dat after dat unpleasant affair vich dat scoundrel Berthauld must haf brought on us before you found him out and stopped his tongue, de Group broke up for de time being.

"Ve thought it vas safer to do dat and go back to de old plan of individual action until it vas time to do something big, as ve haf done. Lea Cassilis settled down quietly to her artistic dressmaking business in London, till she got a chance to go to New York, and vent, partly for de dollars, and partly to begin a little scheme dat I vill tell you more about afterwards. Sophie Vronsky and Marie Rolland stopped in London mit Marie's husband, and I vent back to Elbing to make out my engagement with Schichau.

"Dere vere several delays before ve could get properly to vork on de Tsar's boat, and de consequence vas dat she vas not launched until nearly two years later. Improvements in engines and guns kept cropping up, de English kept on building faster and faster boats, and as de strict contract vas dat she should beat everyding that floated, ve had to keep on doing things over again, even after ve had got dem finished.

"Dis vas goot for me, because it gave me more time to get fellows into de works dat I could depend on, and ven she at last vent on her trial trip I had tirty of dem on board her, stokers, firemen, engineers and sailors. As dere vas only forty on board altogether, and as ve had took care to get de cook who prepared de luncheon dat de swells had on board between de runs on our side, dere vas not very much difficulty in settling mid dose who thought dat de boat should go back to Elbing ven ve vanted to take her someveres else.

"As goot luck vould haf it, one of de Baltic fogs came down like vet blankets so dat you could not see from de nose of de boat to de stern. Dot was our opportunity, so ve took it; and some of de highest officials of Schichau's yard and de two Russian officers vat had come to vatch de trial met mit some serious accidents vich completely prevented dem from svimming home."

"Ah," said Max quietly, "I was afraid you would have to do something of that sort. Had you much of a row?"

"No," replied Hartog with an expressive gesture. "Dere vas no row at all. Ve got dem all into de vard room, shut dem up dere, put a strong guard over dem, and ven ve had run far enough out to sea through de fog ve vent in and fetched zem out von by von, tied deir hands behind deir backs, fixed a pig of iron ballast to deir feet and dropped dem oferboard.

"Ve thought dat vas de most convenient vay of disposing of dem. If ve had shot dem someone might haf heard de shots, and if ve had cut deir throats it vould haf made an unpleasant mess dat ve did not vant in our nice new ship.

"Ven ve had sent dem to de fishes ve ran quietly along to de vestvard until nightfall, and den ve cracked on all speed and made a rush for de Sound. Ve had von or two narrow shaves of

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being found out, but ve got drough all right and den ve ran up de Nord Sea and round Scotland. Den, ven ve vere vell out of de vay, ve drilled ourselves and practised mit de guns and torpedoes and made our plans and vent on de varpath.

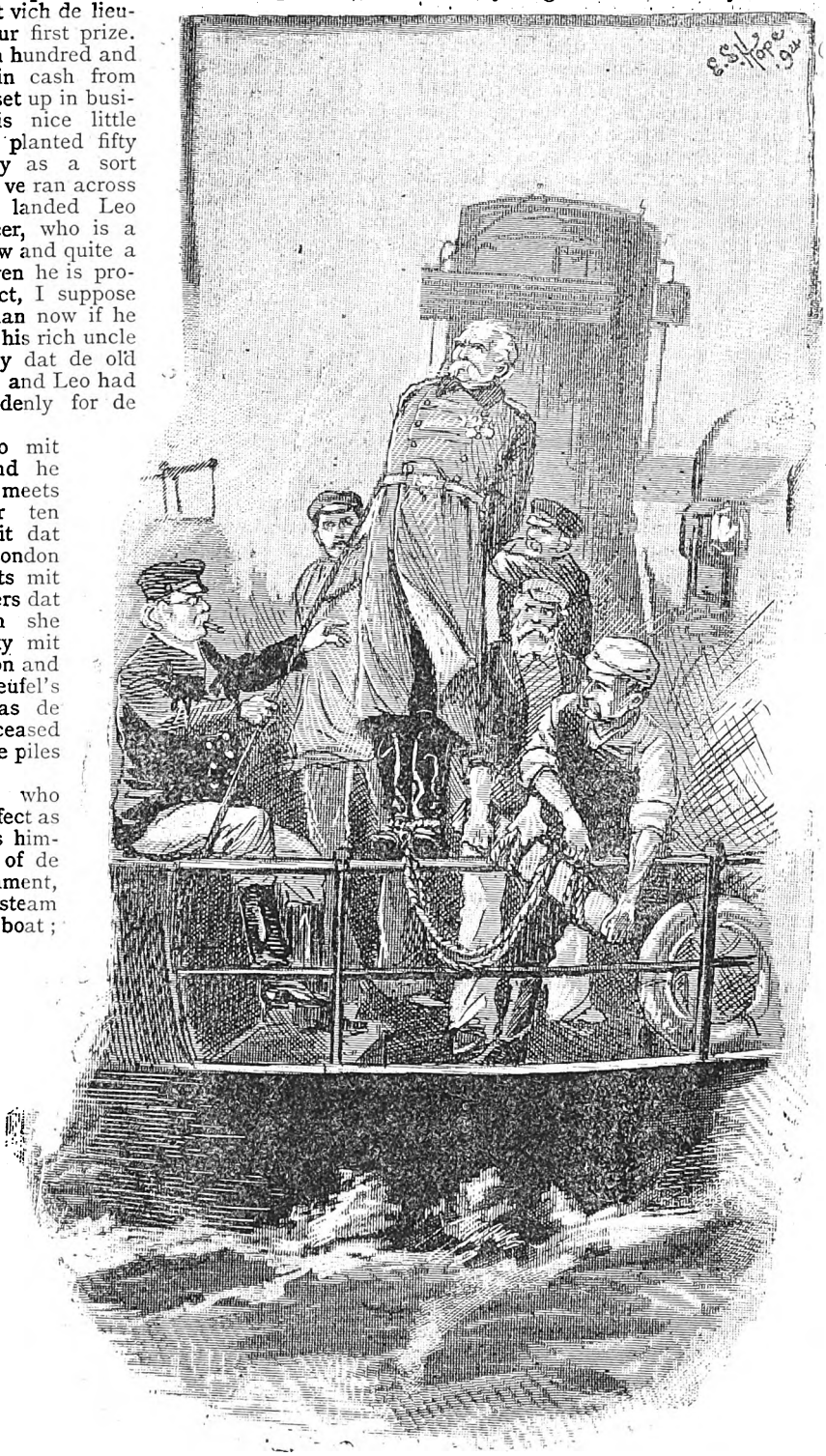
"De *Alberta*, about vich de lieutenant told you, vas our first prize. Ve got more dan von hundred and fifty tousand pound in cash from her, and mit dat ve set up in business. Ve found dis nice little hiding place, vere ve planted fifty tousand of de money as a sort of reserve fund. Den ve ran across de Atlantic, and I landed Leo Marcel, my first officer, who is a very smart young fellow and quite a gentleman to look at ven he is properly dressed. In fact, I suppose he vould be a gentleman now if he had not quarrelled mit his rich uncle in Lyons in such a vay dat de old man never recovered, and Leo had to leave France suddenly for de goot of his health.

"Vell, I land Leo mit plenty of money, and he goes to New York, meets Lea and gives her ten tousand pounds. Mit dat she goes first to London to make arrangements mit Rolland and some oders dat you know, and den she takes Sophie Vronsky mit her as lady companion and goes and cuts de teufel's own dash in Paris as de youthful vidow of a deceased Yankee vat made large piles in pork.

"Meanvile, Leo, who speaks Spanish so perfect as I speak English, gifs himself out as de agent of de Paraguayan Government, and buys a smart steam yacht as a despatch boat; loads her up mit de best sort of ammunition he can buy, torpedoes and different sorts of stores and explosives vich I have told him about, and puts to sea in her so dat ve can meet by arrangement vere nobody vill see us, and dere I captures his ship, and ve drop his crew overboard and bring de stores and dings over here.

"On de vay ve catches de *Norham Castle*, von of de Cape boats, and clean her out. She vas coming home mit gold and diamonds, and dot catch vas vorth more as two hundred tousand pound to us. Den off goes Leo again in his yacht dis time to Europe, and after he has given de diamonds to Lea and Rolland to put into circulation he organises agencies of comrades in London, Paris, and Brussels, Liverpool, Southampton and Newcastle—all as most respectable people in de shipping business and export trade.

"Of course dese gentlemen are always ready to supply us mit anything ve vant in de vay of stores or fighting material and tell no tales about it. Dey find dat much better dan de old style of Anarchy. Dey haf plenty of money and are quite respectable and know dat dey are doing efer so much more harm to our enemies dan dey could do in de old-fashioned style."



"Fetched dem out von by von and dropped dem oferboard."

"But if you've got that yacht, what did you want to take possession of the *Bremen* for? I should have thought a great big lump of a ship like that would be more in the way than anything else."

"Ah, friendt Max! dot vas a little piece of generalship dot I explain to you right away. You see ve shall soon haf to begin operations on a large scale; and first of all ve must haf a place to build dese air-ships in. Vell now, ve can haf de different parts made by different firms in Europe and America, and I vill take care dat de plans are so drawn dat dey shall have no idea of vat the parts vill be like ven dey are all put togeder.

"Now, you see dat dis is a business in vich ve can have no accidents. If ve build dose ships anyvere on shore it is just possible dat de place may be found by some of de good people dat are looking for us so carefully, and if dat vas so ve should not be able to take our vorks away mit us, to say noding of perhaps letting some air-ship, almost finished, fall into de hands of de enemy. Do you see dat?"

"See it?" cried Max rubbing his hands together with delight. "I should think I do! That's another stroke of genius to your credit. Franz. You are going to make the *Bremen* a floating workshop and put the air-ships together aboard of her. Bravo, that's a capital idea!"

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"Jah, de idea is goot," replied the engineer complacently, "and I have thought him out very carefully. You see de *Bremen* is over five hundred feet long, and dat is plenty big enough to build air-ships two hundred feet long on. Ve can take her down South and keep her alvays in fine veather, so dat de vork can be done on deck.

"Dose in charge of her can alvays be on the look out for ships and move her off whenever anything heaves in sight. In dis vay you see ve shall be able to dodge all de ships of all de navies for ever, and no von vill ever be able to guess how de teufel ve get our air-ships built. I tink dat vill be a much better plan dan having dese hiding-places on shore."

"Yes, much better," said Max, "but all the same, I think it would be wise as soon as we have got the *Vengeur* armed to go to Utopia and make a clean sweep of the colony. We shan't be safe if any of them get away, because you know it is quite certain that Austen and Adams will take Milton into their confidence now about the air-ship, and as Milton has any amount of money it will be just as easy for them to build another *Vengeur* as for us; in fact, it will be easier, because they'll simply have to give their orders and pay the money."

"Oh, jah, dat is so of course," replied Franz, sending a meditative puff of smoke into the air. "De first ding dat ve must take care of is dat none of dose Utopian idiots get away from the island alife, except perhaps some of dose pretty girls dat you vere telling me about. Dey might do for sweethearts for some of our fellows on de *Destroyer*. It is a bit lonesome for dem vidout any ladies' society."

"Ah," said Max, involuntarily, frowning as he thought of the miscarriage of his own kidnapping adventure. "That's so. There are plenty of them to choose from, and the boys could take their pick; but, mind you, if we are going to do anything of that sort we shall have to hurry up about it.

"There's no telling how soon Milton may get away in his yacht or the other steamer and be off to England, most likely with Austen on board; and once let them do that and the next thing we shall see will be an aerial privateer out on the Atlantic looking for the *Destroyer*—and precious warm she'd make it for you, too, I can tell you. Now, how long will it take, do you think, to get the guns made and the *Vengeur* properly supplied with ammunition?"

Hartog was silent for a few moments, as if he were making a calculation, then he looked up and said:

"You can haf shells and gun-cotton, and mélinite, and blasting gelatine, and a nice business-like explosive of my own, vich I have thought of christening Anarchite, by vay of a little choke, as soon as ever you like; but de guns cannot possibly be made and brought out to be fitted in less dan tree months."

"H'm!" said Max, after a pause. "That would be a lot too late. The secret would be out long before then. Look here!" he went on jumping suddenly out of his chair and beginning to walk up and down the saloon, "How long would it take you to get the *Destroyer* from here to Utopia?"

"Ah!" said Hartog slowly. "Dat is rather a large order, as the Yankees say. From vat you haf told me Utopia cannot be very much less as ten tousand miles from here by sea, vether ve go round the Horn or round the Cape and by Australia. Ve cannot steam at full speed because ve cannot carry fuel enough. Ve could not make more than tventy or tventy-five knots, say six hundred miles a day mit fine veather, and it vould take us quite sixteen or eighteen days to get dere. Dat vould burn up nearly all our fuel, and den how should ve get back? It vould be a nice thing to be chased by a cruiser just ven our fuel vas giving out, vouldn't it?"

"Then why not take the *Bremen* with you with a reserve supply of fuel? You could steam her down as far as the Horn, load up from her again, and go ahead to Utopia, leaving her to follow on, couldn't you?"

"Jah, dat might be done if ve had men enough to vork her, vich ve haven't," replied Franz with a shake of his head. "Ve should vant at least fifty more, and I can tell you goot loyal anarchists who are able to vork a steamboat are not very easy to find. It is de teufel's own pity dat dis island is so far away."

"Yes, confound it!" said Max, looking rather blank at this unexpected difficulty. "What the deuce are we to do? Of course, it will never do to run the *Destroyer* short of fuel, and you can't take the *Bremen* round the Horn without a lot of men, I can quite see that, and getting men only means more delay—delay which might ruin the whole thing."

"Dere is only von ding to do," said Hartog, leaning back in his chair and crossing his stumpy little legs. "And dat is vot ve must do."

"Well, what is that?" asked Max impatiently.

"It is dis," said Hartog deliberately. "I expect Leo back from Europe in de *Pilgrim*—a nice innocent name dot for an Anarchist gentleman's yacht, isn't it?—to-morrow, mit odds and ends and some chemicals that I want to prepare my fuel. Now, der *Pilgrim* should haf mit her four nice little Maxim guns dat vill do dere eight hundred shots a minute, and give people fits at dree tousand yards.

"Dey only veigh two or tree hundredveight each, so you can carry dem easy. Ve vill fit dem on board de *Vengeur*, den ve vill get plenty of empty bottles from de *Bremen* to make into hand-bombs for mélinite and anarchite, and a new patent fire-mixture that I have invented, and den ve can put half-a-dozen of our best men from de *Destroyer* on board here mit us and take a little trip right avay to Utopia and clear de place out. Ve can be ready to start in three days and ve can get dere in five days, and as you have been five or six days avay now you vill be back again inside the fortnight. And dot vill be quick enough, for you told me dat dey could not get de yacht ready in less than tree weeks.

"By de vay, are you quite sure dat you blew up dat *Nautilus* ship before you came away, because, if you didn't, ve might catch her and she vould be a very nice companion for de *Destroyer*."

Max shook his head rather regretfully as he replied:

"No, I am afraid she is done for. I connected a battery with a time-clock that would make the circuit between it and one of the fuel magazines about three hours after I got away. I had to do most of the work in the dark it is true, and in a considerable hurry too, the night before I left, but I don't think anything can have gone wrong, and there was enough of the stuff to blow her into old nails if it did go off. Of course, it's a pity, but then you see, it wouldn't have been safe to leave them with a vessel almost completed that would be fast enough to run the *Destroyer* down and ram her as easily as you could ram a second-class torpedo boat."

"Oh, no, dat vas quite right!" said Franz regretfully. "It vas a pity, but it vas right. Ve don't vant any faster boats dan de *Destroyer* to come out until ve haf our aerial nafy built, and den it doesn't matter. Now, I think ve had better go down and have a look through de *Destroyer* and the *Bremen* and see if ve can find anything useful for de *Vengeur*."

CHAPTER XVI.

A PIRATE HUNT.

THE examination resulted in the selection of two light Maxim guns from the armament of the *Destroyer* and a three-barrelled Nordenfeldt carrying twelve-ounce shells from the *Bremen*, and these were fitted on board the *Vengeur* provisionally and in case of accident, for, as the engineer said, there was no telling when the air-ship might have to give an account of herself.

"Dere is noding like being reaty or as much reaty as you can," he remarked sententiously. "Dere vill be an awful row ven dey get de story of dat last little flutter of ours. You see ve haf got a big ship and more as a million pounds vorth of bullion and specie and trinkets. Dat vill make all Europe mad, and you bet dey vill hunt us up now for all dey are vorth. I vould give tventy tousand pounds to be five tousand miles from here to-night, but ve can't go till Leo comes back, so ve must give de *Vengeur* some teeths for de present so dat she can bite if she is vanted to."

The shells of the Nordenfeldt had been charged with Hartog's secret explosive, to which, in his grimly jesting way, he had given the suggestive name of Anarchite. It was this that had accomplished the terrible destruction which the shells from the *Destroyer's* rifled forty-pounder had wrought amidst the upper works of the cruisers.

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He reckoned that, given an elevation of two thousand feet, the Nordenfeldt, which was mounted aft, while the Maxims were pointed downwards through the foremost ports in the hull of the air-ship, would have an effective range of quite two miles, while at this distance and elevation the *Vengeur* would be almost invisible, and absolutely beyond the effective range of any gun mounted on land or sea.

Indeed, the *Vengeur* was destined very soon to prove that aerial artillery, in spite of its being necessarily very much lighter than that employed either on land or sea, possessed two enormous advantages. The first was in facility of aim and relative steadiness of the object fired at; the second lay in the fact that the aerial gunner had the attraction of gravitation in his favour, while his opponents had it against them.

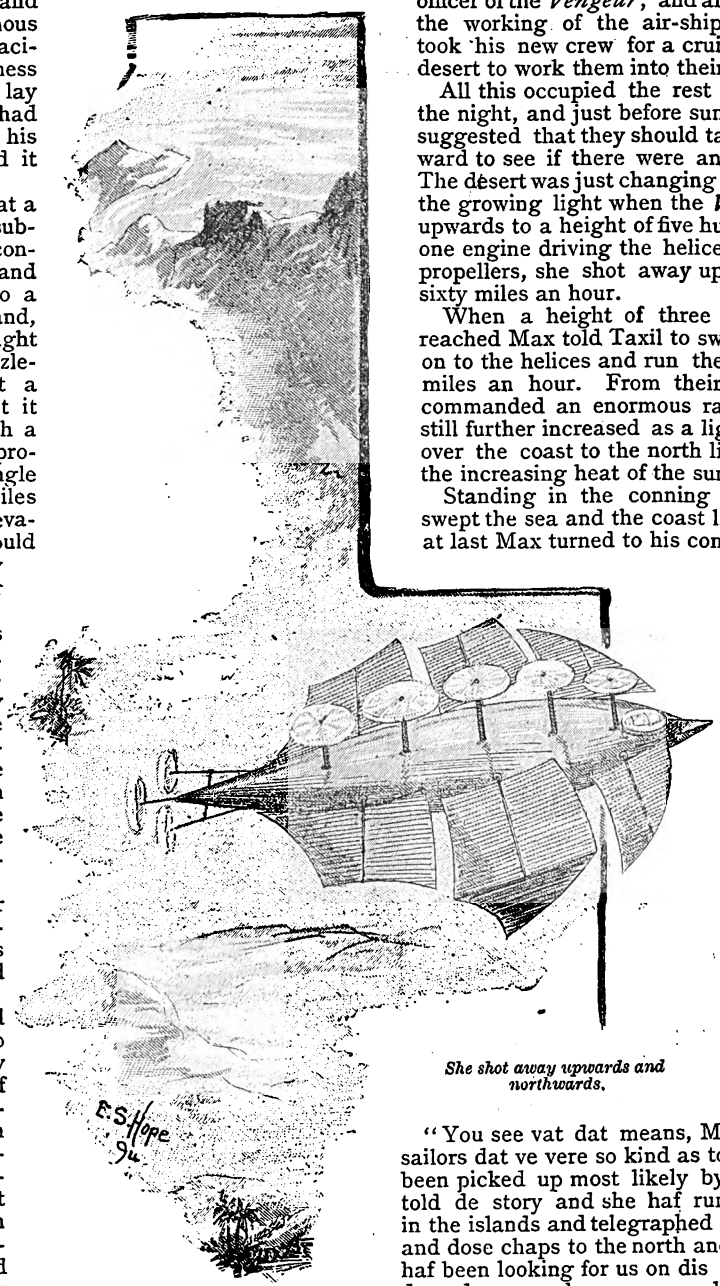
The projectile of a gun fired at a great angle from land or sea is subject to a downward pull which constantly diminishes its velocity and at last converts its path into a downward curve. On the other hand, a projectile fired, say, from a height of two thousand feet with a muzzle-velocity of fifteen hundred feet a second, is accelerated every foot it travels, and strikes its mark with a velocity which is increased in proportion to the acuteness of the angle at which it is fired. At two miles range and two thousand feet elevation the *Vengeur's* projectiles would strike with the enormous velocity of some five thousand feet per second.

So, too, with the heavier shells that would be dropped vertically. In accordance with the well-known law of moving bodies they would travel sixteen feet in the first second of their fall, thirty-two in the next, sixty-four in the next, and so on, doubling in velocity every second they were in the air, less, of course, the retardation produced by the resistance of the atmosphere.

It will be necessary to bear these few facts in mind, as without them some of the results shortly to be described would appear incredible.

In addition to the guns and their ammunition the air-ship was also furnished with fifty ten-inch conical shells, half of which were charged with mélinite and the other half with blasting gelatine and compressed oxygen in separate compartments, and two hundred quart champagne bottles charged with Anarchite and Hartog's fire-mixture, a horrible compound which, in addition to burning with unquenchable energy on the bursting of the shell, spread dense suffocating and poisonous fumes over a radius of several yards from the focus of the explosion.

As soon as he had got his make-shift armament on board Max picked out eight men from the crew of the *Destroyer*. They were all Frenchmen, light, wiry, active fellows, each endowed with a full share of the French mechanical aptitude and dexterity, and all utterly devoid of the most elementary sentiments of mercy or generosity.



She shot away upwards and northwards.

As might be expected, there was the keenest competitions among the *Destroyer's* men for berths aboard the air-ship, and so Max, to whom the engineer had naturally taken his old subordinate position, save where the tactics of the *Destroyer* were concerned, had them put through a stiff competition in gun drill under his own eye and chose those who acquitted themselves with the greatest smartness. One of them, a young fellow of three-and-twenty, named Raoul Taxil, who had been second engineer of the *Destroyer*, he made engineer and chief officer of the *Vengeur*, and after he had fully explained the working of the air-ship's machinery to him he took his new crew for a cruise into the air over the desert to work them into their places.

All this occupied the rest of the day and well into the night, and just before sunrise the next day Hartog suggested that they should take a flight to the northward to see if there were any signs of the *Pilgrim*. The desert was just changing from brown to grey under the growing light when the *Vengeur* soared vertically upwards to a height of five hundred feet, and then, with one engine driving the helices and the other two the propellers, she shot away upward and northward at sixty miles an hour.

When a height of three thousand feet had been reached Max told Taxil to switch the two side engines on to the helices and run the midship screw at thirty miles an hour. From their present elevation they commanded an enormous range of vision which was still further increased as a light haze which was lying over the coast to the north lifted and dispersed under the increasing heat of the sun.

Standing in the conning tower, Max and Hartog swept the sea and the coast line with their glasses, and at last Max turned to his companion and said:

"There she is, I think, down yonder, look, that long trail of smoke to the northward close in by the land."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth before he heard something between an oath and a scream from Hartog, followed by:

"Ach, der donnerwetter! Vat for fools have ve been! I alvays said dat de vorst policy in varfare vas having mercy on your enemies. Look down dere — and dere—and dere. See dose shmokes north and vest and south of us! Von, two, three, four, fife, six—yes, there are six of dem, and dey are all heading straight for de coast!

"You see vat dat means, Max? It means dat dose sailors dat ve vere so kind as to set free in de boats haf been picked up most likely by a varship, and dey haf told de story and she haf run into Fayal or somevere in the islands and telegraphed all up and down de coast, and dose chaps to the north and vest are de fellows dat haf been looking for us on dis side of de Atlantic, and dose down yonder are some ships of the African squadron, and by tam, dat yacht mit her infernal smoke vill guide the whole lot of dem right to de inlet! Tousand donnerwetters! vat are ve to do? De whole crowd vill be on us in little more as an hour."

"I don't see there ought to be any difficulty in running down to the yacht and telling her to steam right away down south," said Max, who had been using his glasses eagerly while Hartog had been coughing and spitting his words out as fast as he could. "I suppose Marcel has his papers all

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right, and if he does get overhauled they'd let him go again?"

"No, no, my friend," replied Hartog, shaking his head vigorously. "It is not so simple as dat. Dose fellows have sharp eyes and goot glasses, and dey know now dat ve have de only air-ship in existence, but Leo does not know anything about her. Now, if ve go down dey vill see us and recognise us as anarchists and de yacht too. Den dey vill blow him out of de water, and we lose some goot men and all our new guns and stores. No, dat von't do. Himmelsfluch! vat is to be done?"

"I see," said Max who had been thinking even more rapidly than Hartog had been talking, and saw that the moment had come for him to take the reins of command in a firm hand. "We must fight, or rather fight and run; there is nothing else for it, and if we don't act sharply we shall be in a mortal tight place. I'll do the fighting, you do the running."

As he spoke he gave a turn to the steering wheel, swung the *Vengeur's* head round towards the coast, and signalled to Taxil:

"Full speed with the three propellers."

The next moment the suspensory fans collapsed and fell down alongside the masts, the propellers whirled round till they looked like solid wheels, and the air-ship, supported only on her planes, leapt forward and upward, crossed the coast-line like a flash, and in five minutes was ten miles inland floating nearly five thousand feet above the desert.

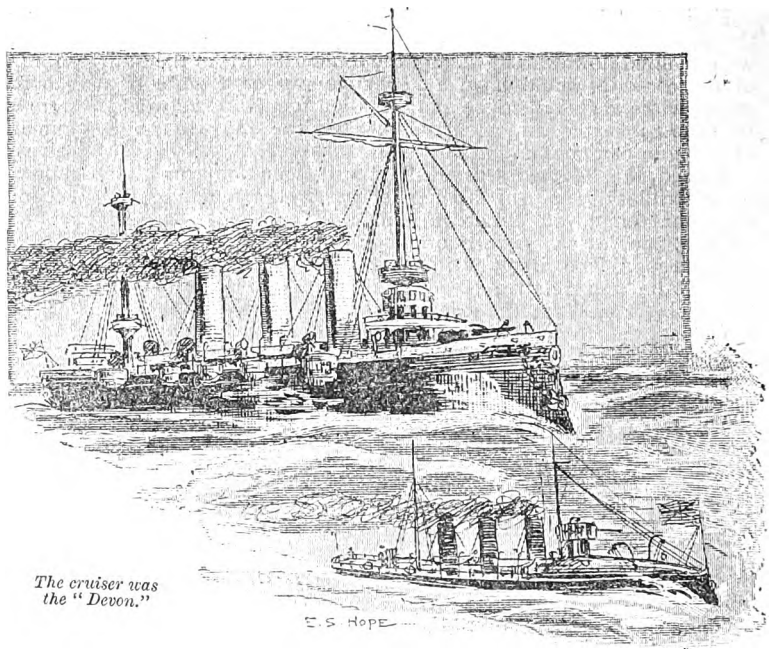
"Du lieber Gott!" exclaimed Hartog, for the moment forgetting all about the danger in his rapture of admiration. "Vat a glorious ship! I should scarcely haf thought dat an angel from heaven could haf done dat."

"That's a trifle to what you are going to see her do soon," said Max shortly as he swung the *Vengeur* round to the westward again, and sent a couple of signals to the engine-room. Then as the fans went up again and the *Vengeur*, flying forty miles an hour, sank swiftly down towards the landward side of the inlet he went on: "Now look here, Franz, this is what we've got to do. When we get ashore fill the entrance to the inlet with torpedoes that you can fire by battery——"

"Dey are dere all ready," interrupted Hartog. "You don't suppose I leave de door of mine house open, do you? If a cruiser was to try and get in dere dere vould not be many pieces of her to pick up five minutes after she had put her nose in."

"See dose shmokes north, and vest, and south of us."

"That's good," said Max with a short laugh. "Then you must have all the *Bremen's* guns trained so as to rake the entrance in case they try it with boats. Then you must take the *Destroyer* outside, run through and see if you can't take the attention of those fellows to the north and west off the *Pilgrim*. There's no fear of them catching you, of course, but there's just a chance that they haven't seen the *Pilgrim* yet, and if you show yourself boldly, send a shot or two at them just for pure cheek, and then run away and draw them off.



The cruiser was the "Devon."

"I'll go aloft again and reconnoitre and go for the first craft that looks dangerous. When we've got the *Pilgrim* in safely we must go to work and polish this lot off. It won't do to let any of them get away, for if they do we shall have a whole swarm down on us before we can clear out with the *Bremen*, and then there is no telling what the chapter of accidents might have in store for us."

"Dat is a goot plan, Max. Ve vill do it. Fortunately I haf had de *Destroyer's* bunkers and magazines filled, and ve haf plenty of torpedoes. I dink ve shall haf some fun dis morning, but for all dat I vould sooner be five tousand miles avay. Fighting dese cruisers is bad business. It is all vork and no pay, but perhaps aftervards ve shall be able to console ourselves mit a nice fat liner. Goot-bye now and take care of yourself. Mind you shoot straight and hit hard. Ve von't let any off dis time. Kindness may be goot morals, but it is tam bad tactics."

As Franz spoke the air-ship touched the water of the inlet, a boat came off and took Hartog to the *Destroyer* which was lying, as usual, with a full head of steam on. Before he had got on board her the *Vengeur* soared up again, sped on an oblique upward path over the land and then swung round to the north, and put out over the sea again.

The morning was now brilliantly clear and the surface of the sea was just ruffled by a cool pleasant breeze from the north-west. With the help of his glasses, Max, floating at the height of three thousand feet, could see everything of any size on land or sea, and what he saw to seaward was this. From the north and north-west two cruisers and two smaller craft were converging, apparently from different points in the Canary Islands, towards the coast.

The smaller of the two cruisers, the one coming nearly due south, was about twelve miles from the land, while the large cruiser and the two small craft were nearly twenty miles out. Five miles from the shore and about fifteen ahead of the single cruiser the *Pilgrim* was running along at about eighteen knots an hour, perhaps a knot faster than the single cruiser, with a considerable volume of smoke coming from her two funnels. Twenty miles to the southward of the inlet and about ten from the shore a large cruiser and a catcher were coming up, apparently under a full head of steam.

Therefore as the yacht was unarmed and had only her heels

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to trust to the odds against the *Destroyer* and the *Vengeur* were, numerically at least, simply overwhelming. The single cruiser was flying the blue and white naval ensign of Portugal with the crowned red shield in the centre. She was the *Flores*, an unprotected cruiser of three thousand tons, four thousand five hundred horse-power, and a speed of 19 knots under forced draught.

The big cruiser and her consorts were flying the tri-colour. She was the *Cécile* of 5,680 tons, 9,600 horse-power, and 20 knots speed, and the smaller vessels were the torpedo-catchers *Aline* and *Rance*.

The two vessels coming up from the south flew the white ensign of the British Navy. The cruiser was the *Devon* of 4,000 tons, 7,000 horse-power, and a speed of 21 knots, and her consort was no other than the redoubtable *Ariel* which had been put on the Cape Verde station to watch for her old enemy on the route of the Cape mail steamers.

Naturally the meeting of this formidable force was not a matter of accident. Hartog had been right in his guess. One of the boats of the *Bremen* had been picked up off Las Palmas in the Canaries by the *Cécile*, cruising with her consorts across the routes of the African and South American lines. The cables had been set to work immediately between the Canaries, the African coast, and the Cape Verde Islands with the result that the international squadron had started to rendezvous at Cape Bojador, and make a thorough examination of the coast north and south in the hope of finding some inlet used by the pirates as a refuge and hiding place.

Whether the air-ship had been discovered or not Max neither knew nor cared. Flying to and fro at a hundred miles an hour at a height of nearly four thousand feet, as he made his observations, it was very unlikely that he had been. He saw that the first trouble would be with the squadron to the north. By the time he had noted the position of all the hostile ships he saw the *Destroyer*, a tiny speck of grey on the bright blue water, clear the inlet and head away northward. This meant that the time for action had arrived, so he sent his men to the guns and bomb-tubes, and signalled to Taxil to reduce his speed to fifty miles an hour and descend.

(To be continued.)

DOCTOR DUBASSOF'S LOVE.

I.

DOCTOR DUBASSOF and Count Louis Klapka had passed their childhood together in the country, and though Dubassof's father was only a small peasant proprietor, and Count Louis owned the great estate of Luvin, their boyish friendship continued until both were in St. Petersburg, Dr. Dubassof as a well-known doctor, Count Louis as a young spendthrift officer.

By the time that Dubassof had become richer than he ever expected to be, Count Louis had become poorer than he had ever imagined. That is, although owning a splendid estate, he was often embarrassed for money, and the life he led at St. Petersburg with his young brother officers was calculated to relieve him of all his surplus revenue.

But he was so handsome, so captivating! Dubassof, who had known him from his soul, throughout all their joint lives, felt this as keenly as if Count Louis were a beautiful young girl whose charms had smitten him. He grumbled at Count Louis' extravagance, when, as the case often was, the Count had to borrow money from the doctor. Yet, he always lent it. Dubassof, moreover, hated to lend money.

One evening, Dubassof was waiting for Count Louis to come for him. The two were to go together to a dinner at the banker Neftel's—for Dubassof's associates were now chiefly of Count Louis' set, if not his class, and invitations poured in upon him, as the case usually is with a young man who has personal distinction, wealth, and a good presence; for although Dubassof possessed nothing of Count Louis' striking beauty, there was something in his deep and glowing eyes, his massive well-balanced head, that marked him. The clock had just struck the quarter when Count Louis' step was heard bounding up the stairs, his sword clattering after him.

"Punctual for the first time in your life," remarked Dubassof, as Count Louis dashed into the room as if it had been his own.

"More than punctual, George," answered Count Louis, throwing himself in Dubassof's own chair. "I was to be here at the half hour, and see, it is only the quarter."

"Then," said Dubassof, "you must have lost some money last night, and want an order on my banker. What a shame it is that with your estates you should ever want money!"

Count Louis laughed good humouredly. "Not quite that, my good George. I have not lost any money, but I need some confoundedly. So much so that I would do anything to raise ten thousand roubles. As for raising it at Luvin, my excellent father was only too successful in his efforts to put my estates beyond my reach."

"Ten thousand roubles is a considerable amount. Why do you want it?"

"Because with it I could make three hundred thousand."

Dubassof gazed at him earnestly, and then putting up his fingers blew a long whistle.

Louis repeated, "I must have ten thousand roubles, and you must lend them to me."

A tone in Louis' voice, different from any he had ever heard, struck Dubassof's ear. He did not in the least believe in the three hundred thousand roubles to be made, but he knew that Louis was frankly determined on the ten thousand, and he knew that he, Dubassof, would inevitably lend it him, considerable as the sum was.

"If it were to relieve your embarrassments, to pay a pressing debt, I would get it for you. But to put into some wild baseless speculation, I would not be justified as your friend in so doing. Naturally ten thousand would not satisfy you; if you made or if you lost, you would want more. The usurers take all sorts of risks, and even with the restrictions on your estates, they would supply you."

"I have not been to the usurers yet, but unless I get this sum from you, I shall certainly go to them," coolly remarked Count Louis.

Dubassof got up and moved restlessly about the room.

"George," continued Count Louis, "you have never heard me speak of making any money. I have not pretended to any talents that way, although I may be pardoned for saying that I have a very marked genius for spending it. If this required combination—the balancing chances—I would discredit my own judgment. But it is knowing the value of anything in advance of the rest of the world. Do you think Neftel a good financier?"

"Undoubtedly," promptly responded Dubassof, pausing in his aimless walk and facing Count Louis.

"Then Neftel told me this. Neftel will put a hundred thousand roubles into it, and is trying to raise more. Neftel got it from the Minister of the Interior. Neftel advises me to do anything in order to get ten thousand roubles together. He has none to lend. Every copeck he can raise between now and to-morrow evening goes into it."

Dubassof, whose mind travelled rapidly, saw at once the different aspect this put upon it; such transactions between bankers and Government officials were common enough. But all at once a grim suspicion pierced him. His black brows closed over his deep eyes, and he looked at Count Louis as if he would read his very soul.

"And this strange interest Neftel takes in you? Is it that Nathalie——"

He paused, unable to go on. The prospect that Count Louis

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should marry Nathalie Neftel staggered him. The brotherhood of so many years made a gallant fight against the overmastering passion.

Count Louis blushed like a girl.

"No," he cried, hurriedly. "Mademoiselle Nathalie's name was never mentioned between us. But you know Neftel remembers the day he came to me. I have always intended to return you something in kind," he said.

Dubassof's brow cleared a little, but, with a lowering face he folded his arms and looked fixedly on the floor. Count Louis rose too.

"Had I dreamed that you—would have thought——" he began blunderingly. He did not know what to say; only some small invisible link between the two men seemed to have snapped at that moment.

"It does not matter what I think," responded Dubassof, "I am a fatalist. It may be that both you and I are to love Nathalie. *I* love her already. But until that moment shall have come, we will be as we always have been. I have at Neftel's exactly fifteen thousand roubles. This sum I meant to buy a country place with. But if ten thousand, Louis, would save you from ruin, and even from temporary embarrassment, I would agree never to have a country place."

Count Louis stared as he listened. It was not like Dubassof to speak thus. There had been no need to utter their affection. Every action of their lives proclaimed it.

"Then it is mine," cried Count Louis, jumping up after a moment with a sudden return of the old unspeakable confidence. "George, have I not always paid you back?"

"Yes," answered Dubassof, good-humouredly.

Arrived at the splendid lighted house of the banker, the two friends entered the drawing-room together. On one side of the door stood Neftel, tall, pale, handsome, and on the other side his daughter, Nathalie Neftel. The daughter of a Polish mother, Nathalie Neftel had all the enticing beauty of these wonderful almond-eyed Polish women. Her face was lighted by eyes so softly splendid that all Poland could not produce a lovelier pair; and when she bowed to Count Louis, opening her fan of long black ostrich feathers, a rosy flush crept into her cheeks.

The two friends left the house together at midnight. Count Louis left Dubassof at his door, and then apparently turned into the direction of the barracks, but as soon as he was out of sight of Dubassof's door, he made another turning, and in a few minutes was again at Neftel's door.

Neftel was expecting him. Count Louis sat down gloomily. This borrowing of money, which had once been so easy, seemed altogether different now. He doubted whether in order to make three hundred thousand roubles he would use Dubassof's money. Neftel, however, standing up before him, cried out:

"All is in danger. Unless I can get fifteen thousand roubles more, it is impossible. Your friend Dubassof has exactly that sum deposited with me. Had I but known this an hour ago!"

He struck his hand against his forehead.

"I have done everything to raise money. Nathalie's dowry is secured, so that I could not, even if I would, get it. It would be no wrong to take that small amount from it. But this moment I have heard from the Minister that it must be a round sum of a hundred and fifty thousand roubles, or else it must be abandoned, and that the money or its equivalent must be in his hands before daylight. If twelve hours more were possible!"

Neftel stopped. His pale face worked. A born money-maker, the idea of losing so much for so little was intolerable to him.

"Dubassof has given me an order for——," Count Louis began in a cold voice.

"For the whole amount—the fifteen thousand?" cried Neftel in a tone more of entreaty than inquiry.

Count Louis remained perfectly silent. He had taken the order out of his pocket, and was looking at it with a strange expression.

Neftel, whose self-control rarely deserted him, rose and went to the other side of the hearth. He read the workings of Count Louis's mind, and he suspected the power of a certain lever.

"It is not all for myself," he continued, "my ambition has always been to make Nathalie the richest heiress in Russia. She is my life, my world."

"Nathalie's happiness can be no dearer to you than to me," said Louis, with a pale fixed face. "This order is only for ten thousand roubles."

"For Nathalie," the banker whispered. "Fifteen thousand,—for Nathalie—it is—my price."

The two men looked at each other. Count Louis took the pen in his fingers. With tightly compressed lips he altered the amount.

It was two o'clock in the morning, and Dubassof, sitting before the fire in his library, was just about to go to bed, when the door opened quietly and Count Louis walked in. Visits from him at all hours were not unknown to Dubassof, but when he saw Count Louis' face, he turned almost as pale as his friend.

Count Louis sat down and folded his arms.

"Dubassof," said he, "can you imagine the feelings of a man who in one moment has put his life, his honour, his fortune, in the power of another man?"

Dubassof gazed at him stupidly. He could not imagine what Count Louis was talking about.

"Because," continued Count Louis, "this is what I've done. I found fifteen thousand roubles was necessary instead of ten. You had written ten—I wrote fifteen."

Dubassof could not repress a cry of horror, of anguish, of rage.

"No one will know it," Count Louis continued in the same voice, "but you, Neftel, and myself. Neftel will conceal it, because I am to marry Nathalie."

Of the two men Dubassof was the more agitated. His dark skin turned a shade darker, he trembled in every limb.

"Oh! Heavens!" he cried, "to lose faith in man and woman is too much."

"Thus you see," said Count Louis with a frightful calmness, "it is quite possible that you should hold my life and soul in your grasp. You can easily prevent me from marrying Nathalie, but I am persuaded that she loves me. *That* you cannot rob me of."

As he spoke he rose with an air of triumph. He was a criminal before his judge, but there was one thing inexpressibly dear to him that the verdict could not affect.

The self-control of a life-time did not desert Dubassof all at once. He clenched the arms of the chair in which he sat, but he made no motion towards Louis.

"The money shall be returned within a week," said Count Louis rising. "But that does not affect things between us. What is done is done. I am going. Have you anything to say?"

"Nothing," Dubassof managed to gasp. He was stunned, overcome with the events of the last five minutes.

II.

ABOUT ten days after this, Dubassof, who had neither seen nor heard of Count Louis, was sitting in his library, expecting him. No sign had come from him, unless it was the depositing of fifteen thousand roubles to Dubassof's credit in Neftel's bank before noon of the day after their interview.

Yet Dubassof had expected him every hour, every minute since. He understood Count Louis too well not to know that he would brave his fate, and come boldly to face his former friend. It was now evening, about the time the two friends were accustomed to meet. Therefore, when Dubassof heard a step upon the stairs, he knew it was Count Louis.

He entered. Upon his face—once so brilliant and merry—the history of his fault was written. There was no cringing in his attitude. Dubassof, who had calculated everything, rose and extended his hand as if they were still friends. Count Louis responded.

Throwing himself into a chair, he said, "The three hundred thousand roubles are mine. Neftel has made enormously. To-day he is among the richest men in the Empire."

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This made no impression upon Dubassof, although he loved money. He did not feel even a pang of regret that he too had not been allowed to share in the information from the Minister of the Interior. Avarice is strong, but love and revenge are stronger.

"The fifteen thousand roubles I have drawn from Neftel's bank, and with them I have the slip of paper upon which they were obtained," was his only remark.

As Count Louis revolved this in silence, his face grew paler and paler. He saw it all now. He would not have been surprised at any time, until the money had finally been withdrawn from the bank, to have been arrested at Dubassof's instigation; but the refinement of cruelty implied in Dubassof's words had not occurred to him.

"To keep it always?" Count Louis asked.

"To keep it always, unless——" Dubassof answered.

"Unless what?"

"Unless you promise not to marry Mdlle. Neftel."

Count Louis laughed,—a strange, mirthless laugh.

"You ask what is impossible."

"Wait until you have lived a year, knowing this to be in my possession."

"I know the force of your threat. But what would it profit you should she not marry me? She will marry neither you nor any other man."

The note of triumph in this chord infuriated Dubassof. His rage, however, was of a cold and deliberate kind.

"You esteem women more highly than I do. They talk much of their constancy, but it is chiefly in their imagination."

"I know nothing of the constancy of any except Nathalie Neftel. I have faith in her as I have in Heaven."

"Then you are not willing to buy this of me?" asked Dubassof, touching his breast.

"Not at your price," answered Count Louis. "Nathalie was the bribe offered me in the first instance. She has cost me too dear to part with her. I now go to her that I may tell her all."

It was not long before the announcement was made of the approaching marriage of Count Louis and Nathalie Neftel. Whatever Dubassof felt, no human being heard him express a word. He was as often seen with Count Louis as ever. Nathalie made one or two timid approaches in regard to the paper which she found he carried constantly about his person, but Dubassof was not to be drawn from his reserve.

One week before the day appointed for the wedding, a great dinner was given at Neftel's house. For the first time on that evening a vast dining-room with a ball-room over it was thrown open. A hundred persons sat down to table, some of them the most distinguished people in St. Petersburg.

Others were of the rank of life of Neftel and Dubassof, professional men, bankers, and merchants. Nathalie was radiant. Dubassof, who was among the number, watched closely the brilliant creature to find a trace of fear or nervousness. In Count Louis' face he saw the look of a man whose hold on happiness is insecure. But to the world he was the same gay, captivating Count Louis.

The dinner progressed with all the merry formalities of such affairs.

Towards the close, Neftel, whose face for once lost its saturnine expression, rose and said:

"In my country—in Lithuania—'tis the custom to drink the health of the prospective bride from her own dainty slipper. We will modify this custom, but we will not ignore it."

At this the servants presented to each guest a slipper of Bohemian glass, with the bride's initial on the top in gold These were filled with champagne, and then the long lines of guests stood up, amid gay confusion, to drink Nathalie's health.

But Dubassof, although he stood up, held a glass in his hand. He had no slipper.

"How is this?" asked Neftel, frowning and surprised, of the servant behind his chair.

"It is I—it is my fault," Nathalie cried from the other side of the table, where she sat in the centre of the line facing her father. "I am not entitled to any slipper, for I keep my own; this is our friend's; I made a mistake. Take this to Dr. Dubassof," she said to the servant, handing him a slipper foaming with champagne.

A little murmur at her ready tact went round. Both Neftel and Count Louis flushed with pleasure at the courteous way in which she had extricated herself from what might have seemed a rude and awkward position.

Dubassof, bowing low, received the toy and drank with the others.

This was the concluding ceremony of the dinner, and soon they all repaired to the drawing-room. A ball was to follow immediately.

If Dubassof had admired Nathalie's self-possession before he would have seen it fail somewhat then. For her eyes constantly followed him, and she seemed somewhat absent in her manner. But he could not notice anything. A strange drowsiness seized upon him. He had drunk more wine than usual, and that little glass slipper of champagne had been too much.

He spoke little to anybody, and presently Nathalie saw him disappear in the embrasure of the window. A divan, wheeled out of the way, was there. He dropped upon it, and in two minutes he had fallen into a heavy sleep, the long curtains concealing him.

It was some hours after this that he became imperfectly conscious of the rhythmic beat of dancers' feet over his head. He roused himself with an effort. By degrees his dimmed consciousness came back to him.

He pulled aside the curtain and saw himself alone in the drawing-room, where the lamps burned low and the candles in the sconces flickered.

Things came back to him. He was vexed and mortified beyond expression; but he was puzzled to know how the very moderate quantity of wine he drank should have so overcome him.

He tried to rise, and sank back weak and dizzy.

All at once the glass slipper of champagne he had received from Nathalie's hand came to his recollection. He thrust his hand into his bosom.

Yes, it was gone. He was cheated of his revenge!

He sprang up, neither weak nor dizzy now. The sound of the dancing had ceased, although the throb of the orchestra was still heard in the great suite of upper rooms. People were saying good-night; he heard the tramping of many horses outside, the shouts of the drivers, the opening and shutting of the vestibules, as group after group passed out. He stood erect, torn by the tempest within him.

And yet, in the midst of baffled rage and despair, something like relief crept in. Fate had placed in his hands an instrument by which he felt obliged to avenge himself on those two enemies, Nathalie and Count Louis. Yet these two, whom he would have crushed between the millstones of his wrath, had been dearer to him than anything on earth. He longed to have that little slip of paper back; he hated himself for being the dupe of a woman's slight, yet cunning, trick; but after all —it was not his terrible destiny to ruin Louis Klapka and Nathalie Neftel.

He waited in the drawing-room until he thought nearly all the guests had left. Then he mounted the broad stairs lined by weary footmen, and entered the splendid ball-room.

At the end, Nathalie and her father with Count Louis were receiving the adieux of the last lingering guests.

Dubassof advanced, and Nathalie, with the same wonder she had excited in him, observed his coolness and naturalness. For the triumph, the joy, the keenness of her success shone in her brilliant face.

Count Louis looked pale and agitated. He knew all, and the crisis unnerved him.

"Mademoiselle," said Dubassof, bowing low, "that your happiness is great I can well believe. Fate, which directs our destinies, decrees that you shall be happy."

Nathalie bowed deeply in return.

"I thank you. We thank you," was all she said. The sparkling of her eyes was as a star to Dubassof, and there was that singular feeling as if a burden had been lifted from him.

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BEHIND the SCENES

"COME, Jeanne, do be reasonable, I have told you not to come here; I have told you several times. You know I am always nervous on first nights."

The handsome tenor took another survey of himself in the glass; then he turned to her, looking so noble in his coat of silver mail—he was to play Lohengrin—that Jeanne's heart bounded with pride and love. But her mad jealousy soon regained the upper hand.

"You shall not play to-night! You hear that? You shall not play with Carola. I won't have it! I won't have it!"

"Another scene! This is getting too bad," said her husband. "I am not in love with Carola. I don't fall in love with every woman I play with. What nonsense this is!"

"I don't care," continued Jeanne angrily. "I know she is in love with you."

"For Heaven's sake, do be calm! You will make me spoil my entrance."

"So much the better. I should laugh if I did." She laughed hysterically; then, suddenly becoming calm, she added coaxingly: "If you love your little wife, pretend you are not well and let us go home."

Victor shrugged his shoulders.

His cue was near. He placed the helmet on his head and walked firmly towards the stage. Jeanne threw herself upon him and clasped her arms round his neck.

"Don't go on to-night!" she cried desperately. "I *know* evil will come of it!"

Thoroughly exasperated by this mad action just at the decisive moment, he forgot himself and threw her violently from him; she struck her head against a wing as she fell, and remained unconscious on the floor. Victor just had time to notice what had happened as he strode on to the stage.

Jeanne remained unconscious for some time. When she came to herself it was to hear a round of applause—the triumph of her rival. She staggered to her feet and walked forward sufficiently to enable her to see on the stage. She saw her husband and Carola clasped in sweet embrace, the limelight playing upon them. They were such a handsome pair, and played so splendidly together that the audience were quite carried away with enthusiasm. Jeanne heard the occupant of a box call out: "What a handsome couple, they are made for one another!"

Jeanne could bear it no longer; she ran out of the theatre into the frosty air, quite unconscious of all save one thing, her mind filled with one thought only. "No, she shall not tempt him! I will save him."

Behind the curtain Victor and Carola still held each other by the hand. They had been called to the front three times and were doubtful whether to answer the calls again or not. The actress was more than ever in love with the handsome tenor, to whom she in great part owed this new triumph. Placing her arm upon his shoulder she fixed her eyes upon his as though she would fascinate him; then she nestled close to him and lifted her face to his so that her ruby lips were near his cheek. Victor's brain seemed to whirl, and for an instant he forgot himself: his lips touched hers. But it was only for an instant; the vision of Jeanne's pale face rose before him and brought him to his senses. If she had seen it! Her jealousy would be awful! He scorned himself for his momentary unfaithfulness and spurned the lovely, but unprincipled woman by his side.

He hurried away from her and went to the dressing-room. He looked about for his wife, but she was not to be seen.

"She saw us," he muttered bitterly. "Oh, fool that I was not to beware of that woman!"

He dressed quickly, made his way out of the theatre and jumped into a cab. The slowness of the vehicle irritated him; he was worried about Jeanne. Perhaps she had hurt herself badly as she fell. He had made no inquiries in the theatre. But he would certainly have heard of it. No, she had gone home, and he must be prepared for a terrible scene. He would soothe her, throw himself at her feet and ask her forgiveness.

Home at last! He ran upstairs and opened the door. He expected to receive a volley of abuse, but to his surprise all was quiet. The dark shade of the lamp concentrated the light on the table, leaving the rest of the place in comparative darkness; the tea was ready, and on looking round he saw his wife reclining on the couch. She was very pale, very grave, and her eyes had a timid expression, as though she dreaded his coming. The look in her eyes seemed to say, "Forgive me!"

It was very cosy and quiet in this room. His usual cup of tea was steaming in the urn, and the whole surrounding so different to the wearing, exciting life of the theatres with their make-believe, that his heart went out to his wife and he kissed her fondly, and murmured, "My dear little Jeanne."

She smiled sadly, without saying a word. She went to the table and poured out the tea, and he seated himself opposite her in his usual place. He was thirsty; it had been a trying evening in many ways and the aroma of the tea was pleasant. He drank the cupful right off although it was hot, and handed the cup to his wife to be filled again.

She did not speak, and he was rather worried at her silence; he knew that he had not behaved well to her that evening, in spite of her foolish ideas. Still, she would come round directly and all would be well.

His throat felt more dry now than when he came in. He drank off the second cup, and as he set it down he noticed the mad look in his wife's eyes—a look of triumph. He sprang to his feet, but was obliged to sink on to the couch. Everything appeared to be going round; his throat and stomach seemed on fire. He tried to cry out, but no sound came. He looked at Jeanne; he saw her eyes, wide open, fixed upon him with a glassy stare. He understood all now; she had poisoned him! He writhed convulsively; his thoughts went from Jeanne to Carola, then back to a reminiscence of his boyhood; he saw the will-o'-the-wisps which he had often watched in his early years. How they danced! They were coming towards him! Larger and larger they grew; great flames they were now; he felt the heat from them, they were scorching him, burning him! A great cry burst from his lips—then all was still!

Jeanne, who had at first recoiled from him, approached and kissed her husband when she saw that he was still, and knelt by the side of the couch. A great calm seemed to have descended upon her soul. There was no feeling of regret or remorse. She was filled with one thought, which made her happy. The poor overturned brain was capable of one thought only: "I have saved him from the temptress!"

The next day, not being able to get any answer, the people called in the police to break open the door. When they entered they found Jeanne in the same position, kneeling by the couch, and all they could get out of her was, "I have saved him! See how peacefully he sleeps!"

In the lunatic asylum, whither she was sent, she is regarded as a model inmate. She is always gentle and resigned, and performs the duties given to her in a scrupulous manner. It is only when her husband's name is mentioned that her expression changes. A strange smile lights up her usually expressionless countenance, and she says, "Hush! he is asleep. I saved him, and he is happy now. I saved him!"

"Ah!" said her brother, who told me this story, "she believes she saved him, whereas other people say she is mad. I wonder which is correct."

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WHAT AILED THE MAN IN 35.

I HAD just blown out the candle and crawled into bed. It was at the Lamb Inn, at one of the cathedral cities of England. My room was 34, and presently I heard a man bid the waiter good-night and enter 35, the next room. Ten minutes later, having fallen into a doze, I was startled by a tremendous racket in 35. The bell downstairs rang an alarm, peal on peal. Jumping from bed, I pulled on some clothes and rushed into the hallway. The landlady and two or three servants had just arrived. Together we entered 35, where we found a big burly man seemingly half choked to death. He was purple in the face, his eyes were staring and bloodshot, he wheezed and whistled, he went from chair to chair, he ran out into the hallway. I saw what ailed him. I gave him sal volatile and brandy, opened the window, and made the servants carry away the feather bed. In a little time he was better, but he wouldn't lie down; he spent the rest of the night in a big easy chair.

"It was that infernal candle smoke that did it," he gasped. "There was no extinguisher, and I got a whiff that set me going. I have always been subject to it. Sorry to be such a nuisance; I'll do now."

There are lots of people like him. Here is another, namely, Mrs. Eliza Mary Cantle, who lives at 4, Thorngate Buildings, Forton Road, Gosport. She says, "I was taken with shortness of breath, and for over two years I couldn't lie down in bed for fear of being suffocated. Something like a ball used to rise up in my throat and seemed to choke me. For years I sat up in bed propped with pillows, and got what sleep I could that way."

That was bad—very bad; and yet very common. You know what it is called, of course—asthma; substantially the same thing as epilepsy, catalepsy, hysteria, and that kind of spasms which end in making the body as stiff as though it were three days dead.

But what causes it? Can it be cured? you ask. One thing at a time. Let's first finish with Mrs. Cantle's experience. The beginning of that lies behind us—seven years or so—August, 1886. She began by feeling weak, nervous, and generally ailing. She had a bad taste in the mouth, poor appetite, headache, heaviness, and a sense of want of warmth and vigour in the stomach; and the looking-glass showed her that her skin and eyes were getting of a sickly yellow complexion. By and by matters were much worse with her. After taking even simple morsels of food she had pain in the chest amounting to agony. On this, she says, she became afraid to eat We can well believe it.

"Then," she adds, "I had dreadful attacks of giddiness, specks floated before my eyes so I could scarcely see, and I could stand only by taking hold of the furniture."

After this came the terrible time with the asthma—already described.

Her letter, dated September 20th, 1893, concludes with these words: "I was now very thin, and so feeble I had to keep in bed for weeks at a time, I was *literally starving for want of food*, yet didn't dare to touch anything solid. The doctor who attended me gave me medicines, but they did no good. At last a friend from Fratton told me how she had been benefited by Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. She brought me a bottle, and I began with it. In a few days I felt better than I had for years. My breathing was easy, and I could eat. I kept on with the Syrup, and was soon as well as ever. In my opinion this remedy saved my life. (Signed) Eliza Mary Cantle."

Very good. A noble result. Yet very natural too. Asthma is not a disease of the lungs, as some wrongly think, but is caused by the poisons of indigestion and dyspepsia entering the blood and prostrating the nervous system. And as the lungs, like all the other organs, are operated by the nerves, they fail when the nerves fail. Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup abolishes the cause, and the effect goes away with it. Don't forget it.

If the man in 35 had used the Syrup months before we met at "The Lamb," he wouldn't have scared the whole household half out of their wits.

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FIFTY FAMOUS BOOKS AND THE LESSONS THEY TEACH.

"ALL SORTS AND CONDITIONS OF MEN" take ... ... BEECHAM'S PILLS.
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"IN THE TRACK OF THE TROOPS" we find ... ... BEECHAM'S PILLS.
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"LANDING A PRIZE" is swallowing one of ... ... BEECHAM'S PILLS.
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EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 306.] FOR WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 10, 1894. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

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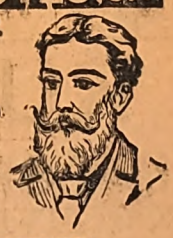

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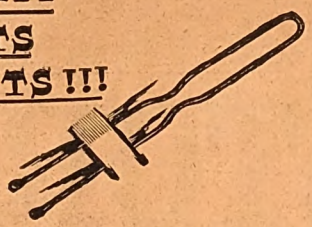

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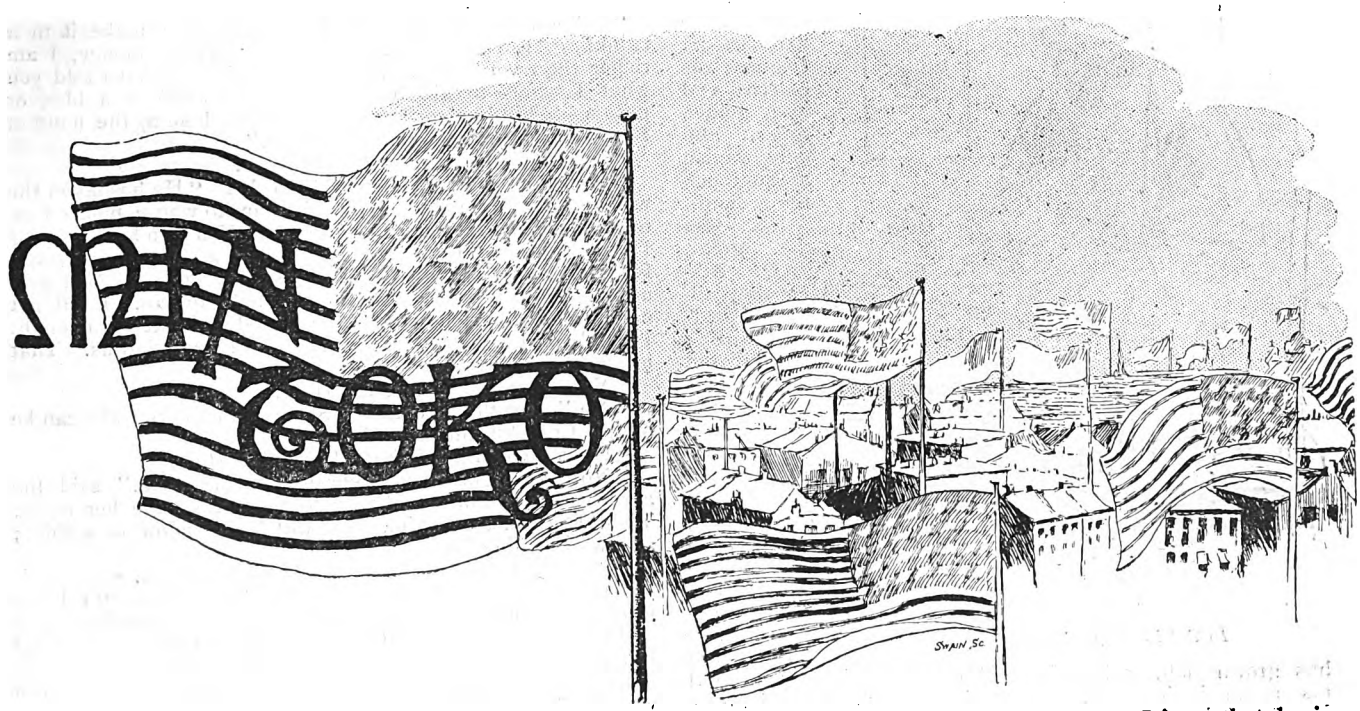
SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 306.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 10, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.



IT is Fourth of July in San Francisco, the Anniversary of the Independence of the United States. The clear, blue sky, like a mammoth bowl cut from one great turquoise and turned over the town, is a background for thousands of flags floating from the roofs of public buildings, and the windows of private patriots.

All the flags are big. Everything is on a large scale in California, the fruit that is exposed for sale, the great roses that enamoured youths are buying for their adored ones. The children are playing in the streets with mighty crackers, that make an explosion calculated to deafen one.

Large men, with ample ladies on their arms, may be seen in every direction. Immense baskets are being borne to the doors of their customers by grocers, butchers, and confectioners.

Immense suppers are to be given to-night, and many happy returns of the glorious Fourth will be drunk in rivers of champagne. Everything is on a large scale but the Chinese, whose small figures and alert movements are in marked contrast to the bulk and size of everything else on which the eye falls.

Yet little Washy-Washy balances on his head a clothes-basket that would serve him for a cradle, or in his kitchen—for he is a favourite cook with California housewives—stirs a pot in which he might easily be boiled himself.

In the arms of San Francisco sleeps Chinatown, the curious offspring of old China, of which Americans think that they know all that is to be known because they can visit the shops, and go into all the strange places, and, if they are in the humour, make themselves sick with an opium pipe among opium-smoking Chinamen.

Vain delusion! The secret soul of the Chinaman remains hidden here in China as in the Flowery Kingdom. No one will ever be able to guess what he thinks or how much he knows, how wicked he is, or how virtuous. I fancy that he is at once a great deal better and a great deal worse than we know, and that a learned and wise Chinee—who, by the way, does not usually keep a laundry—knows many things which would curdle the blood of our scientists and make their flesh creep, if he could be prevailed upon to impart them; but that he never will. The outside barbarian will remain in darkness for all his teaching. He will never be the schoolmaster abroad.

Fourth of July in Chinatown, though little the "haythen" would care for it, but that "Melicky-man" is his customer for fireworks about this time, and that thus the day adds good money to the hoard which he will at last spend in his native country amongst the tea-gardens and the pagodas, where, in his old age, he will catch insects to feed pet singing birds or fly curious paper kites, while his grandchildren watch him with reverence and listen to his stories of that queer place, America, as our little ones do to fairy tales.

But as gold is as mighty there in Chinatown as elsewhere, Fourth of July becomes important, and in the shops in which are sold all those packages and sticks and boxes, wrapped in paper of brilliant colours, the proprietors are on the alert.

Fourth of July. In his laboratory Lin Ham is at work, putting the finishing touches to material for the grand display, which is to be an unusually fine one, and to the work for several private exhibitions also.

Lin Ham is not an ordinary dealer. He keeps no shop. He executes orders for the favoured few. In each he puts a surprise—an invention for the day.

His are the curious boats, all made of coloured fire, moving on the water, apparently by means of a stream of fire at the stern, manned by little men in blue and gold and crimson, and all going off in a wonderful flash and whiz and splutter at last.

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In his laboratory, Lin Ham is at work.

His are those cylinders, which, rising into the air, discharge wonderful sprays and stars, and jewels skywards, while, at the same time, fiery little acrobats let themselves earthward by golden ropes, and only vanish as they touch the ground.

His was the great, green dragon that coiled and darted moonward, and wrote "July" across the sky before it changed into the flag of the American nation, which everyone so admired last Independence day.

Lin Ham has grown rich, it is said, and certainly his costume and his home indicate it. The table at which he is busy is full of his handiwork, his bronze utensils are highly decorated, he uses implements of gold and silver for some purposes. Everything about him is dainty. A screen, covered with curious devices, shields his doorway from the gaze of the curious; and across the middle of the room runs a bronze rod, from which swings what may be either a sign indicating his business or a charm to banish evil spirits, or, as one never knows what a Chinaman means, an invitation to the power of darkness to come to his aid. Below this, an opalescent lantern glitters in the sun.

At present something that smells very curiously is smoking and steaming in a queer fashion, in what looks like a little furnace, and Lin Ham, while still busy with his hands, twists his head about, and blinks up into the face of a tall man in a curious, theatrical costume, who stands with his bare arms folded on his chest, and looks down upon him.

"Such things are costly," he says. "I do not say that I have anything of the sort, but, if I had, you would not buy them, Min Toko."

They are speaking in Chinese, for Min Toko, though not a child of Chinese parents, has been brought up by them. You can believe the story that his father was a Russian and his mother a Tartar, when you look at him.

A little Chinese boatwoman took him from his dying mother's arms, and nursed him with her own, somewhere near those quarters where there are English warehouses, and the barbarian comes to traffic in tea and porcelain, and he starved and played and swam about with her own, and early in his boyhood came to San Francisco.

There he dwelt in Chinatown, and became renowned amongst the showmen of San Francisco for his acrobatic feats. To-night he is engaged to assist in a performance on the lawn before the mansion of Benson Blashfield, Esq.

Mr. Blashfield will have fireworks and a great supper, and the crowning feature will be the feats of Min Toko, who, amongst other things, throws a rope into the air, where it is caught by some unseen power, sends a kitten up its length until it vanishes from sight, sends a monkey to find it, follows himself, and draws up the rope after him, and ten minutes after is heard calling from the inside of a great lacquered box to be let out, and there he is indeed, coiled up like a great serpent.

Oh, there is nothing Min Toko cannot do, and no one ever discovered how he does anything.

Now he laughs.

"I know you have what I want, or can make it in a twinkling, Lin Ham," he answers. "As for money, I am richer than you think. Name your price. I have told you what I want—to kill a man without a knife or a blow or poison—to kill him so that it seems to be done by the hand of Fate; so that no one can suspect me."

"Is he a Chinaman," asks Lin Ham.

"He is an American," said Min Toko. "He has taken the woman I love from me. This rich man, to whose house I go to-night, has a daughter. I love her. You grin! Why not? I am handsome; I am no Chinaman; I am famous; I am a favourite with the ladies, and she smiled on me. You grin again. Of course, the rich man would say, No. I did not mean to ask the rich man. If she loved me, that was enough. I could spirit her away where they would never find us. That is what I meant to do."

"You are mad!" says Lin Ham.

"No," says the acrobat. "She could be won. She can be still, if I can kill this man."

"Do you mean her father?" cries Lin Ham.

"No. To-night they celebrate her marriage," said the acrobat. "To-morrow the bridegroom will take her away. To-night I must kill him. She will be a widow for awhile; afterwards, mine."

"It is the dream of a madman," says Lin Ham.

"Does that matter to you?" asks the acrobat. "I know that it was you who made the toy the rich tea merchant gave to his wife when he found she was false to him. The little bird that perched on her wrist and sang and bit her fingers like a real bird, and of the bite she died. I know it was you who——"

"No more reminiscences!" cries Lin Ham. "I admit that I have another toy that, with a slight addition, which I could make in ten minutes, would wipe your rival out of existence. But of what avail would it be? Rich American ladies do not marry such as you. Her relatives would kill you if you touched her hand."

"I have kissed it thrice when we were alone," says Min Toko. "Yes, I have kissed her hands three times. The next time it should have been her mouth. Let me kill this bridegroom so that she cannot suspect me, and it shall be yet. Look!" He thrusts his hand into the bosom of his tunic and draws forth a pouch. "See!" he whispers, piling bank-notes before Lin Ham. "How much for that toy?"

The eyes of the old man glitter. He gathers up the heap in his claw-like hands, and says slowly:

"This sum makes me have enough with which to return to China, and live there happy for the rest of my life. After all, what does one more dead barbarian matter! But I will tell you this: Unless you can make your rival take the toy in his own hands, it is useless."

"I can manage that," Min Toko replies.

The old Chinaman goes to a little recess in the room, before which hangs a beaded screen, and comes back, holding in his hand a curious kite.

"You fly it like any other kite," he explains. "When at its full length you begin to call: 'Come down, butterfly.' A butterfly descends the cord and flies away. 'Follow rose,' you say. A rose glides down the string and drops to ashes. 'Come down, pretty mouse,' you call next. The mouse descends and runs up your shoulder and is gone.

"Then you call for a blue bird, for a white bird, for a green bird, for a yellow bird. Thus it might end with the applause of the people. But let me work upon this kite ten minutes

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longer, and add one trifle more, and then there will be something else to see.

"Then you may call aloud: 'Come to me out of the sky, bright star.' And far above you may see a star shine, bright as any in the heavens. At this moment, he whom you wish to kill must hold the cord, and that star brings death. As it touches the man's breath life departs from him. Mark me well, the other things that come down the cord are innocent as drops of dew. The star is fatal."

"I understand," replied Min Toko. "Hasten with your work, Lin Ham."

A little later the old Chinaman puts into the hands of the younger man a paper box covered with shining roses, butterflies, and birds, and says to him:—

"Min Toko, the great performer, you have bought of me a pretty kite, which brings down from the heavens the birds of the air, and the flowers the spirits pluck. For all I know you may coax the stars down its cord also. It is well made. If any accident happens, that is the fault of others, not mine, I am not responsible."

"I absolve you from all responsibility, Lin Ham," replied Min Toko.

He throws about him a cloak that covers his theatrical costumes, and carries the box downstairs, where a carriage containing the paraphernalia used in his exhibitions awaits him, and is driven to Mr. Blashfield's residence. There they celebrate, not only the glorious Fourth, but a wedding.

Early in the evening, the rich man's daughter, Rosabel Blashfield, had been married to Mr. Arthur Ware, the son of another Californian magnate. There had been the usual reception, the usual display of gorgeous presents, a fine band has been playing, professional dancers have done their part, now they are ready for Min Toko and his performances.

The whole lawn is flooded with electric light, and, in mighty tents all decorated with roses, they are setting forth a feast. The bride and bridegroom sit upon a sort of throne that seems made of orange blossoms.

Tiers of seats, occupied by people in evening dress, surround the lawn, leaving an archway through which the performers enter. It is opposite the bridal throne; and, as Min Toko passes through, bowing and smiling, his eyes meet those of the bride, and he seems to give her special greeting.

Standing in the midst of the circle he begins to gather, from heaven knows where, white roses of which he makes a mighty ball, how, no one can guess. This he throws towards the throne. As it floats in the air and opens, forth flies a little pink Cupid who flings kisses abroad, and flies skyward and is gone.

Forth flies a little pink Cupid.

Thunders of applause follow this compliment to the bride, and then the little boy-in-waiting on Min Toko brings in the chairs, the tables, the fans, the wands, the boxes, and the show begins.

It is sufficient to say that the man seems to be able to overcome the laws of gravitation, to stand upon nothing, to fold himself up like a foot rule, to put himself in spaces that seem

The star is upon Min Toko's breast.

impossible; and to do all this gracefully, with beautiful accessories.

The bride's eyes never leave him. Min Toko did not boast falsely. Though his position and residence in Chinatown seem to her to place him so far beneath her as though she were an empress and he a serf, she has always admired him intensely, and she knows that he is in love with her.

She has often wished that he were of her race and kind. He has been made a sort of pet amongst the Californians before whom he has performed, and he has had opportunities to speak a few words to her, and, as he said, to kiss her hand three times. To-night she feels that she bids him adieu; and to-night he fascinates her strangely.

When at last, as usual, he inquires if any two of the audience will assist him in some closing performances, she whispers to her bridegroom:—

"Come, Arthur, let us go."

And the young man replies:—

"Awfully bad form; but, if you wish it, of course."

It is a look that Min Toko has given her that makes her do this thing, and the bridegroom hands her down into the centre of the lawn, and they three stand together there.

"Will you be pleased to help me fly this kite, sir?" says Min Toko to the bridegroom as he flings into the air the thing we know of. "See, this is how."

The kite darts upward swiftly in a moment. Its brilliant breast is no longer visible. Only a long copper-coloured cord shimmers in the air from Min Toko's hand moonwards.

"Come to me, all ye butterflies"! he cried. "Come, come!" And down the cord sweeps a myriad butterflies and cover the performer's bosom and vanish.

"Little mouse," he cried. "Come, little mouse!" and whistles exquisitely. And the little grey mouse creeps down, sits on his shoulder, and is gone.

"And now, Sir," Min Toko says, with a bow to the groom and a smile to the bride, "if you like you may call a blue bird, and a white bird, a red bird, a yellow bird, a green bird, and after that one of the stars from heaven." And he puts the cord into the bridegroom's hand, who calls loudly:

"Here, you blue bird, come if you can!" And there is a

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blue bird; and amidst shouts of merriment, and while the bride claps her little palms and showers smiles about her, the birds of all colours come down.

The green bird has arrived and disappeared, when suddenly the bride puts forth her hand playfully, and snatches the cord from the bridegroom's hand.

"You shan't have all the fun," she says, with a pretty pout. "I intend to call the star down myself. Ah, how the cord pulls! No, you shan't touch it. I will do it alone. What do you say, Min Toko? 'Brightest star of heaven, come to me!' Is that right?"

She beams on him, and lifts her sweet shrill voice and calls aloud, and far up in the sky appears a great diamond star that shimmers and glows as it comes earthward. And, with one wild spring, Min Toko snatches the cord from the bride's hand, saying something that she only hears as he does so, and at the same time pushing her fiercely from him.

Then the star is upon Min Toko's breast, and he lies upon the ground, and the gaudy kite flutters down and lies beside him; and those who gather about him see that he is dead, with the fearful burn of electricity upon his bosom.

The kite must have attracted it, they say. Plainly, when he snatched it from the bride's hand, he saw that there was danger. Poor fellow! How brave! How noble!

All night the bride weeps bitterly, and when, in the morning, her bridegroom bears her away, she is still broken-hearted.

The words that Min Toko whispered as he snatched the fatal cord from her are still ringing in her ears. She will never repeat them to anyone, but she can never forget them. They were: "Adieu, my love! I die for you!"

THE CRICKET

I.

A PERFECTLY formed little person, with hands and feet a duchess might envy, a miniature woman, with the fresh but freckled complexion given by life in the open air, with two big liquid black eyes which made the hearts beat quicker of those on whom they rested—such was Noeline Farques' the miller of Espitos.

A rickety old house, built over the stream, quite alone in a forest of alders, leaning over on one side, the life of the old stones taken out of them by their veil of ivy, with huge piles underneath, which looked like crutches; resounding continually with a busy hum like a woman's constant clatter—such was Noeline's home, the mill of Espitos.

Although it was old, the mill had faithful customers; and although the miller was small, she had many admirers. Among them, the most devoted were Aristide Lariensec, a big, red-faced fellow, son of a neighbouring miller; and Jonanin Lacaze, a pale blonde, who was serving his apprenticeship in one of the most important shops of the town.

Aristide, the miller's son, hung about the mill, his pockets full of fruit, for the young miller. They sat before the millstone and ate them, while the iron wheel sang its rhythmic song as the water poured over it, and the flour fell white and silent, powdering everything round.

Jonanin, the apprentice, was less fortunate. He could only see Noeline on Sunday after Mass, when she went to the shop in the town to buy needles and thread. Then, indeed, Jonanin was flushed with pleasure.

He spread out before the eyes of the young girl his whole store of thread and needles, and they were a long time in choosing, for sometimes their fingers met as they turned over the merchandise.

Sometimes on Sunday afternoon, Jonanin had two hours to himself, and he went to fish in the stream of Espitos. He did not catch much, for the stream had fewer fish in it than any in the country; but Jonanin placed himself so that he could both watch the window of the mill and his float; he consoled himself for the immobility of the latter by what he saw through the former. At nightfall Noeline came to look for her ducks along the bank of the stream, and the pressure of hands which the lovers exchanged in the Sunday twilight was so sweet that Jonanin dreamed for nights about it.

The miller did not hesitate between her admirers. She preferred Jonanin. She hardly thought of anyone else. When she was with him she was perfectly content.

Therefore, the blonde Jonanin was authorised to pay his court to her. Noeline's mother invited him to come and eat chestnuts at the mill during the long autumn evenings.

But the first time he went a strange thing happened. The cricket which always sang on the kitchen hearth was suddenly silent.

"It is so singular," thought Noeline's mother, and the young girl turned pale.

And when the young man made his second visit the cricket did just the same. As soon as the young man opened the door, the cricket ceased his song.

Then Noeline's mother crossed herself, and the young miller clasped her trembling hands under her apron.

And each time that Jonanin entered the house the hostile cricket was silent, and if they listened carefully they heard a strange noise, an inexplicable scratching at the chimney, like a protest of the little insect.

Noeline wept abundantly; her mother was very unhappy.

Both of them, like most peasants, attached great importance to the song of their cricket They knew that one of these insects singing in the house assures happiness and prosperity to its inmates. If it was silent when Jonanin came, it was because Jonanin brought ill-luck. It was imperative that he should stay away.

Nevertheless, Noeline knew that her suitor was good, honest, and laborious; she seemed to read promises of happiness in his tender grey eyes; but the cricket would not agree. It would, perhaps, be dangerous to despise its warning; and when the tired youth came, with a beating heart and a voice broken by emotion, to ask Noeline's mother for her hand, the mother was grave, and the young miller could hardly be kept from sobbing aloud behind her apron. Jonanin was refused. They did not give him the true reason. It would have pained him too much to learn that he would bring misfortune to any house he entered.

The mother found plausible reasons to give him, and Noeline went out to conceal her sorrow. She sat down near the millstone in the dilapidated mill, listening to the drops of water as they fell on the big iron wheel, and when she heard Jonanin shut the door and pass out among the alders, and along the bank of the stream murmuring to himself, it seemed to her that her heart had stopped beating, and she prayed to God aloud, as if she was afraid she should die.

The following week Jonanin left the country. With his clothes tied up in a little bundle he went away at dusk, when the last leaves were shivering on the trees. He went through the alder woods and along the bank of the little brook of Espitos. The young miller saw him come, and she stood motionless before her mill.

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"Good-night, Noeline," he said slowly.

"Good-night, Jonanin," she replied, dropping her eyes.

Then, as he went on, she ventured to ask:

"Are you leaving the country?"

He seemed to stagger on the leaf-covered path.

"Yes, I have found a place at Orthez."

She said nothing. Her fingers played with the little silver cross which hung about her neck, and with troubled eyes she watched Jonanin until he disappeared among the deepening shadows of the forest.

II.

A small, thin person, with hands and feet like those of a skeleton, looking as if nature had begun to make a woman and failed, but with two, big, black eyes much younger than her face, such was Noeline Farques, the miller of Espitos, twenty years after the departure of Jonanin Lacaze. Women in the south fade early. The mill, older by twenty years, and showing it, still stood across the stream, keeping erect by the aid of some additional crutches, and its tic-tac was just as joyous as when it was new.

Noeline had never married. After Jonanin went away no other lover could touch her heart. Aristide Lariensec, who who had loved her with a passionate, jealous love, had been refused like the others. The young man, long inconsolable, had married at last. He never came to see Noeline except to sell his grain. They had doubtless both forgotten the fruit they used to eat beside the millstone, where the flour fell white and silent, powdering everything round.

Jonanin had never come back.

Many and many a time Noeline had walked along the border of the stream with the hope of seeing him again. She thought of him every day; and every night when the cricket sang she dreamed melancholy dreams before her sad hearthstone, until her rushlight died out.

Alas! Orthez was so far off. People from Espitos never went there. At the shop in the town they had no news of Jonanin. What had become of the youth with the blonde hair? Sometimes, when her old maid's soul was sadder than usual, Noeline prayed for him, but little by little the beating of her heart grew cold and monotonous.

One night Noeline, who was forty-two years old, was waiting for Lariensec, the former rival of Jonanin. He was coming to discuss the price of the maize he wished to sell her. The miller had offered twelve francs five sous a sack. The farmer asked ten sous more. It was nearly nine o'clock. Noeline, standing on the threshold of the mill, saw someone coming.

"It is not Lariensec," she thought, "he would not come by that path."

The man had a wooden box on his back, he walked slowly, seemed tired, and looked at the stream and the trees and the mill as a stranger might.

"Good evening," he said, stopping. "Would you like to see Notre Dame de Lourdes?"

"He is a Béarnaise or a Bigourdan hawker," thought Noeline.

"My poor friend, it is rather dark to see your Virgin."

But as the merchant had a gentle voice, and as the intercession of the Virgin might induce Lariensec to sell his corn at twelve francs five sous the sack, Noeline said:

"Come in, I will look at the Holy Virgin by the light."

And the merchant entered. When Noeline could see him she felt the blood rush to her thin cheeks, and when the hawker had seen her face he seemed equally astonished. And in a plaintive voice he asked:

"So you are still here, Noeline?"

"Ah! good God!" said the miller, feeling her heart beat as it had not done for years; "is it possible that it is you, Jonanin?"

And for a moment they were silent. Then suddenly, behind the warm hearthstone, they heard the shrill chirp of a cricket.

Noeline felt in her eyes a warm moisture like a gathering tear.

Jonanin told his story. He had been successful at Orthez. He had married, had children, had a shop of his own, and was prosperous and happy. But after all these years the desire to see his old home had seized him, and for the sake of economy he had come, like a Béarnaise hawker, selling needles and thread on his way.

"Oh, I was sure you would succeed, Jonanin," sighed Noeline.

The cricket in the chimney went on singing. The woman seemed almost overpowered by her increasing emotion.

"Then why," stammered Jonanin, "will you tell me, Noeline, why you would not be my wife, twenty years ago?"

At first she could not answer; she pointed to the chimney as if half-ashamed, and would have been glad to hide her head in her apron, as she did when she was young.

"It was the fault of the cricket," she stammered.

"Of the cricket?"

"Yes! I was foolish. I thought you would bring me misfortune. The cricket stopped singing when you came to see me."

"He stopped singing? Why?"

Noeline shrugged her shoulders in sign that she did not know. They both stood silent, dreaming, and they dared not look into each other's eyes by the light of the smoking resin.

Very soon, Lariensec, the farmer, entered.

"Good evening, good evening," he said, after the peasant fashion, saluting as many times as there were persons in the company.

And when he had recognised the former shopkeeper—"What Jonanin! You here. What are you doing here?"

"I come to talk over old times. It does one good at our age."

"Ah, yes, the old times!" said Lariensec. "I remember that you were to have been married, you and Noeline."

"Certainly!" replied the miller.

"And do you know what kept us apart?" asked the merchant, "a cricket."

"Bah!" exclaimed Lariensec. "In fact, I seem to remember——"

He burst into a loud laugh.

"Ah! It was too good!" said he, "too good!"

Then, seriously:

"Bah! you are happy are you not? Both happy? We are all happy here; so we may confess our little peccadilloes of other days! Ah, that one was too good! Do you know, Jonanin, why the cricket did not sing? We are all friends, you know, old fellow. Well, it was because I was watching you; I scratched in the chimney there, on the side next our field, when you came to pay your court. Ah, other people loved Noeline, too, and other people were furiously jealous!"

Then, seeing that his revelation was coldly received, and that Noeline looked at him sadly, he resumed generously.

"That is not all; I come to tell you that I accept your price for your corn; twelve francs five sous the sack. Does that suit you, Noeline?"

And Noeline, in a low voice, replied:

"That suits me, Lariensec."

Then the farmer bought some spools of thread from the merchant from Orthez for his wife, and paid without bargaining.

"Good evening, good evening," he said, going out.

And the two old lovers were left alone.

They did not say much to each other. Jonanin slowly put up his merchandise, Noeline watched him, unconsciously turning over the little silver cross, which she still wore, with her bony fingers. For one despairing moment she was perhaps tempted to press her lips to Jonanin's hair, once blonde, now turning grey; but she restrained herself; her virgin lips were ignorant how to give such a kiss.

"Well, good-night, Noeline," said the hawker, lifting his box to his back.

"Good night, Jonanin!"

They awkwardly pressed each other's hands and parted.

He took the path through the woods on which the moonlight fell; she standing on her threshold watched him go, while in the chimney the cricket sang in the sad night, sang with a calm, clear, untiring voice, as if he wished to tell Noeline of all the happiness that might have been.

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WE were sitting on the deck of the *Konigin Carola*, gliding down the Elbe from Dresden to Weissen. Rogers was in a communicative mood, and was entertaining me with some good stories.

Here is one of them.

"When I first entered the Academy of Arts in Dresden I was a boy of nineteen, and a stranger in the land. If it hadn't been for certain good friends of mine who furnished me with introductions, I might have fallen into the hands of the enemy, and fared badly. However, as it was, I soon found myself on my feet, and before I had been six weeks away I had forgotten homesickness and everything else, and was indulging in a rigorous form of hero-worship. It came about in this manner.

"There are lots of young moneyed Englishmen always drifting about the Continent, and I suppose if they are not stranded in Paris at the first overture, they come on to Germany, and thus eventually to Dresden. At any rate, Bruce Holderness was one of these, and it was he to whom I had attached myself, worshipping from afar at first, and gradually admitted, step by step, into the circle of his friends. He was worth my homage then, and I think it was well for me that he accepted it as he did in his kindly, manly way. For the fact that he was extravagantly wealthy, and above the average in good looks and physique, I cared not a pin; it was the gentle manner, the true, noble heart, that brought me to his feet. What was I? A penniless art student, a dull fellow in any man's society. Yet he treated me as an equal—no, more, as a friend. He had a taste for art, it appeared, and he used to come down to the Academy every morning and work away industriously for pure love of the thing. However, one morning I caught him staring out of the window with a wistful expression, and his half-finished study of a classic subject tumbled into a corner. I asked him what it meant.

"'My friend,' he said, 'I have been fighting unsuccessfully with the desire to take up my palette and go and have a shy at landscape. The antique is all very well; but I am but mortal, and these classic beauties cloy the appetite. Give me just one hour down the river.'

"Now, curiously enough, this was just what had been bothering me, for though I am a plodder, I have my flights at fancy at times, so you can imagine how I jumped.

"'Put yourself into my hands,' I said, 'and light the fire with your picture, for I know the very place.' Half-an-hour later we were steaming gaily away down the stream.

"The very place was the Schonegrund, and, of course, Holderness was delighted. We stuck up our easels under the willows—the trout were rising like fun, by the way—and daubed to our hearts' content. There is a big farmhouse on the crest above the valley, and so, after we had painted our very souls out, we went up there to get a drink. Holderness thumped boldly at the door, and the person who opened it was Gisela Lichtenstein.

"You can have no conception of how beautiful she looked as she stood in the doorway. You would have thought that she was a princess. I felt Holderness give a sort of gasp—I say felt, because I was staring like an owl myself. However, he recovered himself at once, and took off his cap to her like a gentleman; and, as a matter of fact, I believe she was every whit as impressed with his looks as he was with hers.

"Well, we quenched our thirst with good Culinbacher beer, while the princess looked on and answered all Holderness's remarks in her Saxon dialect, and I never thought it pretty until then. I think we should both have stopped there for ever if the last boat hadn't been nearly due, and we had to be off. After we had scrambled on board I happened to look at Holderness's face, and I saw him gazing back at the Schonegrund with a look so different to that he had worn in the morning that it startled me. I wonder whether it really was undiluted nature he was pining for. Now I come to think of it, I don't believe it was.

"I suppose, knowing my susceptible nature as you do, you will think it very odd when I tell you that, after all, I didn't fall in love with the girl myself, but it is the sober truth. The annual exams came off a few weeks later, and whether it was want of leisure or not, I can't say, but except for a passing thought that she was worthy the canvas of a Titian, the Venus of the Schonegrund went clean out of my head. But presently I began to notice something.

"Up to that time Bruce Holderness had been as indefatigable in his exertions in the school as anybody; but, lo! little by little he dropped away. Morning after morning he would come, fiddle about with chalk and crayon for ten minutes, and then bolt, before I could get in a question as to the reason. I used to see him go along the terrace, and he always went in the same direction. At last I asked him point blank for an explanation, and to my amazement he blushed like a school-girl, said he had a sketch to finish out of doors, must take it before the weather changed, no time to wait, and hurried off.

"I was foolish enough to be first hurt, then terribly jealous, and at last, one morning, after the usual flight, I could stand it no longer. As soon as he had taken his hat I seized mine and crept after him. He was just buying a steamboat ticket at the kiosk by the pier, and forthwith I followed his example. I didn't, of course, know where he was going, but I saw him march on board the Meissen boat, and took my billet for that place accordingly. He went forward without looking behind him; I sneaked down into the stuffy cabin and hid there with many twinges of conscience, for I knew I was doing a cowardly and a mean thing.

"When the boat stopped at Kemnitz, Holderness stepped ashore, and not until that moment did a suspicion of the real facts of the case come before me. As I watched him turn up the lane to the Schonegrund, my memory travelled back to the vision in the doorway, and everything seemed to flash into distinctness. No! It was no sketching fit that could bring him here secretly time after time, and make him flush when I questioned him. Bruce Holderness was in love.

"This discovery, overwhelming as it was, did not prevent me making my way up the road that he had taken, though I kept a long way behind—so far, indeed, that I lost sight of him altogether. At one side of the valley a footpath runs along the side of the hill, hidden by a dense growth, and winding here, there, and everywhere, until, with a sudden dip, it lands one at the very edge of the stream. I took this path on account of its seclusion, for it was not the nearest, and walked on until an abrupt turn and the murmur of voices brought me to a standstill.

"Barely a dozen feet below me, on the wooden plank that spanned the stream, stood Holderness and the princess. His arm was round her, his face bent to hers—no need to ask further proof of his condition. As I looked their lips met, and I heard my friend murmuring amorous nothings in the vilest of villainous German.

"Well, I know, I was an eavesdropper, but I was afraid to stir. Presently the two seated themselves on the bank below me, hand in hand, and Holderness opened the conversation.

"'But you know, my Gisela,' said he, using the familiar *du*, 'I will arrange everything. A licence? Surely money can buy that here, as elsewhere. A trousseau? Wait till you are mine!'

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"'I am so terribly afraid,' said the girl with a sigh. 'Am I not betrothed to Conrad Meyer before all the world? How can you gainsay that? And then think what my father said when you spoke—I tremble at it still. The very next day he told Conrad all, and—well, you know. We are betrothed—there was a notice in the *Zeitung*, and, oh, heart's beloved, but I hate him!'

"'My darling!' said Holderness, 'when you are my wife we can snap our fingers at Conrad; and, as for the Herr Lichtenstein, he will forgive you even marrying an Englishman if you do but look half as sweetly upon him as you look now at me.'

"From their attitudes after this speech I judged that there was no fear of disturbing them, and turned away sharply, feeling as if I had desecrated a sanctuary. As I turned a hot breath fell on my cheek, a hand gripped my arm, and someone half dragged me up the path, out of earshot. Then he freed me, and I saw a big tow-haired German scowling down at me.

"'Another pig of an Englishman,' he said. 'Do you know that man yonder? You do? Then look here—here,' glaring at me with bloodshot eyes, 'I am Conrad Meyer, and I will kill him.'

"'No, you won't,' said I, 'not if I know Bruce Holderness. More likely he'll kill you.'

"The fellow snarled, but I think he was a bit taken aback by my answer, and I went on my way unmolested. I had little sleep that night, for the vision of the big German menacing my hero danced before my eyes, and my own dishonourable action had tied my tongue. However, the time went on, and Holderness still made his daily appearance at the Academy, though after that I saw little of him. Thus a fortnight passed.

"One evening I was sitting in my little bedroom, under the roof, when I heard someone scrambling up the stairs. It was a pleasing economy of our landlord to burn no gas there, as I knew only too well, and picking up my candle I ran out to help my visitor to the landing in safety. The light fell upon the face of Holderness.

"He was deadly pale, and over one cheek a red streak trickled slowly. I knew before he opened his lips how it came there.

"'Holderness,' I cried, 'what has happened?'

"He came into my room and sank into a chair while he told me the whole pitiful story. I needn't go over the incoherent explanation he gave concerning the facts I knew already; and, indeed, if I hadn't had my own knowledge to draw upon, I could hardly have understood him. But the rest, as far as I could gather, was simple enough.

"On that very morning he had planned that this wedding should take place, had procured his licence, and prepared everything for the event. Gisela was to meet him at daybreak on the plank bridge across the Schone, and together they were to make their way back to Dresden for the ceremony. Just as they greeted one another at the trysting-place in the grey light of what was to be their bridal morn, a figure stepped out from the bushes, knife in hand, and threw himself upon them. I think my friend would have kept his temper and disarmed the man, who, of course, was Conrad Meyer, if he had not let fall the foulest abuse upon Gisela as she stood cowering by. That was sufficient.

"'How it came about,' said Holderness, 'I cannot tell now. I only know that I was mad with fury, and I remember snatching the knife from his hand—he struck me with it here before I took it—and thrusting it into him as we struggled together. His grip relaxed almost immediately; everything seemed to swim before my eyes; and the next moment I saw a set, white face staring up at me from the water, and a look in Gisela's eyes that told me I was a murderer. I threw down the knife and went towards her, and she drew back with a look of horror, such as I pray you may never see in the face you love. Then I knew that I bore the brand of Cain indeed. I tore away from the spot like a madman, and now I am here to say good-bye. They shall not drag the whole story up at my trial, for by to-morrow I shall be across the border.'

"'And she?' I said.

"'I shall never see her again,' he said. 'But, at any rate, she is free from that demon. No, the truth will be proved, for from what I know there were witnesses to the whole. And now, my friend, I must say good-bye, for the arm of the law is long.'

"He wrung my hand without another word, and then the door closed and he went away into the night. From that time to this I have never set eyes on him; but though it is years ago now I think I could still pick him out from among a thousand.

"The story might well end here; but there is a sequel to it, which is, to my mind, as tragic as all the rest. You may imagine how anxiously I scanned all the papers for long after that, expecting every time to see some account of the affair, and how mystified I was as the weeks went by and not a word appeared. At last, more than a year afterwards, I made up my mind to revisit the Schonegrund, though there is no denying that I looked upon the place with horror. However, I took the boat as before, and walked up the by-path to the plank across the stream, and there stood looking down into the water, with the thought of what it had once seen. I suppose I was too deep in my reverie to notice the sound of approaching steps, and it was not until a heavy foot made the little bridge tremble that I became aware of them. As I live, there stood Conrad Meyer.

"He broke the silence with an ugly laugh.

"'Why,' he said, 'it is the little Englander! Has he come to the stream that would have drowned me?'

"I was so dumfounded that I couldn't say a word.

"'Come,' he went on. 'There was much truth in what you said that day, and I bear no malice. The only thing was, the *Schweinhund*, who has fled, would not hit hard enough. But you meant well, and if you like to come with me the Frau Meyer shall bring us a bottle of wine to drink your very good health.'

"'The Frau Meyer?' I stammered.

"'Born Lichtenstein,' he answered coolly. 'She makes a good wife, the dear Gisela, but somewhat quiet for my taste ——what! You won't come? Well, then, good morning.' He turned slowly on his heel and walked up the valley whistling, as placid as if the wreck of a life were an incident too trivial to be remembered. As for me, I left the Schonegrund more troubled than when I entered it."

Rogers stroked his moustache thoughtfully.

"And do you mean to say that she married that man after all?" I asked.

"I fancy it was not from choice," said my friend. "Who knows what pressure might not have been brought to bear while Meyer lay apparently at the point of death?"

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THE OUTLAWS OF THE AIR.

By George Griffith,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," etc.

SUMMARY.

Max Renault—leading spirit of Anarchist Autonomia Group No. 7, who has joined the Utopians (a Socialistic colony on an island in the South Pacific) in order to steal the air-ship they are building, which he succeeds in doing.

Franz Hartog—a German engineer, in league with Renault, who steals a very fast torpedo-boat destroyer from the Russian Government to levy blackmail on the Atlantic.

Sir Harry Milton—a wealthy young English nobleman, who by chance comes across the island of Utopia, and subsequently devotes the whole of his fortune to hunting down Renault and Hartog.

Herbert Wyndham—a lieutenant in the British Navy who is travelling with Sir Harry for the benefit of his health, and who determines to resign his commission and couple his energies with those of Sir Harry in destroying the Anarchists, on account of the fact that he has been stabbed by Renault when the latter attempts to carry off Violet in the air-ship.

Frederick Austen—the inventor of the Utopian air-ship, who shares its secret with Edward Adams, Dr. Edwards, and Ambrose Miller, three other Utopians.

Violet Milton—Sir Harry's sister, and Lieutenant Wyndham's sweetheart, is terribly injured by throwing herself out of the air-ship on which Renault has tried to carry her off.

Dora Merton—a fair Utopian, who has made an impression on Sir Harry.

Lucy Summers—another fair Utopian.

Max Renault in the air-ship joins Hartog in the *Destroyer*, after the latter has destroyed a fleet of war-ships convoying Atlantic liners. They are discovered in their hiding-place by a combined fleet of British, French, and Portuguese cruisers, who follow the *Pilgrim*, a steam yacht bringing war and other materials for the Anarchists.

CHAPTER XVII.

The "Vengeur" in her Element.

Max saw at a glance that the *Destroyer* was heading out north-west on a course that would bring her into collision with the French Squadron first. A moment's thought showed him that this was bad tactics, and so, as the *Vengeur* swept along on her downward course, he swung her round to the southward and dropped almost to the surface of the water, within a hundred yards of Hartog's craft. The engineer saw the air-ship coming, and ran his boat close up to her.

"Keep a due north course until you sight a single cruiser that you'll find up there," shouted Max, as the two vessels came within hail of each other. "Go for her first, and stop her, if you can. Out yonder to the north-west there's a big cruiser and two torpedo-boats, or catchers, that may have a high speed. Leave them to me, for the present. Speak the *Pilgrim* as you pass, and tell her to run in as fast as she can and lie close. Good-bye; I shall depend upon you to stop the cruiser."

"I'll do dat! don't you fear," shouted Hartog in reply, waving his hand as the *Destroyer* gathered way again and shot off to the northward.

By this time the glasses of the officers on the bridge of the *Cécile* had picked up the *Vengeur* on her downward flight, and as Max mounted into the air again he saw the two catchers, both of which had a speed of over thirty knots, shoot out from under her side and steam away at full speed for the coast.

"Ah," he said to himself, "that's the game is it! I suppose you've seen me as well as the smoke from the *Pilgrim*, and so you think she belongs to us, and you'll try and head her off. Well, we'll see about that."

As only about ten miles now separated the *Aline* and the *Rance* from the *Pilgrim*, twenty minutes would suffice for them to run actually alongside of her, and less than that to get within range. The *Cécile*, steaming her best, came ploughing along in splendid style after her two scouts, and Max knew from what he had seen a couple of nights before, that she only needed a mark to fire at to vomit forth storms of shot and shell which would crumple the *Pilgrim* up as though she had been built of paper, and send her to the bottom in a few seconds.

He sent word to his men to stand by the guns and the bomb-tubes, and signalled to the engine-room for forty miles an hour. Then continuing his downward course, he made the *Vengeur* describe a wide spiral curve and checked her speed a thousand feet above the *Aline*, which was steering the most southern course, and so would be the first one to cross the track of the *Pilgrim*.

He observed with a grim sardonic sort of smile the manifest consternation that was visible among the sailors and officers on the deck of the *Aline*, as they saw her strange foe coming so suddenly to close quarters.

A thousand feet is only a little over three hundred yards. Allowing for the distance that he kept the *Vengeur* astern of her, five hundred yards would measure the range of fire between the two vessels. The elevation was so great that none of the machine-guns on board the *Aline* could be brought to bear upon him, but within a few seconds a score of men appeared on her deck armed with rifles which they raised in the direction of the air-ship.

"You idiots!" he laughed. "Do you think you're going to wing a bird like this with pop-guns like those?"

Then putting his mouth to the speaking tube that ran down to the forward gun-room, he said:

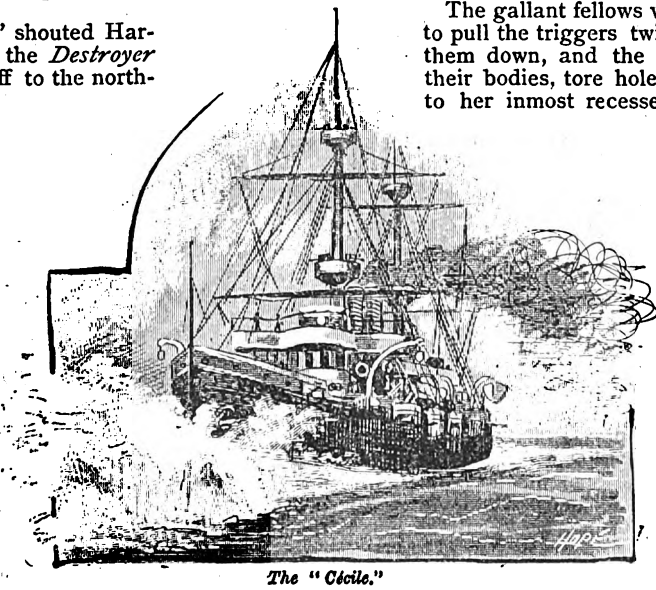
"Ready with the Maxims—Fire! and keep it up while there's a man on her deck."

Almost at the same instant the harsh grinding rattle of the machine guns reverberated through the air-ship, and two converging torrents of bullets rained down upon the decks of the devoted *Aline*. From stem to stern they riddled her as though her deck had been made of cardboard. Some half-dozen of the rifles were fired at once, but that was all.

The gallant fellows who held them hadn't even time to pull the triggers twice before the leaden hail struck them down, and the bullets, after passing through their bodies, tore holes in the decks and penetrated to her inmost recesses. Deck and bridge were alike swept clear by the storm of shot, and before the fire had been kept up a couple of minutes there was no living soul to be seen on board her. Then Max signalled for a little more speed, and as the *Vengeur* ran up over the catcher he called down another speaking tube:

"Ready with the bombs. Now, let go," and at the same instant he signalled to Taxil, "Full speed."

The *Vengeur* leapt forward and upward like an arrow, and as he looked back he saw a cloud of steam and smoke on the water, and that was the last that was seen of the devoted *Aline*.



The "Cécile."

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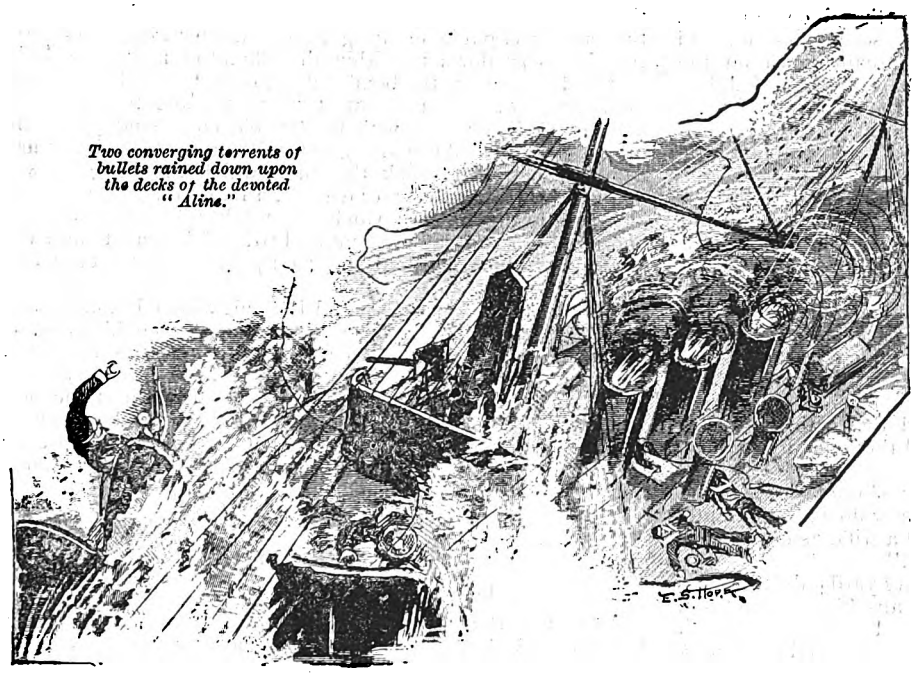

Two converging torrents of bullets rained down upon the decks of the devoted "Aline."

"One disposed of!" he laughed to himself. "This is the very devil's own style of fighting. I wonder what the poor beggars thought of it."

Then he called down the tubes:

"Bravo boys, that was excellently done! Now we'll go and talk to the other one. Stand by, and be ready."

Then once more the *Vengeur* swooped round, described a wide three-quarter circle, and placed herself a mile ahead of the rapidly advancing *Rance*.

"Ready with the Nordenfeldt!" he called down the after-tube. "Stand by to fire on the word. Get the range, and keep it."

A rapid signal went to the engine-room, and the *Vengeur* slowed down till a second signal told Taxil that she was relatively stationary to the catcher.

"Ready—Fire! and keep it up until I tell you to stop."

Then, with a grinding roar, the Nordenfeldt spoke, and, from an elevation of fifteen hundred feet, at a range of two thousand yards, a hail of shells swept down on to the helpless *Rance*. The first discharge flew a trifle wide and ploughed up the water a dozen yards from her side, but a moment later the aim was corrected, and then her decks seemed to curl and crumple up, her funnels were smashed into shapeless masses of iron, her bridge collapsed, a brief, sharp roar, and a rush of steam told that her boilers had burst, and, in twenty seconds she sank beneath the smooth, shining water, her plates torn asunder and riddled like sieves under the impact of the exploding shells.

"Well done, Nordenfelt!" called Max down the tube. "But be more careful with your aim at first. That's a good gun," he continued to himself, "and those shells of Hartog's are the very deuce for tearing anything up. I shall keep that pop-gun, I think. Now I wonder what Franz is doing?"

"Half-speed ahead," he signalled to Taxil, and the *Vengeur* shot forward at sixty miles an hour towards the coast. Then the bell rang "quarter-speed," and Max put his glasses to his eyes. As he did so the boom of a gun came up from the water, and a forty-pound shell from the *Destroyer* crashed into the bridge of the *Flores*.

"Bravo, Franz! Tonnerre! the man shoots like a perfect genius, and that was a good two-mile shot, too."

As he spoke a louder roar came up. Volumes of white smoke pierced by jets of flame rolled out from the cruiser's side, and the water was torn up into foam a hundred yards astern of the clouds of spray which now alone marked the position of the *Destroyer* tearing at her full forty knots an hour through the water.

"There goes another!" he cried again, looking ahead as the *Destroyer* swung round, stopped, and sent another shell home, which pierced the thin plates of the *Flores* a few yards aft of the stem and burst inside, blowing a great, ragged hole in her fore-deck. "I think I can leave you to tackle that gentleman. He's only a Portugee, after all, according to his flag. I'd better go and talk to the other one. She's coming up pretty fast, and if I don't stop her there may be trouble."

Quickening up to three-quarter speed, the *Vengeur* ascended once more, and swept in a long, graceful curve towards where the *Cécile*, with dense black clouds of French coal-smoke pouring from her funnels, was ploughing majestically through the water towards the scene of action.

Knowing that her armament was far more powerful than anything he had yet encountered, Max deemed it prudent to attain a height of four thousand feet before he commenced operations. But, unhappily for those on board the cruiser, she had been built and armed for sea-fighting, and, pitted against her agile ærial antagonist, she was almost as helpless as the two catchers had been.

If she could only have brought her armament, or even a portion of it, to bear upon the *Vengeur* she would have scattered her in fragments through the skies. Her fifteen 6½ and 5½ inch big guns would have vomited a storm of shell that would have swept her from the air like a feather, and her light quick-firing and machine-guns could have torn her to fragments even more quickly.

But the big guns in their barbettes could not be trained to a greater elevation than fifteen degrees, and the quick-firing guns, mounted behind their shields, were only capable of an elevation of twenty degrees, while the machine-guns in her military tops could only be fired horizontally or downwards. As a matter of fact, therefore, every one of them was out of action, as Max took care to keep the *Vengeur* so placed that nothing less than an elevation of sixty degrees would reach her.

This drove the captain of the *Cécile* to fall back on her small arms. The bugle sounded and the marines and naval riflemen formed up on the decks. The word was given and the rifles came up, but before a trigger could be pulled the *Vengeur's* Maxims spoke again, and the massacre began anew. Decks

Max put his glasses to his eyes

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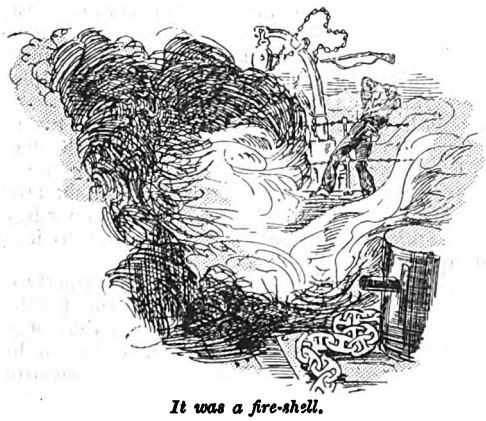
and tops and bridge were swept by the incessant hail as each of the two guns poured its seven hundred and fifty bullets a minute in a continuous stream down on the gallant fellows who, with their splendid batteries lying helpless around them, were incapable of making the slightest effective defence. A few bullets, already half spent, rattled against the sides and bottom of the *Vengeur's* hull, and chipped little pieces out of her air-planes, but that was all.

For five minutes the storm of bullets rained on, and when it stopped the decks of the *Cécile*, splashed with blood and strewn with mangled corpses, presented the appearance of a human slaughter-yard. The guiding intelligence of the big ship was paralysed, for not an officer remained alive on deck. Still she ploughed her way like some blinded monster through the water, and was fast nearing the *Flores*, which was still firing wildly as the *Destroyer* dodged and circled about her, when Max quickened up the *Vengeur* and called to the men at the bomb-tubes to be ready.

"Prepare to let go! One, three, and five with anarchite, two and four with fire-mixture, and send them out lively when I give the word."

"Now!" he cried, as the *Vengeur* slowed down again to the same speed as the cruiser, which now floated apparently motionless two thousand feet below, and a trifle astern of him. "Let go number one, and try the range."

The shell dropped into the water twenty yards ahead of the *Cécile*. He checked the speed of the air-ship ever so little, and ordered number two to be dropped. It was a fire-shell, and it struck the cruiser's forecastle a few feet aft of the stem. There was a bright flash, a flame, and a dense cloud of blue-black smoke swept aft, rolling along the decks, poisoning and suffocating the few poor wretches who still lay in their blood gasping for life, and long tongues of fire ran over the forecastle deck and down on to the forward gun-deck.



It was a fire-shell.

"That'll do," said Max down the tube. "Let go the rest, and go ahead."

The remaining shells plunged downward with ever-increasing momentum, pierced the protective deck as though it had been cardboard instead of steel, and burst below it, tearing it up in long strips as though a volcano had been raging beneath it. Volley after volley was sent down until the upper works of the cruiser looked as though her magazines had exploded and burst up through them. Her engineers and stokers and those of her crew whose duty had kept them below came crowding in a panic-stricken swarm up on deck, preferring, apparently, to die in the open air than to be scalded or burnt, or poisoned like rats in a trap. But still the pitiless hail of shells and fire-bombs rained on, and they were struck down and torn to fragments and hurled to the deck to writhe out their lives in agony in the midst of the flames and the suffocating fumes that kept bursting out incessantly among them.

It was horrible work—horrible enough to sicken the soul of any ordinary human nature; but Max, with the cold frenzy of murderous insanity chilling his blood, stood impassive in his conning-tower, and watched the slaughter that he could stay with a word, with no more sign of emotion than the compression of his pale lips and the angry gleam of the blood-lust in his eyes. The murderous dream that he had dreamt while speeding across the Pacific was already beginning to be realised in deadly earnest.

But even he soon had enough of blood and slaughter for the time being, and so, seeing that there was no one left on board the cruiser capable of firing a shot against him, he brought the *Vengeur* down to within three hundred feet of her deck, and told his men at the bomb-tubes to aim for the funnels with anarchite. In a few moments they got the direction, and half a dozen shells charged with the terrible compound passed in quick succession down the great tubes of iron. Then there came a shock that shook the air in which the *Vengeur* was floating, and after that a crash and a roar and a vast volume of steam, in the midst of which the stately *Cécile* split asunder and broke up and sank in rent and twisted fragments into the abyss over which she had so proudly floated but a brief half hour before.

"Bonjour, messieurs!" cried Renault with a harsh savage laugh. "You bit off a trifle more than you could chew, as the Yankees say, when you came out to tackle the *Vengeur*. I wonder what some of the sapient naval authorities of Europe would have thought if they had seen that little bit of the new warfare. Well, that's three disposed of under the hour, and I suppose Franz has made it pretty hot for the Portuguese by this time. I'll just go and see what he's doing, and then I must have a look at those fellows down south."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE MAN AND THE MACHINE.

AS soon as the *Vengeur* got over the scene of the duel between the *Destroyer* and the *Flores* he saw that, in spite of superior weight of metal and number of guns, the cruiser was getting decidedly the worst of it. In the first place her shooting was very bad, and, added, to that her speed was less than half that of her antagonist.

Hartog was pursuing his usual tactics. His rifled forty-pounder was thoroughly effective at four thousand yards, or over two miles, and he took very good care never to go within less than his range of the cruiser, and never to fire a shot until his range-finder told him that the aim was secure.

It was here that thee normous advantages of greatly superior speed were so strikingly manifested. The naval engagements between Japan and China in 1894 had demonstrated the fact that armoured ships of twelve to fourteen knots had no chance against unprotected cruisers armed with long range guns and possessing a speed of from nineteen to twenty-two knots. The swift ships had been able to choose their positions, shoot their bolts, and retire to a safe distance, returning when it pleased them.

Their commanders chose the speed at which the battle was to be fought. When they chose they could steam the same speed as the heavy ship, and so, for the moment, fire at a relatively stationary object, while their opponents, steaming their best, were still hopelessly out-distanced, and so were pounded at the leisure of their agile antagonists. But the difference between fourteen and twenty knots is, for fighting purposes, as nothing in comparison with the difference between nineteen and forty, as the commander of the *Flores* soon learnt to his cost.

He had fired broadside after broadside at the distant cloud of spray which was scudding along the surface of the water over two miles away, but never a shot had gone within a hundred yards of it. Of the *Destroyer* herself nothing was visible save for the brief moment in which she slowed down to send another shell home. The instant that the missile was despatched the light-heeled craft would spin round and dart away in an ever-changing direction, with the *Flores* vainly labouring after her and blazing away into the empty air and water. A glance to the southward showed the *Pilgrim* just disappearing into the inlet with the *Ariel* about two miles out to sea, and some four miles to the southward. Three miles behind her again the *Devon* was bowling along at full speed, flinging clouds of spray from her projecting stem.

"I think I've time to give that Portugee chap a dose of the Maxims," muttered Max as he headed the air-ship for the now sorely damaged cruiser. "One of those heavy shells might just touch the *Destroyer*, and then Franz's cruise would come to a pretty sudden stop, and that would never do."

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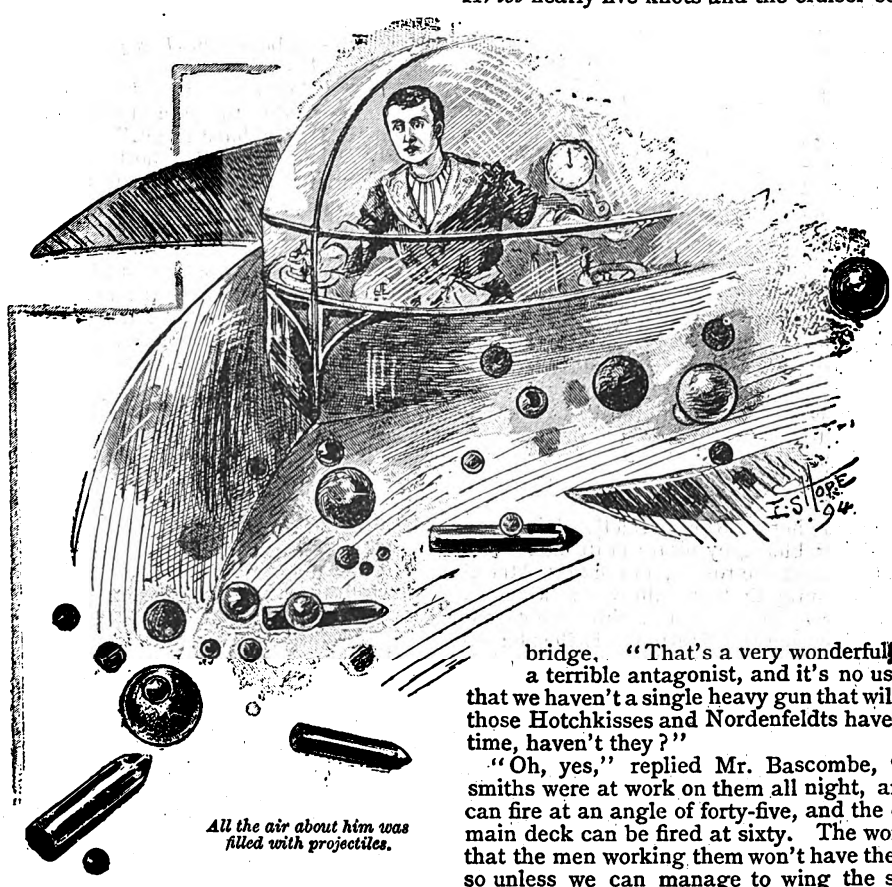
He pursued exactly the same tactics that he had practised with such fearful effect on the *Cécile*. First the continuous storm of bullets swept every living creature that was not under cover from the decks of the *Flores*, then came the hail of mélinite, anarchite, and fire-shells pouring from a height of two thousand feet vertically on to the doomed craft. As has been proved in the case of the Frenchman, no human valour or discipline could support the strange and horrible attack.

Engineers and stokers forsook their posts as the shells came crashing through the torn decks and burst in the ship's interior. The gunners left their guns and ran about, vainly seeking an escape from the flames and deadly fumes which penetrated into the barbettes and battery-chambers in defiance of armour plating and protective shields, and dozens of the unhappy wretches, maddened by the horrors that were multiplying about them, flung themselves overboard, preferring death by drowning to the torments of mutilation, burning, and poisoning that was the only fate that awaited them on board the warship.

In ten minutes the guns of the *Flores* had ceased to speak. Half her crew were killed, and the other half utterly demoralised. Meanwhile the *Destroyer* had been creeping nearer and nearer, watching for her opportunity. Firing shell after shell at a constantly decreasing range through the thin plates of the cruiser's sides, she at last got within five hundred yards of her, and then two torpedoes, one after the other, slipped into the water and made straight for the now almost motionless *Flores*.



All the air about him was filled with projectiles.

So utter was the panic on board the cruiser that no one noticed the two long streams of white bubbles which rapidly lengthened out as the deadly messengers sped at thirty miles an hour on their way.

Then in quick succession came two dull muffled roars, and two mountains of foaming water rose up, one under the cruiser's bow, and the other amidships. At the same instant one of her boilers, pierced by a projectile from the *Vengeur* blew up, and then, as though a hidden volcano had burst forth beneath her keel, her bow rose with a mighty heave out of the water, and she rolled over and went down with a sliding sidelong motion stern first to the bottom of the Atlantic.

These rapidly succeeding tragedies had not, of course, escaped the glasses of the officers of the *Devon* and the *Ariel*. Captain Maxwell, as brave and skilful a sailor as ever took a British ship into action, stood on the cruiser's bridge white with fury, watching the swift destruction which overtook the French and Portuguese vessels in succession, and every minute or two he signalled to the engine-room for more steam, although the *Devon's* boilers were throbbing and straining under the gallant efforts of the stokers, and the steam was hissing angrily from the safety-valves.

The sea was splendid for steaming, and the engines of the *Devon*, working at their utmost capacity, sent the splendid craft rushing through the water at a good twenty-two knots an hour. The captain and his officers knew full well that they were about to encounter no ordinary antagonist. An hour ago the *Cécile*, almost as powerful a cruiser as their own, with her two swift consorts had gone into the battle full of all the confidence of conscious strength, and now they and the *Flores* were lying shattered wrecks at the bottom of the sea, and of all their crews not a man was left alive to tell the story of disaster and defeat.

There was no valid reason why the fate of the *Devon* and the *Ariel* should not be similar. They recognised this, but their duty was to go on, and they went on. But apart from the dictates of valour and duty, there was another consideration. Even if they had wished to avoid the fight it would now have been impossible to do so.

The utmost speed that they could steam would leave the *Ariel* nearly five knots and the cruiser seventeen or eighteen knots an hour behind the *Destroyer* in a trial of speed, while the *Vengeur* with her hundred and twenty miles an hour in hand could fly over and round them in the inaccessible heights of the sky at any speed that her commander chose to select. But brave and all as were the hearts on board the *Devon* and the *Ariel* there was not one that did not beat faster as the moment of battle drew swiftly nearer.

"There's no doubt about it, Bascombe," said Captain Maxwell to his chief officer, who was standing beside him on the bridge. "That's a very wonderful craft, and I'm afraid a terrible antagonist, and it's no use disguising the fact that we haven't a single heavy gun that will touch her. I suppose those Hotchkisses and Nordenfeldts have been altered by this time, haven't they?"

"Oh, yes," replied Mr. Bascombe, "the armourers and smiths were at work on them all night, and those in the tops can fire at an angle of forty-five, and the ones we fixed on the main deck can be fired at sixty. The worst of it is, though, that the men working them won't have the slightest protection, so unless we can manage to wing the scoundrel pretty soon I'm afraid he'll pepper us hotly when he once gets the range."

"Well, we can't help that," said the captain. "I'm going to do my best to bring him down as long as the ship holds together, whatever the result is. I confess I don't like the job. It isn't fair and square fighting; in fact, it isn't like human fighting at all, engaging a brute of a thing that can fly up over your heads and just pepper you as he chooses. But still, that's not the question, and duty's duty, whatever you have to fight. What do the people seem to think of it?"

"Well, sir," replied the lieutenant in a low tone, "to tell you the truth, I'm afraid they're very uneasy. There's nothing that floats in water that they're afraid of, but they don't like the idea of that curious-looking brute flying about overhead. Still, they know what bloodthirsty scoundrels these fellows are, and I don't believe there's a man among them who won't die at his post before he thinks of showing the white feather."

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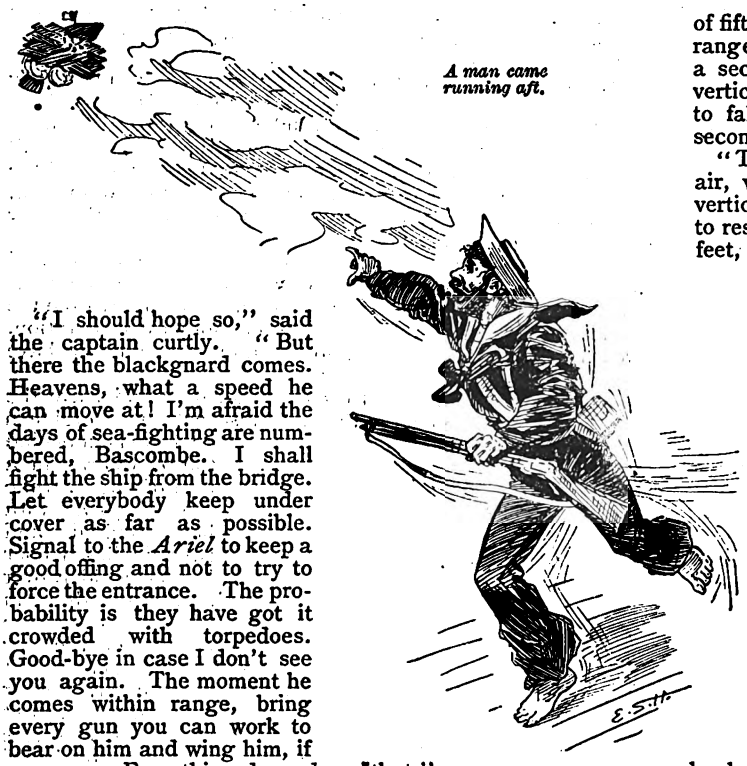

A man came running aft.

"I should hope so," said the captain curtly. "But there the blackguard comes. Heavens, what a speed he can move at! I'm afraid the days of sea-fighting are numbered, Bascombe. I shall fight the ship from the bridge. Let everybody keep under cover as far as possible. Signal to the *Ariel* to keep a good offing and not to try to force the entrance. The probability is they have got it crowded with torpedoes. Good-bye in case I don't see you again. The moment he comes within range, bring every gun you can work to bear on him and wing him, if you can. Everything depends on that."

The captain and his first officer, who were old friends as well as shipmates, shook hands as they left the bridge, the former to go to the conning-tower and the latter to take his place on the main deck to direct the working of the guns. The next instant the signal to the *Ariel* fluttered from the peak, and she began to move out from the shore, but the *Destroyer* was before her.

The *Ariel's* smoke made her position perfectly plain at any moment, but the low-lying blue-grey pirate craft was visible only faintly and at intervals as she rose upon the long Atlantic swell, or by the cloud of spray that she threw up when she put on speed. She ran away out to sea at thirty knots as if inviting the *Ariel* to follow her, for Hartog felt that he was quite justified in leaving, at any rate, the first part of the fighting to the *Vengeur*. The *Ariel* pluckily accepted the challenge at the same time that she obeyed the cruiser's signal, and ran out in the not very well-founded hope of bringing her to a hand-to-hand engagement.

Meanwhile the air-ship, which had dropped out of sight into the inlet to replenish her ammunition, rose again into the air, and, flying at sixty miles an hour, swooped down from the northward on an almost horizontal course at an elevation of about 2,500 feet. When he was within a mile point-blank range of the *Devon* every available gun was brought to bear on him, and a storm of bullets and twelve-ounce shells projected upwards into the air.

Max in his conning-tower saw the flash and the smoke, and a few seconds later he beheld an extraordinary and unparalleled sight. All the air about him was filled with projectiles, apparently floating slowly in the air as though they were tiny balloons instead of solid shot and steel shells. They rose to within a few yards of him and then, taking a sharp downward curve, dropped out of sight.

He looked sharply at his aneroid and read: 2,400. He locked the steering-wheel for a moment and pulled the lever that inclined the slats of the air-planes. Then, as the *Vengeur* soared upward, he took a stump of pencil and a piece of paper from his pocket and made a rapid calculation.

"Ah!" he said, glancing at his paper and then down at the cruiser. "That's the game, is it! I'm glad you spoke soon enough. That quite settles the business as far as you're concerned. Let me see. I suppose those guns have an elevation of fifty-five or sixty degrees, say, a two-thirds angle, and the range was about a mile. Initial velocity, probably 2,500 feet a second. My elevation, 2,400 feet. If I drop a projectile vertically from that height it takes a trifle over eight seconds to fall, and drops with a final velocity of, say, 3,000 feet a second.

"That's the pull of gravity, ignoring the resistance of the air, which is the same in both cases, *ergo*, a bullet fired vertically upwards with an initial velocity of 2,500 feet, comes to rest within eight or nine seconds at somewhere within 3,000 feet, and falls back again. That's how gravitation fights on the side of the *Vengeur*. Good! And that's why those shells came floating about me like feathers. Very curious, but perfectly satisfactory. Now we'll try the Nordenfeldt."

He gave his orders down the tube, and passing over the *Devon* at a height of 3,200 feet he swung his ship round and brought her to a standstill a quarter of a mile astern of the cruiser. The moment he stopped the machine-guns of the *Devon* got to work again, and again the air below the *Vengeur* was filled with floating projectiles.

"Try one or two shots to get the range François," he said to the man at the gun, "and when you've got it, let her have it hot."

Then came the short sharp bang of the gun and the brief whistle of the projectile. Max followed it with his glasses and saw a tiny splash in the water twenty yards or so from the cruiser's stern. Then the gun spoke again, and the second projectile struck the water only a few yards from her starboard side amidships. A third shot grazed her port forward barbette; the shell burst with a bright flash, and the fragments glanced harmlessly from the heavy armour.

"That's better," muttered Max. "He'll get her next time."

And so he did, for the fourth shell struck her square amidships just aft of the after-funnel. A cloud of steam on her deck showed that the steampipe had been cut through. François had got the range now, and in rapid alternation the three barrels of the Nordenfeldt hurled shell after shell with fatal precision on to the exposed deck of the cruiser. It was in vain that volley after volley of projectiles was launched up into the air. The missiles reached the point at which the down-drag of gravitation equalled the energy exerted by the gun, and then they curved downwards and dropped into the sea.

To the men working the guns on board the *Devon* it seemed as though they were fighting a supernatural antagonist, floating serene and unarmed amidst a hurricane of bullets. They knew they had got the range and the elevation, but, as far as they could see, not a shot touched him, or, if it did, the air-ship was bullet-proof. Uneasy as they had been before the duel began, they now showed a nervous excitement, which their officers saw would take very little to turn into absolute panic.

Military writers had often prophesied that, hard as it already was to keep men steady under artillery fire on land, it would be practically impossible to do so if it ever became possible to fire upon them from the air. It was not long before this prophecy was fulfilled on board the *Devon*.

There are no braver men on earth than the sailors who fight under the White Ensign, but they are only made of flesh and blood after all, and when the *Vengeur's* shells, striking with a velocity of over five thousand feet a second, pierced the steel decks as though they had been paper, and drilled clean holes down through decks and bulk-heads and burst in the lowest recesses of the ship, sometimes even piercing her bottom and blowing great ragged holes in her thin plates underneath the armour line, rumours began to run from lip to lip, men looked at each other and shook their heads, and all their officers could do barely sufficed to maintain discipline and even the semblance of steadiness.

The decks were already riddled in fifty places. The military tops were smashed to fragments, the funnels torn and twisted out of shape; scores of men were lying maimed and mutilated

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about the deck; and all the machine-guns save one four-barrelled Nordenfeldt were dismounted and out of action, while down below shells had penetrated even into the recesses of the stoke-hole and burst there, blowing the stokers to pieces, and scattering the blazing coals of the furnaces throughout the narrow confined space.

Meanwhile the speed of the cruiser had dropped from twenty-two knots to sixteen, and then it had gradually slackened down, as furnace after furnace was rendered useless, until she was barely making five knots. Then suddenly the fire from the air-ship ceased.

All this time Max had kept her speed regulated with wonderful dexterity according to that of the cruiser. Now she forged slowly ahead until she floated exactly above the masts of the *Devon*, and then those who were left on her deck saw their terrible enemy sinking gently down towards her. In this position not a gun could be brought to bear upon her, but, determined to die fighting to the end, the brave fellows ran for their magazine carbines and ammunition and opened a hot but, as far as they could see, perfectly ineffectual fire.

After the first volley the *Vengeur* stopped in her descent and rose slightly, then there came a spattering sound on the deck and in the water. Something struck the deck close to where Mr. Bascombe, who was now the only deck officer left alive, was standing, and flattened out. He stooped and picked it up. It was one of their own bullets which had been fired perpendicularly into the air and had fallen back on their own heads.

As he was looking at it a sailor standing near him collapsed and dropped in a heap on the deck, struck down by one of his own comrade's bullets.

"Cease firing!" cried the first officer at once. "He's too high to hit, and we shall only get the bullets back on our own heads."

Those were the last words that a gallant gentleman and a thorough sailor ever spoke. They had scarcely left his lips when there came a blinding flash, a deafening report, and he and every man who was standing near him were hurled off their feet and flung lifeless and mutilated in every direction from the focus of the explosion. Then there came a silence, a silence of death and wordless horror, and in the midst of it a man came running aft from the fore-deck pointing to the northward, and shouting wildly:

"Look, boys, look! There's another of these mechanical bird-machines coming up hand-over-fist yonder to the norrard, and by the great Cæsar's ghost, she's flying the good old Union Johnny. Hooray! Oh, my God, what's done this?"

(To be continued.)

THE OLD VIOLIN.

She has moved a little nearer
To the Master of all music.
HIAWATHA.

THE first bell tinkled from the stage, the gas lights flared up brightly, the audience streamed into the theatre, and the members of the orchestra came up from their underground retreat, each with his instrument under his arm. The leader moved here and there, whispering to this one, calling that one's attention to a particular passage, and speaking, half aloud, over the heads of the others, to one who sat behind.

There was more stir than usual among the orchestra, and one would know, without consulting the play bill, that the music of the piece was an important part in the programme.

The second bell sounded. The voices were hushed, and the instruments taken in hand. The conductor appeared—a young, genteel-looking man. Nodding lightly to the leader, he stepped to his place of honour, then, like a field-marshal, reviewed his troupe. A satisfied smile flitted over his face—then suddenly it darkened. There, among the violins, he discerned an empty chair.

"Who is missing there behind?" he asked.

Many heads turned quickly. "Habermann! Habermann!" was the answer.

"Ah, he shall be punished for this!"

Then came the third signal. Its vibrations had not died away when a little insignificant-looking man rushed to the empty place, pulled his violin from its cover, placed his notes in order, all with feverish swiftness.

The conductor rapped, looked to the right, to the left, then straight ahead. His lifted arm sank, and with a thunderous roll of drums the overture began.

The late comer must have been running, for his breath came in quick short gasps, and flakes of melting snow still clung to his coat. He held his violin upright upon his knee, and stretched his head far forward to see his notes.

At the end of the first act part of the audience went out, but the orchestra remained in full numbers.

"Habermann!" said the conducter, "come this way."

The individual addressed looked up uncertain. Had he been called?

The contra-bassist, a large, rough, but good-natured man, shook him by the arm. "Come, old marmot; can't you hear?"

He understood then. "Marmot" could only mean him. Stumbling, for he was very short-sighted, over several things in his way, he stood before his master, who looked down upon him imperiously.

"My man, you have the privilege of the unpunctual. Confess! What have you been about?"

Like a whipped dog the old man looked up at the speaker, but his face remained cold and expressionless.

"Can you not speak?"

"Perhaps he is in some love affair," the mirthful violin-cellist could not refrain from saying.

"You will be kind enough to keep your foolish humour to yourself," said the conductor. "And you—old man—of course you will pay the ordinary penalty. If this happens again, I shall obtain your dismissal through the director. You know very well you are not wanted here—only tolerated. Enough!"

With a grand gesture he turned away, and the old man stumbled back to his place.

A strange figure was this Habermann. Small and thin, his face of an ashy grey hue, surrounded by a bristly grey beard, and bristly grey hair stood up defiantly over his head. His eyes were close drawn together by his near-sightedness. His trousers were too short and his coat too long, both of uncertain age. When out of doors, to this outfit was added an old hat, and an old knitted scarf that was wound many times round his neck, and the long ends either hung down in front, or were blown back, flaglike, by the wind. His form was well known

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by every boy in the streets through which he passed in going to and from the theatre.

The second act began. The stage represented a scene of Oriental splendour that astonished even accustomed theatre-goers. And the musicians, indifferent, from long familiarity with such things, might have been seen stretching up their heads here and there, in the passage, to get better views of the unusual magnificence. Only Habermann showed not the least curiosity.

In the long interval the stalls were soon deserted, save by some aged people. Habermann's companions vanished to the underworld again. They all passed him, and each had some nonsense to drop. He was the scapegoat on whom was turned all their good and bad humour. They were, in the main, good-hearted men, having not the least thought of doing him harm, but they never knew it to be, or thought it could be, different. Habermann himself had never protested. Only by a shadowy drawing of the face that took the place of a smile did he show that their bantering was noticed.

The last one to go by was the contra-bassist. Clapping his hand on the old man's shoulder, he said:

"Come, Papa Habermann, your cup of coffee will be cold."

It had been Habermann's custom to take a cup of coffee in the long interval—the only refreshment he allowed himself in the theatre.

"Thanks," said he, "not to-night. I took one at home."

He certainly spoke falsely then, for he had eaten nothing the whole day but half a roll; the other half was still in his pocket. He wished for nothing then but to be alone. He thought, "Is she asleep—the refreshing slumber that brings the sick to health?" Oh, if it could be so! But the physician that day said he had no hope of her recovery. She might live weeks or months, and she might go to-day or to-morrow. There was nothing certain about these lung diseases. His daughter—his Elfrida—and dying! She who was the essence of his thoughts and feelings, she who was his life—going from him for ever! No, it could not be! It must not be! God would not allow it!

For twenty-four years Nicodemus Habermann had been second violinist to the Y. theatre orchestra. He belonged, in a measure, to the establishment, as did the chandelier that hung from the ceiling. His wife also came from the same theatre. How he had found courage to ask the important question of the quiet, pleasant, by no means young person, was a theme that racked the brains of his colleagues for a long time. But he had done it and succeeded.

It was certainly no fierce passion that they experienced; but they understood each other, and their marriage had been happier than many so-called love matches. Two years they lived together, quiet and contented, then his wife died at the birth of her child.

Nicodemus became still more quiet and dejected. He lived only for his child. What a wonderful girl she was! Her form was dainty and white as a porcelain figure; her hair was fine, soft, and glossy like spun glass; her eyes bright and dancing like the waters of a trout brook; her laugh as silver clear as sweet toned bells. There were hours when Nicodemus was confounded and puzzled that this graceful, charming creature was his child; when he scarcely dared touch her with his big hands, fearing he might do her some harm.

What foolish things they did together! How she danced when he crawled on all fours about the room! How she sprang upon his back and tried to hold him by the hair, but never succeeded, it was so short and bristly!

How many times had she, sitting in his lap, seized his neckband, and pulled upon it until he was purple in the face, he saying no word, because it seemed to give her pleasure to maltreat her father in that childish way! He endeavoured to gratify every wish she expressed, and once, when she wanted the moon, he had considered, with all earnestness, how he could fashion for her something resembling that luminary.

The years slipped by. Elfrida was a wonderfully pretty girl. People often turned to look after them when he walked with her in the street. She wanted to attend a select girls' school, and he denied himself proper food in order to save the tuition fees. She learned readily, and he rejoiced in her progress.

One day she expressed a wish to accompany him to the theatre. That disturbed him very much, and for the first time he denied her request. Should she be a witness to the ignominious rôle he there played? Should her pure child mind be poisoned by the piquant operettas there brought out? Elfrida pouted and wept. She knew, she said, her papa loved her no longer. What had she done? All her schoolmates visited the theatre; only she, who had the best opportunity, could not.

Habermann was conquered. He could not see her weep, so she went with him. Seated in a vacant seat in the front row of the stalls, she followed the performance with glowing eyes. Her presence worked wonders in the orchestra. Through the entire evening Habermann was treated with perfect respect.

On her way home Elfrida could not find words to express her pleasure. Oh, the singers! How charming it must be to sing like that! Then to receive such oceans of flowers! Yes, she would be a singer, and then her dear papa would not have to go to the theatre every night, but stay at home eating cakes and sweetmeats. Habermann listened with shining eyes. Yes, a singer she should be.

Again years went by. Elfrida had blossomed out into a young woman, left school, and, under the instructions of a celebrated professor, was cultivating her voice. The economy of the father had to be still more severe, for this professor was none of the cheapest. But how richly was Nicodemus paid when he saw the progress of his daughter, and heard the professor's enthusiasm over her talent, and his prophecies of a brilliant future!

A charity concert had been planned, into which was to be drawn the highest musical talent of the city, and which promised to be the event of the season. The professor thought this a grand opportunity to bring out his brilliant pupil.

The evening came. A distinguished audience filled the large, richly-decorated hall. Far back against the wall, pressed into a corner, stood Habermann, with a programme in his hand. A glimmering was before his eyes, a roaring in his ears.

He could not have been more stirred had he suddenly been called upon to play upon his violin over there upon the stage. His only fear was that Elfrida would lose self-command; if she kept that, he was sure all would go well.

A storm of applause stirred him anew. The exotic, order-decked piano virtuoso had bowed and left the stage. Now she must come! Habermann felt his heart beating as if it were in his throat and he wiped the perspiration from his forehead. A low whispering ran through the assembly. Elfrida appeared, led by the professor. There she stood, flower decked, before that thousand-headed Moloch, the public.

An indescribable air of innocence aud purity surrounded her. Her golden hair enveloped her fresh young form like a mantle. People nodded approvingly at each other, and a young man near Habermann said, "By Jove, that's a pretty girl!"

The pause seemed longer than usual. He saw with horror that she was confused. The professor turned impatiently. She raised her head and looked towards her father. The visible distress on his face made her forget her own, and drawing herself up decidedly, she mastered her embarrassment.

Her first notes were low and hesitating, but grew louder and firmer, and finally came out in all their strength and purity. One could scarcely believe there could be such power in that childlike form. Her strength increased with the difficulty of her part, and nothing in her execution betrayed the beginner.

For a time Habermann could see nothing. The tears rolled down his cheeks. Only with his ears could he revel in those heavenly strains. Oh, to think it was his child—his own flesh and blood—who held that large audience in such breathless rapture.

The applause came like a hurricane. She stood for a moment with her hands pressed over her beating heart, while the flowers spread out about her like a fragrant garden. Her eyes sought her father, but he has slipped out into an ante-room, and sinking into a chair, with his head in his hands the

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sounds came into him like the dull roarings of the sea. That hour made good his whole life of sorrow and disappointment. He had not lived in vain.

There was a still more stormy burst of enthusiasm. They called for an *encore*—but Elfrida appeared no more. The professor came instead to say the young singer had been taken suddenly ill—nothing serious—but she could not appear again that night.

Habermann heard himself called. He hurried to the green-room. How strangely the artistes looked at him! One pressed his hand sympathetically, and told him his daughter had been taken to the private room of the manager. Why was there so much emotion over a little indisposition? In spite of himself, a feeling of apprehension seized him. As he entered the manager's room he saw Elfrida, with face pale as death and closed eyes, lying on a couch. The front of her white dress was stained red. He looked with dazed eyes at those who stood about her. What did it mean?

An earnest-faced old man came to him and took his hand.

"Control yourself, my friend," said he. "The tender constitution of your daughter was not equal to the strain of the evening. A blood vessel has been ruptured. She can, perhaps, be well again, but she can sing no more."

With a cry that was hardly human, Habermann sank by her side.

The next day's papers contained long, exaggerated accounts of the affair. A young singer, till then unknown, had appeared and, by her loveliness of person, as well as her unparalleled singing, had won all hearts; but, while the applause still rang through the hall, she had fallen behind the scenes, purchasing success with her heart's blood.

For some days after the concert the unfortunate singer was much talked of; then other matters came up, and she was forgotten.

Troublous days followed for Nicodemus. There were times when Elfrida seemed to be recovering—when she could laugh and joke—but those moments of light made the night that followed all the darker. The lung disease made rapid progress. They had moved far out into one of the suburbs of the city, that she might have the benefit of purer air, for a journey to the south was beyond his means, however much he might economise.

For the last few days she had been worse, and that was the cause of her father's lateness at the theatre. How tiresome the music seemed to him, with its endless repetition! If it would only end, so he could go home!

At length the curtain fell for the last time, and Habermann rushed out as he had rushed in, as if fearful someone would restrain him. Through the wide-opened portal poured a thick, black stream of humanity, laughing and talking about the magnificence of the performance. Coachmen were shouting; pedestrians hurrying, and the snowflakes whirled down without intermission through the misty air, covering the street with smutty, grey pulp.

Pushing through the crowd, every moment in danger of falling under the carriage wheels, hurried Habermann, with his violin under his arm. Turning into a quieter street, where the snow kept more of its whiteness, he pressed his hat more firmly upon his head, drew the skirt of his coat under his arm, and walked as fast as the moist snow would allow. The passers-by looked after the curious figure, and many snow-balls flew about his ears, but it did not trouble him; he only rushed forward—forward.

On, by the great factory, whose tall chimney reared ghost-like into the night; by the churchyard, whose white crosses and monuments seemed signalling to him of the uncertainty of all earthly things; by fair mansions, with their carefully-trimmed gardens. At last, quite exhausted, he stopped before an old house. With trembling hands he opened the heavy gate, then went through the long, dark yard, to the little garden house where he dwelt. A middle-aged woman, with pleasant, though coarse, features and sleepy eyes, met him in the entry.

"Oh, I am glad you have come. Elfrida has asked after you so many times."

"How is she?" he asked, eagerly.

"She has been sleeping for a little while. Try and not wake her. Good-night. I will lie down now."

She had the door latch in her hand, but turned again.

"If——if——anything happens," she said, hesitatingly, "call me."

As she disappeared Habermann looked after her, shaking his head. "She is a queer woman. What does she think can happen?"

He pulled off his wet coat and boots, put on an old dressing-gown, and pushed his feet into a pair of slippers; then opening the door carefully, he stepped to the bedside of the sick girl.

She was still lovely. Her blonde hair surrounded her head like a halo, but her face was white, white as the linen of her bed. With an expression of unutterable tenderness he looked down upon her. Her breath came quick and short. Opening her eyes, she stretched her arms to him.

"I'm so glad you've come," she said, as he kissed her upon the forehead.

"But I shall have to scold you that you do not sleep. Truly, you give your papa a great deal of trouble;" but the tones of his voice gave the lie to his words.

She stroked tenderly his knotted hand, and looking up, said: "Can't I talk a little with my dear papa? Come, sit here and tell me about the new performance."

"Oh, my dear child, what is there to tell? You know I care nothing for that nonsense; my thoughts were with you."

She made no answer, but soon after, looking up suddenly, said:

"Papa, I wish you would play for me upon your violin."

"Oh, child, you must not think of it! It would excite you, and the doctor said you must be perfectly quiet."

"But I feel so well—to-day—so light—better than I have for a long, long time."

"Truly?" His whole face lighted up. "Then sleep now; perhaps to-morrow I will do as you wish."

She put her arms round his neck and snuggled her cheek to his.

"When I say it will be a great, great joy for me, and beg you to gratify me, will you not do it now?"

"Yes, yes, I will," he whispered.

She kissed him tenderly. "My precious papa! Now I shall sleep so much better. Give me a good night kiss."

He pressed her to his heart as he gave it, then laid her back among the pillows.

He took his stand by the window, as far as possible from the bed, and set the bow with a trembling hand. The tones of the old cradle song, "Sleep, my child, sleep on," sounded low through the room.

Then the playing became more lively, and he handled the bow more firmly. The simple, soulful melody awoke soaring phantasies. The longer he played the more the artist within him was aroused. All that had lain in his heart through the long years, under the cares of life as under an ash heap, came up to the light. The tones exulted; they wept and lamented. A divine fire beamed from his eyes; the glow of inspiration was upon the cheeks of the man who had at last found himself. Ever more heaven-inspired and spiritual, they became a sacred prayer to the Lord of life and death. He stood a few moments motionless, with bowed head, when he ended, as if listening to the dying tones; then, breathing fast, laid aside the violin.

Softly he stepped to the bedside. What was that? He hastily seized her hand, then laid his grey head on her young breast, but there was no sound of a heart beat. A blessed, happy peace rested upon her features. He knew then why she had felt so light and happy.

There was a cry and a fall, then all was still in the little room save the rattling of the window sash and the ticking of the clock. Habermann lay there on the floor for a long time, then arose tottering like a drunken man. His features were fixed and bloodless, as if carved from ice. He took his violin and dashed it in pieces against the wall; he broke the bow over his knee; then sat down and leaned his head upon the bed of his dead child. He had played the finale of his life.

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THE AGENT'S STRATAGEM

AUGUSTINE LAFONT was the confidential agent of a large banking-house in Paris. Early in the spring of 1832 he set out from Paris with bills, notes, drafts, etc., to the amount of over a million francs, for a house in Chaumont. Much secrecy had been observed in the preparations for his journey, as the kingdom was at that time infested by a secret organisation of thieves. Lafont had the notes concealed in various parts of his dress, and taking the heavy diligence as the best mode of conveyance, he set out on his mission.

Nothing worthy of note occurred to arrest Lafont's attention until he had passed nearly through the Department of the Seine-et-Marne, when, just at nightfall, two well-dressed gentlemen hailed the diligence, and claimed passage to Chaumont. It was already too dark for the agent to clearly distinguish the features of the new comers, but yet, from what little he could see, he at once made up his mind that their countenances were not unfamiliar to him, and, having come to this conclusion, he determined to watch their movements, for a vague suspicion that they had by some means become possessed of the secret of his business took possession of his mind.

The diligence crossed the Seine at Nogent, and there remained for the night. As soon as Lafont had opportunity to examine the countenances of the strangers at the supper table, he became satisfied that his first impressions were correct, for one of the travellers, at least, he had seen in Paris on the day before his departure, and he could not but notice that they both eyed him with marked interest.

After supper the agent lighted his cigar and walked out on to the bridge, where he remained nearly half an hour, at the end of which time he started back towards the inn, and just as he arrived at the door he noticed his two travelling companions entering the stable.

Prompted by a feeling of curiosity, he followed them, and as he came round by the stable door he could just see the two men crouching away in an empty stall. With a stealthy, cat-like tread, he approached, and he was fortunate enough to make out the gist of their conversation.

When Lafont left the stable he knew that the two men had left Paris for the purpose of robbing him, and that they intended to put their plan in execution as soon as the diligence should have entered the Department of the Upper Marne.

He returned to the inn, and after considerable reflection he determined to procure a horse and secretly pursue his journey. Having come to this conclusion, he went to the driver of the diligence, and under the plea of having to remain in Nogent on special business for a day or two, he settled his fare thus far; then he went to the stable and ordered a horse to be in readiness for him by three o'clock in the morning, at the same time enjoining upon the garçon the strictest secrecy with regard to his movements.

As soon as these arrangements were made, Lafont retired to his room. He, of course, knew that his secret had leaked out, and even in his proposed course he was not entirely free from danger. A million francs was a large sum, and if the two Parisian robbers had set their hearts upon its possession, he had yet some work to perform ere he would be entirely free from them. Last of all, a new idea struck him, and, obtaining a number of papers, he neatly folded them in an envelope, which he strongly sealed and bound with a blue ribbon.

At three o'clock in the morning, while it was yet very dark, and, before any one else was stirring, Lafont quietly descended from his room and went to the stable. The garçon was easily aroused, and in a few moments the agent was on his way to Chaumont.

For two hours he rode on his way, but, instead of pursuing the high road from Treves, he again crossed the Seine, and kept along by the banks of the Aube. Daylight was just beginning to streak the eastern heavens, when Lafont thought he heard the sound of horses behind him, and it was not long ere he knew that he was being pursued, and in ten minutes he was assured that the two robbers were after him.

In a moment the agent leaped from the saddle, and, seizing a heavy stone, he inflicted a severe bruise upon one of his horse's fore legs. The animal reared and plunged, but Lafont managed to hold him, again mounted, and rode on; but the horse limped and staggered beneath the effects of the blow he had received, and, in a short time, the robbers came up.

"Ah! Good morning, gentlemen," said the agent, as he reined in his lame steed, at the same time raising his hat with affable politeness. "So it seems you, too, are tired of the lumbering diligence."

"Yes," replied the foremost of the two men, "the diligence did not exactly suit our convenience, so we took horses."

"And you are bound to Chaumont?" asked Lafont.

"Yes, on important business."

"That is fortunate," said Lafont, with the utmost earnestness, "for you may, if you see fit, do me a great favour. I, too, have important business at Chaumont, but I fear that without assistance I shall not be able to accomplish it. I have, gentlemen, in my possession a vast amount of valuable papers, and intended to have continued on my way in the diligence, but at Nogent I received the intelligence that there was a plan on foot to rob me.

"Do not start, gentlemen, for what I tell you is true. And for that reason I set off thus alone, but my horse has met with a sad mishap, and I fear the robbers, who, I think, are yet at Nogent, may overtake me. Now if you are going directly to Chaumont, perhaps you would be willing to take my package in your charge and deliver it to M. Augient at his office. Any one there will tell you where it is. Then, if I am overhauled, the robbers will find nothing, and, of course, you will not be suspected. If you will thus accommodate me you shall be suitably rewarded. What say you, gentlemen?"

The two men exchanged significant glances during these remarks; and, after a moment's consultation, one of them said:

"You seem to be ready in trusting strangers, sir."

"Oh, not at all, sir," returned Lafont, with a frank smile, "I would much rather trust honest travellers than run the risk of meeting with robbers. You see just now how I am situated, gentlemen; and, if you will do me the favour I ask, you shall not regret it. I shall stop at Arcio, and change my horse, and then follow you."

"Well," said one of the men, "we will do your wish, and meet you at M. Augient's office."

"Then I thank you most heartily," said Lafont, and as he spoke he took a closely-sealed packet from his bosom and handed it over. "In this," he said, "there are valuable papers, and I trust you will use all discretion in their care. Now the robbers may overhaul me as soon as they like."

After some further directions given in an honest confiding manner, Lafont bade his new messengers Godspeed, and ere long they were out of sight. The agent turned his horse's head back towards Nogent, where he arrived in safety, and on the next morning he procured a guard, and once more took the diligence. The robbers stopped at the first convenient place to examine their prize, but their chagrin can be better imagined than described when they found that they held only a securely bound parcel of waste paper. They knew that they were suspected, and, of course, they dared not push the matter further.

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HOW SHOULD STOUT LADIES DRESS?

Some considerable controversy has been going on in one of the American fashion magazines on this subject, started by the threatened inundation of crinolines.

Fancy a fat lady in a crinoline! Or better still, fancy ten fat ladies in ten fat crinolines, with, say, five a side in a none too fat omnibus!

The Yankee humorist says: "A fat lady can beat a fat man; she can stick a stiletto-like pin through her head till it comes out the other side and hold on her bonnet, but the fat man can't." Let's have those ten pins to complete the picture of those ten crinolines. Would we of the sterner sex not like to "lynch" the fiend who invented mountainous hats and feathers for front rows in theatres? Blondin can walk across Niagara on a tight rope, but can he walk a theatre corridor with three ladies' trains in front of him? The fashion miscreant, and the barbed wire inventor, have much to answer for. One fashion paper argues that if the portly lady adds a little slashing of light on a dark backgrouud, artistically and judiciously, it has the effect of *apparently* reducing her size by half a stone. How ludicrous all this seems! What is the seven pounds *imitation* reduction? We have known Mr. Russell, the eminent Specialist on Corpulency, reduce a lady eleven pounds in seven days, and not an *imitation* reduction, but an absolute fact, at a cost of probably less than is paid to the "faking" dressmaker. Those who are acquainted with his methods, or have read his work, "Corpulency and the Cure," can bear us out that he talks with as glib unconcern of fourteen-pound, twenty-eight pound, and even half-hundredweight reductions of unhealthy waste accumulations as a steamboat stoker would talk of coal. The dressmaker simply attempts to hide the disease—creating adipose, carried about by the unfortunate victim to obesity—whereas Mr. Russell (of Woburn House, 27, Store Street, London, W.C.) aims to remove the cause, and thus impart health. Of course, no lady likes the brute of a man who enters into a crusade against tight-lacing in a blunt common-sense way; but he is, however, right when he claims that tight stays with *embonpoint* is suicidal, especially when a few doses of a most pleasant, agreeable, and exhilarating tonic, made entirely from herbs, will reduce one's weight so easily with a corresponding improvement of health and strength, and with it that bright eye and healthy complexion which we all like to see in a lady. If our roof leaks and lets the rain in, we can shelter ourselves from it by opening an umbrella; but if we get the slater to stop the cause, he is the true benefactor, and not the umbrella maker. So it is with the reducer of fat and the dressmaker. The fair sex begin to see that he is their benefactor; he does not ruthlessly rip up the bodice, like uncouth Dr. Abernethy; he is better informed, for he actually knows that in twenty-four hours that identical inimical appendage will be in a state of subjugation. In other words, a dangerously tight lacing on Monday will be slack by Tuesday, after taking three simple doses of his mixture. "Has one to starve one's self?" asked a lady once. Not at all, for it is a singular fact that one eats more under his treatment.

It is perhaps not singular, if we investigate. A fat man is unhealthy; he is, in fact, diseased; as the disease is being cured the organs become healthy, the patient is more buoyant, and takes more exercise, and requires more food (it is also traceable to other reasons without exercise). Then, again, with stilt-like high heels, fashion—well, I think we had better drop this theme. we shall get into hot water with our fair readers; we are married. We generally get the old bachelor-editor to write on these subjects; he is not a bit afraid of women, as he calls them.

But seriously, if any lady, or gentleman, as far as that goes, wishes to reduce their weight, we commend them to Mr. Russell's work, "Corpulency and the Cure," which is published at Woburn House, Store Street, London, W.C., and only costs 4d. in stamps, post free. But to revert to the subject of crinolines, honestly we are pleased to see the really sensible and steadfast way in which ladies have made their standpoint, and we suggest that they should have a medium of their own to rule the fashions to their own liking, and not be the victims of the profit-seeking professional modiste.

DO STOUT PEOPLE LIVE LONG?

This is a question which has occupied the attention of medical authorities from time immemorial. Some argue that the lean kind take longer to shuffle off the mortal coil than their stout brethren. The statistics naturally favour this argument, and no doubt are correct to a great extent, because sufferers from obesity are more susceptible to disease in consequence of the debilitated state of the system when clogged with abnormal adipose tissue; but a curious fact has been overlooked, viz., that corpulency generally commences about the age of thirty-five to fifty, after which time it seems to decrease; therefore, before the proverbial "three score and ten" is reached, the whilom fat man is, by a natural process, again reduced to what may only be called moderate plumpness, and thus cheats the statistician. Stout persons can now, thanks to science, reduce their weight in a most extraordinarily rapid manner, without the slightest injury to their constitutions, or without resorting to those drastic remedies which only operate for a time, or by the continuance of the use of toxical drugs extending over such a period that renders it baneful to the long-suffering patient. An eminent Continental therapeutist recommends the victim to obesity to eat fat meat, while an equally eminent American prescribes lean ditto, and the stomach is to risk an accumulation of serious disorder by swallowing a pint of hot water daily, a most nauseous remedy, we should think, and not unattended with danger. The past master in the cure of corpulence is Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, London, W.C., whose book (256 pages), entitled "Corpulency and the Cure," price only 4 stamps, seems to impress us considerably, for he reduces more weight by his system than the Continental and American physicians, without any of the absurd restriction which would make life scarcely worth living. He uses simple herbs, the properties of which he seems to possess a more than usual knowledge of, and he makes but little secret of his method, so refreshing after the mystery made of most chemical and herbal concoctions of various complaints.—*Wetherby News.*

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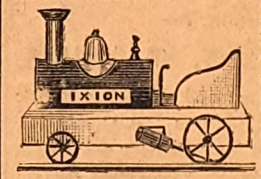

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EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 307.] FOR THE WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 17, 1894. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

RAW-BONED HEROISM

"IT isn't until you try to light your pipe with your last match that you realise what is meant by 'the four winds of heaven,'" said John Wray.

He was lying flat on his chest as he said this, and his words were addressed to a very lean-bodied specimen of the genus lizard, that stood on its tail a few feet from him, blinking at him out of its round dull eyes. In Mr. Wray's mouth was a short black pipe, and in his fingers a wax vesta, very dirty and very limp; that he had fished up, a minute since, from the depth of his breeches' pocket.

It was to escape the wind that Mr. Wray lay on his chest, and to gain the shelter of two large sandstone boulders that stood together and formed a little natural cavern.

S-s-s-s-cratch! Whiz-z-z! Bang!

The lean lizard fled away in mad affright. The match ignited, flickered for one brief instant, and then went out. John Wray threw away its scorched stump in mute disgust, put his "cutty" back in his pocket, mounted his horse, and rode on.

"Another defeated project!" he exclaimed, when he had gone a hundred yards. "To think that I have been to the trouble of filling my pipe, dismounting my horse, tying the brute up and scratching my hand on some infernal thorns in the bush I tied him to, and all for nothing! Heigho!"

He shaded his eyes with his hand and looked anxiously ahead.

"No sign of human habitation yet," he muttered.

The path he followed was rugged and uneven, and based its claim to be called a path on the fact that two months previously, in the rainy season, a heavy waggon had passed over its course and left the impression of its broad wheels on the miry ground; which impression had since been indelibly stamped in the hard soil by the heat of the sun. On either side of the path stretched a seemingly limitless plain, diversified at wide intervals by a tiny hillock of ironstones or a clump of milk-bushes.

The horizon was dimmed and blurred by a light mist, having in it shades of green and pink, that betokened the speedy fall of night. The heavens were cloudless, and the red sun, looking like the palm of a blood-dyed hand, was throwing up long streaks of crimson and gold to mingle with the pale blue of the sky.

Soon it would be dark, densely dark, till the sun rose, and in this interval of darkness John Wray reached Sin Point.

Sin Point is a little mining station, consisting of some thirty log houses and the inevitable drinking booth. A mile from its confines John Wray passed a solitary traveller, who rode an exhausted pony. This traveller peered curiously into John Wray's face as that gentleman clattered noisily past him on the hard track, but gave him no salutation, and made no attempt to follow him closely.

Standing on the outskirts of Sin Point, some fifty yards from the other houses, was a single one-storey tenement. At the entrance to this isolated dwelling John Wray reined in his horse, and, dismounting, rapped noisily with the heavy handle of his riding-whip on the wooden panels of the door. A woman, dressed in an ill-fitting gown and wearing on her head a hideous sun-bonnet, answered his summons.

"Who is it?" she cried, shading her eyes with her hand and peering into the darkness. "If it's you, Hank, your trousers ar'n't done yet."

"It's not Hank," said John Wray.

The woman started, and laid her hand on the door-post for support.

"John!" she cried.

"Yes, John," was the reply. "John Wray, your erring husband, come back like the prodigal son to partake of the fatted veal, or anything else that is appetising and forthcoming. Is there any place where I can put up this poor, tired brute?"

"Come with me," the woman said, and took the horse's bridle in her hand and led the way to a little shed in the rear of the building. "You can put him there," she said, pointing to the interior of this shed. "There's corn in the corner, and two buckets of water. He can have those."

John Wray unbridled his steed, washed out its mouth, placed before it the heap of corn, and then turned and faced the woman.

"And now you can get my supper ready," he said.

"Yes, John," said Hannah.

He followed her back to the room from which she had emerged to admit him, and sat down on a chair beside the blazing log-fire.

"Bustle, Hannah!" he said.

"Yes, John," said Hannah.

She stood a little behind him, with one hand resting on her bosom; and though she said "Yes, John," very meekly, made no attempt to obey him.

"Come, bustle!" repeated John impatiently. "I'm hungry, and dog-tired into the bargain. Don't stand there looking at me!"

Still Hannah hesitated.

"You have been away four years," she said simply.

"Is it as long as that?" he remarked as he kicked the fire

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The woman laid her hand on the doorpost for support.

with his heavy boot and scattered a shower of sparks upon the hearth. "It doesn't seem as many months."

"To me it has been a lifetime," she said. "John, have you no kind word for me? Believe me, I bear no ill-will towards you."

"I never met the woman who could bear ill-will towards me—for longer than five minutes at any rate," said John Wray, passing his white fingers through his long black hair, and half unconsciously arranging a phantom necktie. "Come, Hannah, you're not pretty enough to indulge in heroics. An ugly woman talking sentiment is an abomination. I can't stand raw-boned heroism. That's agreed."

"May I kiss you, John?" his wife said humbly.

"When I've had my dinner you may," he replied. "'Pleasure first, duty afterwards,' has always been my motto."

Hannah sighed, and said no more. Soon a hot repast was on the table, and John began to eat.

"Don't talk to me whilst I'm eating," he said, when Hannah ventured a timid remark. "If I answer you with my mouth full, my words will get mixed up with my food, and I shall have to swallow them. No man likes to eat his words, you know."

At last his appetite was appeased.

"Now you may kiss me," he said, as he drew his pipe from his pocket.

His wife availed herself of this gracious permission, and then sat down on the buffalo rug at his feet and looked at him whilst he smoked.

"Well, and what have you been doing in my absence, sweet wife?" he asked.

"My life has been smooth and uneventful," she said. "The miners have been very good to me. I wash and mend their clothes, and they in return provide me with food and give me money, and do anything for me that I am unable to do for myself. That is all. What have you been doing?"

"Many things that I shall not tell you of; many things that would interest you; some that would not, and some that would merely pain you. I shall only tell you of these last things."

"Thank you, John," said Hannah, with a touch of fine sarcasm that was involuntary.

"Look at me, my dutiful wife!" said John, melodramatically. "Am I not handsome? Am I not clever? Am I not your master and you my slave? There are some men who go to the dickens on horseback. I am one of such men, and I have killed many steeds of the devil's providing in my time.

"First steed, my uncle's fortune, which I ran through in two years. Second steed, my father's fortune—I rode that to death in fifteen months. Then I walked for a bit. I walked past your house. I walked into a coal shaft and broke my arm. You found me lying there—doubtless my immobility was picturesque—and walked into your heart. I was taken to your home and tended. My broken arm became complicated by a malignant fever. You nursed me through my illness into convalescence, and then your father borrowed my fever, and it took him to heaven. He left you his fortune. I married you, and mounted my third steed. It has lasted me three years.

"My fourth steed was a sorry hack—an appointment at three hundred a year, in some Government hole, which a lordly relative of mine placed at my disposal. In a month it was on its knees; but ere it fell I mounted, by its aid, a better horse. Unfortunately this better horse led me into the wilds of the Criminal Code, and I came a nasty cropper over a forgery hurdle.

"I fled from England, taking you with me in my flight because I couldn't get rid of you. We came here, and soon I mounted my sixth steed—a nice little filly which the miners here christened "A Streak of Luck."

"On this filly I rode away, four years ago, and betook myself to Cape Town, where I have been going to the dickens at a rare pace. Two months ago my horse fell badly, and I was thrown. I left Cape Town and journeyed north to see if I could get a 'pony' or two from you—excuse the pun if you see it! On my way hither I mounted my seventh steed. It's only a poor flesh-and-blood horse that I stole from the man I have been travelling with. You have seen it, for it's in your stable now. If its owner catches me, I shall mount my eighth steed—the end of a rope—and that will take me home!"

He rose, knocked the ashes from his pipe, and laughed gaily.

"How much money have the miners given you in these four years?" he asked.

"I don't know. About a hundred pounds, I think."

"Only four ponies! Well, I suppose I must put up with them."

"But you cannot stay here," said Hannah. "The miners have sworn an oath that if you ever return they will lynch you. You stole Hank Davison's best horse when you went away, and—and—besides——"

She hesitated.

"And besides," he concluded, "these men are filled with honest indignation because I deserted you. Don't worry yourself, my sweet wife, I don't want to stay. Where's your money?"

"If you will only take me away with you you shall have it all—every penny," said Hannah. Then she came and laid her face on her husband's knee and clasped his hands in hers, and cried:

"May I kiss you, John?"

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"Oh, John, dear John! do, *do* take me with you. I will go as your servant, as your slave. I have been so lonely without you all these years. Take me to your heart again. I believe you loved me once. You sneer. I know that I am ugly and stupid, and you are so beautiful and clever. But, oh, John! if only for the sake of that tiny second life you gave me—if only for the sake of our dead child!—take me back to your heart; try to love me! I will be dutiful as I have always been.

"And, John, I know you will be angry with me for saying it, but you don't know—you don't know!—try to think sometimes that there is a God! Let me lead your thoughts upward to Him! Let me——"

"Hush!" cried John, suddenly rising with a blanched face, and shaking off her clinging hands. "What's that?"

Hannah listened in silence. Faintly audible to her ears was the sound of many horses and the confused hum of a babel of angry voices. The sounds drew nearer—nearer—nearer!

"It's the miners!" cried Hannah. "They know you are here! Quick—quick, John! Run—hide! My God! My God! how can I save him?"

. . . . . .

An hour after John Wray passed him on the road, Bob Radd, the traveller who rode an exhausted pony, entered Peter Bittle's bar, and dropped in the midst of the miners congregated there a metaphorical bomb. The explosion was four words dramatically uttered, and the four words were these:

"Jack Wray's come back!"

At first the miners were speechless with astonishment. They then crowded round their informant, and rained on him a perfect deluge of hot inquiries. As it was impossible to answer all of these, Bob Radd answered none, but called for a glass of whiskey, and waited till the storm of questions had in some measure subsided.

"'Ow do I know?" he cried, when comparative silence was restored. "'Ow do I know? Didn't I see 'im wi' my own eyes not a mile from 'ere? Warn't 'e a ridin' as fine a blood stallion as any on yer 'ere ever clapt eyes on? An' didn't I, to make sure on 'im, peep through Tant Wray's winder as I come up 'ere, an' see 'im awolfin' down 'is dinner, while 'is poor desarted wife stood by 'im awatchin' 'im as if he was a gord? Ain't I seen it all wi' my own eyes? 'Ow do I know, indeed! I reckon I ought to know, anyway?"

Hank Davison stood out from his fellows and held up a large, impressive hand.

"Mates," he said, "yer remember what we said four years agone? Yer reckerlect yer oath?"

"We do!" they made answer, waving their hands.

"An' yer still o' the same mind?"

"We air!"

"Is it the end of a rope?"

"It is!"

"Then come along, Git yer 'osses out. The cuss 'as got a good mount from all accounts, an' 'e may try ter give us the slip."

The miners gave a whoop of savage delight, and scattered. Soon they reassembled, mounted everyone, and went their way towards Hannah Wray's cabin at a rapid trot.

The full African moon had risen, and was flooding the countryside with its silver radiance. By its light all stood out clearly and distinctly—the sprawling milk-bushes, the tiny hillocks, the shallow pools that the fierce sun had yet left, and the little log habitations of the miners, with their covering of white plaster.

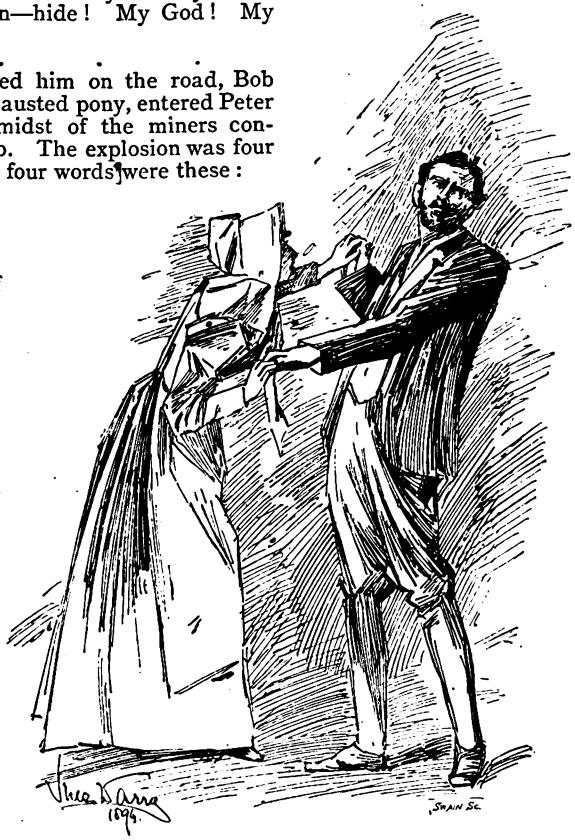
Swiftly the cavalcade moved along towards Hannah Wray's abode; but ere they reached it they saw a huge white horse dash out from the shadow of its farther side, and speed away across the moonlit plain.

"That's 'im!" screamed Bob. "That's 'is dandy black coat! Them's 'is fine ridin' boots! That's 'is long black 'air! That's 'is 'orse'. That's 'im. After 'im, mates; don't let the Gord-forsaken galoot git off this time!"

"We kin all spare the skunk, so don't spare 'im, any on yer," yelled Hank Davison with grim, paradoxical humour.

"Shoot 'im, if yer git near enough, as yer'd shoot a sprawlin' jackle!"

No need had Hank's companions for any such adjuration. Each was thirsting for the blood of the fugitive, and soon Sin Point was left in the darkness behind them—deserted, forsaken. Over the loose, sandy soil that clung to the horses' hoofs and fell in heavy showers about them, over the dried-up beds of erstwhile swollen sloots; through clinging, thorn-clad bushes that tore the skins of the horses and riders till the soil was stained with their dripping blood; slipping, falling, stumbling, jostling, leaping, flying, cursing, hallooing, the band of rude avengers bore down on their hapless quarry. But he was better mounted than they, and had his horse been fresh would soon have left them far behind.



"Hush!" cried John. . . . "What's that?"

As it was, he held his lead easily. A mile was swiftly covered—two, three—till Sin Point was a couple of leagues behind, and still the stern chase continued. But now the rough, heavy horses of the miners began to lose pace. One by one they fell out of the race till only Hank Davison was left of the whole party, and even his steed gave signs of weariness.

"'E *shan't* escape!" cried Hank savagely, and he drove his heels into the horses ribs, and strove to urge it to greater speed.

But even as the words were uttered his jaded steed stumbled and fell heavily, and Hank was pitched forward on his hands and knees. In an instant, however, he was on his feet again. Swiftly he brought the rifle that hung across his back round to his shoulder and fired at the fugitive.

"Missed! by all that's unlucky—missed!" he cried, for the flying figure on ahead still held its course unmoved.

Then, suddenly, Hank saw it reel heavily and fall to the ground.

"Hooroar!" he shouted, turning and beckoning wildly to his comrades far behind. "I've hit 'm! We've dropped our bird at last!"

An answering cheer came faintly on the night air to his ears. With a run Hank approached that huddled heap upon the ground, which the riderless horse, now lost in the darkness, had left, and sunk on his knees beside it.

It lay face downward in the loose sand. As Hank stooped to turn it over a flying cloud obscured the moon, and all was dark. A horror, that was all the more horrible by reason of its indefiniteness, filled the miner's soul. He buried his face in his hands and prayed for a gleam of light. It came at last, touching reverently the dead form, and Hank discovered that he held in his arms the lifeless form of her who had once been the living, loving woman—Hannah Wray.

. . . . . .

John Wray mounted his eighth horse on the first anniversary of his wife's death; and, as he had predicted, his eighth horse took him home.

The Extra Christmas Number of *Pearson's Weekly* will be published on Thursday, November 15th, and will consist of 32 pages. Price Threepence.

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THE ROMANCE OF A RING.

"A LADY, Major."

The constable bowed slightly, as with a gesture he intimated to the caller, who had waited for nearly half an hour in the ante-room, that she was at liberty to enter the inner office.

The District Superintendent of Police, standing upon the threshold where he had dismissed his last visitor, looked attentively at the heavily veiled figure which moved toward him. Placing a chair for her beside his desk, he seated himself at his official post and waited for her to speak.

Without any hesitation she threw aside her veil, glancing round the office, as if particularly curious as to her surroundings. She was a woman of about thirty years of age, whose face, though wearing an expression of the profoundest melancholy, was remarkably lovely and interesting.

"I have come to you for advice," she said, looking questioningly at the Superintendent.

He was a thin, wiry little man, who, with the tips of his forefingers pressed closely together, was regarding her keenly through his half-shut eyes.

"I shall be most happy to give it, madam."

The lady smiled slightly—it was plain to see that she smiled seldom—at a suggestion in his tone.

"Perhaps your advice is oftener asked than taken?" she said. "That is no unusual occurrence anywhere, and may I say frankly that it is quite probable I may not act upon yours."

The Superintendent bowed impressively, a twinkle in his keen, half-shut eyes.

"A diamond ring," she began, "has been stolen from my writing-desk, and under peculiar circumstances. The drawer in which it was placed was intended for a jewel-casket, and even its existence was known only to myself. I put the ring into the drawer last night at about eleven o'clock. This morning it was gone, and I have not the least clue to its disappearance."

"What position did the drawer occupy?" the Superintendent asked, as she paused a moment.

"It was at the back of another drawer, which had to be taken out before the jewel-casket could be reached. It was opened by touching a secret spring."

"And the desk itself?"

"Was made to order for me, some years ago."

"You say no one but yourself knew of the existence of this drawer?"

"No one but the cabinet-maker, and—my husband—who died three years ago."

The tones died away in a whisper. So the confirmed melancholy of the face, the heavy crape shrouding the slender figure—these were accounted for.

"I must know something of your house—your family, madam."

"My house is an ordinary one—33, South Crescent. It is, I believe, the middle house. My bedroom is the second floor back The desk stands near the window, and at right-angles with it. I have no family except my servants—a housekeeper, whose son lives in the house, and a man cook."

"What is your opinion of the honesty of these persons?"

"The cook has never, to my knowledge, entered those rooms. My housekeeper, an old lady and dear friend, is above suspicion. So, also, is her son."

The Superintenent shrugged his shoulders significantly.

"You probably, in your profession, suspect everybody," the lady said, a little sharply.

"Pardon, madam, not everybody. Is her son employed about the house?"

"He—I at one time employed him as a coachman, but he was not trustworthy."

"Yet above suspicion, you say?"

"He is too fond of his glass. I do not believe he is a thief. Last night he did not come home at all."

"Ah!"

"You seem to attach some significance to that fact?"

"That is inevitable."

"I mentioned it simply to prove that he was——"

The Superintendent nodded, in a manner which said that the logic of a lady was often unlike that of a police-officer, and that different conclusions might be drawn from the same premises.

"You are sometimes away from home?" he said, in an interrogative tone.

"Very seldom. My life is a secluded one. This is the first time I have been out of doors for over a month, and I receive no visitors."

"No one has ever seen you open this drawer?"

"No one, I am positive."

"And there is nothing missing but the ring?"

"There was nothing else in the drawer—in the house. My other jewels—I wear no ornaments now of any kind, but I had many at the time this drawer was made for them—have been for months in the care of the Safe Deposit Company."

"Was the ring marked, madam?"

"Yes."

"In what way?"

"A date and initials—mine and ——"

"Your late husband's?"

"Not my husband's."

The Superintendent was studying with great interest the point of a pencil which he had picked up from his desk.

"Are you willing to tell me why this was the only piece of jewellery you kept in the house? Not unless you are willing, you understand," he added as she shrank a little.

"I will tell you, certainly," she said, in so frank a voice that he wondered how he could have supposed her reluctant. "Because it is the only link between me and a past which is precious. It was the only thing worth keeping in all my miserable and disappointed life. So much for the sentiment of the matter, if you care to hear it; though no one who could in any possible way be connected with it is now living."

"Your doors were locked on the night in question?"

"As they always are. I am a light sleeper, too, always. But, above all, sir," she added with great emphasis, "bear in mind what I have told you of the construction of this drawer. I would have risked that desk in the hands of fifty burglars. The jewel casket could not have been discovered unless the desk was broken to pieces. Now, have you any theory about it?"

"One—and it must be the correct one, or my experience goes for nothing. The ring was taken by your housekeeper's son."

"Impossible!"

"I merely give you my opinion."

The lady looked greatly distressed.

"Are you willing that the young man should be watched for a few days? He need never know that he is an object of suspicion, unless we have reason to believe him guilty?"

"I will trust it to your judgment, sir," the lady said reluctantly.

The Superintendent drew toward him a memorandum-book.

"Your name, please?" he asked, as he wrote down the number of the house she had incidentally mentioned.

"Mrs. Westerton."

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"And the young man?"

"John Cheyne, at present employed in Holley's Parcel Office, Broad Street."

"Do not fear, madam, that we shall disturb him now, or at any future time, without your express permission."

The Superintendent of Police was as practical and prosaic a man as could be found anywhere; but he was completely fascinated by the lady's face and manner. Her voice, too—it was wonderfully musical, but the saddest he had heard in his life.

"Nonsense!" he mentally ejaculated, ten minutes after she had left him. "At my time of life! Sixty-two, and as bald as ——"

He rubbed his hands vigorously over his head, and then set as vigorously to work on a pile of papers lying on his desk.

On his way home that night he called upon Captain Farleigh, the Divisional Superintendent, one of the most valued men in the force—the intimate friend and confidant of his Chief.

"Queer case to-day, Farleigh," the Chief Superintendent began, caressing a little Scotch terrier, which showed extravagant delight at his presence. And he related all the details of his interview with Mrs. Westerton.

The Captain looked interested.

"You're on the right track, no doubt. The idea of your fascinating caller knowing anything of the way in which such rascalities are carried on."

"And her house is only a stone's throw from this station," the Superintendent remarked. "It will be easy for you to keep an eye on it for a while—see who goes out and comes in. I believe every syllable she says; and yet—put Willis on the track of this young Cheyne. He's a lynx, Willis is, and if there's any crooked work going on he'll get at it in no time. I'd give a good deal to recover that ring for her—I admit that much, Farleigh." And with a laugh the Chief Superintendent passed out into the street.

It was several days before the two men met again.

"Anything going on at 33, South Crescent?" the Chief asked, pointing with his thumb over his shoulder in the direction of the house.

Captain Farleigh shook his head.

"The hinges of the front door have a good chance to grow rusty this rainy weather," he remarked. "I doubt if the door has been opened since the lady passed through it to go to you. Lang has grown quite excited over it—had a glimpse of the lady's face once at the window, and has raved over her ever since as wildly as you did. I believe he's watching the house by night as well as by day, though I've no idea what for. Perhaps he has."

"How about the suspicious John Cheyne?"

"I should judge from Willis's report that he's about as harmless an idiot as you could find—knows enough to get drunk occasionally; but even then generally has some one at his elbow to jog it for him. He never took that ring—that I could swear to—unless it was left under his nose."

"Who did it, then?"

"A question easier asked than answered."

The Chief shrugged his shoulders.

"I hate to find myself so far out of my reckoning. I'd counted on making an easy job of this matter. Positively I was fool enough to believe that I could find that ring in the first pawnbroker's shop, and so far I've not discovered it. There's a further development in that diamond-ring case, Farleigh. I had another note from the lady this morning."

"Another note? You don't mean to say that——"

"Yes, I've written to her several times."

"And what in the world——"

"About the ring, of course. I've told her what we were doing, and how little reason young Cheyne had given to confirm my suspicions of him. I knew that would please her, as it's easy to see that she's mighty fond of the boy's mother."

The Captain was laughing, and as the Chief slapped him on the shoulder he laughed in his turn.

"Oh, it's no use. I'm not such a fool as that—don't believe it! But it's been a little excitement—a little recreation. It's done me good, and I warrant it hasn't hurt her. Hurt her! That woman has done one hurt, if I'm not mistaken, that will last her for her life. And every breath she breathes is devoted to the memory of some dear love or other. Happy Ghost. I'd almost be willing to change places with him, whoever or whatever he is. 'Tisn't her husband, that's certain. Look at this!"

As he spoke he took from his pocket and unfolded the note of which he had spoken, pointing to the elaborate monogram at the top of the sheet.

"That's superb," the Captain said, examining it with great interest.

The Superintendent read the note aloud:

"Mrs. Westerton desires to again express her sincere thanks to the Superintendent of Police for the great interest which he has shown in the matter upon which his advice was solicited, but begs that he will make no further investigation, as she has reason to believe that she has herself found the clue to the disappearance of her property."

Captain Farleigh gave a low whistle, and then laughed.

"Your correspondence does not seem to have passed beyond the first formalities."

"I can't flatter myself that it ever would, but I've taken no end of comfort just in those. It's easy enough to see how a man could break his heart over a woman like that. I should pity a fellow who loved her hopelessly—mind you, I don't propose to try that little experiment myself. I wish you could see her for yourself once. But, sentiments aside, I should like to know what clue she has found in this business, and I'm blest if I don't find out!"

He did this in a straightforward way. He called in person the next day at 33, South Crescent, and was ushered in by the housekeeper, through the seldom used front door, into a tiny, but magnificently furnished, reception room. He sent up no card.

"A gentleman on business," was the message delivered by the servant to her mistress.

Mrs. Westerton did not keep her guest waiting. He heard instantly the rustle of her dress on the stairs, and as she sat facing him in the little room, she was lovelier, yet even sadder, if that were possible, than she had seemed at their first interview.

Though her recognition was ready, and her greeting cordial, it seemed to her visitor as if it were the body only of the woman who stood there—as if the spirit was unconscious of his presence. He found more difficulty than he had anticipated in opening the conversation.

"You will not think it strange, perhaps, Mrs. Westerton, that I have not only a great deal of interest, but no little curiosity, in the matter you confided to me, and more than ever since your note of yesterday. You may consider me presumptuous, but my object in calling was to ask you if you are willing to tell me on whom your suspicion rests—what clue you have found to this most mysterious robbery. The more I have thought of this case, the more it has puzzled me."

Mrs. Westerton made an uneasy motion with her hands, which were lying in her lap. She glanced about the room, out of the window, then back to his face again. For the first time since she had entered the room she seemed to be conscious of herself and of him.

"I don't know, after all, why I should not tell you," she began, in a voice that sounded faint and far off. "My husband, whom I thought dead long ago, is still living. I told you, you remember, that he knew the secret of the jewel-casket."

The Superintendent gazed at her in amazement.

"But, even then," he said, after a long pause, "how could——"

The lady made an impatient gesture.

"Don't ask me any questions as to how he could do anything. You might like to know what my life has been for the last ten hideous years— since I was George Westerton's wife! I married him from pique—while angry with the only man whom I really cared for—and he married me for my money. It was a fair bargain—that is, neither of us tried to deceive the other, though he was a much worse man than I ever suspected. I found it out quickly enough—after I had married him. No doubt it was he himself who three years ago sent me notice of his own death. I believe now that it was another of the

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countless traps he was continually setting for me—Heaven knows why! We both knew that the man to whom I was engaged before my marriage was killed in Australia. He certainly could trust me with all the rest of the world—after that."

"And you have seen him?"

"No. My housekeeper has, however. Accidentally, at the window of one of the houses at the back of this one—a lodging-house. And he has taken my ring; I am sure of it. There's no use in asking me how; I don't know."

It was a woman's unreasoning conviction. It admitted no argument.

. . . . . .

"A queer affair, altogether," the Chief remarked that night to Captain Farleigh, as they sat confidentially together. "I've no doubt that Mrs. Westerton's theory is the correct one. It's plausible enough. I'd like to get a good hold on that fellow, but she won't listen to it, even though she admits that she'd give five years of her life for that ring. Little she cares now for fifty years of it, I fancy."

"It must have been a rather unsatisfactory interview, almost as unsatisfactory as the correspondence, now that you find that she's not the widow of some saint, but the wife of some scoundrel. I know you hate to give up when you've undertaken to find out anything, so you ought to have some comfort in knowing where the ring has probably gone to, even if you don't quite——"

He stopped abruptly as two officers entered the police-station, having in custody a man—a gentleman, he might be called, judging from his dress alone. But his well-made clothes were bespattered with the mud of the street. His hat was gone, his dishevelled hair and bleeding face made him a pitiable object to look upon.

With the group was a fourth person, an elderly man, who followed them in a state of great excitement.

"This is the man, sir," he said rapidly, addressing Captain Farleigh, "whom the police hunted for two years ago to answer for the forgery in the Barford Bank robbery. The very man, sir!—I know! Call on me for evidence. I'm on my way out of town on business to-night; but I'll be back to-morrow, sir, and early, sir, to help this rascal to his place in gaol, sir!"

With a menacing glance at the man so designated, and a hasty comparison of his watch with the clock of the police-station, he rushed out again into the street.

"The gentleman recognised him," one of the policemen explained, "and there was a street fight before we got to them. If this had been loaded it might have made short work of somebody," and he laid a pistol on the desk; "that is, if he had not been too drunk to use it. I had to call for help before I could capture him, drunk as he is."

"Your name?" the Captain demanded of the prisoner, his pencil suspended in his fingers.

The man made no reply. He had fixed his eyes on the face of the questioner, while a curious change passed over his own.

"Your prisoner is not so drunk as you think, Willis," the Captain remarked, *sotto voce*. "What's your name?" he repeated.

"Do you ask that question in your social or professional capacity, Bertram Farleigh?" was the man's reply. "You do not seem to have the pleasure of my acquaintance, though I have long had the pleasure and honour of yours."

The Captain eyed him sharply, though with very little curiosity.

"Your name?" he asked impatiently.

"Perhaps you will be more interested in that of—Heloise Sayre!"

The Captain, with a blanched face, stared at him as if paralysed, then rose suddenly and passed his hand over his eyes.

"Search him!" he said, shortly, to one of the officers.

"How's this, Farleigh?" And the Chief Superintendent laid his hand on the younger man's shoulder, while his eyes twinkled. "I'd no idea that you ever had a weakness for any woman under the sun. How is it?"

There was a sharp, metallic click as something taken from the prisoner's pocket fell on the floor and rolled to the feet of the Superintendent.

He picked it up. It was a diamond ring of great beauty, in a peculiar setting.

"I'm getting to be a monomaniac on the diamond ring subject," he said with a laugh. "Here, tell me if it's marked, I'm afraid to look at it myself for fear that it isn't hers."

"About one chance in a—Great Heaven!"

"Recognise it, do you?" the prisoner exclaimed, as he watched the little transaction. "I thought you would. 'Tisn't so very many years ago since you had the best of it, and I hated you accordingly. Not that I cared so much for her, but I wanted my own way, and I got it—with her, and her money, too! You can return the ring with my compliments, so long as I can't help myself; and if she's curious as to how I got it, tell her I've been a neighbour of hers for some time—could watch her back window from mine, and didn't find it very hard this midsummer weather—with windows wide open—to make a visit to her desk."

The Captain turned suddenly toward his Chief.

"Do you hear? Do you understand?" he demanded; but the Superintendent had left the police-station.

"Heloise was never particularly happy with me," the man went on, notwithstanding the attempts of the officers to check his speech. "She might have been if she'd married Captain Farleigh. I told her you had been killed in Australia. Queer business you've drifted into Bertram Farleigh."

The man had been thoroughly searched. A miscellaneous collection taken from his pockets lay on the Captain's desk; but the Captain, with an expression on his face so new and strange as to attract even the attention of the officers, fingered the pistol which lay near the rest of the man's possessions.

"This should do good service for once if it were loaded," he said, with dry white lips. "I know you now; I swore long ago that I would have the life of the man who married Heloise Sayre if I ever found out who he was!"

"Better put it down, though," the man sneered, "and treat me to a better sort of hospitality, as I've come to spend the night with you."

The Captain raised the pistol and held it aimed at the man's head, while his breath came hard and fast.

"Farleigh! What's this?"

He turned quickly to face the Chief Superintendent, who, with a dexterous movement, sent the pistol flying across the room. A lady stood by the Chief, gazing at Captain Farleigh.

"Bert, Bert!" she gasped, in a half whisper and with dilated eyes. Beyond him she saw her husband. She turned to the Superintendent, clinging to him for support.

"Why have you brought me here?" she asked in a husky voice.

"To identify this man—this ring," and he took up the jewel. "You will not refuse now to let the law protect you—to take——"

"This is a most unexpected pleasure, Heloise," George Westerton sneered, looking at his wife; "but since you're here, I'd like to ask where's the rest of the jewellery you used to keep in your writing-desk cabinet? I looked for it a few days ago, and if I'd found it I shouldn't have been in this hole. I kept the ring by me as a sort of small change, you know, in case I should need it. But the game's up. It never was worth the candle. Give my respects to the old gentleman when he calls in the morning. He's right enough about the bank business. You can keep the pistol to remember me by, Bertram Farleigh. Ta-ta."

With a quick movement he drew from the lining of his sleeve a small dirk-knife. It flashed in the light for an instant, and then he plunged it into his heart.

With a shriek, she hid her face upon the Chief Superintendent's shoulder, and, with his arm about her, he led her out of the police-station.

It was not more than ten minutes before he returned. Captain Farleigh was alone. Upon a bench, his face covered with a handkerchief, lay the body of the suicide, whose blood stained the floor.

"Mrs. Westerton has her ring once more, Farleigh," the Chief Superintendent said quietly. "I put it back on her finger myself—for you. After awhile you will go and see it there. You have my permission, and my blessing, my boy!"

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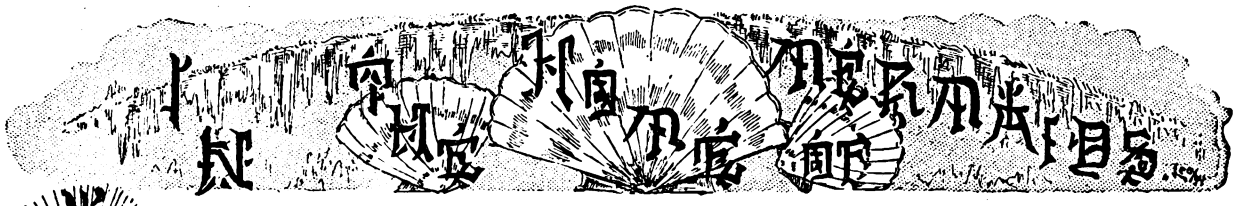


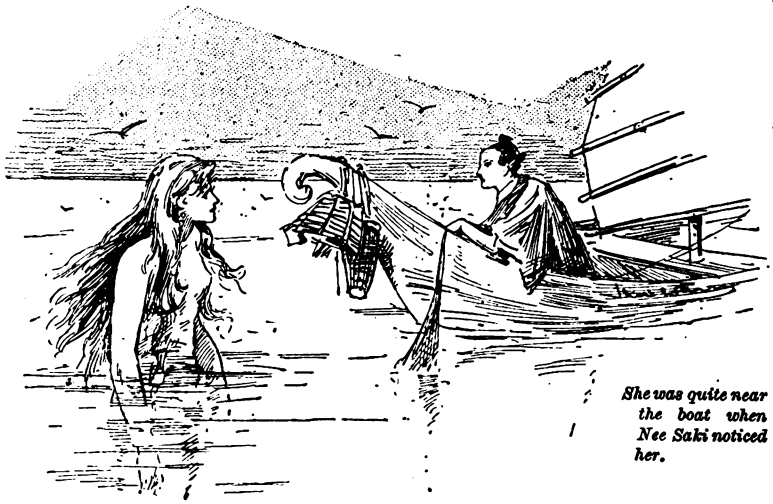
AMONG all the young men of Kishigato none were so handsome as Nee Saki. Kishigato was a village on the coast of Japan, but readers of SHORT STORIES will look in vain to find it on the map, for the name was changed long ago. Nee Saki was only a fisherman, but he was envied by the young men of the higher classes because of his jet-black hair, his bright eyes, his clear skin, his fine figure, his strength and alertness, and the easy grace of his movements.

Pretty girls of his own class looked upon him as one whose smile was worth winning, while the maidens of higher degree often wished that he had been born in their own class, or they in his, so that they might allow him to know how much they admired him, and how gratefully they would esteem his love.

Indeed, some of them could not command themselves so completely as to prevent their eyes lighting up when he happened to look straight at them; but Nee Saki was modest, and regarded the glances bestowed upon him as being the signs of kindly feeling only, rather than evidence of admiration, and of something even deeper.

Nee Saki might often have fallen in love, for many were the devices made by the maidens of Kishigato to draw him into the meshes of mutual admiration and affection. But the lad's heart was too full of love for his old father and mother to allow him to think of courting.

His days were spent in drawing finny prey from the depths of the sea, and in selling what he had caught. He was lucky as a fisherman, and brought to market the finest, largest, and sweetest fish caught in the waters surrounding the beautiful island.



She was quite near the boat when Nee Saki noticed her.

It followed as a matter of course that he prospered in the market, for apart from the excellence of his fish, it was a pleasure to buy from a lad who was as polite and obliging to his customers as he was good to his father and mother. As to his evenings, he spent them at home, telling his parents of his adventures on the seas and of his success in dealings with the people of the village.

Early one morning, Nee Saki went out in his boat as usual to fish, and was as lucky as ever. He was very light-hearted, and sung as he had often sung before. His songs were mostly of his own composition, telling of his fondness for the sea and his love for the pursuit that enabled him to bestow comfort upon his parents in their old age.

Very often when he had sung on other days he had seen mermaids at a distance sometimes drawing near to him and then hurrying away. Were it not that he was so modest he would have perceived that they were listening to his songs, and would have guessed that they wished to get a closer view of his handsome face, but lost courage as they drew nearer to him.

On this day one of the strange sea-maidens bolder than the rest led them all in their approach. One after another the others turned back, but this one came steadily on followed at last by only two or three, and finally deserted even by these. She was quite near the boat when Nee Saki noticed her for the first time. He had never seen among all the maidens on shore one who was half so beautiful. Certainly so strange a being he had never seen or dreamed of. Filled with wonder and admiration he sang no longer.

"Sing on, gentle youth," the mermaid said; "it is your singing that has made us your friends. We have kept the storm from your boat and lured the fish to your lines, for we love to have you near us. Gladly enough would we have you visit us in our beautiful home beneath the waves. There you would know nothing of toil, but would pass all the long day in pleasure."

"But my thoughts are not always of pleasure," Nee Saki replied; "and I enjoy my toil, for through it all I see the contented faces of my old father and mother. Making them happy is happiness to me. However, if it pleases you, I will sing, for singing lightens my toil."

So Nee Saki sang as he cast his lines and drew in many a fine fish. The mermaid listened, with her eyes fixed upon his face so steadily that soon he began to feel more inclined to look upon her lovely features than to watch his lines. Then, as his song grew more earnest in its praise of the sea, she joined him in tones so sweet that he paused to listen to her. Alone she sang, and her words and music filled him with such a longing to visit the wonderful home she described that he sat entranced. As he listened eagerly she began to float away with the tide.

"Come back! Come back, and go to my home with me," cried the young fisherman. But the mermaid sang and beckoned, going further away from him all the time. Father, mother, and the little home in the village, his many friends, and all else were forgotten in a moment, and, leaping into the sea, he swam swiftly to the side of the mermaid, who waited till he reached her, when both sank beneath the waves.

Nee Saki had been under the water often, for he was an expert diver, and from great depths he had looked up through the sea to admire the changing colours as the broken rays of light struggled down, down towards him. But he was not prepared for the sight that met his vision as he went deeper and deeper, his heart growing all the time lighter. Now and then some frightful fish, such as he had thought were known only to the writers of fables, rushed towards him as if to devour him, but turned back and hastened away when the mermaid waved her hand and placed herself between the monster and the youth. At length they reached a beautiful grotto, where flowers of rare beauty were seen on every hand. Sweet music filled Nee Saki's ears as the two entered.

"Here is our home," the mermaid said—"your home and mine."

A night and day were passed in bewildering pleasures.

The Number will consist almost entirely of Stories by Well-known Authors, profusely Illustrated throughout.

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Another night and a day added to Nee Saki's new-found happiness, for the mermaid and her companions were busy every moment getting up some new surprise But on the third night Nee Saki could not rest. The forgotten home, with the old father and mother mourning for their son and wondering as to his fate came to him in dreams that caused him to waken weeping almost as soon as he would fall asleep. In the morning he was unhappy. Vainly his companion tried to cheer him, and her attendants were tireless in assisting her.

"I am weary of pleasure," Nee Saki said, when she asked him what troubled him. "I am weary of pleasure. I long to see my good old father and mother, from whom I have never been absent more than a day until now; and I long to be once more at the toil that gives them comfort. You must let me depart."

The mermaid pleaded with him to stay, but he would not listen. Go he must, and go he would. When she found him thus determined she sorrowfully prepared to guide him back to his boat. Just before departing she placed about his neck a golden chain to which a golden locket was attached.

"Keep it for my sake always," she said; "but for your own sake do not dare to open the locket."

Back towards the sunshine, with a heart lighter even than it had been as he descended into the waters, Nee Saki was conducted by the mermaid to where his boat lay dancing on the waves. His fish were as fresh as though he had just caught them, and as the mermaid left him with a sad parting song upon her lips, he turned the bow of his boat towards the shore and broke into a glad song about his home and parents.

So glad was he to be near home again that he did not notice the changes that had taken place on the shore during his absence. He paid no attention to the strange faces of the people whom he met as he hurried toward the home where he expected both welcome and reproof, nor did he notice the curious look with which the people regarded him. He had no patience for walking, but ran.

At last the street was reached where he had left his parents only a few days before, but he looked in vain for their cottage. He broke into a bitter cry.

"What ails thee, youth?" he was asked by an old man passing by.

He could not speak for weeping, except only to repeat the names of his father and mother.

"Why, those whom you name died a hundred years ago," the old man exclaimed.

"A hundred years ago! Why, thou sayest an untruth, old man," said the lad. "It is scarce three days since I saw them here, alive and well."

The old man shook his head in pity and passed on, saying, "Alas, poor boy, thou hast been forsaken by thy wits."

Night was near, and Nee Saki began to feel a strange dread. He clutched at the locket on his breast, and gazing upon it exclaimed:

"That sorceress of the sea has placed an evil spell on me. I will break it."

He opened the locket. It was a fatal thing to do. Held captive within had been the demons of a whole century, for Nee Saki had passed a hundred years with the mermaids. The demons fell upon him, and some of them started for the shore where he had left his boat. Those who stayed scratched deep wrinkles in his face and breathed upon his black locks until the hair grew thin and white. He tried to run from them, but tottered and fell. Weaker and weaker he grew through the night. In the morning those who first visited the spot where he fell found the corpse of an old, old man, and those who visited the shore where he landed found an old boat decayed and gone to pieces.

Found the corpse of an old, old man.

To Gain £200.

"I HAVE put up the shutters, sir."

"All right, Thomas; you can go home. And remember that you need not be here till eleven to-morrow. I am going over to Lanchester to spend the night, and shall not be back till then. I don't suppose we shall miss custom if we open a little later."

"I don't suppose we shall, sir," said Thomas with a smile. "There was nobody in till twelve to day—and not many after," he added to himself. "I'll be here at eleven to take the shutters down, sir," he said aloud, as he started for home.

Mr. Tom Gorville looked after him as he went. Then he said under his breath to himself:

"Well, if all goes well, you won't find any shutters to take down, my boy."

Mr. Tom Gorville had been a year in business at Lesterbury, and he had not prospered there. When he married and embarked all his little capital in the shop in the High Street his hopes had been very high. An optician was just what Lesterbury wanted. Although the town itself was a small one he would be able to count upon all the surrounding villages for custom and the gentlefolk of the neighbourhood would swarm to his shop for their magic-lanterns, field-glasses, and microscopes.

After the shop was taken, poor Gorville discovered that the gentlefolk took no interest in magic-lanterns or microscopes, or, if they did, they ran up to London for them, while the people of the place who wanted spectacles gave their patronage to a modest little man in a back alley, who had provided for their wants for twenty years before Gorville's advent.

It had not taken Gorville the whole year to find out that he had made a mistake. It seemed to him that he had ruined his career at the outset by one false step.

If he could but get rid of his debts he might still think of moving his stock into some more promising town, and beginning again there, much more modestly than he had done

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at Lesterbury. But unless he got money from somewhere his stock would be sold off by his creditors.

If he could but raise £200, he had said over and over again to himself, he could start again; but where was the money to come from? They had no rich friends. Edme, his wife, had gone up to London that day to see if she could coax a loan from her only well-to-do relative, a crusty bachelor uncle; but the prospect was not in the least hopeful, because the crusty bachelor uncle had never been known to unloosen his purse-strings to anybody.

Gorville had not the least hope from that direction, the only reason, in fact, why he had allowed his wife to take the journey was to further a last plan which had been building itself gradually in his mind, and which even Edme did not share. He was going to burn down his shop. The premium would be due again in three weeks' time, and with all his ready money spent on the year's living, Gorville saw not the slightest means of paying it.

Nothing is more terrible than the ease with which a man who has determined on wrong-doing can persuade himself that his crime is justifiable. It was only when the thought of his wife finding out what he meditated came into his mind that the plan seemed at all hideous to him.

Whatever happened, he told himself, Edme must never know. She would not see the affair in its right light at all—any more than the police and the insurance company would.

So his wife had left on a wild-goose chase to her uncle, where she was to stay the night, and, by the greatest of good fortunes, her brother at Lanchester, twelve miles away, had invited him to spend the night at his rooms. It seemed as if chance was assisting his designs.

"It must be to-night, if it is done at all," said the optician to himself, when his combined errand-boy and assistant left him alone in the house.

It was half-past eight. At nine he was to leave the house for the station to catch the train for Lanchester. Within half-an-hour, if the thing was to be done, he must take the final step. His plans had been prepared carefully.

Down in the cellar below the shop, which was crowded with packing-cases and straw, was a cheap American clock, with a piece of string attached to the hammer of the alarm. The string was connected with a delicately poised basin of acid, so that the slightest tug would overturn the liquid into another basin of chemicals beneath. The effect would be a sudden burst of flame which could not well fail to ignite the dry straw which Gorville had carefully laid close to it. Then, after the fire had burned a few minutes, and consumed the string tied to the alarm, what suspicion could possibly be aroused by the presence of two basins and a clock among the ruins in the cellar?

None at all. People might possibly shake their heads—they always do—and say with a sneer that it was very fortunate for Gorville and his wife both to be away on the very night that the premises were burned, that it was fortunate for Gorville to have the fire just as the insurance premium was due, and so on—but nobody could ever find out for a certainty that the fire was planned; the insurance company would have to pay him the £200, and his difficulties would be at an end.

Then he groped his way down to the cellar below the shop, struck a light, and wound up the alarm. Five minutes later he was in the street again, hurrying to catch the train.

. . . . . .

Tom Gorville found when he arrived at his brother-in-law's rooms that his host was not yet home. He had been called away on business, the landlady said; but hoped to be back before his guest's arrival. He had not come, however, and poor Tom was left to his own thoughts once more. He tried not to go back to the old question, telling himself that the deed was irretrievable.

There was certainly no train back to Lesterbury that night, but it was only twelve miles away, and, if he started to walk at once, he could get back before one o'clock. He had timed the alarm to go off at one, thinking that there would be less risk then of anybody being about to notice the fire and stop it before it had well begun. If he walked back he would just be in time to undo his work. But he let the opportunity pass, and did not start.

His brother-in-law came in after eleven, full of apologies and grumbling at the train, which had been delayed by an accident for two hours or more.

"You haven't seen Edme, then?" he said, as soon as he had taken off his greatcoat, and Tom looked puzzled.

"Edme? She is in London."

"Oh, no, she isn't," said her brother. "I met her on the platform at Clunted going home. She had changed her mind, she said; she was keeping a secret evidently. I asked her to come here with me, and promised to make myself a bed on the sofa, but Edme preferred going home. She said she would get there before you started, and if not you weren't to bother; she was awfully tired, and would just get herself a cup of tea and go to bed. I was sure to tell you not to hurry back on her account. What is the matter, man?"

For Gorville had sprung to his feet white and wild-eyed.

"Edme is at home?" he repeated hoarsely.

"Yes, sure to be, and asleep in bed by this time."

"Then, great Heaven, what have I done?" gasped Gorville, and groped his way out into the hall for his hat.

"My dear fellow, you can't go back to-night, there is no train," cried the brother, in astonishment; but Tom Gorville did not hear him, he was running as hard as he could in the direction of the railway station.

"There must be some train back," he kept telling himself; but the hope was a vain one. There was no way of getting to Lesterbury that night by rail. His next thought was to run, but there was only an hour and a half left now before the fire he had planned would spring into being to destroy his loved wife, and the distance was twelve miles.

Outside the station, however, he found a cab, the horse in good condition, and by dint of wild promises which he hoped to fulfil somehow, he managed to persuade the man to start at a fairly good rate on the twelve miles' journey.

It was a quarter-past one when they reached the High Street, and all was dark and still. With a great throb of relief Gorville noticed that the shop was still standing untouched. But when he opened the door he found that the house was full of smoke.

With a beating heart he groped his way up to his wife's room on the floor above, fearing to think what he might find there. The smoke was not dense, but the conscience-stricken apprehension made him almost certain Edme would be dead.

He was more frightened still when he found the room empty. There were signs that his wife had been in the place, but she was there no longer, and poor Tom Gorville pursued his search through the smoke-filled house with greater and greater dread. He was making his way down to the cellar where he had planned the fire, when, in passing through the shop, a faint light appeared in the opposite doorway, and Edme herself came towards him with a candle in her hand.

Her face was pale and distraught, and she made no attempt to greet him. She stood in the doorway at the farther end of the shop, and looked at him with sad eyes.

It was a great relief to him to find her uninjured; but, somehow, he could not feel any happiness or sense of relief. The look in his wife's eyes froze every emotion. The silence was painful.

Gorville struggled to break it.

"The place seems to be on fire," he said, feeling weakly foolish as he said it.

Edme answered solemnly:

"Yes, I have just managed to put it out."

"All alone?"

"Yes. I thought it would be best if I could."

Her voice sounded hard and mechanical, but suddenly she burst out crying:

"Oh, Tom—Tom! I am so glad you have come. Say that you did not do it—say that you did not!"

She looked at him imploringly, but her husband, conscience-stricken, only held down his head.

It was a terrible half-hour for the confessed incendiary. The news which his wife had hastened back to tell was that Uncle Jonadab had been generous—he had given her £200.

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Amongst the Story Writers who are represented may be mentioned Messrs. Headon Hill, G. B. Burgin, W. L. Alden, and George Griffith.

A VISIT FROM MR. CALLAGHAN.

MR. CALLAGHAN was busily engaged in an inspection of silver-ware that seemed to interest him exceedingly. He examined each article carefully, often stopping long enough to test the particular object with his teeth, or even to bend it. At the same time, his actions were quiet and, one might say, reserved. He did not appear to care to be noticed.

He was a rather tall young fellow, "carelessly dressed," as they say in novels, and had a pale face, like a student's. One might, indeed, have thought him a poor student, were it not for his eyes, which, instead of looking tired and dreamy, like a student's, were exceedingly active and restless. On the whole, his face and his general appearance were not prepossessing. Indeed, the policeman on the beat most frequented by Mr. Callaghan in social life reported him at the Bridewell as "a regular tough 'un."

Mr. Callaghan, though very young, had already learned the value of exceeding caution. Hence he was almost noiseless, and he inspected the silver ware in the very mild light of a half-opened dark lantern. A happy smile played around the corners of his face the while, for the silver-ware he was examining proved to be of the finest and newest, and bore the monogram of a famous family. For that matter, the entire surroundings of Mr. Callaghan at the time were of the richest. The very sideboard at which he laboured was worth a small fortune, and the cut glass upon it looked very beautiful in the mellow light. There were rich red tints in some of the glass-ware, occasioned by their contents, but Mr. Callaghan did not stop to examine them. He did not believe in drinking during business hours. The time was something after midnight.

Mr. Callaghan was aroused from his preoccupation by a faint click. It sounded very much like the click of a trigger as a revolver is cocked. It was a trifle startling, but he did not lose his presence of mind. He faced around like a flash, and turned off the rays of his dark lantern. He knew it was almost useless to take the latter precaution, however, for he was well informed, and he knew that in the houses of the rich of to-day it required but the touching of a switch to turn on a full stream of electric lights throughout an entire floor. The sudden burst of light came, just as he expected it would, and as it did so he heard a voice say:

"Don't dare to move."

He was more startled by the voice than he was by the sudden glare of the electric lights, for it was the voice of a young girl. Mr. Callaghan blinked, took a good look, and then his thin face broadened into a smile. At the other end of the room stood a very pale but resolute girl in a pink dressing-gown. She had a little gold-mounted revolver of a calibre so small that Mr. Callaghan, but for his natural politeness, would have laughed at it outright, and she was biting her lip for she was apparently very nervous. The revolver was pointed in Mr. Callaghan's direction, but, alas! the hand that held it was shaking very perceptibly. Callaghan grinned.

"Isn't it rather late for you to be out?" he asked her.

"Don't dare to move," she replied. "I know precisely what to do. Papa told me before he went away. I am going to sound the burglar-alarm, and have you arrested. Then you will be sent to prison."

"Well," almost laughed Mr. Callaghan, "why don't you do it? I'm waiting."

"Because," she answered hesitatingly—"because you're standing in front of it."

"Oh, I am?" answered Callaghan. "Then I'll move away. I always like to be polite to ladies."

He moved away a few steps.

She frowned a little bit. Then she said:

"Excuse me, will you please move a little further away?"

"Certainly," he answered. "Anything to oblige a real lady."

She stepped towards the alarm, which Callaghan had not until then perceived, and stretched forth her hand. She was about to turn the handle, when Callaghan said, hastily:

"Hold on a minute. Do you think that would be a nice thing to do?"

"Of course it would," she murmured.

"Just think about it a moment," Callaghan continued. "If you do that, I'll be arrested, and sent to prison for fifteen or twenty years. Fifteen or twenty years in a little cell all to myself, with no one to talk to and nothing to do—except break stones for my health. Now, I don't care anything about myself. Of course I haven't done you any wrong. I haven't got away with the silver, and therefore there isn't any wrong done—is there? I tried to, but you have got the best of me, and you're an awfully brave little girl to do it, too. But just think of yourself during the next fifteen or twenty years, if you have me taken. Every day you'll be thinking about the poor fellow who's doing time because you made him, and every night you'll be lying awake crying because you made him suffer so much for such a little thing, and every time the minister in your church says anything about forgiving your enemies you'll be thinking he means you, and——"

She broke in:

"I think I'll let you go"—she said it very earnestly.

Callaghan laughed aloud.

"That's right," he said, "I knew you would, for I knew you were a lady the minute I saw you. I didn't mean what I said. Probably in a month you'd forget all about me. No one remembers a fellow who's doing time but the police and the detectives. I was just trying an experiment. Do you think I was afraid you'd call the police? Nonsense! Do you think I was afraid of your little revolver? Nonsense! I've been shot twice by real revolvers. If you had tried to sound the burglar-alarm, do you know what I'd have done? I'd have made a quick jump for you, and I'd have had my hands about your throat before you could have winked. If you had fired the revolver, you would have missed me. Girls can't shoot."

He said this last almost contemptuously; but he was sorry a moment afterwards, for he noticed that she was growing very white and very frightened too.

Nevertheless, he continued:

"And after I'd got my hands about your neck, and you couldn't scream or struggle, what do you suppose I'd have done?"

She did not reply. She could not speak. She was trembling violently.

"I'd have — I'd have"—he was embarrassed, and he actually blushed—Callighan blushed—"I'd have kissed you," he said with an effort, "and then I'd have gone away. But you needn't look frightened any longer. I ain't going to hurt you, and I ain't going to kiss you; for some day you'd be ashamed of it, and you'd be ashamed to tell your sweetheart that Jimmy Callaghan kissed you. And I ain't a-going to take anything that belongs to this house, although I could right before your eyes. I'm just a-going peaceably home."

He moved towards the window by which he had entered. As he did so, however, he looked at her critically, stopped, and said:

"You're going to hold out just about until I'm gone; then you're going to faint. I can't leave you here alone in a faint. I'll fix it."

He walked deliberately to the sideboard and poured out a glass of wine.

"Here," said he, "drink this, and then go upstairs to bed as quick as you can."

She took the wine with a frightened "Thank you," and drank it.

Mr. Callaghan turned to leave.

"That brings the red back in your cheeks," he said. "It's a good thing when not taken during business hours. Now I'm going, but I want you to remember that I'm not afraid of the burglar-alarm or the little revolver. I'm not going to rob you because—because you are so brave, and because you are so pretty. I sort of hate to make a failure of a job, but you are too pretty."

Saying which, Mr. Callaghan climbed nimbly through the window and disappeared.

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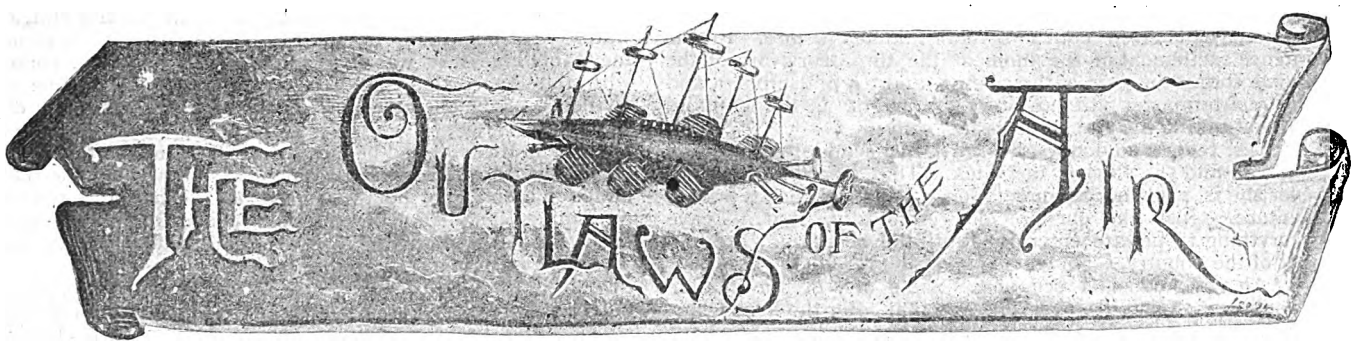


By George Griffith,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," &c.

SUMMARY.

Max Renault—leading spirit of Anarchist Autonomie Group No. 7, who has joined the Utopians (a Socialistic colony on an island in the South Pacific) in order to steal the air-ship they are building, which he succeeds in doing.

Franz Hartog—a German engineer, in league with Renault, who steals a very fast torpedo-boat destroyer from the Russian Government to levy blackmail on the Atlantic.

Sir Harry Milton—a wealthy young English nobleman, who by chance comes across the island of Utopia, and subsequently devotes the whole of his fortune to hunting down Renault and Hartog.

Herbert Wyndham—a lieutenant in the British Navy who is travelling with Sir Harry for the benefit of his health, and who determines to resign his commission and couple his energies with those of Sir Harry in destroying the Anarchists, on account of the fact that he has been stabbed by Renault when the latter attempts to carry off Violet in the air-ship.

Frederick Austen—the inventor of the Utopian air-ship, who shares its secret with Edward Adams, Dr. Edwards, and Ambrose Millar, three other Utopians.

Violet Milton—Sir Harry's sister, and Lieutenant Wyndham's sweetheart, is fearfully injured by throwing herself out of the air-ship on which Renault has tried to carry her off.

Dora Merton—a fair Utopian, who has made an impression on Sir Harry.

Lucy Summers—another fair Utopian.

Max Renault in the air-ship joins Hartog in the *Destroyer*, after the latter has destroyed a fleet of war-ships convoying Atlantic liners. They are discovered in their hiding-place by a combined fleet of British, French, and Portuguese cruisers, who follow the *Pilgrim*, a steam yacht bringing war and other materials for the Anarchists. Renault in the *Vengeur*, and Hartog in the *Destroyer*, annihilate the fleet, and, at the last moment, a strange flying machine appears on the scene.

CHAPTER XIX.

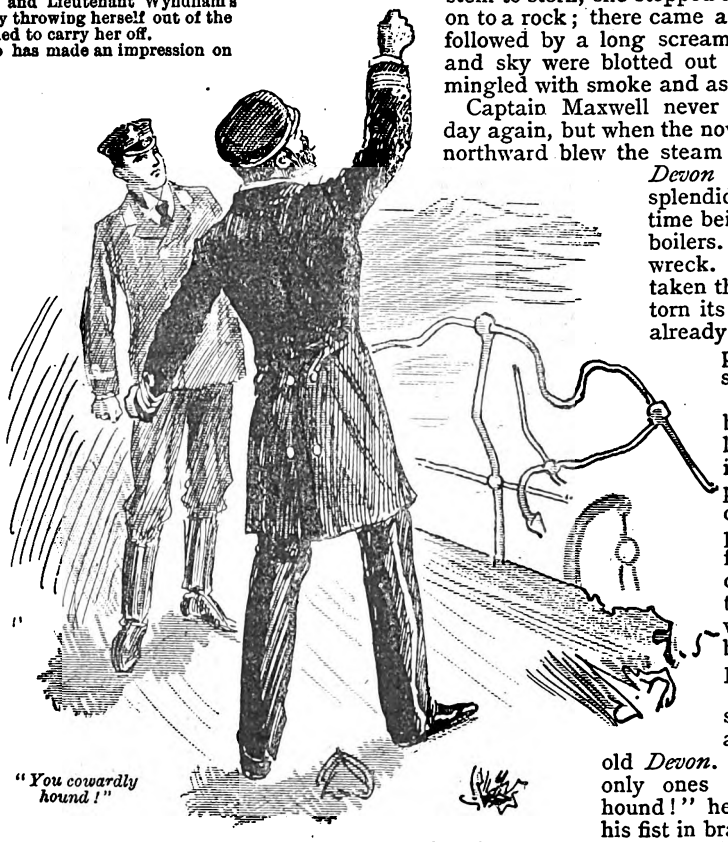
A Timely Rescue.

The words had scarcely passed the poor fellow's lips before he sprang convulsively into the air and fell to the deck, rolling and writhing in agony. A fire-shell had burst close to him, a stream of flames had passed over his bare feet, and as he fell back the choking poisonous fumes surged in dark waves about him and in a few moments ended his torments in death.

The armoured citadel on the centre of the bridge in which the captain of the *Devon* stood, with a senior midshipman to work the now useless signals, and a quarter-master at the wheel, had so far escaped the projectiles of the *Vengeur;* but though the head remained untouched the body was crippled and paralysed, and all communication between the two parts of the organism was virtually severed. The gallant *Devon* was in fact in the position of a man paralysed in every limb but still retaining his intellectual faculties. Her captain saw his terrible foe sinking lower and lower towards his now doomed vessel, and he was unable to order a shot to be fired against him.

Soon barely a thousand feet separated the air-ship from her now helpless prey, then, with deliberate aim, three of the ten-inch shells charged with anarchite, were dropped into the ragged gaping holes where the funnels had been. Captain Maxwell saw them fall, helpless to stretch out a hand to avert the disaster which he knew must now follow in a few moments. He felt the shock of the shells as they burst in the inmost recesses of the ship, then, with a shudder that shook her from stem to stern, she stopped as though she had run head-on to a rock; there came a report like a thunder-clap, followed by a long screaming roar, and ship and sea and sky were blotted out in a dense cloud of steam mingled with smoke and ashes.

Captain Maxwell never expected to see the light of day again, but when the now freshening breeze from the northward blew the steam cloud aft he saw that the *Devon* was still floating. Her splendid hull had withstood for the time being even the explosion of her boilers. She floated, but only as a wreck. The escaping steam had taken the line of least resistance and torn its way up through the decks already perforated in a hundred places by the *Vengeur's* shells.



"You cowardly hound!"

Of her top-works only the bridge remained anything like intact. The fierce burning breath of the steam had penetrated the air-holes of the citadel and scalded its occupants severely, though not fatally, and the moment the cloud had passed the captain threw open the steel door and went out on to the half-ruined bridge, saying to his companions:

"We may as well die outside as in there. We've about seen the last of the poor old *Devon*. I'm afraid we're about the only ones left alive. You cowardly hound!" he suddenly burst out, shaking his fist in brave but impotent defiance at the air-ship. "If I only had you in a fair and square fight, ship to ship and gun to gun, I'd—Hullo! Look yonder. As I'm a living man there's another of them! Just give me my glasses out of the citadel Mr. Clinton."

Looking up at the *Vengeur* had brought within his line of

Each story is adorned with numerous illustrations, and considering that amongst the artists are numbered Miss G. Demain Hammond, Miss Inez Warry, Monsieur Georges Montbard, and Messrs. Raymond Potter, E. S. Hope, and Sydney Harvey, I think I may safely assert that no Christmas Number issued this year will have such a splendid array of high-class illustrations.

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sight the second air-ship, of whose approach the unfortunate seaman had given notice several minutes before. In the intense excitement of the moment the three survivors of the *Devon* forgot the pain of their burns, and the midshipman and the quartermaster uttered a cry of delight as the captain, without taking his glasses from his, said:

"Yes, there's no doubt about it. She's an air-ship, not a balloon, and she's flying the Jack. That means that, whatever she is, she's not in commission. I suppose she's a private venture. Just like our precious Admiralty, that. Leave everything to private enterprise until the best things are sold out of the country.

"Ah, of course, I see now. She's one of the Maxim æroplanes. I heard some time ago that after the War Office had refused to buy Maxim's rights, a big syndicate had been formed to develop them and keep them in the country. I suppose that's one of them. Well, I only hope—Ah, there he goes! The brute doesn't think us worth notice now, I suppose. Knows we're helpless. I wonder what he's up to."

"I fancy he's gone to bring up that *Destroyer*, sir," said Clinton, following with his glasses the now rapidly receding *Vengeur*, which had suddenly swept round in a wide curve to the southward, and was flying out to sea in a course at right angles to that of the new comer.

"Then, if he has, God help the *Ariel* and us!" said the captain, "for he'll sink her, and then that blackguard will come and torpedo us at his leisure. However, we'll go and see if any of our poor fellows are left alive. We may be able to do something for them. We might find a boat, too. But no, that's no good. I won't leave the *Devon* while she floats, and if we got away those blackguards would only sink us."

Wherever they were able to go they found a perfectly awful state of affairs throughout the shattered fabric of what only an hour or so ago had been one of the finest cruisers in the British Navy. The aerial bombardment had taken her in all her weakest instead of her strongest portions, and the result had been, not a battle, but the merest massacre, culminating in the final tragedy of the explosion which had literally blown to pieces or otherwise killed every survivor of the unequal duel save themselves.

The flag was run up.

Added to this they found that the ship, in spite of the fact that all her watertight compartments had been closed before she went into action, was settling slowly but surely by the stern. Of the boats there was not one fit for use. Hanging in their exposed positions on the davits they had been riddled through and through by the storms of shot or burnt to uselessness by the fire-shells. The main gaff had been shot away, and this had brought the White Ensign down to the deck just before the explosion of the boilers, so when he had completed his inspection as far as he could make it, the Captain said:

"Well, if we have to go down we'll go with the old flag flying. Mr. Clinton, see if you can find anything in the bridge-house, and you, Mr. Thompson, go and see if the fore signal halyards are all right. I think they are."

The midshipmen found a Union Jack, and the halyards proved to be in working order, so the flag was run up to the fore and then the three went back to the bridge to wait for the end and watch the beginning of the aerial duel which was now inevitable unless, as was very unlikely, the *Vengeur*, content with the destruction she had wrought, should decline the challenge of the enemy who had come to meet her in her own element.

Captain Maxwell had been right in his conjecture as to the character of the strange craft which had arrived on the scene of action a couple of hours too late to do anything towards preventing Renault and Hartog from accomplishing the terrible destruction and slaughter that they had achieved with such dreadful rapidity and thoroughness.

More than a year before Mr. Hiram Maxim, after many failures and one or two disasters, had succeeded in demonstrating the practicability of human flight by mechanical means. His æroplane was to all intents and purposes a huge kite with auxiliary wings, supporting a car in which an engine, driven by steam and burning vaporised gasoline fuel, operated two huge propellers projecting from the stern.

These forced the inclined æroplane and wings against the air, the upthrust of which lifted the machine from the ground after a short run corresponding to that of a bird taking flight from the earth. As soon as his machine had really flown and had proved itself capable of being steered and manœuvred in the air he had offered the exclusive rights of the invention to the British Government for a million sterling, an offer which it is almost unnecessary to state the British Government had declined, after wasting about six months in negotiations In the midst of these the Tsar of Russia had sent a commission of three officers to examine the flying machine, with power to conclude the bargain there and then if they were satisfied that it would do what its inventor claimed for it.

Even this failed to break the bonds of tradition and red tape which paralysed the British War Office; and the machine was only saved from becoming the property of the Tsar by the spirited and patriotic action of a hastily-formed syndicate composed of a dozen of the wealthiest peers and gentlemen in England, who in their first sitting guaranteed to pay the million down, and raise another half-million within six months for the purpose of building a small fleet of æroplanes on Mr. Maxim giving his undertaking not to sell his invention, or any part of it, to any foreign Power.

This ensured the refusal of the Tsar's offer, and raised such a storm of popular indignation against the authorities, as soon as the story was made public, that within a week the Royal Assent had been given to a Bill authorising the payment of half the money out of the public funds. This had happened a little less than six months before the *Vengeur* had made her appearance above the Atlantic.

As soon as the money had been guaranteed it had been decided to build six æroplanes under the supervision of the inventor, and of these the first to take the air equipped for fighting purposes was the *Britannia*, the craft which Captain Maxwell and his companions were now watching from the bridge of the disabled *Devon* as she came sailing down out of the northern sky to engage the foe whose terrible and swiftly succeeding exploits had already been flashed by telegraph over the whole of Europe and America.

She had, of course, been tested as regards her capabilities of bomb-dropping, and her inventor had mounted in her car three light, specially constructed machine-guns, two of the Maxim type forward, and amidships a gun capable of throwing a two-pound shell to a distance varying from two to five miles, according to the elevation. She had shown that she was capable of tremendous destruction on land or sea, but she had, of course, had no opportunity of proving her powers as a fighting ship when pitted against a craft which could dispute the mastery of her own element with her.

How she would actually acquit herself was now to be seen by the three silent watchers who, anxiously sweeping the sky with their glasses, stood on the half-wrecked bridge of the slowly-sinking *Devon* waiting for the first aerial duel in the history of the world to begin.

The *Britannia*, flying like a huge bird on extended and motionless wings, swooped gracefully down from her elevation of two thousand feet until within fifty feet she passed the floating

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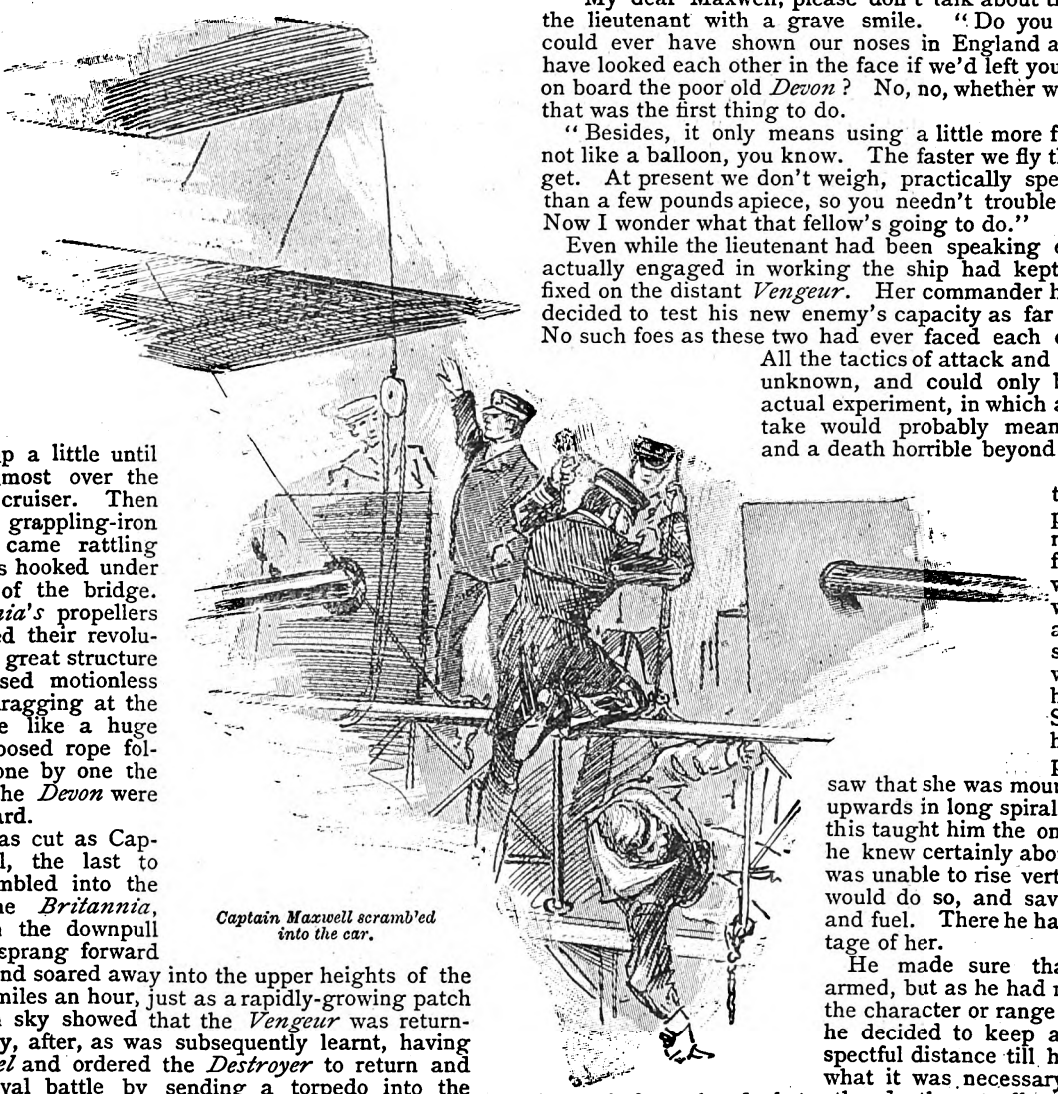
wreck of the *Devon* at a speed of about fifteen miles an hour. They saw that she carried a crew of six men, and that she was commanded by a man in the uniform of a lieutenant of the British Navy.

"Why, good heavens, Pelham, is that you!" exclaimed Captain Maxwell, as the first hails were exchanged, and he recognised in the naval officer a man who three years before had served under him as second lieutenant in the *Devon* when she was first commissioned.

"Yes, Captain Maxwell, it is," came the reply. "I'm deeply sorry to see what's happened to the poor old *Devon*, we'll try and send a line on board and take you off. She doesn't look as if she'll float much longer."

"No, she won't, I'm afraid. We've had an awful hammering from that blackguard, but you mustn't think of stopping to take us off. If he catches you down here he'll smash you to bits in no time."

"We must risk that," replied Lieutenant Pelham decisively, as the aeroplane swung round and soared up a little until she hung almost over the foretop of the cruiser. Then a rope with a grappling-iron at the end came rattling down and was hooked under the ironwork of the bridge. The *Britannia's* propellers now quickened their revolutions, and the great structure remained poised motionless in the air, dragging at the tautened rope like a huge kite, till a noosed rope followed, and one by one the survivors of the *Devon* were hauled on board.



Captain Maxwell scramb'ed into the car.

The rope was cut as Captain Maxwell, the last to ascend, scrambled into the car, and the *Britannia*, released from the downpull of the rope, sprang forward and upward and soared away into the upper heights of the air at eighty miles an hour, just as a rapidly-growing patch in the western sky showed that the *Vengeur* was returning to the fray, after, as was subsequently learnt, having sunk the *Ariel* and ordered the *Destroyer* to return and finish the naval battle by sending a torpedo into the crippled *Devon*.

CHAPTER XX.

THE FIRST AERIAL DUEL.

WHILE the *Vengeur* was coming up at a cautiously moderated speed of not more than thirty miles an hour, Captain Maxwell gave the commander of the *Britannia* a rapid but sufficient description of her appearance, armament, and approximate speed.

"H'm," said the lieutenant, looking rather serious, when he had finished his description. "A hundred miles an hour or over, you say. That's bad. Eighty is our best speed, and then you say he can soar vertically; we can only soar spirally. That's point number two against us.

"Now, I wonder how high the fellow can soar. A lot depends on that, for I can see perfectly well that in this warfare of the future for one air-ship to get above another will be something like a frigate, or a line-of-battle ship getting the weather-gauge of an enemy, only a good deal more so. Keep her up, Jackson, keep her up," he continued, turning to the man who was stationed at the levers which controlled the auxiliary side wings or lifting-planes. "Keep her up; we shall want all the elevation we can get."

"And by bringing us three on board, Pelham, you've diminished your rising power by putting between five and six hundred pounds more weight on board."

"My dear Maxwell, please don't talk about that," replied the lieutenant with a grave smile. "Do you suppose we could ever have shown our noses in England again or even have looked each other in the face if we'd left you to go down on board the poor old *Devon*? No, no, whether we win or not, that was the first thing to do.

"Besides, it only means using a little more fuel. This is not like a balloon, you know. The faster we fly the lighter we get. At present we don't weigh, practically speaking, more than a few pounds apiece, so you needn't trouble about that. Now I wonder what that fellow's going to do."

Even while the lieutenant had been speaking everyone not actually engaged in working the ship had kept his glasses fixed on the distant *Vengeur*. Her commander had evidently decided to test his new enemy's capacity as far as possible. No such foes as these two had ever faced each other before. All the tactics of attack and defence were unknown, and could only be learnt by actual experiment, in which a single mistake would probably mean destruction and a death horrible beyond description.

He saw that the æroplane could move very fast, but whether she was moving at her utmost speed or not was what he had to learn. So, too, with her soaring power. He saw that she was mounting rapidly upwards in long spiral curves, and this taught him the one thing that he knew certainly about her; she was unable to rise vertically or she would do so, and save both time and fuel. There he had the advantage of her.

He made sure that she was armed, but as he had no idea as to the character or range of her guns he decided to keep at a very respectful distance till he had learnt what it was necessary for him to know before the duel to the death actually commenced. If he had only carried a sufficient amount of ammunition it would have been easier for him to fight a fleet of sea-going ships and destroy them one by one as he had destroyed the British, French, and Portuguese cruisers and torpedo boats than it would be to fight this single opponent that had come to challenge the *Vengeur* in her own element. He determined, therefore, that the first trial of strength should be one of soaring power. It did not need a second glance to tell him that the æroplane was trying to gain the advantage in elevation and then open fire on him while he floated below.

"So we are going to have a flying match, are we, to begin with," he said to himself as he stood in his conning-tower,

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watching the *Britannia* sweeping round and round and climbing higher and higher into the bright blue sky with every curve she made.

"I wonder how the deuce the British Government got hold of that thing. Why, of course, what an ass I am! she's one of Maxim's æroplanes. The old boy must have made a success of it after all. Of course, there's only one man in England could build a thing like that, and he's an American. Well, well, M. Maxim, let us see if your pretty mechanical kite can fly as well as the *Vengeur*.

"Five thousand feet," he continued, glancing at the aneroid; "and that thing is about a thousand feet higher. I suppose he'll make his swoop soon. I think I'd better let him do it and force his hand. He can't ram me, that's quite certain. He'd smash that bit of a car to fragments if he tried; but if he gives me a chance to put the *Vengeur's* ram through that kite of his, I'll spoil his flying powers for a bit.

"Ah, yes, *sapristi!* that's a good idea. Why shouldn't I let her down gently and capture her? That would be a triumph and a half—besides, she might be useful. Anyhow, she'd make a pretty plaything for the boys to practise aerial navigation in. Taxil, come into the conning-tower for a moment, will you?"

His lieutenant promptly obeyed the order given through the speaking-tube that communicated with the engine-room, in addition to the electric signals. He pointed the *Britannia* out to him, and said:

"Look you, mon garc'."

"Look you, *mon garc'*, there is our new enemy. You observe, she's an æroplane. That means she can't soar vertically, but only spirally, as she is doing now. There we have the advantage of her. Also, I think she's flying her fastest, and that is not our fastest."

"*Tonnerre, mon capitaine!*" replied Taxil, with a shrug of his shoulders. "Not by a good thirty or forty miles an hour at the least. We can sail round her and over her. Bah, what's the good of sending out a kite to fight an air-ship! Will you destroy her, M. Max, or will you just capture her and make a despatch boat of her?"

"Just what I was thinking, *mon brave*," replied Max, putting his hand on his lieutenant's shoulder; "but first we must have a little flying match, and then we shall see what we shall see. Now, are all your engines and gearing in proper order?"

"They are perfect," said Taxil, with a touch of pride in his tone, for he had already begun to love the marvellous machinery that had been under his control during the eventful morning. "Ask me for a hundred and thirty miles an hour and you shall have it. The engines have never been tried to their fullest capacity yet."

"Good!" said Max. "I don't believe they have, but they will be this morning. Now, look you, that thing, whatever they call her, is seeing if she can out-soar us. When she thinks she has done so she'll make a swoop for us, and either try and drop a bomb on us, or cripple us with bullets. Perhaps, who knows, she may have a shell-gun or two on board, and if she crippled one of our wings, or got a shell into your engine-room, the cruise of the *Vengeur* would end with a single ignominious plunge down yonder. Do you see?"

As Max spoke he made a downward gesture with his thumb towards the vast expanse of ocean that now lay spread out five thousand feet and more beneath them. Taxil shrugged his shoulders again, and said:

"That would be a poor anti-climax to our morning's victory. It must not happen."

"No," said Max. "And it shall not if the *Vengeur* does what I expect her to do. Now listen. We have too much weight on. Go and take that Nordenfeldt to pieces and pitch it into the sea. I don't think we shall want to do any shooting, and if we do the Maxims will be enough. Move one of those aft and put it in the Nordenfeldt's place.

"Then you will have two more men to spare. Take one of them with you into the engine-room. I think you'll find Lacroix the smartest, and let him stand by to give you a hand to the engine, because everything will depend upon the rapidity with which my orders are executed. Set the other one to get out the longest piece of that fine wire rope that we have on board. I want fifty or sixty fathoms of it at least, and set him to work to splice one of those four-pronged grapnels on toit

"Then let him make fast the end round the after-part of the ship—right round the hull, mind—he can do it by working through the slides and windows, and have it so that the after-mast will stop it slipping off if a strain comes on it. Then when he's got it all clear, let him have the rope coiled so that he can drop the gapnel clear of the ship in an instant. That's all at present. Now be off, and let's have everything done smartly on the word, and you shall see something before you're an hour or two older."

Taxil promised prompt obedience, and left the conning-tower. Max resumed his watch on the æroplane, keeping the *Vengeur* still ascending almost vertically at a leisurely speed, and always maintaining his distance of about five miles from the *Britannia*.

For nearly an hour nothing happened. The two air-ships, like wary opponents testing each other's strength and watching narrowly for the first opportunity of advantage, kept soaring steadily up and up into the higher regions of the atmosphere until the fans of the *Britannia* were beating the rarefied air at a height of nearly ten thousand feet.

The *Vengeur*, as nearly as Lieutenant Pelham could guess, was still five miles away and some two thousand feet lower. He found, as he had expected to do, that the higher the *Britannia* rose the less actual elevation she gained in proportion to the power exerted by her engines. This was of course due to the decreased suspensory power of the rarefied air.

"I don't think we can get higher," he said at length to Captain Maxwell. "And it doesn't look as if he could either, but still we mustn't be too sure. Now I'll go to the helm and try and bear down on him. You stop here and do all the seeing you can, for no one else ever saw a fight like this is going to be. Stand by the guns there! Keep them trained on him as well as you can, and fire sharply when I give the word."

The *Britannia* now took one last upward curve, the engines were slowed down, and she shot away with ever-increasing momentum towards her enemy on a very slightly inclined plane. Just as he saw her coming Renault received word from Taxil that his orders had been executed and everything was ready.

"All right," he said, "then down fans and full speed ahead! Give her every yard you can!"

Taxil returned to the engine-room, and the next moment the suspensory fans collapsed, the three propellers whirled round with ever-increasing speed, and Max heard the wind whistling and screaming past the masts and stays as he swung the *Vengeur* out of the path of the rapidly approaching *Britannia*, and darted away to the southward at a speed that both astounded and disgusted Lieutenant Pelham and his shipmates.

It was absurd to think of using the guns at the terrific speed at which both ships were moving. Firing into space from the top of an express train would have been a work almost of

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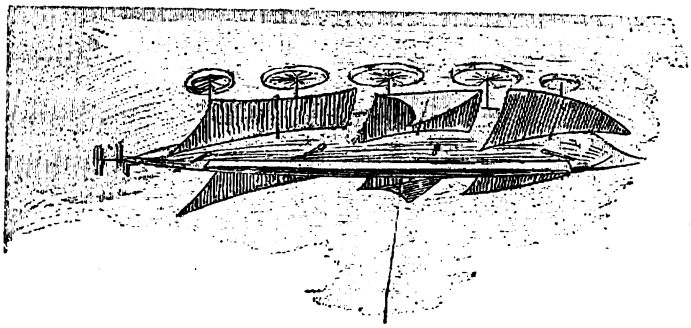
precision in comparison with it. The battle of tactics was not over yet; in fact, it was only just beginning.

Lieutenant Pelham inclined his guiding-planes to the full again, and the *Britannia*, under the influence of her own momentum, swept nearly a thousand feet higher. Then the engines began to work at full speed again, and they looked round for their enemy.



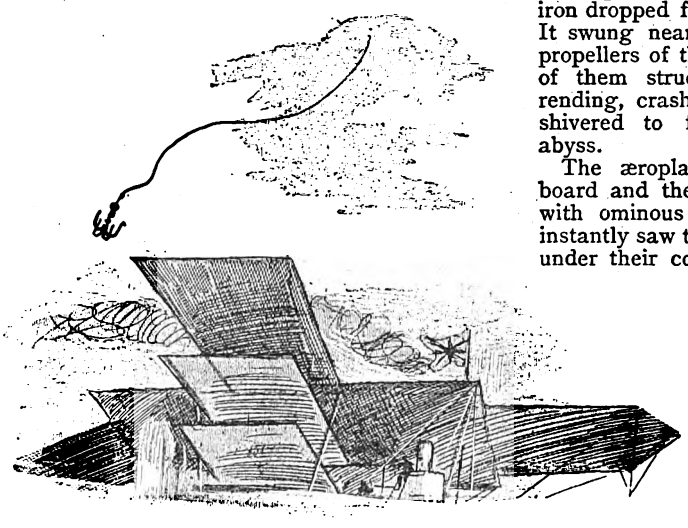
They had not long to wait. Cleaving the air like an arrow in its upward flight, the *Vengeur* seemed to leap up out of the distance to the south at right angles to their course. She passed them like a flash of light a couple of miles astern and five hundred feet or so above them.

"He's got the elevation of us, after all!" gasped Pelham, half choked by the rush of the wind through which they were flying. "And, as for speed, I believe the brute could fly round us."

"Yes, I'm afraid there's no doubt about that," said Captain Maxwell, biting an excusable imprecation in half between his suddenly clenched teeth. "I wonder how, in the name of all that is unfortunate, it came about that such a magnificent fighting engine as that, ever fell into the hands of such pitiless scoundrels as those infernal Anarchists."

"I suppose we shall learn that sometime—if the said scoundrels let us live to know anything more," replied the Lieutenant gloomily.

The *Vengeur* sped away to the northward, swerved round again, and, ever mounting up and up, swept round ahead, doubled again, and with a last sudden turn placed herself over the *Britannia*, whose aneroid now marked an elevation of ten thousand four hundred feet.



Instinctively all on board her felt that the end was coming, and that the battle had been won and lost without a single shot having been fired. For a moment they looked at each other in blank dismay, and then at the awful void below and around them into which a single shell dropped from the *Vengeur* would now hurl them together with the fragments of the wonderful machine that bore them upon its wings. Their own æroplanes prevented them seeing their antagonist from the car, and, therefore, also made it impossible to fire at him without piercing their own support. It was as complete a case of checkmate as had ever occurred in the game of war.

Then, while they were waiting with bated breath for the blow that would mean destruction, something dropped from the sky and struck the *Britannia's* forward guiding-plane. They looked up at the sound and saw that it was a four-pronged grappling iron. After striking the wing it swung out and then back again, then two of the prongs hooked themselves firmly in the framework, and then the rope tautened.

There was a ripping, tearing sound, the *Britannia* gave a lurch to aft, and then the hinge and stays of the wing gave way and it was wrenched bodily off. Like a bird with a wounded wing the *Britannia* wavered in her course and the barometer showed that she was slowly sinking. The detached wing was hauled up out of sight, then the grappling iron descended again, this time astern, and within a couple of minutes the lifting wing was also wrenched off. Evidently it was the intention of those on board the *Vengeur* to cripple, and not to destroy, the æroplane.

Her crew waited in helpless rage and agonising anxiety to see what would happen next. Once more the grappling-iron dropped from the sky; this time astern. It swung nearer and nearer to the whirling propellers of the *Britannia*, and at last one of them struck it. Then there came a rending, crashing sound, and the propeller, shivered to fragments, dropped into the abyss.

The æroplane swerved violently to starboard and then began to oscillate laterally with ominous rapidity. Those in the car instantly saw that the machine was no longer under their control, and that the only thing to do was to lighten its load as much as possible, and then, if their now victorious adversary allowed them, to trust to the æroplanes to save them from the awful fall that now looked as if it could not but be inevitable.

"Quick, for God's sake," cried Pelham. "Overboard with the guns, we can't use them now! Overboard with everything that we can spare. Look lively! She'll go down now like a kite with a broken string!"

(To be continued.)

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The Artist's Love-Dream.

EDWARD LUZERNIER enjoyed what is called a "successful artistic career." He was an artist, and studied at Rome, and on his return to Paris, being convinced that classical subjects are played out, and his genius not inclining to landscapes, patriotic celebrations, or nymphs in sunlight, he had decided to devote himself to portrait painting.

Having but few relations, he victimised his comrades, and for several years exhibited portraits of well-known artists and sculptors in every conceivable attitude. However, one day he was commissioned to paint a picture of an ancient duchess in a wonderful toilet of velvet and pearls, with a hound at her feet and a coat of arms in the background, and this was his starting-point.

Very soon after elegant ladies and famous men felt the necessity of bequeathing to posterity their physiognomy under the signature of Edward Luzernier, and for the artist this meant both success and fortune.

He bought old furniture, rare china, and antique weapons, and refurnished in a sumptuously artistic manner, held receptions in his studio, and, in fact, became quite a lion.

Personally, he was brisk, energetic, and genial, and won the heart of his companions by his kindheartedness and generosity; and yet Edward Luzernier was not happy. No, in the midst of a life of apparently unalloyed success one thing was wanting, and that void cast a gloom over his greatest triumphs—the artist wanted love; without love he felt his work was vain, and his honours but as Dead Sea fruit.

The young man was certainly not prepossessing; he was short, square, and bony, and the most anxious care had been powerless to reduce his hair and beard to order, while his hands were very clumsy; as to his face, it was large and round, with just the tender, courageous expression of a big dog.

All the ladies called him "Mon bon Luzernier," in a tone of sympathetic protection, and in such a way as to invariably dash his hopes to the ground. Often and often had he been on the point of throwing himself at the feet of one of the beauties who frequented his studio, but until now he had restrained himself in time, realising how vain his dreams were.

One summer evening, when he was in his dressing-room (a very elegant apartment, which had cost him a portrait and a half), Luzernier felt even more lonely than usual. He strolled out on the balcony, and gazed idly at the swallows flying backwards and forwards. All day he had been at work on the portrait of a great politician, and in half an hour was due at a dinner-party, where he would be presented to an Italian marchioness, who also desired to sit to him; and she, too, would do as the others did—call him "Mon bon Luzernier." "It will always be so," he sighed. The swallows were still winging their noisy flight, and he was just about to re-enter, when, on the other side of the road, leaning on the balcony exactly facing his, he saw a woman looking intently at him.

She was tall, with jet black hair and small regular features and a daintily-fresh complexion, the *tout ensemble* being indescribably charming. Luzernier's heart beat fast, and in the regard which he returned to the young lady he tried to put all he knew of emotion and ardour. Was he dreaming? Could he see clearly? She smiled a little, a sweet, reassuring smile. For a few moments they remained thus, then she slowly withdrew. The painter waited for her to return, but she did not appear, and he arrived very late at the dinner-party.

. . . . . .

Next day he heard all about this lady of the balcony. She was English, a widow, and very rich; staying in Paris with her mother.

Twenty times during a sitting Luzernier escaped from his studio to see if she were at the window; but it rained, and he saw her no more. A few days later, however, to his delight, she read the whole morning in the balcony, and Luzernier told himself he had been wrong in always working in his studio, and that fresh air would do him good.

How exquisite that pale pink dress was. What lovely black hair. She had looked again and smiled. The artist adjourned all further sittings for portraits, and his time was passed at the window. Once he bowed to her, and she returned his salutation; she always smiled in that singular way, and Luzernier fell more and more deeply in love with her.

He thought of writing to her; but what should he say? If he offended her his heart would break—he preferred to live on in sweet uncertainty, and hoped for a chance meeting, though he trembled to spoil his dream.

The studio teemed with studies of the fair unknown; he lived among these heads in profile, heads looking up, heads looking down. His sadness was turned to joy—at last he was beloved—and he was in a paradise. At times, however, there was a sort of hesitation in the expression of the beautiful English lady.

Luzernier noticed it, and assured himself that his fervent love had touched her—she had guessed how he worshipped her, and was not displeased.

One September afternoon he saw the windows opposite were all open, and the servants came and went rapidly. "What could have happened? Could she be ill?" he said to himself. But, no; she appears on the balcony dressed as if to go out. She leant her two daintily covered gloved hands on the iron balustrade, and seemed serious and perplexed. As usual, the painter saluted her. Then, as if deciding all at once, she pointed to the street with an imperious gesture, and entered quickly. She wished him to descend. She was going to speak to him.

Luzernier seized his hat and gloves, and only waited to choose his best cane—a present from an Austrian Princess to "Mon bon Luzernier." The lady came out of her house and, the painter advanced shyly. What attitude should he take? Should he advance? No, she comes to him with a slightly embarrassed air. How much lovelier she is seen in the light of day, and so near.

"Monsieur," she began.

He interrupted. "Madame, my emotion is so great—what gratitude—having so kindly—I should so like——" then finding that none of his phrases would finish, he was silent, discouraged; but so happy!

The young lady continued, with a pretty foreign accent, "I know that what I am doing is strange, and I have hesitated about it for a long time. Perhaps you will think it rude of me to meddle."

"Oh——"

"I should never have decided to act thus, but you are a famous artist. I admire your talent. Often have I wished to tell you across the street, when we were in the balcony, but I dared not. Now I must speak, as I am leaving Europe. Mon Dieu! how late I am; there is the carriage! This is what I want to tell you. From the window of my room, which is opposite your dressing-room, nearly every day for the past three months I have seen your valet brushing his boots with your hair-brush! Horrible, isn't it? Good-bye, monsieur!"

Edward Luzernier does not believe in the meaning smiles of young women who dream in balconies on summer evenings now, and he is still a bachelor.

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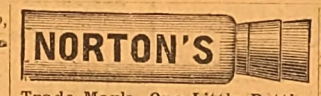

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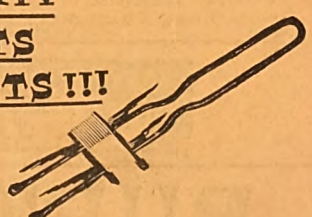

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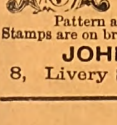

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 308.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING NOVEMBER 24, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

A PERSONAL AND WHAT CAME OF IT

YOU may smile if you like, but I always read my morning paper from "a" to "z." I begin with the top of the first column on the first page, and finish with the end of the column on the last page. In that way I lose no possible scrap of information, and, besides, the habit often leads to important consequences, as the following narrative will show.

For a whole week I had found in the column of my paper devoted to "Personals" the following touching appeal:—

MY THEODORE,—Why have you not answered my last two letters? Are you angry with me, or are you ill? Oh, my Theodore, have pity on me, and relieve the anxiety of your suffering CLEOPATRA.

The first time I read it it made no particular impression upon me. So with the second and third times—for I remembered that all advertisements are generally inserted three times—but when I opened my paper on the fourth morning, and saw it still there, it set me to thinking seriously. Cleopatra began to interest me. The advertisement had already cost her eight shillings.

The fifth morning came, and with it the same heart-breaking appeal. It began to affect not only my nerves, but to arouse my indignation. Cleopatra had evidently written two letters to this unknown person, who had obstinately refused to answer them. Courtesy alone would have demanded some acknowledgment of them, however formal. He was angry with her, unquestionably, for in the last advertisement was added the line—"Are you still angry with me?"

But even had she done something to make him angry, he might have taken some sort of notice of her appeal. And it was touching, too, the way in which she asked if he were ill.

The next morning I departed from my usual habit; I looked at the "Personal" column first

There it was again.

Unhappy Cleopatra! Had she taken space in the advertisement columns of the paper for a year?

That sort of thing could not go on longer.

My resolution was taken. I sat down to my writing desk at once, hastily scrawled a few lines, inclosed the price of one insertion, and sent it by a boy to the office of the newspaper.

The next morning I tore open the paper. There stood my advertisement in large letters just after that of Cleopatra.

DEAR MR. THEODORE,—Will you not show some pity on Cleopatra, and not leave her to suffer longer? Your conduct is both unbecoming and reprehensible. MICHAEL.

Now we shall see, I thought, if he will keep silence.

There was no sign from him in the next day's paper, but from her there was this line:

MICHAEL,—Thanks, oh thanks, you good soul! CLEOPATRA.

It is very flattering to be considered a good man, but there is something about the expression, "good soul," that I don't exactly like. Its application by Cleopatra rather displeased me. An old woman, who is rheumatic and who reads the Bible a great deal, is a "good soul"; but a man of forty, who dresses well and has ambition—well! However, when I came to read it over, I could see that it was not ill-meant. It was unquestionably a genuine outburst of feeling. In any case, it was thoughtful of her to make an acknowledgment of my interest in her affairs.

I could hardly wait until the next morning to come. The moment the paper arrived, I turned to the advertisement page. It was there! Theodore had been aroused to answer. This was the token of his existence:

MICHAEL,—Do not meddle with what does not concern you. It strikes me, from your note, that you are like your namesake, who killed himself in running after the comet. Will you, in the future, be so good as to mind your own business? THEODORE.

On the instant I sat down and wrote the following, which I despatched for the next day's issue:

THEODORE,—Your rudeness does not at all surprise me. I was perfectly prepared for it after the brutal manner in which you have treated the prayers of a lady. The Chinese have a custom of never answering a letter until a month after it is received. I take the liberty of supposing you to be a Chinaman. MICHAEL.

And then the correspondence dropped.

I looked upon the whole affair as dead and buried, when some days later the name Michael caught my eye in the advertising columns. Was it intended for me, or for some other Michael? A second glance assured me. It ran:

MICHAEL is earnestly entreated to send his address to CLEOPATRA.

Hem! That was something to be thought about. Might not it be a trap which was set for me? To judge of him by his advertisement, this Theodore was a surly, cantankerous fellow, who might want to find my address to make a personal attack upon me, or perhaps send me a challenge for a duel.

I am opposed to duelling on principle. I prefer any time a dozen oysters to a shot in the leg or a thrust with a small sword.

What should I do?

The advertisement was certainly signed "Cleopatra," and courtesy demanded some kind of answer. I would not follow the Chinese method and wait a month, so I answered that my address might be obtained from the editor.

A morning or two later, while sitting at breakfast, my old housekeeper informed me that a lady wished to see me.

"Is she young?" I asked.

"Yes."

"Pretty?"

"Yes." My housekeeper was very sure on that point.

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A ravishingly beautiful young lady.

"Clear the table, then, and let her come in." I hurried into my bedroom to brush the hair over the bald place on the top of my head, slipped on a black coat—in which I am assured I look tolerably well—and hurried back again. When I re-entered the room, a ravishingly beautiful young lady, whom I had never before seen, stood before me.

"Sir," she began in a soft voice, in which there was an anxious sound, "forgive this intrusion on the part of a stranger, but——"

Here she made a slight pause. I pushed forward an arm-chair.

"Please be seated. There is not the slightest need of an apology. I am charmed, I'm sure."

Her eyes until this point had been cast down. Now she raised them and looked me full in the face. What eyes! Black, with blonde hair. Is there any combination more magnificent?

"Mr. Michael," she began, "I am not altogether unknown to you."

"No; certainly not," I stammered, "certainly not. I—I believe I have had the pleasure——"

I looked at her closely. I was lying—I had never seen her before.

"You meant to do me a good turn, even if you failed."

To whom had I attempted to do a good turn? I could think of no one. I only bowed.

"Yes, Mr. Michael, you certainly have shown that you are a man with a heart."

She looked at me with trustful eyes. Such eyes! They burned to the very marrow of my soul.

"Why, my dear young lady," I burst forth, "I should be worse than a barbarian if I did not place my heart and myself at your disposal. Yes, I would even, to please you, set sail for Corea, and set the Chinese——"

"Chinese!" she interrupted. "That brings me to the business I came upon. Calling him that was the very thing that made him so angry. He insists that the whole matter was a conspiracy between you and me. He is so dreadfully jealous!"

Conspiracy! He! What and whom could she be talking about? And a Chinese! Could it be possible that this charming young creature had a Chinese lover? Women have all sorts of tastes, however. But then, what had I to do with it? Why should she confide in me? But I put a bold face upon it.

"Jealous! That is too ridiculous! You must convince him that he is mistaken."

"But I cannot. Mr. Michael, you are the only one that can bring him to his senses. You must call on him and explain. Perhaps he will then listen to reason."

Cold chills ran over me at the thought. To put myself into the hands of this Chinese Othello! To risk my head between the jaws of the lion! To explain a matter of which I was thoroughly ignorant to a heathen foreigner mad with jealousy! No. My willingness to become a martyr did not extend so far as that.

"My dear madam," I stammered, "nothing would give me greater pleasure, but my professional duties occupy every moment of my time from morning until night."

"But you cannot refuse me," she pleaded. "You can take time enough for that, dear, good Mr. Michael!"

And she caught my hand and patted it like a child. I could resist no longer. I declared myself ready.

"Thanks! oh, thanks!"

"Where does he live?" I asked firmly. I felt at that moment like one of the old knights who was about to go out to fight dragons.

"In Powderhouse Street, number 17. You can't mistake it. It is on the right-hand side of the street, and the first door to the left as you enter."

Powderhouse Street! The name sounded ominous.

At ten o'clock the next morning I prepared myself for the fight. After a long walk I reached the street. My heart beat so it could be heard when I stepped into the hall of the house where the monster dwelt.

The first door to the left. This was it. At the further end of the passage was a servant with a dustpan and brush.

"Here!" I called to him in a loud voice, "can you tell me if the Chinaman is at home?"

I was just in front of the door, and, as I spoke, it flew violently open and the dragon stood before me. I raised both hands mechanically to keep him from springing at my throat. It was the instinct of self-preservation. Then I looked him in the eye. My hands dropped.

"What, Damian!"

"Michael!"

For five long years I had neither heard from nor seen my old schoolfellow, and here he had dropped upon me, or rather, I had dropped upon him, from the clouds. We shook each other's hands till they ached.

"But what in all the world are you doing here, and where have you been all these years, Damian?"

We shook each other's hands till they ached.

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"That is a long story to tell, Michael. I have been in America."

"In America? Truly? You must tell me all about it. Isn't there a *café* near here where we can have a chat?"

Suddenly I remembered my mission.

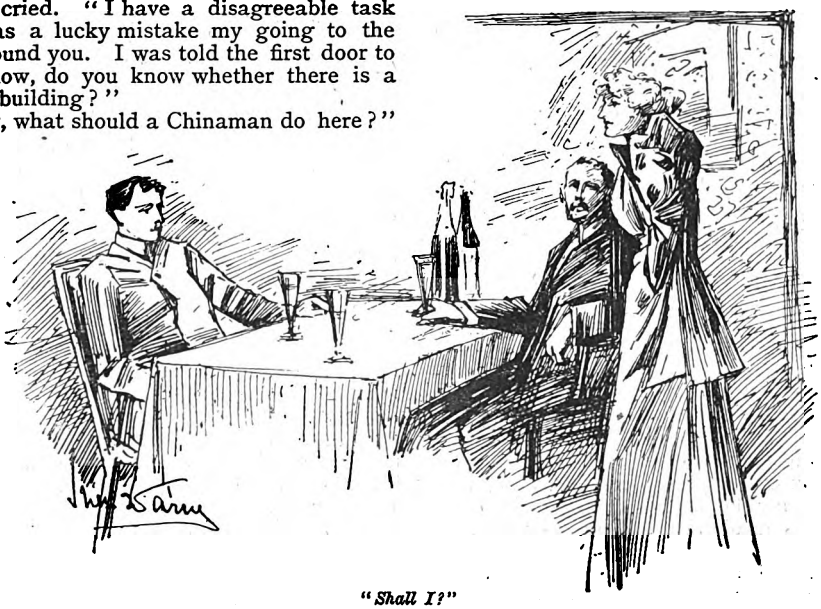
"But not just yet," I cried. "I have a disagreeable task to perform first. It was a lucky mistake my going to the wrong door first, for I found you. I was told the first door to the left. I say, old fellow, do you know whether there is a Chinaman living in the building?"

"A Chinaman? Why, what should a Chinaman do here?"

"Well, that's what I really don't know myself. But I have promised to find him, and I expect to have my throat cut for my good nature. I haven't the slightest idea what I have to say to him. It is to oblige a young woman whose name I don't know, and whom I never saw but once."

Damian shook his head, and looked at me with a curious glance.

"Terrible to die so young, isn't it?" with a weak attempt to encourage myself by a joke.



"Shall I?"

My friend paid no attention to what I was saying. He was looking over my shoulder towards the door.

"Are you convinced now?" said a voice behind me. "Do you believe now I have told the truth, Theodore?"

Theodore! And that voice! It was that of my unknown visitor of the day before. Theodore! Where had I heard that name before?

"I have not the slightest idea what you mean," replied my friend coldly. "All I know is that I have just accidentally met an old school comrade."

"That is splendid!" and she clapped her hands joyously. "But why are you staring at me so strangely, Mr. Michael?"

"Because I really don't know what to say. I haven't yet found your Chinaman."

"The Chinaman!" and my unknown laughed heartily. "Why, the Chinaman stands before you—Theodore!"

"Cleopatra!"

Ah, ha! Theodore! Cleopatra! The light began to break in upon me.

"That impudent Michael in the advertisement was you then?" said my friend.

"And you, Damian, were——"

"For goodness sake, don't call me Damian again. I dropped that name in America years ago. I am Theodore now."

"Well, Theodore. I take back the Chinaman, but you must acknowledge your mistake in saying that it was Michael who ran after the comet."

"If it will be of any comfort to you, certainly. It was very likely Timothy."

"Well, in any case, let us forgive and forget. And now for a couple of Rüdesheimer."

The wine was brought, and we sat down to it round the little table in Theodore's room. The whole matter was, little by little, cleared up.

"I am curious to know one thing, Theodore," said I. "Why did you let the charming Cleopatra beg in vain for an answer for a whole week? That wasn't at all like you."

Theodore hesitated.

"You are forcing my hand, Michael, but I will tell you. All this whole week I have been held by the police on the charge of disturbing the peace. You see, I was going home one night after a late supper where I had drunk too much, and that was because of our little quarrel." He here nodded at Cleopatra. "I wasn't in the best humour, and, for the matter of that, neither was the man whom I met on the way home. He insisted on my going along quietly, and I insisted on singing, and the end of it was that he took me to the police-station. For seven long days I sat there, determined not to pay my fine, growling to myself, and thinking of Cleopatra, who is to blame for the whole of it. I might have been sitting there now if a third party had not thrust his nose into the business and made me jealous."

"Then I really have you to thank for his coming back after all, you dear, good Mr. Michael."

And Cleopatra rose from her chair and came to my side of the table.

"Shall I?" she asked, looking at Theodore.

"Certainly," said he, laughing, and a kiss from her soft lips burned on my cheek.

The wedding came off three weeks later, and to keep up the joke that had brought us together I sent them, for a present, an elegant Chinese pagoda for the mantel.

Since that time I have never mixed myself up in newspaper correspondence.

XTRA MAS Number of "P.W."

NOW ON SALE.

LAST year many thousands of readers were unable to obtain a copy of our Extra Christmas Number, and considering that this year's issue contains even more exceptional attractions, we are anticipating a still larger demand.

The number consists almost entirely of stories by the best authors, profusely illustrated throughout by first-class artists. Stories appear from the pens of Messrs. Headon Hill, George Griffith, W. L. Alden, and G. B. Burgin, and amongst the artists illustrating the Number are Miss G. Demain Hammond, Miss Inez Warry, and Messrs. Georges Montbard, Raymond Potter, E. S. Hope, and Sydney Harvey; an array of literary and artistic talent which I make bold to say will not be equalled in any other Christmas number published this year, at even double the price.

P.W. Extra Christmas Number is twice the size of the ordinary issue of *Pearson's Weekly*, is bound in a peacock blue wrapper, and with it is given away a beautiful coloured plate measuring 19¼ inches by 14¼ inches. The price, as last year, is threepence, not a very out-of-the-way sum to have paid, you will say, for the coloured plate alone.

This number is now on Sale. Intending purchasers should not fail to buy their copies at once, as owing to the time necessary for the careful printing of the coloured plate there can be no re-issue.

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THE NOVELIST'S NIECE

A FRENCH STORY.

WAS young, for I was not much more than twenty; and I was inexperienced, for after having frankly published a novel at my own expense, I sent three copies, in all seriousness, to the Secretary of the Académie Française in the hope of winning the Academy prize, and took no further steps in the matter, confident of my own merit. However, an old aunt whom I had informed of my ambitious object, gave me some good advice.

"My dear nephew," she said, "I know an Academician, the well-known writer Z——. Give me a copy of your book with a special dedication. I will speak to him about it, for I meet him every week at some house or other, when I am dining out."

The very next morning my book was despatched to the famous writer Z——, who is dead now, but not, as you shall see, from having read my book.

Summer was coming on, and I went down into Burgundy to get a breath of country air, and to economise a little. The publication of my book had created a stringency in my finances. Times have changed since authors were the ruin of publishers.

In a compartment of the Paris, Lyons, and Marseilles Express there awaited me the sweetest satisfaction that literature has ever afforded me.

There were three of us in the compartment. Myself, of course; then a man of about sixty, short of figure, red of face, bald, and a strange thing at his age, without the ribbon of the Legion of Honour. On the other hand, the young girl who accompanied him—his daughter, doubtless—seemed to me a person of indisputable distinction, for she wore silk stockings. I have learned since, to my sorrow, that it does not do to pin one's faith to silk stockings.

However, the fair unknown might have worn sabots, had only one eye, and been hunchbacked. It was not on her my dazzled eyes rested, it was on the book she was reading; a book in a salmon-coloured binding that I would have recognised miles away. Great heavens, it was my book!

Everyone can set the press working nowadays. Who among us has not given himself the refined delight of seeing his name blazing forth from a bookseller's window! But to see one's self read! Ah, what a voluptuous delight it is.

My neighbour was not agitated. She was yawning. Doubtless she had got up very early that morning to prepare for her journey. Her eyes closed little by little; her rosy chin sank towards a charming cushion which nature had set to its hand; her finely-gloved hands relaxed, and—my book fell on the floor. It is not an inexcusable downfall to drop at the feet of a pretty woman—especially if those feet be clad in silk.

She had not moved. Her slumber was no trifling cat-nap, but sober, serious, and enduring. It was presumably a family trait, for the father had been snoring gently for some time. Happily, she had not been reading "Fatal Love," which fact cut short certain disquieting suppositions. As these thoughts flashed through my brain, I stopped to pick up the book. Alas! My happiness did not last long. No, she had not bought the book, for on the fly-leaf I found these lines, which I recognised, for I had written them myself!

"To Monsieur Z——
(Of the Académie Française).

"Dear master, allow one whom you do not know to offer you the homage of this humble book, as a token of respectful admiration for your sublime genius."

But then—this apoplectic and neglected person, sleeping in the corner was—oh, joy!—he was the famous writer, Z——! And he had noticed my book, for he had taken it with him. He allowed—who knows? perhaps he had advised—his child to read it.

I must profit by this unhoped-for meeting. I had fully six hours to spend with my Academician—more than enough to assure myself of his vote, which, according to my aunt, would carry with it thirty-nine others. There was no reason why I should not begin operations on him through his daughter. It was a roundabout way to reach my end, but what a charming detour! Imagine a brunette, with red and pouting lips, a figure with pure and striking outlines, suggestive of everything but the Academy and its prizes.

But I must think of my book. Poor book; the leaves were not yet cut, and if matters went on this way they might never be. So I drew forth my penknife and began cutting the pages. The rustling of the leaves awoke my neighbour, who looked astonished at my occupation.

"Sir," she began, reaching out her hand to recover her property.

"Allow me to save you a little trouble," I replied. "It will take only a minute."

She thanked me with a smile. I saw that she regarded me with a certain complaisance; evidently I did not displease her. Now was my chance to get to business.

"Besides, I have almost a right to do it," I continued, throwing into my face a word of meaning.

"A right?" she repeated, opening her eyes wide.

"Why, yes; for if you will permit me to introduce myself, I am the author, the humble and obscure author of this book."

"Then, sir, you are an author?" she said, with a somewhat disdainful tone.

"I have that honour, for I do not doubt it is an honour in your eyes. You must know many of the leading litterateurs of the day."

"Quite a number come to our house, but they are mostly old men."

"Papa keeps a sharp eye on his daughter," thought I; then I remembered the business I had on hand.

"Do you think your father will do me the honour to glance over this modest effort? I need not tell you how important such indorsement as his——"

"He is not my father, he is my uncle. Do you know him?"

"By reputation, of course. What talent he has!"

She nodded her head in approval. "Unfortunately," she said, "he is growing old, and one is soon worn out in his vocation. We have had a busy house this season; several large dinners every week, and my poor uncle has been just rushed to death."

"That is one of the consequences of being a great man. But he will be able to rest now. You are going to the country, doubtless."

"Don't imagine that country life will be a rest. In Burgundy the dinners are simply endless."

"Ah!" I exclaimed; "you are going to Burgundy?"

"Yes, to Champrive."

"To the Duchess's? Shall you be there long?"

"All the autumn. Do you know the neighbourhood?"

"I visited that superb residence some years ago. What would you say if I visited you there in a few days?"

She seemed astonished, and stared at me as if to see if I were speaking seriously.

"It would only be," I continued, "to learn what you think

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of my book, and if you have the goodness, after having read it, to say a good word for it to your uncle."

She burst out laughing—a pearly, rippling, delicious laugh.

"You're joking," she said; "you wouldn't come to see me."

"Not to see you? Why not? You shall see. Promise me, though, that in the meantime you will not have forgotten him who will carry for ever in his heart"—the uncle still slept like a dormouse—"the memory of your exquisite grace and beauty?"

She was not foolish enough to be angry, for, bold as were my words, my manner was perfectly respectful. We talked of everything—of Paris and Burgundy, theatres and hunting, the Duchesse de Champrive, whom she evidently knew very intimately, but on whom she expressed herself with a reserve which seemed to me in excellent taste. I even dared to ask her name, which she gave, with adorable ingenuousness:

"Félicie Legerot."

"Your uncle is not your father's brother, then," I remarked, "for you have not the same name."

What more shall I say? The journey was a dream. At Tonnerre, where the train stopped for luncheon, I had the honour to escort her to the buffet, for the Academician, "tortured," he said, "by an atrocious headache," had refused to get out. Worthy man! I served his niece with the same assiduity I would have served a queen.

When I alighted at Dijon I had not made much progress as regards my literary future, but I certainly had no cause to complain of that which I had made in Félicie's affections. In the Blaisy tunnel (5,000 feet long) I had devoured her hands with kisses, and I had whispered, "I shall see you again soon," to her, emphasising the words with a passionate pressure of her supple fingers.

"But it is impossible," she protested, though not angrily. "You must not attempt to see me again, M. Lejeune."

"Come, come," I exclaimed with a happy laugh, "haven't you guessed that Lejeune is a literary pseudonym?" And bringing my lips a little nearer her pink ear than perhaps strict decorum would permit, I confided to my pretty neighbour the honourable name and title my ancestors had bequeathed me.

Under any other circumstances Félicie's reply would have seemed a little hard on my literary pride.

"There," she exclaimed, "I thought all the time you didn't look like a real author."

Her uncle had finally wakened up, and I spoke to him just as the train stopped.

"Dear master," I said, "I have respected the repose needful to a great intellect like yours. Let me assure you, however, of my strong desire to be presented to you soon at the Duchess's. Though you do not suspect it, you see before you a petitioner for your good offices."

He seemed surprised, but made no effort to understand me.

"Sir," said he, cordially, "if it is anything that lies in my province you may count on me." And we shook hands warmly.

The reader need not be told after what manœuvres I found myself a week later at the Duchesse de Champrive's, who invited me to luncheon a few days later.

I was thinking too much of Félicie to pay attention to anything else, and you can imagine my disappointment when, as we entered the dining-room I saw that neither she nor her uncle were among the company. What had happened? They told me they were to be the Duchess's guests until the end of the autumn.

Profiting by a moment of silence, I determined to ask for them.

"Has our distinguished friend Z—— left you, madame?" I asked, raising my voice; "I hoped to meet him here."

"He did not come this year. Do you know him?"

"Only enough to have offered him a book which——"

"I thought as much. So you are an author, sir. Our friend Z—— lent me your book, recommending it as the work of a compatriot. I read it and found it charming."

"What," I insisted, "M. Z—— has not come! Why, I travelled down here with him the other day; he was coming here with his niece."

"His niece?"

"Yes, madame. She has a great admiration for you. She is extremely pretty, and so sensible, too."

"Z——'s niece? Do you know her name?"

"Mademoiselle Félicie Legerot."

Madame de Champrive crushed me with a look. The Duke seemed astonished, and glanced at me in a droll manner out of the corner of his eye. And as I was mechanically staring at the butler, who stood opposite me, I saw the face of that grave man express stupefaction so profound that I intuitively felt I had committed some horrible blunder.

A silence reigned for a minute, and then they began to talk of something else. For the time being I decided not to open my mouth again, even to eat, for my appetite was gone. If it had rested with me, the château would have caught fire immediately, so that I could have escaped under cover of the confusion. But I had to sit there and wait for the end of the dinner, pretending to find the conversation highly diverting.

Finally the suggestion was made that some guests from Paris and I should inspect the château. That over, I hoped to ask for my tilbury and escape to my own roof, hoping that, sooner or later, some chance would reveal to me the fatal error I had committed, of which I vainly sought to imagine the nature and extent.

That chance was not long in coming.

As we descended to the kitchen, the Duchess keeping me at her side, do you know whom I saw in cap, apron, and shirt sleeves, standing before the immense range? Simply Z——, the Academician, or rather the false Z——, fatter, redder than in the railway car, but not asleep this time, for he was in the act of preparing an *aspic de volaille* for dinner.

And do you know whom I saw enter by another door, in a coquettish white apron, and carrying a kettle that she had doubtless just filled with hot water? Félicie Legerot in person. The young unknown, whose hands I had kissed with impetuous ardour in the Blaisy tunnel, was the Duchess's maid. He whom I had taken for the famous writer Z—— was the cook, and "Fatal Love," the cause of all this confusion, had been filched by Félicie from her mistress.

We—Félicie, her uncle, and I—must have looked unspeakably funny as we recognised each other, for the Duchesse de Champrive could not restrain herself, and, in spite of her dignity, had to lean against one of the pillars that supported the roof to laugh at her ease. As for Félicie, she fled to the next room, where I heard her shriek with laughter.

All this happened ten years ago, and never since then have I been seen at Champrive. I have met the Duchess once or twice in Paris, but I hope she did not recognise me. If she did it certainly was not my fault.

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OLD SLATER'S LOVE STORY.

THE sloop of war *Antelope* stood off Gonave.

The sun's gold disc had disappeared and the sweet melancholy of a southern twilight lay upon the Island, whose profile, darkly outlined against the saffron-hued sky, was set in an amethyst frame, the deep and luminous violet of the sea. Briefly, the tropic twilight is short; its *silhouette* hung there between the two immensities of sky and sea, then the jewel colours of wave, and cloud, and wood-draped island vanished—a velvety blackness covered all.

On the spar-deck of the *Antelope*, seamen Bill Williams and Sam Woods, apprentice Stubbs, and the Jack of the Dust were matching experiences. The boatswain's mate listened, without commenting. Old Slater commented, without listening. From time to time he left his messmates, to lean over the rail. Fixing his eyes on Gonave with that interest which we give to something which marks an event in our lives, he wagged his head so knowingly that Stubbs and Dusty—men of one poem, so to speak—were visibly envious. At length the old seaman took his place among them. He began at once to speak:

"Hev I ever tol' ye of 'n adventure me an' the Exec'tive had on thet ther' island?"

"Give us the first line, Mr. Slater, and we'll tell you," replied the Jack of the Dust, jauntily.

"Ketch a-hol' o' yerself, Dusty," recommended old Slater. "Et ain't no comic piece. Et's 'bout a gal. A little bit of er gal—yaller's gol'."

The Jack of the Dust's expression changed; he had but just begun the study of the "eternal feminine," and his desire for phenomena was still unsatisfied.

"Fire away," he said cordially. "I guess it's a good one this time."

"Do you mean the *Antelope's* 'First Luff'?" questioned Stubbs.

"Ther same," old Slater replied.

"That porpoise?" exclaimed the Jack of the Dust.

"He wuzn't no porpoise then, lad," said the storyteller. "They called 'im ther 'Dandy Ensign'—he wuz Ensign Fitz in them days—an' 'Gentleman Jack' an' 'Han'some Jack,' an' 'e wuz purty near all thet, fer 'e wuz clear pink 'n white; 'e hedn't no airs, an' 'e wuz plucky as the nex' one.

"Me an' him hed been on ther *Bender* two year, an' one cruise in these 'ere waters, ther skipper—no sailor-man 't all he wuzn't—took et inter 'is blame ol' head ter come up 'ere from Port o' Prince, whar we wuz havin' more fun than 'nuff, fer gun practice. No matter 'bout what we done. Though I rec'lec' our Divis'n Cap'n got 'n eye blowed out, an' seed more 'n ever after thet, et havin' quick'ned his 'magination. One mornin' Fitz he come ter me an' sez, 'I've got ter get out er this.'

"'I'm goin' 'shore shootin',' sez he. 'Git leave an' come 'long, Slater; mebbe we'll strike sumthin'.'

"I know'd he wanted me ter pull ther boat, so I got leave an' we went 'shore an' shot wil' roun' thar er while, then 'e got 'nuff an' propos'd er bite of the rations I'd fetched. I set 'em out under a big coco-palm, an' Fitz 'e got conf'dential over mess, and began ter talk 'bout the Creole gal he'd got 'quainted with in Port o' Prince. Fitz 'e sed 'e loved 'er 'madly,' an' a lot more that I knowed by 'eart, fer 'e loved easy an' of'en in them days, an' swore 'e'd make 'er Missis Fitz ef 'e 'ad ter give up 'is fambly—'s mother havin' given 'im warnin' that she wouldn't hev no furrin graft on ter ther Fitz tree. While he wuz a-ravin' we 'earn sumthin' an' looked roun'. Thar she stood!"

"The Creole?" interrupted the Jack of the Dust.

"No; the yaller gal," Old Slater answered, "lookin' like 'er leetle gol' statyure in 'er garden, with all ther green stuff back on 'er. She was jes so slim an' still. I reck'n she wuz 'bout twel' year ol'."

"A kid!" exclaimed the Jack of the Dust.

"Don't ye go a-jumpin', Dusty," said Old Slater; "she wuz out er the nus'ry."

"They ripen early in these 'ere lat'tudes, Dusty. They don't hev nuthing ter keep 'em back, which ever edication will an' too many strings roun' ther wais'," Bill Williams remarked, with the air of a Reformer.

"But the little golden girl?" ventured Stubbs.

Old Slater continued: "Fitz jumped up when he see her, an' motions 'er ter come an' hev a bite, an' 'long she steps, easy 'n' light 's a kitten, an' se' down side o' 'im. She couldn't never hev seed no sech rations, but she wuzn't took back. She eat 's nat'ral 's a bird picks up crumbs. Thet, my lads," with a glance at the apprentice and the Jack of the Dust, "thet wuz 'cause she wuz thurerbred—they shows their grain fust off. Don't fergit thet when ye're lookin' fer somethin' ter 'dorn yer 'omes."

"I ain't looking for *savages*," returned the Jack of the Dust. "I like a woman with some style; that has seen something of the world, and knows her way about better than to mess with two strange men in the jungle."

"Let me tell ye, Dusty," said Old Slater, gravely, "a gal's got ter be equil ter the occasion, whether ye find 'er in ther jungle or'in ther Whitechapel Road. Ef she hain't got ther knack fer *thet* she ain't got nothin' ter build on."

"I ain't asking anybody for points!" blazed the Jack of the Dust.

"Hush up!" said Stubbs.

Silence being assured, the old seaman resumed his narrative:

"Fitz 'e begun ter talk ter 'er in Creole. Et 'it ther mark, but she hedn't much ter say: she'd never seed nuthin' like 'im, an' was all carried 'way with 'is pink 'n' white. So thar she sot, 'er great, big black eyes full o' witch-looks, a-listenin' to 'is talk, an' answerin' up sof' 's er leetle bird peeps, when 'e asked 'er sumthin' d'rect. 'Twuz plain 'nuff ter me thet she wuz clean gone on 'im, so *I* went ter sleep—thar ain't no bigger blunder, Dusty, than fer er man ter keep 'wake when thar ain't gals nuff ter go roun'; 'e ain't goin' ter be pop'lar in any s'ciety ef 'e makes *thet* slip."

"Much obliged, but I've got ahead of a-b ab," the Jack of the Dust said, with fine irony.

Old Slater continued calmly:

"When I woke up they wuz a kissin' of one another like mad. Mimi—thet wuz 'er name—wuz a-callin' of Fitz '*Doudoux*' ev'ry other word, an' 'e wuz bustin' with pride an' vanity."

"Well, I wuz equil to et! I hedn't been ten year on the flagship fer nuthin'. I hed dyplom'cy 'nuff fer 'n adm'ral, an' kep' my eyes a-rovin', and list'n'd to Fitz makin' of himself out ther 'ero o' combats he'd never ben in, without blinkin'. But when ther bats begun ter sweep roun' over'ead in er percession, I know'd 'nuff ter know we b'long'd on ther *Bender*, an' I calls Fitz down an' gits a move on 'im.

"Mimi, she wa'n't fer sayin' good-bye, an' she trots 'long with us ter ther shore, an' when 'e sed 'e'd love 'er alwus, an' promised ter come ther nex' day an' stay for ever, she let 'im git inter ther gig. She stood thar, a-watching' after 'im. I kin see 'er yit! Leetle slim gal, 'er blue cotton gownd, belayed at ther wais' with er green and yaller string, half coverin' of 'er, a-callin', '*Adieu, Doudoux, adieu!*' in a voice sof' 's velvit—jes' ther sperit o' the islan'! 'Slater,' sez Fitz, when we was clear o' moorin's, 'et's a great ol' world!' Then 'e waits er while an' sez—'e wuz smilin' free, like a lad—'Why, that leetle gal 's ther light o' my life.'"

"What about the Creole lady?" questioned the Jack of the Dust. "Your 'Dandy Ensign' didn't need transfer papers for his affections, did he?"

"I entered right inter et," continued Old Slater, slightly raising his voice. "An' I let 'im say the same thing a 'undred diff'rent ways till we wuz 'longside ther *Bender*, then sez 'e, 'I'll see 'er ter-morrer, Slater!'"

"But we didn't get off so easy. Ther skipper had ther dyspepsy ther nex' day—thar wuzn't no liberty fer ennybody, an' he wuz sorry he couldn't stop the sun from shinin'. He kep' this up for his 'musement 'till ther end o' ther week. Fitz, he was blame near crazy, an' I sez, 'Try 'em on goin' 'shore for butterflies.'

"Et went, fer 'e wuz knowed ter be a great entymol'gist in them days, an' we got off. Then Fitz, 'e took at outen me!

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'E wuz goin' ter marry thet leetle gal ef 'e 'ad ter quit ther service, an' live under a cabbage-palm ther rest o' 'is life. She was wuth et! 'E named er king thet married whar 'e wanted ter, an' wuzn't never sorry—but 'e didn't mention no ev'ry-day man thet 'ad the same run o' luck. 'E sed she wuz er match for enny Duchess—an' I reck'n 'twaz so, ther only Duchess *I* ever see bein' yeller 's er saffron bag, an' ol' at thet. Yes, she wuz ther mos' perfect' leetle gal in ther worl'; an' 'e wuz going' ter hav er, an' prej'dice might go to thunder. 'I tell ye what, Slater,' ses 'e, 'I'll give out she's er princess; they'll knuckle ter *thet*.'

"I wuz so dead set 'ginst thet Creole an' 'er airs thet I 'greed with 'im. 'Thet's so,' sez I. 'Ther gal's got ther royal grain, an' no mistake.'

"Well, Mimi, she wuz on ther shore, an' when 'e see 'er he wuz up on 'is feet. 'Don't git ter sleep, Slater!' sez 'e. 'She's waitin', man, can't ye see?' He was out 'fore ther gig wuz in, an' when I made things fast I follered on. They wuz in ther same place under ther coco-palm, an' Mimi wuz restin' 'ginst Fitz light's er slip o' willer—I ain't ever see anything ter equil ther grace o' them leetle slim niggers; runnin' water ain't smoother nor purtier 'n their ways o' movin', an' jist surroundin' ther man they love——."

"Go 'head," growled Sam Woods.

"Wall, I lef' Fitz an' Mimi an' struck out fer butterflies; after er while I ketched er big black feller, an' thet wuz all I wanted fer er blin', one bein' as misleadin' 's er dozen, an' 'nuff sight easier ter ketch. Then I started back to ther 'rig'nal spot, an' I'd better never hev lef' et.

"Thar sot them two, Mimi makin' no 'bjection ter Fitz's arm snug roun' her wais', an' a-wrigglin' towards 'em, on ther ends o' his foes, wuz as ugly-favoured er knave as I ever see. They wuz sittin' with their backs to 'im an' me, an' in er flash I knowed 'e didn't like what 'e see; thet 'e was Mimi's comp'ny—fathers 'n' brothers ain't interferin' in love 'fairs in these parts—an' thet somebuddy'd got ter pay fer 'is losin' of 'er. I give er jump for'ard an' sung out. Fitz an' Mimi sprung up an' faced roun'.

"Then 'e turned an' see me, an' knowed 'e wusn't goin' ter stand enny show with us two men. I wuz near par'lysed by ther look on 'is face, but 'twuzn't ennythin' ter Mimi's—hate, sech as white wimmen don't feel, wuz ragin' an' blazin' thar. Et told 'im, better 'n words, thet he'd los' grip on 'er, an' ther nigger wuz 'nuff like er white man ter be boun' thet nobuddy else shouldn't hev it. They glared er minnet, mebbe, then what do you think she done?"

"Screeched, of course," said the Jack of the Dust, without hesitation.

"Only white ones screeches an' squeals," said Old Slater.

"What *did* she do?" questioned Stubbs.

"I ain't sayin' but what ther everlastin' woman wuz in et," Old Slater said. "She kinder straightened up fust, then clasped Fitz, a-callin' of 'im er lot o' sweet Creole names—never did them mongrel lisping's soun' sweeter! Then quicker'n I kin tell et a blade flashed in thet nigger's 'an, an' *whiz* et went 'issing through the 'ot air.

"I turned sick, fer I 'lowed Fitz wuz er goner, but *now* I know thet she wuz expectin' of et and wuz willin' ter pay ther price like ther thurerbred she wuz, fer she faced roun' suddent, jes' in front o' Fitz, 'er two arms stretched wide ter shield 'im, and ketched thet knife on 'er bres'-bone!"

"Good enough!" said Jack of the Dust, with hearty, if tardy, appreciation.

"I'd done 'er blame sight too much lookin' on," continued Old Slater, "but I soon put ther 'sassin whar 'e b'longed. Fitz as white 's 'er ghost, wuz a-holding' Mimi. 'Er blood wuz pourin', an' suthin' like er curtin wuz creepin' over 'er eyes, shuttin' out ther light. She tried ter smile—she *was* er Princess, an' I reck'n, too, she wuz satisfied ter knew she'd hev ter knuckle down ter thet nigger man. '*Doudoux*,' sez she, '*adieu*.' Them wuz all the words she spoke, an' no young bird never piped 'good-night' enny softer n' sweeter. Then she tried to put up 'er arms. But 'twusn't in 'em—poor little arms, they dropped, an' she wuz gone."

"Dead," gasped Stubbs.

"Thet's er good name for et in enny lat'tude," replied Old Slater, dryly. He continued in a softer tone: "Fitz laid Mimi down like as ef she wuz er babby, an' 'im an' me kinder straightened of 'er out. I couldn't help wonderin' ef she hed 'er mammy to moan over 'er leetle spent life. We lef' thet nigger whar 'e fell, an' went 'way without er word. Thet night ther *Bender* hauled up 'er anchor, and we went down ter Port o' Prince."

Stubbs sighed.

"Whar thet Creole begun whar she'd lef' off," added Old Slater, savagely.

"How *could* he? Do you mean that he *forgot* Mimi?" cried Stubbs.

"Don't ye go ter gittin' sof', Stubby," said Old Slater. "A man thet's goin' ter mount ter shucks in the service kin forgit *ennything!*"

"But when she died for him!" persisted Stubbs.

"She didn't feel et none to speak on," Old Slater said, with conviction. "Wimmen are made so 's they kin die easy fer ther men they love."

"Don't git 'xcited, lad," advised Bill Williams. "Ye ain't got nuthin' ter do with et; ther Lord he made 'em ter fill their places."

Old Slater was seemingly searching some chamber of his memory. At length he said:

"White ones, mebbe, dies a *leetle* harder, an' they ain't *quite* so likely ter do it, but colour don't make no great difference."

"White ones feel—and die!"

It was the boatswain's mate, and he spoke in a voice which forbade contradiction. "*She*——" but his voice broke; he paused on that word, stayed by thoughts too bitter to express. He walked away, without looking at his companions.

"Well, much obliged, Mr. Slater," said the Jack of the Dust; "she was a dandy, and no mistake."

He, too, walked away, followed by Stubbs. Old Slater looked after the apprentice.

"Humph," said he, with a short laugh. "Thet lad's heart aches an' he dunno *why*. *Thet's youth*."

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Mr. Geo. Grossmith at the piano.
Miss Ada Blanche as "Robinson Crusoe."
Miss Lillian Russell.
Miss May Yohé singing the Plantation Song.
Miss Topsy Sinden in some of her parts.
Miss Cissy Loftus as Haidee in "Don Juan."
Miss Maud Millett: a Reminiscence of "Liberty Hall."
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The Misses Lily and Hilda Hanbury.
Mr. Wilson Barrett as Pete in "The Manxman."
Miss Lizzie Ruggles.

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THE OUTLAWS OF THE AIR.

By GEORGE GRIFFITH,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," &c.

SUMMARY.

MAX RENAULT—leading spirit of Anarchist Autonomie Group No. 7, who has joined the Utopians (a Socialistic colony on an island in the South Pacific) in order to steal the air-ship they are building, which he succeeds in doing.

FRANZ HARTOG—a German engineer, in league with Renault, who steals a very fast torpedo-boat destroyer from the Russian Government to levy blackmail on the Atlantic.

SIR HARRY MILTON—a wealthy young English nobleman, who by chance comes across the island of Utopia, and subsequently devotes the whole of his fortune to hunting down Renault and Hartog.

HERBERT WYNDHAM—a lieutenant in the British Navy who is travelling with Sir Harry for the benefit of his health, and who resigns his commission and couples his energies with those of Sir Harry in destroying the Anarchists, on account of the fact that he has been stabbed by Renault when the latter attempts to carry off Violet in the air-ship.

FREDERICK AUSTEN—the inventor of the Utopian air-ship, who shares its secret with Edward Adams, Dr. Edwards, and Ambrose Millar, three other Utopians.

VIOLET MILTON—Sir Harry's sister, and Lieutenant Wyndham's sweetheart, is permanently crippled by throwing herself out of the air-ship on which Renault has tried to carry her off.

DORA MERTON—a fair Utopian, who has made an impression on Sir Harry.

LUCY SUMMERS—another fair Utopian.

Renault in the air-ship *Vengeur*, and Hartog in the torpedo-boat *Destroyer*, levy blackmail on the high seas. Just as they have annihilated a combined British, French, and Portuguese fleet sent to discover them, Mr. Maxim's aeroplane, the *Britannia*, comes on the scene and is captured by the *Vengeur*.

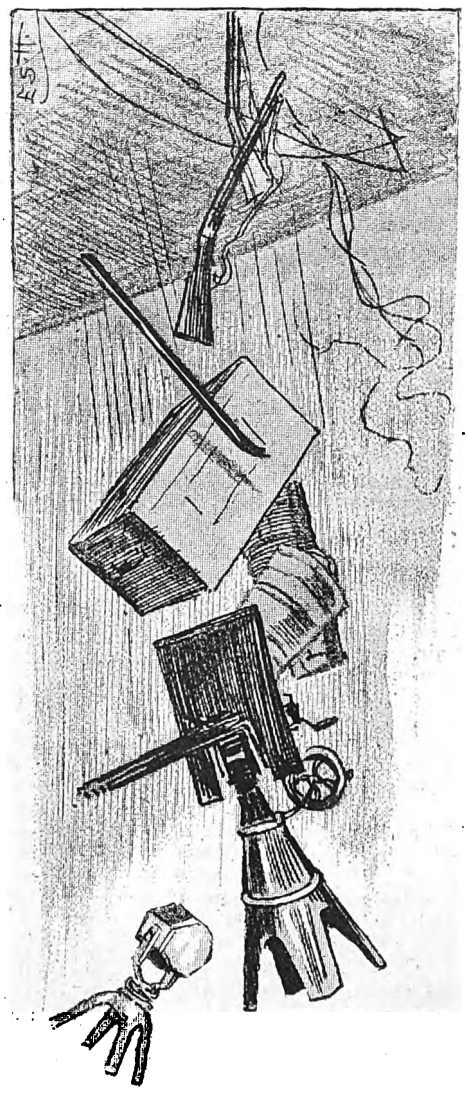
CHAPTER XXI.

A VICTORY OF TACTICS.

IN less time than it would take to describe the operation, the guns, ammunition, and all heavy movable *impedimenta* were flung overboard from the car of the *Britannia*, and, after the first to-and-fro rocking movement consequent on the violent wrenching off of the guiding-planes and the throwing overboard of the heavy weights had ceased, the whole machine began to settle gently down with ever-decreasing speed as the denser air was reached, until, at a height of four thousand feet above the sea, the downward motion was so slight as to be almost imperceptible.

In fact the *Britannia* had become a huge parachute, and was exactly fulfilling the prediction that her inventor had made years before when he said that his aeroplane, if crippled in mid-air, would alight as gently as a bird coming to rest after a flight. But she was not destined to continue her descent uninterrupted. The grapnel descended again, this time in front, and hooked on to the forward midships stay which connected the aeroplane with the car. As soon as it was firmly hitched on there was a gentle forward pull, and the *Britannia* slowly swung round and headed towards the coast, which was now about twenty miles distant.

"I wonder what the deuce the fellow's up to now," said Lieutenant Pelham, who had already recovered his composure, on finding that, for the present at least, the *Britannia* was not to be destroyed. "I may as well hail him and find out, if he'll tell me."



All impedimenta were flung overboard.

He went forward to the bow of the car, and looking up, saw, as he expected, that the victor in the so far bloodless duel was towing the *Britannia* by means of a long wire rope attached to the grapnel. The first thing he saw was the barrel of a Maxim gun protruding from an after port in the air-ship's hull, and trained on the car of the *Britannia*.

"Air-ship, ahoy! Where are you taking us to, and what are you going to do with us?"

There was no answer for a few moments. Then a window slide was withdrawn close to the port hole, and Max Renault put his arms on the sill of the window, leant out, and said:

"Who are you, may I ask?"

"I am Lieutenant Pelham in command of the air-ship *Britannia*, and——"

"*Late* in command, I suppose you mean," interrupted Max with a short laugh. "It doesn't seem to strike you that I've taken you and your mechanical kite prisoners of war, and that I can blow you into little pieces whenever I like. However, Lieutenant Pelham, I don't want to be rude or to take any ungentlemanly advantage of my position. If you admit the logic of circumstances, and are prepared to surrender and haul that flag down——'

"I'll see you—well, civilised first,' and then I won't!" retorted the lieutenant with an energy that was quite justifiable under the circumstances. "Fire away, and be hanged to you!"

"Oh, I don't want to insist upon trifles," replied Max with imperturbable good-humour. "If it pleases you to keep the flag flying, do so by all means. It's only a matter of form, after all. And even if you don't want to surrender, you needn't do so, only, if you finger the handle of that revolver any more, or anybody is foolish enough to shoot, I shall just cast off and let you drop. You'll make very good target practice for my fellows with their Maxims as you are going down. But there, it's no use fooling, do you mean to continue the fight or not?"

"No, we don't," said the Lieutenant biting an oath off short between his teeth. "How the deuce can we? Of course, you can send us into the sea in little pieces if you like. The only question is, on what terms you will refrain from doing so."

"Ah, now we shall begin to understand one another," said Max, still smiling and still speaking in the same even tones that he had used throughout the brief interview. "My terms are these—and you can accept them or reject them as it pleases you. First, will you give me your word of honour, as a gentleman and a British officer, that no one on board that thing of yours will fire a shot or commit any other act of violence as long as no violence is offered to any of you?"

While he was speaking, Captain Maxwell had joined the Lieutenant in

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the bow of the car. Pelham looked at him inquiringly, and he said:

"I don't see why you shouldn't. We are beaten in this fight, and there's an end of it. You've no right to sacrifice the lives of your people, or even yourself, in what would simply be a cold-blooded murder. You'd better say yes."

"Very well," said the Lieutenant to Max. "I consent, on condition that we are treated honourably, as prisoners of war would be treated between honourable and civilised combatants."

Max passed by the plainly implied sneer with a laugh, as he could afford to do, and replied:

"Certainly. I don't propose to harm any of you, if you accept my conditions."

"Very well," said the Lieutenant. "What are they?"

"I am going to tow you to the coast as near as I can to one of the Canary Islands, or to within reach of some town on the coast. There you will land and shift for yourselves, on giving your parole that you will keep to the north and give no information about what has occurred to-day for three full days and nights from now. After that, you may say and do what you please."

Lieutenant Pelham looked inquiringly at Captain Maxwell again. The Captain thought for a moment, and then nodded.

"Yes," said the Lieutenant, in reply to Max. "We can consent to that, and if we do I presume you guarantee all our lives and personal safety. And now, perhaps you won't mind telling us who and what you are, and the name of that really wonderful craft which I suppose you command."

"I am Max Renault, Anarchist and Outlaw, and this is the Anarchist air-ship *Vengeur*. I suppose you have heard of her before, and I can promise you that you shall hear of her again. In fact, I may say that I am making arrangements to build a fleet like her, and then—well, then I should advise your so-called civilised Governments to resign and get into private life as fast as ever they can, because I propose to make things very hot for people that I disagree with.

"We Anarchists have a lot of grudges to pay off, you know; and when we get the upper hand, as we shall have in a very short time, we propose to pay them in full and take no change."

"My dear sir, if you propose to make a speech on practical anarchy," interrupted the Lieutenant coolly, "I would suggest that the audience is both limited and unsympathetic, and the occasion hardly suitable. In fact, if you go on talking such senseless nonsense, I shall withdraw what I've said, do my best to spoil your plans by putting a bullet into you, and then let your comrades do their worst."

"Pluckily spoken under the circumstances!" said Max with an ironical laugh. "Still, I didn't propose to make a speech—and deeds, after all, are more eloquent than words. Adieu then for the present, make yourselves comfortable, and I will land you safely on the coast as soon as possible: By the way, oblige me by starting that other screw of yours. It will help us on our way."

With that he drew his head in, and the slide shot across the window, but the muzzle of the Maxim gun still remained grinning out of its port hole at the car of the *Britannia*. The *Vengeur* now quickened her speed considerably, and the *Britannia*, supported by her aeroplane and driven by her single screw, was towed at a speed of about forty miles an hour in a north-easterly direction towards the coast.

In less than an hour she had gained the land, and then the *Vengeur*, taking a more northerly course, towed her along until a small Arab settlement was sighted some ten miles ahead. There she was allowed to settle quietly to the ground, and her crew disembarked, sad and angry, but still thankful to escape with their lives from an encounter in which no credit could possibly have been gained under the circumstances, save the empty glory of defiance to the end, which would simply have resulted in not a man being left alive to tell the tale of the disastrous cruise of the *Britannia*.

Renault allowed them to depart with their arms, money, and

Pelham looked at him inquiringly.

such provisions and personal effects as they could carry; and so they set off to make the best of their mournful way to the Arab settlement.

They had scarcely gone five hundred yards from where the *Britannia* was lying with the *Vengeur* beside her on top of the sand cliffs, when Peter Jackson, the late coxwain of the *Britannia*, who was lagging behind the rest of the party, suddenly and without a word faced about, dropped on his knee, and opened fire with his magazine rifle on three or four of the *Vengeur's* men who were standing in a group near the broken propeller of the aeroplane. Two of them rolled over, and then the Maxim in the stern of the *Vengeur*, which had been kept trained on the retreating party, sent a stream of flame and bullets from its muzzle, and Jackson paid the penalty of his rash and, in fact, treacherous deed, and doubled up in a heap and dropped on the sand.

Three other sailors who had run back towards him also dropped in their tracks. Then the fire of the Maxim stopped, and Taxil, followed by three of the *Vengeur's* men with rifles at the ready, ran forward and called on the survivors of the party to throw down their arms and surrender. The Lieutenant and Captain Maxwell at once dropped their rifles and walked quickly towards them. Taking no apparent notice of the levelled rifles Pelham advanced to Taxil and said in French:

"I hope you don't think that that man fired by my orders. I'd have shot him myself before I'd have allowed him to do it, if I'd have known what his intention was. If you don't believe me, shoot."

Taxil looked at him straight in the eyes for a moment. If he had shown a sign of flinching, his doom and that of his remaining companions would have been sealed, but his eyes never wavered, and not a muscle of his face moved.

"You're a brave man," said Taxil lowering his rifle; "and therefore you don't tell lies. I believe you, so go on your way in peace. Even we outlaws, you know, are not without honour—sometimes. Adieu! Don't look back, or you'll be fired on."

Pelham bowed in silence and turned on his heel and walked back to where Jackson was lying with his two remaining shipmates bending over him. He was still alive when they reached him, though almost riddled with bullets.

"What did you do that for, Jackson?" asked Pelham sternly, as soon as he saw that the man was still conscious. "It was a dirty trick, unworthy an English sailor, and it might have cost the lives of every one of us."

"I couldn't help it, sir," gasped the man with almost his

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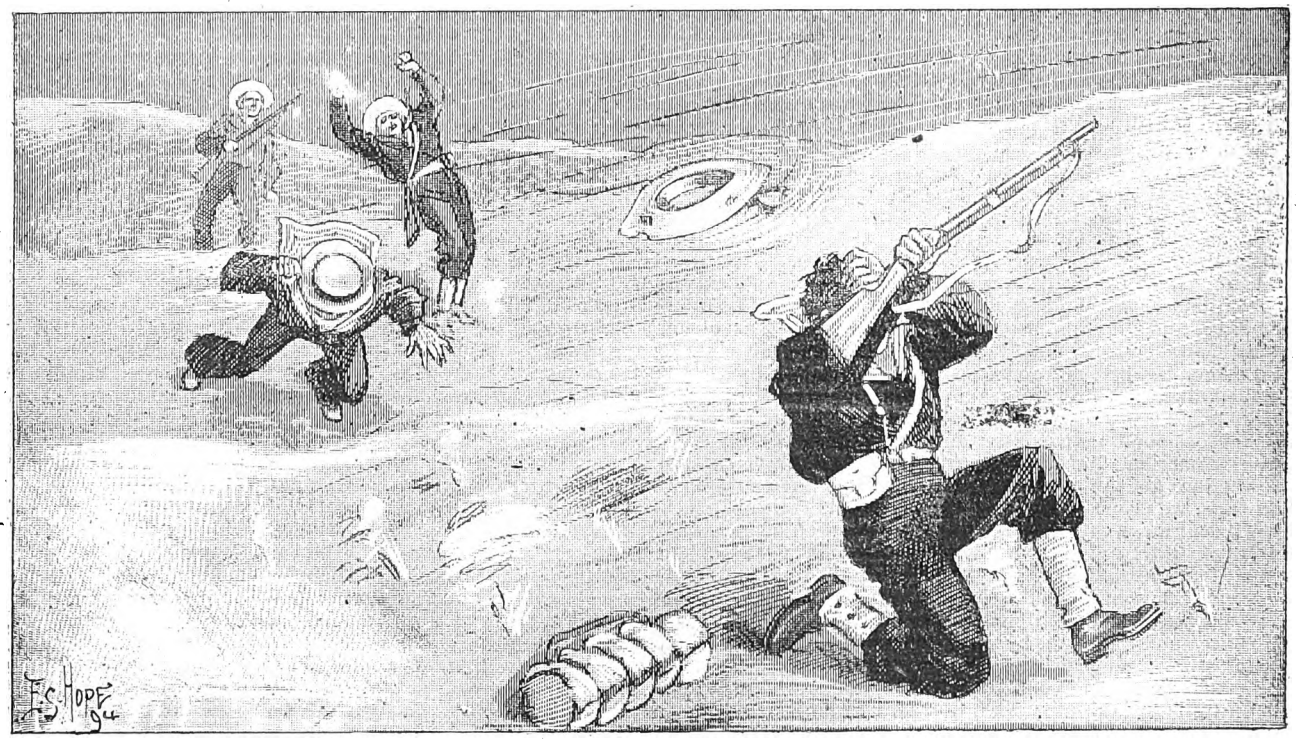
last breath. "So help me, God, I couldn't, and if I've killed that chap that told you to haul the flag down I—oh——"

The rest was lost in a gurgling rattle in the man's throat. He made a brief, desperate struggle for breath, and then the rising blood choked him, and he dropped back dead in the arms of the shipmate who was holding him up.

"Poor beggar!" said Captain Maxwell turning away with a shudder. "I suppose he acted according to his lights. Who knows, perhaps he killed that cynical scoundrel who commanded the air-ship, and if he's done that he may have changed the history of the world. Still, they treated us about as fairly as they could. But there, it's no use arguing. He's paid the best price he could for the mistake he made.

"Come along Pelham, it's no use stopping here, and it's no good trying to bury these poor chaps, for the jackals would have eaten them, all the same, before morning. Let us get away before those fellows change their minds and shoot what is left of us down. We may be of some use to the Old Country yet."

The Lieutenant saw the justness of his reasoning, and so with heavy hearts the four survivors of the lost *Britannia* shouldered their rifles and the few possessions they had brought away with them, and set out on their ten-mile tramp over the desert towards the Settlement.



Jackson paid the penalty of his rash . . . deed.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE RESULT OF PETER JACKSON'S SHOT.

CAPTAIN MAXWELL had come nearer the truth than he thought in his supposition that one of Jackson's bullets might have killed Renault, and so, by quenching the master-spirit of the outlaws of the air, have changed the history of the world.

When Jackson fired Max was standing examining the broken propeller in order to see if the shaft had been strained by the wrench, and so to judge how long it would take to fit one of the spare propellers of the *Vengeur* in its place. Of the five shots which emptied the magazine of the sailor's rifle, two had struck him. One drilled a clean hole through his right shoulder-blade, glanced upwards, broke the collar-bone and passed out shattering the jaw of a man who stood close beside him. The other one pierced his left arm a couple of inches above the elbow, chipped a clean piece out of the bone, and flew away out to sea without doing further damage.

Stunned by the double shock, he rolled over as though one of the bullets had pierced his brain, and did not recover consciousness until the *Vengeur*, with the *Britannia* in tow, had borne him to the inlet and was sinking gently down towards the shore near which the *Destroyer* and the *Pilgrim* were already lying.

Fortunately for him among the numerous company of recruits that the yacht had brought out was a highly skilled French surgeon, named Vaillac Fargeau, a man of high scientific and general culture who, like Fénelon, Jean Grave, and Réclus, had become, from really honest if perverted convictions, deeply imbued with the terrible doctrines of the Propaganda by Force, and so had thrown in his lot with the outlaws. He at once went on board the *Vengeur* and lost no time in examining Max's wounds, setting the broken bone, and allaying the inflammation. Max was now perfectly conscious again, and was all impatience to know how long it would be before he could resume the active command of the *Vengeur*.

"At least three weeks' perfect rest will be absolutely necessary," said the doctor when he had finished his work. "In that time I hope you will be able to use your left arm a little; your right must not be moved for quite a month from now."

"*Mille tonnerres*, doctor! but that is impossible," exclaimed Max. "It would ruin all our plans, and perhaps, who knows, the whole course of events would be altered by such a delay. No one can and no one shall command the *Vengeur* but myself, and we must start at once for the South Pacific."

"And equally, my dear Monsieur Max," said Fargeau with quiet firmness, "it would not only alter but ruin all your plans and the hopes of your comrades if the inflammation spread to the lung, which is already injured, and deprived us, as it well might do, of the leader on whom everything depends. Believe me, it is so. The penalty for not following my instructions would be a long lingering illness which might weaken you for

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He rolled over.

life and perhaps, as I say, cut short your life itself. The plans must go for the present. You are of far more mportance than they, whatever they are."

"And to tink," broke in Hartog who was standing by the couch on which Max lay—"to tink dat all dis has happened just because you let dose fellows go instead of drowing dem into de sea when you might haf done it so comfortably. I vould haf blowed dem and dere miserable kite into fifty tousand pieces before I vould haf let von of dem go.

"You are kind to dem, you treat dem honourably, and set dem loose to go and tell tales about us, and den, by tam, one of dem turns round and shoots you. I haf alvays said dere is only one goot policy in var; you kill your enemy ven you haf de chance and den you haf done mit him. You spare him and he turns up some day and puts some bullets into you. Oh, Max, Max, I did not tink it of you!"

Renault heard the little German's harangue to the end with a smile, then he said, without any appearance of anger at his reproaches:

"Yes, yes, Hartog, that's all right as far as theory goes; but you know when we agreed to destroy everybody, we didn't count on the appearance of the aeroplane, and really those three fellows on the *Devon* and the lieutenant who commanded the *Britannia* showed such splendid pluck, and took their licking so well, that I don't believe even you would have had the heart to kill them in cold blood if you'd been in my place."

"Ah, vouldn't I!" ejaculated Hartog with a savage glint through his spectacles. "I vould haf turned de Maxim on dem like a hose on a fire, and by de red beard of Barbarossa I vould haf put dem out too. No, mein friend, mercy is no goot; it is foolishness only fit for vat dey called civilised peoples."

"All the same," replied Max. "I had an object in what I did. I meant those fellows to go back to England and tell what they had seen with their own eyes. I wanted them to prove to the British Government that they might as well send a lot of carrier-pigeons against us as things like that aeroplane. That is why I took it from them without firing a shot; just to show them how helpless they were.

"I can tell you the moral effect of that would be worth the sparing of a good many lives. Of course, I never dreamt that the blackguard of a sailor would disobey orders and do as he did. However, what's done is done. The question is, what are we to do now?"

"You must not talk any more for the present, Monsieur Max," interposed Fargeau, holding his hand up to stop Hartog, who was just beginning to speak. "You have talked too much already. I shall give you a sleeping draught now, and you must sleep for at least six hours in perfect quiet; after that, if no fresh danger appears, you may make your plans. Now, Monsieur Hartog, you must go," he continued, putting his hand on the engineer's arm. "It is really necessary. I would not say so if it were not so."

"Just one more word, Doctor, and I'll obey," said Max, who was too sensible not to see that Fargeau's course was the right one. "Hartog, whatever happens, we must get out of here with all the ships as soon as possible. It would be ruin to be found here with me in this state. Get up steam on all the ships and be ready to work out after nightfall. Clear away the upper deck of the *Bremen* so that the *Vengeur* can be laid along it. I'll tell Taxil what to do. Now then, Doctor, let's have your sleeping draught, and I'll behave myself."

It was then a little after mid-day, and Renault slept soundly until nearly seven. When he woke the Doctor found that the inflammation had subsided very favourably, and pronounced him fit to make the necessary arrangements with Hartog.

Meanwhile, the engineer with every man at his command had been working hard making preparations to leave the inlet. All the treasure and stores had been stowed on board the *Bremen*, a fresh supply of fuel had been prepared for the *Destroyer*, the liner's four masts had been cut down, and a clear space over two hundred feet long had been made aft for the air-ship to rest upon. Shortly after seven, therefore, Hartog had a *tête-à-tête* with Renault for the purpose of determining on future plans.

"Well, friend Franz, have you found any way out of this infernal hole while I have been asleep?" said Renault to begin with.

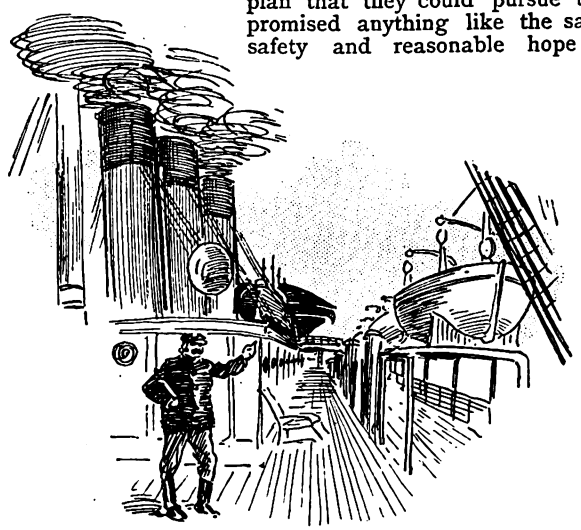
"Vell, mein frient, I haf been doing some tinking, and so far as I can see de best dat ve can do unter de circumstances is dis. In de first place, everyting is ready to leave de inlet insides of an hour; secondly, as de *Pilgrim* has brought out between fifty and sixty recruits, goot smart fellows all of dem, mechanics and engineers and some sailors, I tink dat, if ve send Marcel home again mit as small a crew as possible to get de machines and tings made for de air-ships vat I haf given him de plans and drawings for, ve can find men enough now to man de *Bremen* and take her round de Horn. It vill take us quite a month to get to Utopia, but dat ve cannot help. It vill give you time to get vell, and ven ve get dere you can take command of de *Vengeur* and clear dose peoples out."

"Supposing always that they're there still."

"It is not unlikely dat dey vill be dere. They know dat you had no weapons and no ammunition. Dey vill believe dat you vill go somevere and get dem made, and dey know dat vill take some tree or four monds. Now it vould take dem longer dan dat to build and arm anoder air-ship for demselves, and I don't tink dey vill leave before dey have made one, always supposing dat you have successfully destroyed de *Nautilus*.

"But, at any rate, I suppose you must haf damaged her very much, and she vill take a long time to repair. You may be sure dat dey vill not go avay mit only de yacht and dere oder steamer, because dey know it vould be perfectly easy for us to lie in vait for dem up near de entrance to de Panama Canal and sink dem both before dey could say dere prayers. Besides, I do not tink dey vould have room to take de whole lot in de two ships, and you can bet dey vould not leave any behind if dey are such civilised merciful sort of people as you say dey are. Now vat do you tink of dat for a scheme?"

Max, who had been thinking hard while Hartog was talking, saw that under the circumstances there was really no other plan that they could pursue that promised anything like the same safety and reasonable hope of


A clear space had been made aft for the air-ship.

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destroying the colony of Utopia, so after a few moments' silence he said:

"No, I don't see anything else for it. That's the best thing to be done, Franz, and we'll do it. Just send Taxil here and I'll tell him how to lay the *Vengeur* on board the *Bremen*. Then you go and see everything ready to get out."

"Goot! I thought you vould find dat de best scheme. Ve shall be outside in less as an hour." So saying he left the saloon, and then Taxil came in to receive Max's instructions.

So perfectly did he carry them out, and so thoroughly had Franz made all the arrangements, that within half an hour the air-ship was lying in her place on the *Bremen's* deck, properly shored up on dog-leg supports, and yet free to rise at any moment into the air. Her two Maxim's had been replaced at the forward ports and a light quick-firing pneumatic shell-gun which the *Pilgrim* had brought out was mounted aft, so that she was perfectly ready to co-operate with the *Destroyer* in case any fighting had to be done.

Twelve men had been left to work the *Destroyer*, and this with the recruits left nearly eighty free to work the big liner. The *Bremen* had coals enough in her bunkers to run some ten thousand miles at half speed. This, of course, was not enough to take her to Utopia, especially as she might have to do some hard steaming on the way, but this gave them very little anxiety. There was plenty of coal on the sea to be had for the taking. Nothing would be easier than to run down a liner or a cargo boat or even half a dozen of them on the route, empty them of coal, and turn them adrift, and this as a matter of fact was done no less than four times between the African coast and Cape Horn.

Before eight o'clock everything was ready. The *Pilgrim* went out first and ran away to the northward, then the *Destroyer* stole out to see that the coast was quite clear and came back to tow the *Bremen* through the narrow entrance, By nine o'clock they were well clear of the land and, with no lights showing, they steamed away in company to the south-west.

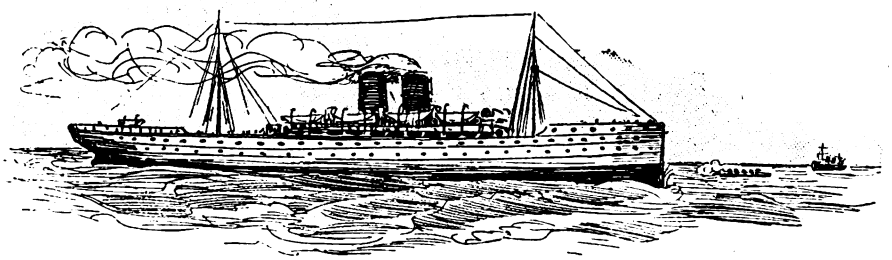
Beyond the holding up and plundering of two South American liners and a couple of big ocean tramps the voyage out was marked by no incident worthy of record, and on the morning of the fifth of February the look-outs reported Mount Plato rising out of the unfrequented sea dead ahead to the north-west. Max who had profited immensely by the healthy quiet of a long sea voyage and the skill of Doctor Fargeau, well seconded by his own vigorous constitution, was almost as well as ever and quite ready to take command of the *Vengeur* again.

The *Bremen* was therefore ordered to go dead slow for the land, and the air-ship rose from her deck to make a reconnaissance of the island, while the *Destroyer* ran ahead to patrol the outside of the reef. The *Britannia* had, of course, been taken to pieces and stowed away in the liner's 'tween decks, as it was not intended to make use of her for the present, except for experimental purposes.

The *Vengeur* had not floated for long over the familiar landscape of the island of Utopia before Max felt certain that his main fears had been realised. The most searching scrutiny of his glasses failed to reveal a single sign of life. The Settlement was there with its outlying houses, but no smoke rose from the chimneys of those in which the cooking for the colony was done. He soared over Mount Plato and Mount Orient and found the craters deserted.

Then, still cursing the delay that had made them come too late, and the promptness and skill with which the colonists must have formed and executed their plans after his departure, he ran the air-ship over the dockyard only to find the same silence and the same signs of desertion there. Worse than all, the shed in which the *Nautilus* had been built lay in ruins, the slips were empty, and, with a savage oath breaking from his lips, he was forced to the conclusion that his attempt to destroy her had failed, that the colonists had finished her and taken her away to some unknown destination, and that, therefore, the hitherto incomparable *Destroyer* was now no longer the mistress of the seas.

(To be continued.)



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THE RECORD OF A BASE ACT.

KITTY DELAMARE was uncomfortable. We were constrained. Remembering the proverb about glass houses, we were all disposed to be tolerably charitable to flirtations and flirtees, but this was a little too bad.

Dave Hilton was a general favourite, a fine, manly, deserving fellow; and the only weak thing that he ever had done was his falling in love with Kitty.

She was a handsome girl, with a fair, sweet face bearing no trace of craft or evil in it; but, heartless and utterly incapable of loving anyone but herself, or of appreciating the unselfish devotion that was offered her, she led Dave on through a whole summer, suffered all his attention, went out only with him, might even have married him, if George Maryatt had not presented himself at that time as a suitor.

As his expectations were greater, Kitty threw over Dave without scruple; even assumed a look of astonishment when he referred to the encouragement that she had given him; was very gentle, very sweet, very cold, and utterly inexorable.

I never saw a man so thoroughly beaten down as Dave looked the morning he left us. He had lost, not only her, but his faith for a time in women.

Our indignation was intense; for we were all personal friends of Dave, and Kitty's cold serenity and utter absence of even a tinge of remorse was infinitely provoking. She was so wise, however, so quiet, so patient, and had such childish ways, and, above all, was so marvellously pretty, that the men could not do less than be civil to her; and, as she cared nothing whatever about the girls, they found their indignation thrown away, and comforted themselves with the reflection that at least she had not entrapped George Maryatt, who had gone away without proposing.

Kitty, however, took her defeat philosophically, and, just at this juncture, down came Paul Danforth. His arrival was a surprise to all, and a mystery to me; for, early in the summer, he had sketched his plans for the season, and "The Pines" had by no means entered into his calculations. He was an intimate friend of Dave's; and it was to him Dave had gone on leaving us; and, duly weighing all these considerations, I could not but wonder what evil angel had sent him among us.

From the first Kitty was not a little struck by his appearance, though he was not a man to be highly esteemed. Not handsome, but with a face capable of an infinite variety of expressions, superbly formed, possessed of a tact almost womanlike, a deep, melodious voice, and brilliant eyes; not the man to whom I would willingly have given a sister or a daughter.

Curiously enough, it was their first meeting (I mean Kitty and Paul), and, as he was a warm admirer of female beauty, I looked for the immediate initiation of a flirtation. No such thing occurred, however. He was polite, attentive as any gentleman might be to a pretty young girl, but for all further effect Kitty might as well have been her grandmother, so small a share did she seem to occupy in his thoughts. I confess to being puzzled; the others rejoiced; and Kitty, who had looked calmly into Dave Hilton's blood-shot eyes and haggard face, and met our taunts and slights serenely, could not hide her chagrin. His indifference wounded the only love of which she was capable—her self-love—and roused her from her usual quiet security to active exertions.

She positively sought out Paul, intrigued to attract his notice and admiration, and in vain. The innocent unconsciousness of this man of the world stood in good stead, and all of Kitty's arrows fell harmless to the ground.

So passed the first three weeks. Of what follows I shall tell the tale as it was told me afterwards, not as I saw it at the time.

Kitty—let us hope, accidentally—had sprained her ankle, just seriously enough to prevent her walking out, and to give her an excuse for becoming morning-caps and the display of a handsome foot and slipper; and Paul could not but think, as he looked at her, that if white and rose tints, heavenly blue eyes, superb golden hair, rosy little fingers, a rounded chin, a little arched foot, and all the foolery of lace, and bows, and dainty handkerchiefs, could excuse folly, then was Dave Hilton fully justified in loving Kitty Delamere.

All this time she had been lying smelling at a rose that she was swirling in her fingers, seemingly unconscious of his steady look.

Suddenly he spoke.

"When have you heard from Dave Hilton, Miss Delamere?"

"I have not heard from him at all," she said timidly. "He is much too angry with me to write to me, and you," she added, half-raising her eyes, but dropping them instantly before Paul's burning, inscrutable looks, "you are angry, too."

"I? You mistake. I should not presume to be. What have we in common?"

"Nothing," she answered, wincing under his tone; "but I could wish that we could hold a good opinion of each other, as common property. Mr. Danforth, won't you come here a moment? I have something to say to you?"

Paul came over and sat near her, in the chair that she had indicated by a wave of hand.

"You know," she commenced, "that I have heard so much of you that I could not but feel as if I knew you before we came here even; and all that I have heard and seen has given me no reason to think otherwise than well. Ask yourself, then, if it is not hard that a person whom I respect should condemn me, misjudge me, without a hearing, as I know that you have done. Will you let me tell what that miserable story about Dave Hilton really was?"

"If you like," returned Paul coldly.

"I always liked Dave," went on Kitty plaintively. "I was really fond of him, as a brother. I told him so, and I thought that he understood. He raved, persisted, would not be refused. I pitied him; but what could I do? I must be firm. If I had shown him half the grief I felt he would never have left me. It would have simply prolonged his misery and mine. Could I have done otherwise?"

"You? Certainly not," returned Paul, with a somewhat remarkable accent on the pronoun.

"I confess," went on Kitty, "that I think now I might have been to blame in not checking him quickly enough, in not speaking more decidedly; but I never dreamed that his attentions were more than brotherly, and I was so fond of him."

Here she heaved a little sigh; and then came a silence, broken at last by little sobs and curious, suppressed sounds from Kitty's corner.

Paul put out his hand and touched a face wet with genuine tears.

"You are crying. What is the matter?" he asked, more gently than he had yet spoken.

"Nothing."

"Do ladies cry like that for nothing?"

"Well, then, I am so lonely. They are all against me; and you, whom I thought would be generous and believe me, are against me, too."

"How do you know I am against you?"

"Your silence just now spoke more plainly than words."

"Perhaps you are not the wisest of interpreters. I am not conscious of having given you cause for any such assertion. It is unjust in you to say so."

Kitty sank back with a little sigh.

"I am tired, Mr. Danforth. Will you give me a glass of water?"

He brought it and stood by her after she had finished drinking it.

"Are we friends?" he asked, with a soft look, rare on his face.

"Do you believe me?"

"Believe?"

"About Dave Hilton?"

"I think Dave should have been capable of taking care of himself. I am not sworn to do battle for him. I shall have enough to do to take care of myself."

"You persist in thinking so, then?"

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"Thinking what? You are obscure."

"That I was unfeminine—a flirt."

"That is your explanation, not mine. How can I but believe you? It is hardly necessary to say that I do. I think you evade me also. You have not answered me yet. Are we friends?"

Kitty put out a little hand silently, and Paul, taking it into his grasp, pressed and kissed it.

From that time they were I hardly know what; it seemed rather a vassalage than a flirtation. Paul's caprices equalled those of the most inveterate coquette. At one time he was devotion itself, and Kitty bloomed out at such times with a loveliness truly surprising, because the expression of an emotion, the least selfish of any feeling that she had ever experienced; at others he was cold, distant, almost uncivil, devoting himself exclusively to others, and these alterations, perplexing to us all, wore visibly on Kitty's health and spirits.

She was thoroughly subdued, this veteran coquette, this cold-hearted girl. Paul chose to prefer the ugliest and most unbecoming dress in her wardrobe, and she wore it till we hated the sight of it. He insisted that she looked best with her hair plainly dressed, and she put all the superb golden mass straight behind her ears, and lost half of her beauty in consequence.

At last he addressed her in words of love, carelessly, as one who was sure of his prize; and she caught at the declaration eagerly, complaining at the same time that he but half loved her.

This was not the burden of her complaints.

She doubted perpetually, required perpetual reassuring, assurances that Paul gave sometimes carelessly, sometimes refused pettishly. On one of these occasions, Paul said to her:

"You distrust me strangely. Do you dread retributive justice? Is it that you remember Hilton?"

She shuddered.

"Why do you speak of him? I never loved him?"

"But you do love me?"

"Yes."

"And if I should deceive you, as you did Hilton?"

"I cannot imagine it. I would not believe it; but if such a thing could be, I should not die—people don't die so easily—but live. Oh, why do you suggest such things? I had rather die than know you were false."

"But suppose I were; suppose I hated you for a cruel wrong done to my dearest friend; suppose I had sworn to wreck your life as you have wrecked his; suppose that——"

"Paul, are you mad, or am I? Why do you talk thus? Why do you look so?"

"I have taken off the mask. At last you see me as I am; at last you hear me say what has so long been in my heart, and know the truth, and Hilton is avenged."

Kitty rose, white as death and trembling in every limb, tried to speak, staggered, stretched forth her hand, and fainted.

Paul rang the bell, consigned her to the servant's care and left the house. She has never seen him since.

MOBBED BY MISTAKE.

A NIGHT ADVENTURE IN BENARES.

HAD I known what was going to befall me when I took steamer passage from Ceylon to India I should have probably continued my journey eastward round the world without stopping at the "Land of the Rajahs." In blissful ignorance, however, I landed at Calcutta.

The time of year was that when the climate most favours up-country travelling, and so, after a brief visit with friends, I started north by rail. I was the richer by half-a-dozen introductory letters to men of more or less prominence in the chief cities of the empire.

I went first to Benares—the sacred city on the mighty Ganges, and sought the house of Sita Ram, to whom one of my letters was addressed. Sita Ram was a wealthy and cultured Hindoo banker, and my friends had pictured in glowing colours the hospitality that I would receive.

Before my ride through the city was over I felt that hospitality of any sort from anyone would be doubly welcome. To my surprise most of the bazaars and business places were closed, though it was early afternoon. Groups of evil-faced natives stood about in the squares and streets, while police and soldiers appeared to be unusually plentiful. I was made a target for sullen glances from all sides, and I could not help recalling the stirring times of the great mutiny, more than thirty years back.

I found Sita Ram's house to be a palatial cream-coloured building, not far from the river. Its owner proved to be absent, but his private secretary received me and opened the letter of introduction.

Baboo Das was a sleek, mahogany-faced gentleman, who spoke English perfectly, and wore European garments of faultless cut.

"My honoured master is in Allahabad on a matter of business," he explained. "He will return in a day or two, and meanwhile the house and servants are at your disposal."

I thanked Baboo Das, and inquired the meaning of the strange sights I had witnessed in the city.

"There has been danger of a riot during the past twenty-four hours," he replied gravely; "but it is believed to be past now. The most ignorant of the Hindoo population are angry because the municipality have acquired the Ramjee temple for the purpose of erecting new waterworks on its site. The Mohammedans have taken part in the disturbances because of the dearness of provisions for which the municipality is also responsible. My honoured master belongs to the board of government and helped to purchase the temple."

I suspected that Sita Ram's departure might be more in the order of flight than a business trip.

"Are you sure that the danger is over?" I asked, for I had some notion of going to a hotel.

"Yes," replied Baboo Das, "the rioters are cowed and submissive. My master's house was under the protection of the police, but they withdrew this morning."

His manner was so calm and decided that I quite forgot my fears. I was shown a luxurious bed-chamber, and a little later I dined in solitude off dishes of gold and silver. The entire house was furnished in a costly and sumptuous style that showed its bachelor owner to possess a sense of European taste as well as of barbaric splendour.

During the evening I was left pretty much to myself, and as I did not care to venture into the streets I passed the time with a cigar and a magazine, and when I signified my wish to retire he preceded me upstairs.

Squatted on a rug in the hall, just outside my room, was a bright-faced Hindoo lad, about twelve years old. A cord dangled by his side, and, passing through the door, communicated with the fans that were attached to the ceiling of the apartment. The lad was evidently the "punky wallah," or fan puller. His name was Gunpat, Baboo Das informed me, and his duty was to keep me cool through the sultry hours of the night.

I chatted with the boy for a few moments, and found him to be intelligent and fairly conversant with English. Then I

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entered my room and lowered the square of rice matting that was furled above the doorway. There was also a door of heavy teak-wood, but I did not think it necessary to close it. The apartment had two windows, overlooking a small court-yard that contained shrubs and a fountain. After riding most of the day in a stuffy and jolting railway carriage I was weary. It did not take me long to undress and fall asleep. The last thing I remember was the soft whirring of the fans and their refreshing current of air.

I was awakened by a hard tugging at the bed-clothes. "Rouse, Sahib, there is danger," was poured into my ears by a shrill, childish voice.

I sprang out of bed in a trice and struck a light. It revealed the half-naked figure of little Gunpat. His expression was one of indignation rather than of terror.

"What is it?" I demanded.

"Those pigs of rioters, Sahib," he replied. "They have broken loose at last."

Then, for the first time I became aware of the tumult in the streets surrounding the house. Brawling voices and the restless patter of feet rose hoarsely on the night air. I could distinguish the shrill "Din! Din!" of the Mohammedans—their rallying cry to battle. From afar I heard the faint pealing of bells and the rattle of musketry. A lively commotion was going on downstairs, banging of doors, and shoving of furniture, interlarded with husky voices.

Gunpat slipped away for a moment and I hurried on my shirt and trousers. I felt decidedly uncomfortable, to say the least. I could not forget the black looks that had greeted me on the previous afternoon. Europeans were in bad odour at Benares just now. I glanced at the clock. The hands pointed to an hour past midnight. I began to consider what I had better do. I was puzzled to account for the non-appearance of Baboo Das.

Meanwhile the tumult had swelled to a frightful din. The street without seemed to be choked with rioters. "Kill Sita Ram," they yelled. "Slay the heretic. Loot his house. Down with the destroyers of the faith!"

I was fully alive to the situation now, and the thought of my peril sickened me. A moment later a succession of heavy thuds, followed by a tremendous crash and a burst of cheers, told that the main entrance of the house had been beaten in. Cries of rage and terror and the sounds of deadly conflict floated up the staircase.

I determined to escape, if such a thing were possible. There was no time to put on shoes or coat. I seized my money and papers and jammed them into the pockets of my trousers.

I ran to the window and looked out. Alas! The courtyard swarmed with dusky figures. The only avenue of escape was cut off.

I turned back into the room, resolved to sell my life dearly. I had no weapons, but on the wall hung a Tibetan shield and spear, trimmed with yaks' tails. I dragged them down and rushed for the door. Before I could close it entirely, a figure slipped through the crack, and I very nearly impaled Gunpat on my spear.

"The Sahib must fight," he exclaimed. "Baboo Das has fled, and the rioters are downstairs and everywhere. They have killed some of the servants, and now they will search for my master, whom they hate. They believe he is in the house. They will kill you, too, Sahib, if they find you."

"What shall we do?" I demanded. "Is there a way to escape?"

"None, Sahib. We must push furniture against the door and fight. The police and the soldiers will be here presently."

"But surely the mob won't hurt a little chap like you," I replied, filled with admiration at the lad's bravery. "Go while you can, Gunpat."

"No," he answered calmly, "my duty is with the Sahib. I will stay here."

There was no time to argue, for already the bloodthirsty miscreants were pattering up the staircase with shouts and yells. The door had only a frail bolt on the inside, but luckily the furniture of the room was massive. Gunpat seemed to know just what was wanted. He helped me to the best of his strength, and hardly was the barricade in place when the mob surged through the hall.

"The heretic is trapped," they cried, at sight of the closed door. "Come out, Sita Ram, and meet your fate."

Crash! crash! crash! The door trembled under the rain of heavy blows. A table that was on the summit of the barricade toppled to the floor and burst asunder. The mob heard the fall and yelled exultantly.

Gunpat twirled his spear between his supple fingers. "The end will be soon, Sahib," he said quite calmly. The next instant he gave an eager cry and pointed overhead. There I saw for the first time a small circular trap-door.

"Where does it lead?" I demanded.

"To the roof," replied Gunpat. "My master sits there on hot evenings. But there is no ladder. We must take from the barricade, Sahib."

No sooner said than done. Hardly as they could be spared we removed a table, a chest of drawers, and two chairs. We piled them one upon another. I plainly saw the door quiver from top to bottom as I mounted the shaky structure. I was directly below the trap now, and a blow from my fist drove it upward. I grasped the edge of the opening and drew myself to the roof. Gunpat passed up the two spears and the shield. Then I caught the lad's hands and drew him to my side.

That instant the mob broke into the room below, where they expected to find Sita Ram. They howled with rage at the empty room. Then we saw their dark faces glaring at the pile in the middle of the room, and up at the opening in the ceiling above. We slammed down the trap door, but there was no way to fasten it on the outside.

We knew the mob would follow us in a moment, so we ran across the flat roof, mounted the parapet, and sprang to the top of an adjoining house. Thus we hurried on from roof to roof till we were some distance from the house of Sita Ram.

"Faster, Sahib! they are coming," panted Gunpat.

Then husky yells rang out behind us and I turned and saw half a score of turbaned figures at our very heels. The space of but a single roof intervened. A spear whizzed between us. A pistol ball shrieked overhead.

Faster and faster we sped, till suddenly a gap of six feet wide yawned before us. "Jump, Sahib," yelled Gunpat. Without hesitation we sprang together, and landed safely on the next roof. One of our pursuers was close behind us—a burly Mohammedan with a sword. Gunpat snatched the brazen shield from my hand; turned, and threw it with all his might. It struck the fellow as he was in the act of jumping. Without a cry he plunged down between the houses. His companions paused only an instant. Then they leaped the gap, and came on with frightful yells.

This advantage, brief as it was, proved our salvation. We ran on as before, climbing headlong over the parapets from roof to roof, neither gaining nor losing. The end house of the block abutted on the Ganges, and all at once, over the last parapet, we saw the deep blue water below us.

"You can swim, Sahib?" asked Gunpat.

"Yes; come on," I replied.

We dropped through twenty feet of air and shot far under water. When we came to the surface we dived again instantly. The next time we rose we were well out in the current. Side by side we swam out, while a shower of spears fell harmlessly in our wake.

Anchored in mid-stream we spied the ark-shaped roof of a trader's boat, and a short swim brought us to it. The friendly natives gave us shelter, and there we remained until morning, listening to the sounds of strife in the opposite-lying city.

When day broke the riot was quelled, but the mob had wrecked the telegraph office and railway station, plundered the treasury, and destroyed the boiler and engine of the new water-works.

Sita Ram returned that afternoon, and I found him a most polished and agreeable gentleman. He was apparently unconcerned over the looting of his house. His first act was to discharge Baboo Das. His next, on hearing my story, was to promote brave little Gunpat to an honoured position among the household servants. Nor did I forget to honour the lad in my own way.

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BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

THE MAN OF TWO LIVES.

BEFORE his death—the result of solitude and old age—Jean Ferney kept a dingy little shop in a certain street near the Rue Charlot, Paris. It was not a respectable neighbourhood—indeed, the police considered it a very questionable one, though no crime was ever committed there. Perhaps its ill-repute was due to the reticence of its inhabitants, and their inclination to attend too strictly to their own affairs, to know or profess to know nothing about their neighbours, and to have forgotten in a large measure even their own previous history.

The street was narrow and dark; so narrow that the sunshine only visited the pavement while the sun was high up in the heavens, and never succeeded in entering Ferney's shop further than the door-sill. To the right of the door was a show-window, in which a few old coins and time-stained manuscripts were displayed, but so covered with dust that it was better to go within if you should wish to examine them. Above the door hung a sign:

"J. MALPLAQUET, EXPERT CHIROGRAPHIST."

Not *Jean Ferney*, oh, no; he had some years before been seized with an inexplicable antipathy for that name, and changed it at the same time as his business, place of residence, and wearing apparel; at the same time that he shaved of his moustache, let his beard grow, and bleached his hair somewhat. But perhaps we should not speak of this transformation, as he never referred to it himself.

One day as Ferney, or Malplaquet to be more polite, was sitting at his desk deciphering a bit of writing under the light of his smoky lamp, the door opened and a man entered. He, too, seemed a rather mysterious individual, and at the moment you might have found a set of false whiskers in his pocket, together with a pistol and a pair of handcuffs—but that is neither here nor there—for at present he was clean shaved, plain La Rouche, clad in his ordinary suit of ministerial black, with his broad felt hat, as usual, well down over his piercing grey eyes.

"Good morning, La Rouche," said Ferney, glancing up from his work.

"Good morning, Malplaquet," was the answer, as La Rouche seated himself on a chest at the side of the desk.

"How is Constantin, and the detective force in general?"

"Constantin has been missing for the last three days: one of his slow but sure schemes, I suppose. He is interested in the same case as myself now. Will you inform me what sort of person wrote this scrap, Malplaquet?"

Malplaquet took the paper handed to him.

"Where was this unearthed, La Rouche?"

"It was found in the secret drawer of the writing-desk of the late diplomatist, Jules Foreau. The drawer was discovered by a member of the family only five days ago."

"The writing," said Malplaquet, without waiting to comprehend the answer to his question in his eagerness to commence deciphering, "I see it bears no date, but from its state of preservation, the yellow stains here in the right hand corner, and the degree to which the ink has faded, it was written, I should judge, about nine years ago."

"Precisely; that was the date of the decease of the recipient," said La Rouche, taking his note-book from his pocket.

"The characters," the adept continued, "are small, indicating literary tastes. The peculiar formation of the d's is undoubtedly due to much practice in the writing of Greek. The handwriting smacks of the university, a German university it may be, since there appears to be a slight touch of German angularity in the small letters. The writer was certainly a scholarly man, though perhaps a quack in some respects. He was reticent, this is shown by the shortness of the *g* and the *y*; in short, you have a man to deal with, La Rouche, a man.

"Another thing which may aid you. This was written by an imperfect hand, a hand mutilated in some way; a finger amputated probably.

"Now that we have determined all that the chirography can explain, may I have the pleasure of reading the document?" asked Malplaquet politely. The detective nodded.

"To M. Jules Foreau,—

"When this is placed on your study table your very dear friend and colleague, Paul Rapin, will have been dead one hour. His body will be found lying face downward in the street near the south end of Pont d'Austerlitz. No sign of violence will be found; he has to all appearance died of disease of the heart. The affair is purely political, I assure you. This letter is to warn you not to attend the Assembly to-morrow or the day following. Of course, you will not dare in the present state of the times to disclose this which I have written, and to which, therefore, that you may know instead of suspect me, I without hesitation affix my name,

"FERNEY."

The reading ended.

"Foreau went to the Assembly the day following," said La Rouche——

"And died of heart disease the same evening," added Malplaquet smiling.

"Ferney, Ferney," muttered Malplaquet, "I have heard the name before. Look in the municipal death records of April, 1852. I think you will there find note of his decease, my friend."

La Rouche, closing his note-book, rose to go, and held out his hand. Dr. Malplaquet grasped it with his left, for his right hand was mutilated, lacking the first joint of the fore-finger, and detectives are sometimes keen observers.

The next day the detective was perusing the municipal death records, when he stopped at an entry which ran:

"Ferney, Jean, was observed drowning in the Seine, April 9th. Help reached the spot too late. For witnesses refer to Testimony of Witnesses, vol. 196—3—90.

"Body unrecovered."

The last two words had evidently been interpolated in the record at a later date.

The record was made in the disguised handwriting of Ferney—but La Rouche was not a chirographist.

RESULT OF PLOT COMPETITION.

THIS competition has been in every way a success. Several hundreds of attempts were received. Most of them were very good; and I think my surmise about brilliant ideas lying dormant in the minds of readers was well founded, although I noticed that one or two found it incumbent upon them to stimulate their imagination by reference to early numbers of SHORT STORIES.

The Two Guineas has been awarded to Mr. H. Flowerdew, 2, Roskell Terrace, Lower Richmond Road, Putney, S.W., whose plot, written up into a story, will appear in an early issue.

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A POSITIVE REMEDY FOR CORPULENCE

Any remedy that can be suggested as a cure or alleviation for stoutness will be heartily welcomed. We have recently received a well-written book, the author of which seems to know what he is talking about. It is entitled "Corpulency and the Cure," 256 pages, and is a cheap issue (only 4d.) published by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. Our space will not do justice to this book; send for it yourself. It appears that Mr. Russell has submitted all kinds of proofs to the English Press. The editor of the *Tablet*, the Catholic organ, writes:—"Mr. Russell does not give us the slightest loophole for a doubt as to the value of his cure, for, in the most straightforward and matter-of-fact manner, he submitted some hundreds of original and unsolicited testimonial letters for our perusal, and offered us plenty more, if required. To assist him to make this remedy known, we think we cannot do better than publish quotations from some of the letters submitted. The first one, a marchioness, writes from Madrid:—'My son, Count ——, has reduced his weight in twenty-two days 16 kilos.—*i.e.*, 34 lbs.' Another writes:—'So far (six weeks from commencement of following your system) I have lost fully two stone in weight.' The next (a lady) writes:—'I am just half the size.' A fourth:—'I find it is successful in my case. I have lost 8 lbs. in weight since I commenced (two weeks).' Another writes:—'A reduction of 18 lbs. in a month is a great success.' A lady from Bournemouth writes:—"I feel much better, have less difficulty in breathing, and can walk about.' Again a lady says:—"It reduced me considerably, not only in the body, but all over.' The author is very positive. He says:—'Step on a weighing machine on Monday morning and again on Tuesday, and I guarantee you have lost 2 lbs. in weight without the slightest harm, and vast improvement in health through ridding the system of unhealthy accumulations.'"—*Cork Herald.*

Should Stout Persons STARVE THEMSELVES?

We are afraid that semi-starvation as a cure for corpulency prevails very much to a dangerous degree. Mr. Archer, the late well-known prominent jockey, was in the habit of going without food for a long stretch in order that he could ride a certain horse at its weight, and there is not much doubt that the debility resulting from this habit of abstemiousness was certainly not conducive to combating the dire attack of fever, which was, perhaps, indirectly responsible for the untimely end, in the zenith of his fame, of this unfortunate but accomplished horseman. Even Mary Jane in the kitchen will eat sparingly of the food allowed her, while she will seek to reduce her fat by copious draughts from the vinegar cruet, and succeed only in injuring the coats of her stomach—the forerunner of dyspeptic troubles which will be difficult to overcome.

The Continental medicos seem to advocate this great reduction of ordinary foods, but one of these savants suggests that the stout person should eat considerably of fatty meats, in order that the appetite is appeased, and consequently less food required, so that practically this is indirectly advocating semi-starvation. On the other hand, Mr. Russell, the British specialist, takes a different course. He says, "Eat as much as you like," and as it is an acknowledged fact that under his treatment persons lose from 2 lb. to 12 lb. per week, it beyond doubt stands out pre-eminent against those so-called starvation cures "made in Germany." Some claim that Mr Russell has to insist upon his patients drinking hot water every morning, but on the contrary he avers that it is dangerous to do so, and has, of course, never advised it. No; the success of Mr. Russell's treatment is incomparably beyond other specialists, for he resorts to no stringent dietary, and simply prescribes a harmless vegetable tonic combination which is the outcome of years of study and botanical research. We advise all those interested in this question to get his book, the price of which is only 4d. It is entitled, "Corpulency and the Cure," 256 pp., and is published by him at Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. It can be had direct, or through any bookseller.—Extract from *The Million.*

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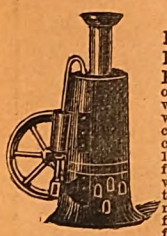
SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 309.] FOR WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 1, 1894. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

BAKER'S NOVELTIES.



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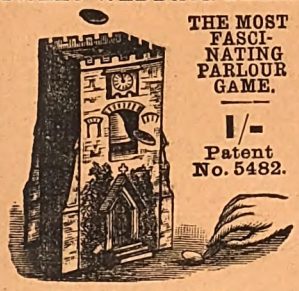

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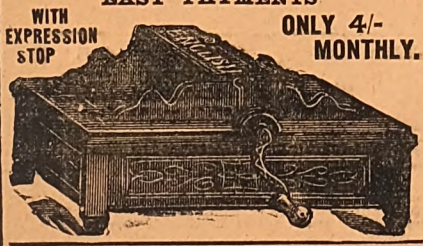

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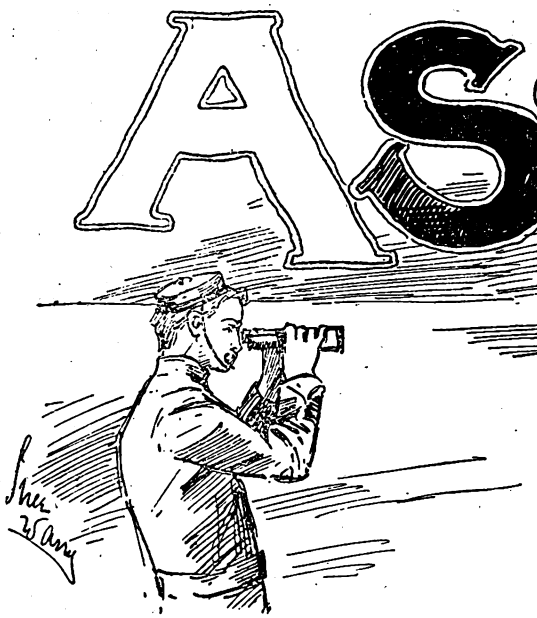
SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 309.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 1, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

A Soldier's Honour



A COMPANY of soldiers was drilling on the parade-ground, and some officers had gathered on the captain's porch watching them. Fort Harker was far out on the plains, so far that the blue peaks of the Rockies could be discerned, and it was a common halting-place for emigrants, outward or homeward bound.

Hence it caused no surprise when a white-topped "prairie schooner" was seen crawling out of the west. In an hour it was not apparently nearer.

"Pretty well tired out, evidently," said Lieutenant Jayne, watching it through his glass.

Another hour and the travellers had not arrived, but just at twilight the outfit appeared in the barracks yard, a forlorn and dilapidated looking object. A woman sat alone on the front seat guiding the weary horses. Even jolly Corporal Doyle was awed into forgetting his usual joke by her appearance.

"Be you alone, ma'am?" he asked.

"No, he's behind in the waggon," came from the pinched but determined lips of the driver as she stepped to the ground. "My husband was taken ill two days ago. I was alone, but I did the best I could for him. He needs care."

The men who had half expected to lift a corpse from the waggon, were relieved to find it was only an invalid, though his appearance was that of one almost dead.

Thus they came to the fort. For a week the stranger lingered between life and death, and when at last life conquered; it was nearly a month before strength returned sufficiently to allow him to leave his bed. The wife, too, was not well, and the troops saw little of their guests.

Mrs. Culmer, as she gave her name, recovered first; and the husband when he awoke one day in July to a knowledge of his renewed strength, roused also the realisation of a fact which nearly threw him into a relapse.

It came about in this way. There was a wide porch with many hammocks outside the guest's chamber, and his bed being near the window, brought him within hearing of a conversation.

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"So we did our best for three years, Abner, but it could not succeed."

Culmer started. It was his wife's voice, but who was Abner?

"And you left New Mexico when?" He had heard that voice somewhere.

"Three months ago, as soon as spring came. We had raised three crops only to see them baked by the furnace-like south winds, and then at last the baby, too, grew weary of the lonely land of adobe huts and scorching suns. We laid her in a pretty spot near Signal Mountains, and putting all we had into the waggon, started for 'God's country.'

"It seems more like home here, and we will stop now where we can find a way to live. John was taken ill on the journey, and for days I struggled alone, not meeting a soul for forty-eight hours at a time. That is all. It is not much like what we planned when you and I lived by the Maine coast, is it?"

"No, and my own life has been as dissimilar to my ideal. I was to be a minister, you remember?"

"And John an editor."

"Instead I went to West Point, then to a Montana post, and now for two years have been here."

There was a sound as of a woman's sobbing; then the man's voice went on—

"But your fate has been harder than you deserved, Mary. So has John's, and it seems to me I could never have lived under it."

Culmer knew now who was talking. Abner Jayne and he had been rivals for the hand of the brave little woman he had made his wife. He had thought sometimes that Jayne was preferred, but finally himself was chosen—and now they had met so strangely. It was indeed different from what they had planned in the days when all three of them were children in the little fishing-village.

Culmer shut his eyes and stopped his ears with the bed clothing. He lay back upon the pillows and thought. They were talking over the past out there in the hammocks. Was Mary sorry that she had chosen him? Did she wish her lot had been with the handsome (he felt sure that Jayne was good looking) army officer instead of with the broken-down adventurer? It had been a hard life he had led her, but somehow in spite of himself everything had gone wrong.

As he lay there he reviewed it all and cursed himself and his "luck" as he called it, while the low hum of voices from the

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porch almost maddened him. And then a pity for himself followed, and jealousy came in its wake. He vowed vengeance on the more prosperous rival—and then drifted off to sleep.

"I do not understand John," said the lieutenant to Mrs. Culmer a few days later, when the old schoolboy friends had had several reminiscent visits. "He looks at me so strangely, and seems so different from his boyhood days."

"He has been too much troubled and discouraged. I wish he could get something to do here—the Kansas prairies are so beautiful."

The soldiers began to note Culmer's distracted state and to talk of it. He had not talked with his wife about his new trouble, but avoided every mention of the lieutenant.

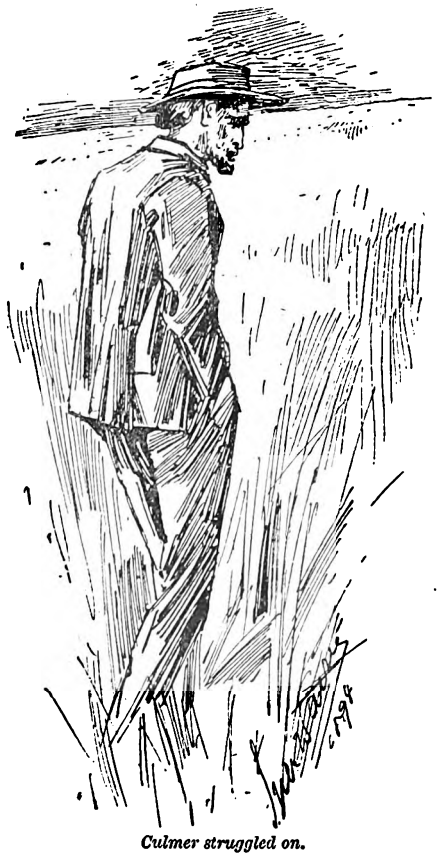
Mrs. Culmer and Jayne were much together, and once, when the officer had been to the prairie city ten miles away, she met him on the parade-ground, and came in with flushed cheeks and a pleased expression. The soldiers had come to call her pretty. Culmer saw the meeting, and that evening his walk over the plain lasted until nearly midnight.

He slept late the next morning, and when he awoke his wife was gone. What was more remarkable, the horses which had been feeding in the stable since the emigrants arrival were gone too, and Lieutenant Jayne had left in the saddle before daylight.

Every man in the garrison pitied Culmer that morning as he went about making inquiries in a dazed kind of way that told more plainly than frantic imprecations how severe was the blow.

Mrs. Culmer had ordered the horses, so said the ostler, just at daybreak, and had driven off alone, though the animals were very restive from their long halt and good feeding. She had gone toward the prairie city where Jayne had been the day before. As for the lieutenant, no one noticed which direction he took.

For an hour Culmer walked up and down the parade-ground. His face had the pallor of death, and his steps were nervous and quick, as one whose brain is throbbing. The summer sun beat down on his wide-brimmed felt hat, but he did not notice it.



Culmer struggled on.

Suddenly he was gone. The few soldiers who were lounging in front of the buildings did not see him depart, and the guard had challenged no one.

It was judged that he had gone towards Fairview, the railway station; but no one was sure of it until noon, when the captain, sweeping the plain with his telescope, made out a figure four miles away.

"Poor fellow!" he murmured, "he will never finish the chase!"

And then he volunteers the information that Jayne had the night before asked for and received his month's vacation furlough.

That settled it, in the soldiers' minds. There was but one explanation of the morning's happenings — an erring wife, a broken-hearted husband, a soldier-lover. Some of the officers who had known Jayne professed to believe him incapable of such a deed, and declared him the soul of honour; but they were in the minority.

The prairie over which Culmer had walked, half staggered, was dry and brown. Though only midsummer, the drought and hot winds had eaten up the sap of the grasses, and they swished against his feet with a hard, crisp sound.

The sky was clear, and the unsoftened Kansas sun had blazed the air into pulsing waves of heat that met his face in burning currents, borne by the racing south wind that came steadily, swiftly, like the blowing of a simoom. Not a house was in sight, for the Government claimed all the land thereabouts as a military reservation, and the fort itself was a distorted figure on the horizon.

Culmer struggled on with bowed head and shambling, weak-kneed steps. He did not see even the meadow larks that struggled fitfully against the wind.

That wind—for three days it had been blowing—rolled up from the south, bearing on its back the *débris* of hundreds of ill-tended fields and ill-kept door yards. In the towns vast clouds swept through the streets and in the homes of toiler and capitalist alike; little ridges of dark, finely pulverised sand marked every crevice in wall or window casing.

The third day of the wind storm a darker cloud than that of dust came rolling out of the southern horizon.

It was smoke.

The flames swept with peculiar strength and apparent pleasure over the Government reservation, and the soldiers of the Seventh remember yet the fight they had that afternoon to protect the buildings of the post.

Culmer was roused to his danger only when the long dancing flame could be distinguished as it devoured the dry grasses. The line was so long that he knew he could not escape on foot and he stood staring at it dumbly. Then he turned and swept the remainder of the horizon, hoping for a way of escape.

Coming towards him from the east was a white-topped waggon. It must have followed a ravine that he did not see it before. Now it was out on the high prairie, and the horses were approaching at a canter. As it came nearer through the film of smoke already filling the atmosphere, he saw that the driver was a woman—and, yes; it was Mary! Culmer was becoming more and more bewildered, and could not speak until his wife's voice called to him.

"Oh, John; quick. Help me unharness the horses; they can never pull a waggon fast enough! We must ride."

Serious as was the situation, he could not resist the temptation to answer with a sneer, "Where is Abner?"

"He is coming, John, and we've been so fortunate—I'll tell you about it—don't you see the fire there—quick, help me!"

She was tugging at the leather harness frantically. The horses alarmed, reared and fretted.

John with desperate recklessness, drew his knife, and slashed trace after trace, strap after strap, and in a moment the animals were free. He was too desperate, too reckless about it, and the nervous woman at the horses' heads was overpowered by their actions and lost her footing. Away the frightened animals went scurrying over the prairie, while the husband and wife looked each other in the eyes blankly.

"John"—it was the woman who spoke—"what have you done?"

The flames were now not a quarter of a mile way.

"Why should I care what I've done with your doings of to-day to think of?"

"My doings?" The blue eyes were very wide.

"Yes, I know you like him better than me, because he wears a uniform and all that—but it won't matter now."

"Do you mean our old friend Abner? Why, John—oh, there he is now."

Tearing up from the ravine in the track the waggon had followed came the lieutenant on his strong army horse. Almost as soon as they had discovered him he was at their side. A motion from Mary's hand towards the flying horses,

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now mere specks on the plain, was sufficient to explain the situation.

With quivering lips he looked the pair in the face. He could mount his horse and escape. He could take one of them. That was all. Which would he do?

"Here John, hold the horse." The lieutenant's voice had a queer husky inflection that made the listeners stare.

There was not an instant to lose. Already the fire was so close that the air scorched their lungs.

"Mary, I have no one dependent on me. Take these things."

The woman did not realise the sacrifice until she had had forced into her hands the pocket-book and letter-case.

"Give them to the captain," he added. "He understands. Now, no stopping."

"Mary, take these things."

He put both strong hands round the woman's waist, and easily lifted her to the horse's back, sweeping her shoulder with his lips as she was carried upward.

"John, jump into the saddle."

The tone was so commanding that the man obeyed. There was a sharp blow on the horse's flank, and the two were borne almost in the teeth of the tide of fire northward. On and on the strong charger raced until the flames were outstripped. The atmosphere grew clear and broad. Black smoking plains stretched off to the right, with flames away to the northward.

"John," sobbed the woman, "did you think——"

She faltered.

"Yes, Mary, I thought it all. But why did you leave to-day?"

"Leave? Abner had secured you a place on the paper at Fairview, and I went there to arrange things, and was going to surprise you. He was to spend his furlough getting us settled."

They rode into the fort at nightfall, and we who carried the wan woman to the guest chamber wondered what experience she had been through since that morning. It was weeks before we knew it all.

A company of soldiers went out in the morning. They found a blackened heap of ruins in the midst of the blacker plain.

These were the ironwork of a waggon, some timbers, and among them a body wrapped in charred canvas.

It was Lieutenant Jayne. He had met death as calmly as he would have done on the field of battle. A small Testament was found in his clothing. In it were two photographs—one was that of a grey-haired woman, his mother; the other every man in the group recognised as that of the emigrant's wife, Mary Culmer.

THE STORY OF A PICTURE.

I.

THE artist stood before his picture in the dusk of the evening. The great studio was full of shadows, and the heaped up canvases, the easels, the properties of various kinds loomed indistinctly and mysteriously in the gloom, looking many of them like strange personalities waiting until darkness was fully come to perform some action unbefitting the light.

And the artist stood before the picture in the centre of the cedar wood floor, quite alone, quite immersed in peering contemplation. He had been a so-called successful man all through his life, a favourite of the gods.

He was a noble specimen of manhood, an athlete as well as an artist, an actor in the world's drama of action, not merely a dreamer who imagined, or a thinker who looked on and grew sad. He lived in many ways, not merely in one; and if his great ambition, his untiring genius led him ever upon one road, the road which artists traverse, he often went down the by-path, and took excursions which led him from the toilsome way, at the end of which stood the goal towards which he aimed.

Harold Brand was in a peculiar, terribly strung-up frame of mind. He had just come to the end of a great effort, and he was strongly excited, as the actor is excited after a great scene, or the musician after an ardent performance. He had been striving, as even he had never striven before, and he was not yet calm enough to appraise the result, or know whether his idol was clay or gold.

The picture seemed to him transcendently beautiful as he stood bending forward and gazing at it with the closest attention. He fancied that at last he had almost succeeded in satisfying his own ambition. All his matured knowledge, all his acquired skill, all his shining genius seemed to speak plainly from the canvas, convincing him for the moment of his own greatness, as others had long ago been convinced.

Yes, it was a noble work; and yet it was only the presentment of a woman, who stood in a simple attitude, holding a mirror in her hand and gazing into it with a sad, half wonder-

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ing wholly wistful expression. Only a woman; but how magically painted!

Underneath the picture the artist had scrawled roughly on a bit of cardboard its title, "The Mirror."

There came a tap on the door of the studio. The artist started, and for a moment stood uncertain. He had been so wrapped up in his achievement that he could not realise what had roused him and broken his reverie. He knew he had heard something, but could not at first tell what it was.

But the tap was repeated, and a smile stole into his eyes.

"If she has come!" he thought, and he walked towards the door. His footman stood there with a card. "Mrs. Amarinth," he read on it.

"Ask Mrs. Amarinth to come into the studio," he said, "and bring tea and a lamp. I am not at home to anyone else this afternoon."

The man departed, and Harold stood by the open door with the card in his hand expectantly, until he heard steps in the distance. Then a sudden thought seemed to strike him. He hurried to the picture and drew a covering over it, with a hand that trembled slightly.

"She must not see it yet, not till I have told her about it," he said to himself, and then returned as a lady entered.

"I have kept my promise, Mr. Brand," she said, holding out her hand to him in the twilight. "I have come and scattered excuses behind me. I only stayed five mimutes at Lady Endbury's. I don't know what she thought of me, but if we cared what people thought or said about us, in this world of London, we should have a very bad time, shouldn't we? How very dim and religious your light is. Where shall I sit?"

"Will you sit here?" he said, slowly releasing her hand and bringing forward an armchair covered with stamped velvet. "It is not very cold, but I mean to light the fire so that we may have a cosy hour together."

"Do," she said, with a little sigh, leaning back, "I love firelight, and this darkness seems cold. Ah, that is better," as the flames began to flicker and dance, and fly from log to log. "And now tell me why you wanted me so particularly to-day."

He came and stood before her. His handsome face was slightly flushed, and his eyes were glittering with excitement.

"I always want you, I think," he said.

"That is because you haven't got me," she answered. "You have so much—fame, wealth, satisfied ambition—everything a strong man wants, and yet I would not mind wagering that you believe yourself unhappy, that you imagined yourself unsatisfied. Everybody does nowadays. To be restless and dissatisfied is almost as fashionable as to be poor, or to have made one's money in trade."

He sat down on an oak settle near her.

"I think I am happy at this moment, quite happy. Yet, there is one thing would make me happier, and it depends upon you."

She smiled softly.

"And what is that?" she asked, letting her eyes rest upon his.

"I will tell you. But here's tea."

She sipped softly, with her eyes on him.

"You are an adept at piquing a woman's curiosity," she said at last.

"Believe me, Mrs. Amarinth, it is not that. I only wish to put off something that makes me hopeful, yet afraid. I think you understand me a little, very well, I might even say. You are not a worker, but you understand what work can be to the worker, what a mingled delight and terror, what a supreme joy—almost touching love in keenness—or what a sorrow. You know how I have looked on myself as a failure, while the world chooses to think otherwise. You know I have not been happy ever, because I have never succeeded as I wished, done all I have sometimes felt it in me to achieve. I have let you know all this. Have I bored you?"

Her soft lips parted.

"You have paid me the highest compliment a great man can pay a woman who is not great," she breathed.

"No one can pay you compliments," he said. "They can only render you homage. But you have done more than sympathise with my dissatisfaction, you have helped me to kill it, I believe. Your influence has worked a spell in me, and given me, as it were, the management of, the control over, my powers, which sometimes seemed lacking before. I want to show you the result. But first tell me something, will you not?"

"Ask me what it is?"

He bent over her and took her hands, and his were trembling with a keen, nervous emotion that strength of will could no longer entirely control.

"Need I ask you in words?" he said. "There are some things whose bloom is rubbed off so easily, and words are rough things at times. Look up into my face and tell me you understand what I mean."

She lifted her beautiful eyes to his passionate ones slowly. Then musingly she said, "But if I made a mistake it would hurt me. I am only a woman. You must tell me before I can answer you."

"I will tell you then," he answered, and he kissed her.

Her soft lips lingered on his. "That's my answer," she whispered in a sigh. And it was a long while before either of them spoke again.

At last she broke the silence—"I hoped you loved me," she said, with a delicious frankness, "but I never knew it; your mind is a strong box, a safe which it is difficult to prise. I have only tampered with the lock till now,"

"I fear there is not much treasure in it. But it is all yours. And while I cannot tell you how much I love you, I can show you in my work. Do you remember the first time I saw you that you said something about mirrors? You said you looked into life as you would look into your mirror, and you saw in it nothing that interested you more than your own reflection. I have painted you looking into the mirror, and I think—I hope—that at last I have done something that will be more than praised, that will be remembered after the summer is over, and the Academy has shut its doors. I would not exhibit it only I want all the world to know how beautiful you are."

The young widow looked at him eagerly till he had finished speaking, then she sprang from her chair.

"And it is here, in the studio?" she said. "Ah! now I understand why you wanted the light. You want me to tell you it is beautiful, and then your happiness will be complete. Show it to me."

"I will."

He strode to the distant table. His heart was beating violently with excitement, and he himself was already eager to see his work again now that a longer time had elapsed since he had finished it. He might have to slightly readjust first impressions. He pulled the table in front of the easel, and then slowly drew the covering from the picture.

Then he stood in silence waiting, not looking at her because he wanted to so much. She said nothing for a while. Not a word escaped her. The silence was so intense that he could hear her breathing.

At last, suddenly, a little hard sound broke from her. It might have been a sob.

"I wonder you can love me at all," she said in a dry voice. "If I am like that, I wonder you can love me."

She turned towards him and saw the expression on his face.

"Mr. Brand—Harold—" she said, and the dryness vanished in a moment, "I have hurt you; but, indeed, indeed, you have hurt me. I am not like that. I am not." She put up her mouth to his. "Kiss me," she whispered. "I am not angry. I do love you. But, oh, Harold, you must not exhibit it! The world may see me, but it must not see—that."

She had gone and the artist stood once more alone in his studio. The fire leaped and crackled upon the hearth, and cast its ruddy glow over the cedar-panelled walls, over the vaulted roof, over the music gallery at the end of the room, over the easel on which the picture stood. After he had bidden Mrs. Amarinth good-bye and kissed her once more in the deserted hall before he himself let her out into the evening air, Harold had turned to the studio and locked the door. He sat down upon the oak settle by the fire and remained for a long time plunged in meditation.

Many emotions swirled round in the whirlpool of his mind.

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His strong deep nature had been utterly taken hold of by Mrs. Amarinth and he had never known exactly why. He loved her as an artist, certainly for her great beauty; but her personality was what attracted him really with a strong magnetic force that made him acknowledge himself more than her lover—her slave. He could see her faults, and they were not few, but one he had never allowed to himself could possibly exist, and this was a frivolity and a lack of depth which, in spite of all her culture, prevented her from really understanding, or in any way properly appreciating, the greatest achievements of art or the noblest beauties of nature.

He had almost deliberately bandaged his eyes and refused to recognise this fact. And now he was suffering from painful doubt, from quenched enthusiam, from a sense of being utterly misunderstood by the one being whom he utterly loved.

He suffered because he could not break the shackles of a love he had felt unworthy. The struggle was intense, but it could only end one way. At length he set down the lamp, bent his head a moment till his lips nearly touched the canvas, then dropped the covering down over it, lifted it from the easel, and placed it against the wall behind some heaped-together failures on which no one ever looked. The soul of the man, the human being, dominated the soul of the artist; the love for the woman conquered the love for the picture.

Silently, in that bitter-sweet moment, Harold Brand renounced his art.

II.

THEY had been married for some years, and many springs had fled away since that spring evening, yet in all that time Harold had never once handled brush or palette. He would fain have locked the studio up and left it finally deserted; but this his wife would not allow. It was an ideal ball room, she said, with its vaulted roof, its smooth floor of dark polished wood, its gallery just made for Coote and Tinney's band, whose valse music floated down deliciously through the elaborate carving of the beautiful balustrade.

"And I think, dear," she would say sometimes to her husband, "that you killed what little love I had with that frightful travesty you made of me. Do you remember it? You called it 'The Mirror.' I am so glad you never showed it to anyone. By the way, what has become of it?"

"I hardly know. It is lying about somewhere," he answered. And then he would abruptly leave the room.

The whole nature of the man seemed to have changed during those years. All his brilliancy and brightness, all his impulsive charm, all his energy, vivacity, and determination had gone. He was as one living and yet dead, cold with a coldness that seemed almost as the grave, instead of warm with the warmth of pulsing young life. His love for a woman had killed him then.

So Brand married a woman for her money, so they said, in order to escape from the trammels and the assiduous labours of art. He buried his genius in a grave of gold, and left it to rot while he lived an aimless life of luxury. And they grew to despise him and to hold him in a measureless contempt. His old loved set of intimates, the few men who had once understood and worshipped him, knew him no more.

Sometimes it seemed to him impossible that he could be wrapped up in a being who had no appreciation of the things which meant most to him, who had no real care for anything except the frivolities of life. He loved her, and was her husband, and yet his whole real self was unknown to her.

Sometimes, when he heard her congratulating herself on her influence over him, and telling people that he lived in the world now, instead of burying himself in art, he could not refrain from smiling bitterly. Her influence over him! What was it? She could make him love her. She could reach his heart and touch it. She could never reach his mind and touch that. Hers for him, meanwhile, at length wholly died. She lived more and more in the world, and ceased to desire to take him with her.

Mrs. Brand had among other distractions taken to gambling heavily.

So long as he was not compromised he let things take their course, and the last scene of the strange comedy of his life was, he knew, fast approaching.

. . . . . .

The artist learned two things almost simultaneously—that his health was failing and that his wife's passion for gambling was leading her farther than was wise. Her fortune had been large originally, but she had almost exhausted it, and had begun to draw heavily upon his. Remonstrances were useless. They seemed to avail perhaps for the moment, but Mrs. Brand continued to play in secret, although, to all appearances, she had yielded to her husband's entreaties or commands and given up the practice that was ruining her.

That his health was failing visibly she never noticed, and he never told her that he was suffering from aneurism of the heart, and that his days were numbered.

She, on the other hand, gave out that she was full of ailments, and finally persuaded an accommodating doctor to order her to Monte Carlo for change. Before she left England the artist won a promise from her that she would not once go to the tables while she was there.

Needless to say, the promise was never kept. She had never meant that it should be. Every day was passed at the tables, with varying luck at first. She even won a good deal, and her excitement grew more intense, more feverish than ever. But the luck changed, and the usual thing happened. She went on until she was terribly involved, till she had gambled away every farthing she had in the world. She was at last reduced to telegraphing to her husband for the means of getting home. The money was sent without a word of comment, and she returned.

It was late in the afternoon when she drove up to the big house in Kensington. She noticed that all the blinds were closely drawn. The servant who met her at the door broke the news that her husband had died in the studio, and had been found there some hours afterwards.

Mrs. Brand was honestly shocked, but she was hardly grieved. It could not make very much difference to her now; and it set her free to gamble with the money which had been his, and which now was hers. And so she played on until nearly everything was gone.

At last destitution stared her in the face. She had paid away all her money to satisfy debts of honour, and her other creditors were clamouring to be satisfied, and threatened to sell her up. Most of the beautiful things in the house were already sold. She resolved now to part with the house itself.

One evening a man, who had been an old friend of her husband's, and who had heard of her disasters, and of the dire straits she was in, called upon her. He had loved Harold, and for the sake of his memory resolved to do what he could to help the woman who had ruined the artist's life. He found her standing in the drawing-room before an easel, that was struck up incongruously in the middle of the floor, looking hopelessly out of place among the surroundings of the room.

After the first greetings had been uttered, Mrs. Brand said abruptly: "I know you are a good judge of art, and I want you to tell me something. I have appealed to you in my difficulties, and you know how terribly hard-up I have managed to get. Now, casting round for some means of making money, it occurred to me that although my husband long before his death entirely gave up painting, his name is still famous, and a new work of his might fetch a good price in the market."

"A new work!" exclaimed her visitor. "Has he left one behind him?"

"Well, it can hardly be called new. It was painted before we were married, and it was never exhibited, at my request. I will tell you exactly how it was. Before he proposed to me he painted me. I gave him no sittings. I never knew what he was doing till it was finished. On the evening he proposed to me he showed me the finished picture—I believe he thought it by far his best work—his masterpiece—but it did not do me justice. I told him so frankly. I begged him not to exhibit it. Do you know I often think it was my disapprobation which led him to forsake art? He never took a brush in his hand again. He loved me very much, and he was very proud. Now it occurs to me that I might sell this picture. It was painted years ago. I have altered. Nobody will find out it was

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intended for me, probably, and even if they do, I cannot help it. I must have money."

"May I look at it?" he said, and he stood before it.

She lifted the covering, and he gazed silently, holding his breath.

And as he gazed his eyes filled with tears, and he trembled. He, too, was a fine artist, and the dead man had once been his dearest friend. He had misunderstood him. He had been alienated from him. He had thought him unworthy.

Now he understood all the tragedy of his life, all the wasted genius, all the agony the proud, passionate, loving nature must have endured. And she would sell the picture.

He could not speak. He dared not trust himself to say one word.

At last she said, "Is it any good?"

He walked to the window, and looked out into the gathering dusk Then in a hoarse, low voice, he said abruptly: "Will you take two thousand pounds for it?"

She gave a cry of delight

"Two thousand pounds for that!" she exclaimed.

"I will send a cheque to-night, on condition that I may take it away with me at once."

He could scarcely command his voice.

"Take it by all means," she said. "The servant shall carry it out for you."

"No. I will carry it out myself, with my own hands," he answered. And he lifted it reverently from the easel and bore it away with him to his home.

. . . . . .

And now the world gazes in awe upon that wonderful canvas, which wrecked a life, and worships the memory of the silent, dead artist.

And the woman—she has gambled away the two thousand pounds and forgotten the picture; the picture that did not do her justice!

HOSKIN'S PETS.

"YES," said the journalist, reflectively, "I've been almost everywhere in my time, except in gaol, and I've been in many worse places than a first-class gaol, with all the modern improvements. The fact is, that philanthropic people have gone so far in improving the condition of prisoners, that most of our prisons are rather better than most of our hotels. At any rate, they are less expensive, and the guests are treated with more respect.

"I never could understand the craze that some people have for criminals. For instance, you can read almost any day in the papers of young ladies sending fruit and flowers to murderers. Whenever a man is convicted of murder and sentenced to be hanged, the girls begin to shower tributes of flowers into his cell until he can't turn round without upsetting a vase of roses, or a big basin of pansies, and getting his feet wet.

I had a neighbour when I lived in Lewes who was the president of the Society for Ameliorating the Condition of Prisoners, and he was the craziest man on the subject that I ever met. His name was Hoskins—Major John Hoskins—and he was the author of the Hoskins' Bill that attracted so much attention when it was before the House of Commons, though it never became law.

"The Bill provided that every prisoner should have a sitting room as well as a sleeping room, and that it should be furnished with a piano, a banjo, a library, a typewriter, a wine cooler, and a whist table; that the prisoner should be allowed to hold two weekly receptions, to which everybody should be allowed to come, and that he should be taught any branch of study that he might care to take up, books and masters being, of course, supplied free.

"Major Hoskins used to insist that the only thing that made a man go wrong was the lack of kindness, and that the sure way to reform a criminal was to treat him with so much kindness that he would grow ashamed of being wicked, and would fall on everybody's neck and devote the rest of his life to weeping tears of repentance and singing hymns of joy.

"While Major Hoskins patronised all styles of criminals, burglars were his particular pets. According to him, a burglar was more deserving of kindness than other men. 'How would you like it,' he used to say, 'if you had to earn your living by breaking into houses in the middle of the night, instead of sleeping peacefully in your bed? Do you think you would be full of good thoughts after you had been bitten by the watch-dog and fired at by the man of the house, and earned nothing by your labour except a bad cold and the prospect of hydrophobia?

"'There is nothing more brutal than the way in which society treats the burglar, and as long as society refuses to put him in the way of earning an easier and less dangerous living he cannot be blamed if he continues to practise his midnight profession.'

"I must say this for Major Hoskins. He did not confine himself to talk, like many other philanthropists, but he was always trying to carry out his principles. He really meant what he said about burglars, and there isn't the least doubt that he had more sympathy for them than he had for the honest men of his acquaintance.

"When people asked him what he would do if he woke up in the night and found a burglar in the house, and whether or not he would shoot at him, he said he would as soon think of shooting his own wife, and that he would undertake to reform that burglar then and there by kindness alone. Once somebody said to Hoskins that he ought really to let the burglars know his feelings towards them, and Hoskins said he would do it without delay.

"That same day he drew up a beautiful 'Notice to Burglars,' and had it printed in big letters and framed and hung up in the dining-room of his house. It read this way: 'Burglars are respectfully informed that the silver is all plated, and that the proprietor of this house never keeps ready money on hand. Cake and wine will be found in the dining-room cupboard, and burglars are cordially invited to rest and refresh themselves. Please wipe your feet on the mat, and close the window when leaving the house.'

"Major Hoskins took a good deal of pride in that notice. He showed it to every one that called at the house, and said that if other people would follow his example, and treat burglars like Christians and gentlemen, there would soon be an end to burglary, for the burglars would be so touched by the kindness of their treatment that they would abandon the business and become honoured members of society—insurance managers, or bank cashiers, or churchwardens. He didn't say how the reformed burglars were to find employment in banks and insurance offices; but that was a matter of detail, and he

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always preferred to devise large and noble schemes, and leave the working details to other men.

"One morning, Major Hoskins, who was an early riser, went down to the dining-room before breakfast, and was surprised to find that he had been paid a midnight visit by some burglars. Two empty wine bottles stood on the table, and all the cake was eaten, which showed that the burglars had accepted the invitation to refresh themselves. All Hoskins' spoons and forks lay in a heap in the middle of the floor, and every one was twisted or broken so as to be good for nothing. The window had been left open, and the rain had ruined the curtains, and on a dirty piece of paper the burglars had scrawled with a lead pencil the opinion that 'Old Hoskins is the biggest idiot and the bloominest skinflint in the country. You set out whiskey next time, or we will serve you out.'

"Hoskins was not in the least cast down by the rudeness of the burglars. 'Poor fellows,' he said, 'they have been so used to bad treatment that they don't altogether appreciate kindness at first. But they will learn.' So he laid in some new spoons and forks, and added a bottle of whiskey to the wine that he kept in the cupboard for the burglars, and was as confident as ever that the next gang that might break into the house would be melted into tears and repentance, and would call him their best and dearest friend.

"A week or two later Mrs. Hoskins was awakened by a noise in the dining-room, and, after rousing her husband, told him that there were burglars in the house, and that he must get out of the back window and go for the police. He told her that he was sorry to see her manifest such an un-Christian spirit, and he would show her how burglars ought to be treated.

"There was not the least doubt that there were burglars in the house, and they were making a great deal more noise than was strictly consistent with the prospect of rising in their profession, for no able burglar ever makes any unnecessary noise while engaged in business, unless, of course, he falls over a coalscuttle, and then he naturally uses language. Hoskins was sincerely delighted to have the opportunity of meeting his burglarious friends, and he lost no time in dressing and descending to the dining-room.

"He wore his slippers, and the burglars—there were two of them—did not hear him until he was fairly in the room. They were seated at the table, with their feet on the damask table-cloth, and the bottle of whiskey was nearly empty. The Major was much pleased to see that they had not damaged his silver ware, and he was just about to thank them when they saw him. They started up, and one of them caught him by the throat while the other held a pistol to his head, and promised to blow out his brains if he made the slightest noise. Then they tied him hand and foot, gagged him, and laid him on the floor, and then sat down to finish the whiskey.

"Both burglars were partly drunk, which accounted for the unprofessional noise they had been making. They talked in a rather low tone, but Hoskins could hear everything they said, and it was not particularly encouraging to a gagged and bound philanthropist.

"They agreed that he was a fool, and a stingy fool, or else he would have kept money in the house, and would have set out lemons and sugar as well as plain whiskey. They said that any man who treated poor working men in that way wasn't fit to live, and that Hoskins would have to be killed, even if it was not necessary—as it was plainly in this case—to kill him in order to prevent him appearing at any future time as a witness against them. They admitted that the whiskey was not bad of its kind, but they were of the opinion that Hoskins had left it in their way so that they might get drunk and be caught by the police.

"Major Hoskins listened to all this conversation with horror, and the prospect that the drunken rascals would be as good as their word, and kill him before they left the house, was only a little more painful than the conviction that his method, appealing to the better nature of burglars, had failed for the second time.

"When the whiskey was exhausted the men rose up and looked at Hoskins, and a happy thought struck one of them.

"'Thish yer idiot,' he said, 'may not have any money in the house, but he's bound to have some in the bank, and he's going to write us a cheque for a hundred pounds, providing we let him off, and don't kick his brains out this time.'

"The other burglar, who was in that benevolent frame of mind that Irish whiskey and conscious virtue sometimes produce, agreed to the suggestion, and Hoskins was therefore unbound and seated at the table, and told to draw a cheque at once if he had the least regard for his life. As he was gagged he could not explain to the burglars the kind feelings he still had towards them, and the fact that they could not draw the money on the cheque without being captured by the police. So he simply signed the cheque, and groaned to think that the poor burglars were so slow to be reformed in the way that he had hoped they would take.

"When this business was over, the burglars tied Hoskins' wrists again, and then bound him to a chair, Then they set to work to do all the damage they could without making too much noise. They tore the curtains and hacked the piano with knives, and poured a jug of golden syrup over the carpet. Then they plastered Major Hoskins' face with raspberry jam, and emptied a sack of flour all over his head, and went away, telling him that if he ever ventured again to trifle with the feelings of poor but self-respecting men they would put him to death by slow tortures.

"Hoskins sat in the chair for a couple of hours, till his wife timidly crept downstairs and released him. It took him a good hour to get the jam and the flour out of his hair and whiskers, and as Mrs. Hoskins said that he was in no state to enter a decent bedroom, and made him wash at the tap in the back kitchen, he found it a rather cold operation.

"Perhaps it was the remarks that Mrs. Hoskins addressed to him during the operation that irritated the Major, for she intimated very plainly that he was no better than a professional idiot, and when a man's hair is stuck together with jam remarks of this sort from the wife of his bosom seem to be lacking in tenderness.

"However that may be, Major Hoskins had no sooner got himself into what his wife condescended to call a state of comparative decency, than he took down his 'Notice to Burglars' and tore it into a thousand pieces.

"That day he had an electric burglar alarm put into his house, he bought the fiercest dog that he could find, and he stopped the payment of the cheque, which, however, was never presented.

"He continued to be the President of the Society for Ameliorating the Condition of Prisoners, but he steadily refused to better the lot of a single prisoner convicted of burglary; and while he was always a lunatic in regard to other criminals, he openly maintained that a burglar was the worst of men, and that kindness was utterly thrown away upon him.

"He never had any more burglars in his house, though the dog now and then destroyed masculine clothing, when some stranger to that part of the country ventured into Hoskins' premises at night. Hoskins was very fond of the animal, which was quite right; but his practice of leaving a bottle of whiskey, with an ounce of strychnine in it, on the dining-room table every night, in case a burglar should succeed in getting into the house, was, in my opinion, going a little too far. But there is no man who is more severe than a philanthropist who has been turned sour."

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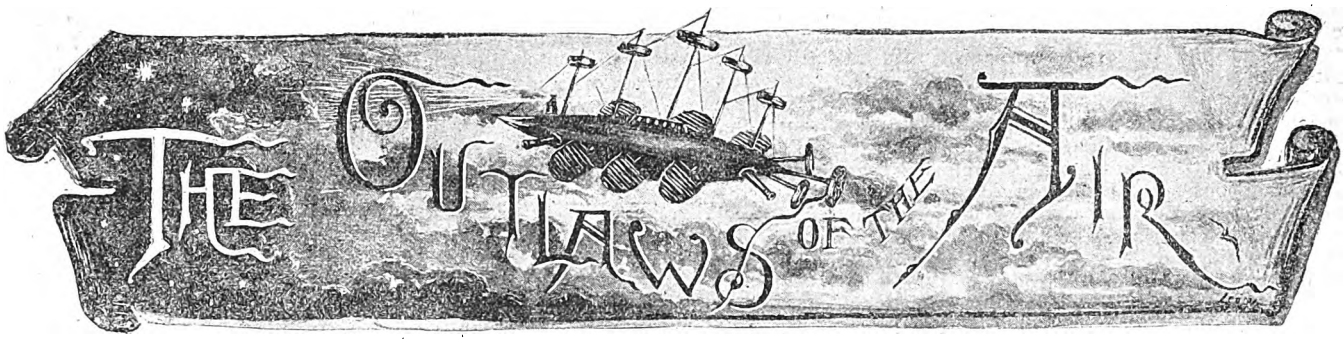

By George Griffith,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," &c.

SUMMARY.

Max Renault—leading spirit of Anarchist Autonomie Group No. 7, who has joined the Utopians (a Socialistic colony on an island in the South Pacific) in order to steal the air-ship they are building, which he succeeds in doing.

Franz Hartog—a German engineer, in league with Renault, who steals a very fast torpedo-boat destroyer from the Russian Government to levy blackmail on the Atlantic.

Sir Harry Milton—a wealthy young English nobleman, who by chance comes across the island of Utopia, in his yacht, the *Calypso*, and subsequently devotes the whole of his fortune to hunting down Renault and Hartog.

Herbert Wyndham—a lieutenant in the British Navy who is travelling with Sir Harry for the benefit of his health, and who resigns his commission and couples his energies with those of Sir Harry in destroying the Anarchists, on account of the fact that he has been stabbed by Renault when the latter attempts to carry off Violet in the air-ship.

Frederick Austen—the inventor of the air-ship, who shares its secret with Edward Adams, Dr. Edwards, and Ambrose Millar, three other Utopians.

Frank Markham—the young captain of the Utopian yacht, *Mermaid*.

Violet Milton—Sir Harry's sister, and Lieutenant Wyndham's sweetheart, is permanently crippled by throwing herself out of the air-ship on which Renault has tried to carry her off.

Dora Merton—a fair Utopian who has made an impression on Sir Harry.

Lucy Summers—another fair Utopian.

Renault in the air-ship *Vengeur*, and Hartog in the torpedo-boat *Destroyer*, levy blackmail on the high seas. Just as they have annihilated a combined British, French, and Portuguese fleet sent to discover them, a Maxim aeroplane, the *Britannia*, comes on the scene, and is captured by the *Vengeur*. Those on it are put ashore, and one of the crew shoots at Renault and wounds him. A few weeks later Renault and Hartog set out for the Island of Utopia for the purpose of destroying its inhabitants, but find it deserted.

CHAPTER XXIII.

Back to Life.

It will now be necessary, in order to preserve the continuity of the narrative, to go back to the evening of the disaster which caused such a dark and sudden cloud to fall upon the hitherto unclouded brightness of life in Utopia.

Before daybreak on the morning following the discovery of Lieutenant Wyndham lying wounded on the platform in the crater of Mount Orient, and the rescue of Violet from her perilous position on the top of the palm-tree, young Markham came galloping up to the crater on pony-back and had an interview with Adams and Mr. Austen, who were roused for the purpose from the brief slumber into which they had fallen after the distress and excitement of the previous night. So serious was the news that he brought that they were not long in seeing that he was perfectly justified in taking the step that he had done.

It will be remembered that he was intrusted with the amusement of the *Calypso's* crew during the holiday, and in the discharge of this duty he had taken several of them for a run round the reef in the *Mermaid*, after entertaining them for the greater part of the day, in order that those of them who wished might get a good general view of the island that they were so soon to leave. During this trip, and while the *Mermaid* was at the eastern extremity of the reef, and over twenty miles from the landing stages, he had seen the air-ship rise from the crater of Mount Orient and leave the island.

Bewildered as he had been by an apparition which, as he well knew, meant the disclosure of Utopia's most jealously guarded secret, he had not been long in coming to the conclusion that it could only be explained on the supposition of treason and desertion. Then, instantly, his thoughts had reverted to the *Nautilus*. If there had been anyone on the island capable of disclosing the secret of the air-ship and stealing her from the colony, was it not also reasonable to suppose that such a traitor would also try to deprive the colonists of the formidable sea-weapon which had so nearly approached completion.

It had taken all his own ingenuity and the authority of Mr. Topline to restrain or in any way satisfy the wondering curiosity of the *Calypso's* men with regard to the apparition of the air-ship. But this was of insignificant importance in comparison with the undefined, but very certain, fears that he entertained with regard to the safety of the *Nautilus*. Consequently, he put the *Mermaid's* head about, and astonished the sailors still further by rushing her back to the entrance to the lagoon in front of the settlement at a good thirty knots an hour.

Had taken several of them for a run round the reef in the "Mermaid.

It was dark by the time he got back to the dockyard, so, after giving the *Calypso's* men in charge of the sailing-master, he took the crew of the launch ashore, lighted the electric lamps, and set to work to make an examination, first of the hull of the *Nautilus*, and then of the dockyard itself.

For between three and four hours they searched in vain, and then, just as they were about to give up the search and leave the interior of the vessel, Markham's quick ear had caught a sound like the ticking of a clock, faint but regular, in the inmost recesses of the after part of the craft. He saw at once that this was a sound that boded danger, for there was nothing

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in connection with the work of building that could explain it, so they set to work again with redoubled energy and not a little anxiety, and at last discovered close hidden under one of the motor-fuel magazines, a battery and a little clockwork mechanism arranged like that of an alarum clock which, as after examination proved, would five minutes later have completed the circuit and sent a spark through the magazine, and produced an explosion which would have blown the after part of the *Nautilus* to fragments.

This was of course proof positive of treachery as ruthless as it had been cunning and secret, and gave ample confirmation of Markham's timely apprehensions. The battery was immediately disconnected, and then, leaving two of his companions to explore every other recess of the ship into which a human being could crawl, Markham took the rest and, after enlisting the assistance of Mr. Topline and the *Calypso's* men, proceeded to make a thorough and systematic examination of the whole dockyard.

This precaution, very necessary after what had been found in the hull of the *Nautilus*, occupied the searchers well through the night, but resulted in no further discovery, and from this fact it was rightly concluded that the traitor or traitors had had no time to plan or execute any further damage. As soon as he was satisfied of this, Markham, without waiting for daylight, had ridden up to Mount Orient and told his story to Adams and Mr. Austen, so that they might lose no time in taking any precautions that they might think necessary.

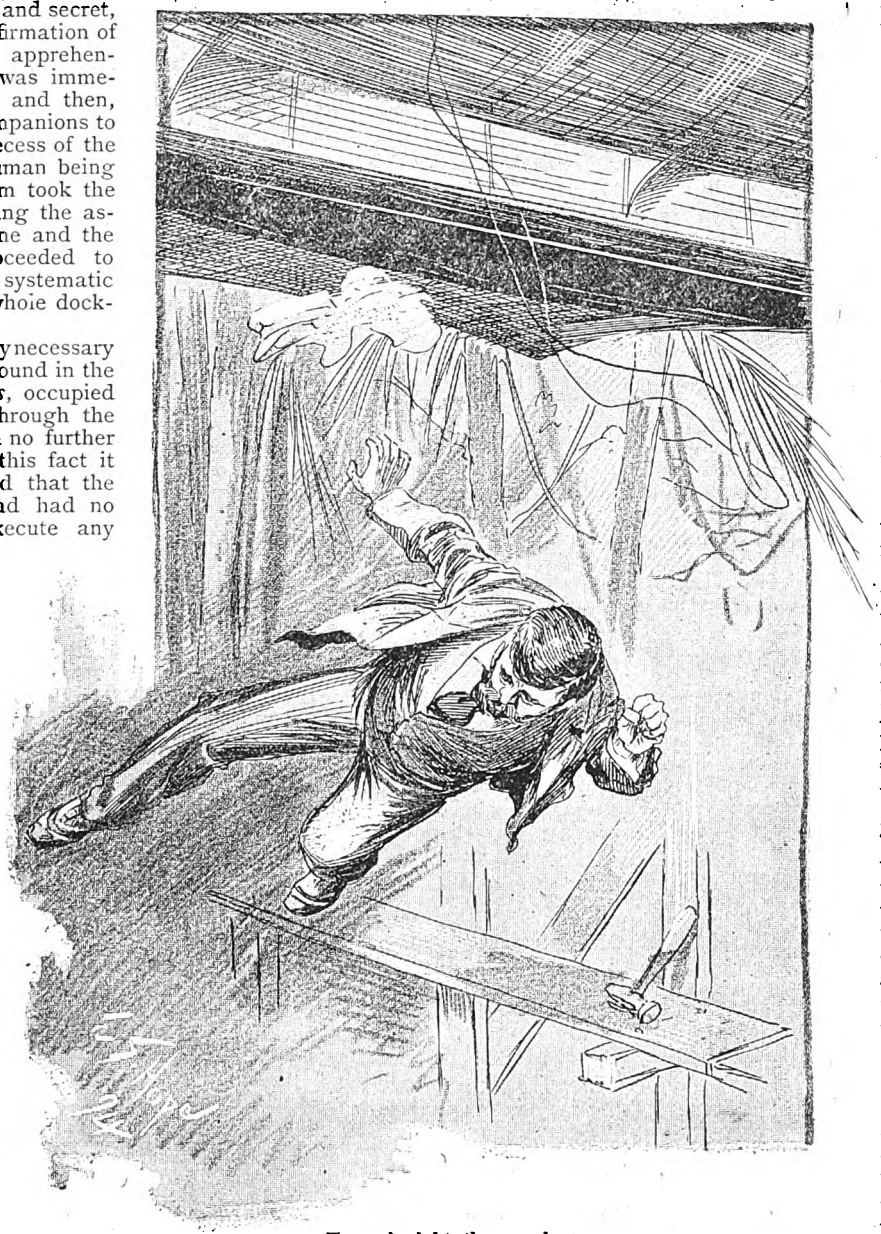
The first thing to be done was to hold a sort of council of war, and to this Sir Harry was invited in consideration of the offer he had made the evening before to devote his life and his fortune to avenging the misery and suffering that Renault had brought upon his sister and himself.

Naturally the first question that arose was whether Renault had acted entirely alone or whether he had had any accomplices on the island. As soon as the Lieutenant woke, which he did soon after sunrise, very weak but in the full possession of his faculties, he was able to answer this question in the negative so far as the carrying off of the air-ship was concerned.

He told them that on the previous afternoon he and Violet, when wandering alone, for reasons best known to themselves, in the valley between the two craters, had been unexpectedly accosted by Renault, who appeared to be in his pleasantest and politest mood, and he had led the conversation round to the *Nautilus* and the Lieutenant's offer to take her to sea.

Then he had told them that he had had a conversation on the subject with Adams and Mr. Austen, and that they had agreed with him that, as the Lieutenant had virtually decided to throw in his lot with the Utopians in their campaign against the *Destroyer*, there was no reason why a much greater secret than that of the existence of the *Nautilus* should be any longer withheld from him.

Wyndham had seen instantly what he was driving at, and when Renault at length, without giving any sign that he knew of their knowledge of the air-ship's existence, told him point blank that there was such a craft on the island, and offered to show it to them, there and then, in the crater of Mount Orient, his anxiety to see the wonderful ship at close quarters had got the better of his prudence, and he had accepted the offer without a thought of any ulterior design on Renault's part.



He was hurled to the ground.

He had proposed to go back and fetch Sir Harry, but Renault had objected to this on the ground that he was not yet authorised by his comrades to communicate the secret to Sir Harry, though he would take the personal responsibility of admitting Violet to the crater if she chose to come. To this he added that, as the afternoon was getting on, they would not have time to go back to the crater of Mount Plato and then go on and see the air-ship in daylight.

He said that he hadn't the slightest doubt but that Sir Harry would be invited to inspect the vessel before long, but there was no reason why the Lieutenant and Violet should not have a glimpse of it that evening—a sort of private view, as Renault had laughingly put it; and so, in their curiosity to see what was certainly the most wonderful thing on earth, they had given no further thought to the matter, but had simply followed Renault to the crater.

They had found the air-ship resting on her platform, and Renault had taken them on board, showed them the machinery, and explained the working. Then they had gone on deck, Renault having promised to run the ship round the inside of the crater, to give them an idea of the ease with

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She laid her uninjured hand in his.

which she could be managed. Just as they were waiting for her to rise from the platform, the Lieutenant had felt the stab of Renault's dagger in his back; then came a violent lurch, the air-ship's deck rose beneath his feet, and he was hurled to the ground, and remembered nothing more till he opened his eyes and found Adams and Sir Harry leaning over him.

Wyndham had scarcely finished his recital before Doctor Roberts came out of the hut in which Violet was lying to tell her brother the anxiously awaited news that she had regained consciousness at last, and was able to see him for a few minutes.

It would be easier to imagine than describe the mingled sorrow and rage that possessed the young Baronet when he went in and saw the awful change that Renault's villainous crime had produced in the girl, who only a few hours before had been full of life and strength and spirits, and had never known what a day's illness meant. Now she lay upon the luxurious couch that had been prepared for her, pallid, maimed, and crippled, barely able to move a limb, and so weak that she could only speak in a whisper.

She could not even hold out her hand to him as he approached her bedside, but her eyes brightened and her lips, now pale and shrunken in comparison with their rosy fulness of a few hours ago, moved in a faint languid smile.

Totally unable to speak for the moment, he stooped over her and kissed her, and as he did so she whispered:

"You see, I didn't kill myself after all; but I had to throw myself out—you know there was no other way. If I hadn't he would have taken me with him, and, of course, I would sooner have died twenty deaths than that. It was right, wasn't it?"

"Right?" said Sir Harry in a husky, half choked voice. "Yes, of course it was right, old girl. We were on the hill and saw you fall, and I knew you had thrown yourself out. It was your only way to escape, and you took it as your mother's daughter was bound to do. As for that scoundrel Renault——"

"Never mind him now, Harry," she whispered with a slight shake of her head. "Tell me, is Bertie—I mean Mr. Wyndham—alive? I've some dim recollection of Renault trying to stab him, or something, and throw him out of the ship. Did he do it?"

"Yes, I'm sorry to say he did—but, there, don't distress yourself about that. The wound was not fatal, though it was meant to be, and Roberts says there isn't the slightest danger if he's kept quiet; in fact, it's only a few minutes since he was asking how you were getting on. He's a lot more distressed about you, I can tell you, than he is about his own wound, though it's a pretty severe one."

Just the faintest perceptible flush rose into Violet's whitely transparent cheeks as he spoke. With an effort she laid her uninjured hand in his and said:

"Tell him I'm so glad—more glad than I can say—and, Harry, you must also tell him that he's not to think any more about what he said to me yesterday afternoon, because, although Doctor Roberts won't tell me, I believe that even if I don't die I shall never be able to walk again. There's something wrong with my back, and though, as you must know, I'm badly injured, I've scarcely any feeling at all in either of my legs, although Mrs. Merton told me that one of them is broken in two places."

"Nonsense, old girl, nonsense; you mustn't talk like that!" replied her brother with an assumed cheerfulness that he was far from feeling. "Of course, I know you've been terribly knocked about; but, you know, you've got the constitution of a young colt, the same as I have, and we shall pull you through all right now that you've once come round.

"Anyhow, I'm not going to tell Wyndham anything of the sort, and if I did he'd only laugh at me and tell me to mind my own business. You must settle that between yourselves when you're better. I don't believe in third persons interfering in these things. They always burn their fingers. Serve them jolly well right, too."

"Time's up, Milton!" said the doctor's voice outside the door before Violet could reply. "I said only five minutes, and you've had nearly ten. Out you come now, please. You can see her again after breakfast, but she's talked quite enough now."

Sir Harry knew his doctor too well to rebel, so, with another kiss and a gentle brotherly caress, he turned away from Violet's bedside, and catching the doctor outside the hut, put his arm through his and drew him away out of earshot.

"Now," he said, "Roberts, I suppose the worst of the danger's over, so you can tell me the worst there is to fear for the future."

"I can't tell you, my dear fellow, simply because I don't know myself. Thanks to young Edward's assistance, and the perfect nursing she has had, she has really made a wonderful improvement in the time. She'll live, there's not a doubt about that, I think; and as for the broken bones, why, she has the Milton constitution, and that means that there will be no trouble with them.

"We've reduced the fractures and got everything into place, and if it wasn't for that unhappy injury to her back I don't believe she'd even be lame, but I shouldn't be doing right if I didn't tell you that I don't at all like the look of the spinal injury. The best I can say is the back is not broken; but there's no doubt that the spinal cord is either crushed or strained.

"The lower part of her body is almost without feeling, though I fancy there is a slight increase of sensitiveness since the bones of the leg were set."

"And therefore," interrupted Sir Harry, "I suppose the worst is that she may be a cripple for life."

"I won't go so far as to say that," replied the doctor, shaking his head. "Of course, there is danger of it, it's no good disguising that, but it will be quite a week before I should feel justified in saying anything positive, you never exactly know where you are with spinal injuries. Sometimes the body literally dies from the place of lesion downwards, and sometimes the nerve-power gradually returns until only a little weakness is left.

"Your sister is young and strong and organically as sound as a bell, and in a year or two she may be running about the same as ever. On the other hand, it is possible that she may never be able to stand again or move without assistance. That's the best and the worst of it, and if there's anything in surgery you may rely upon us to make the best of it if it's physically possible.

"But I'll tell you this," he continued, stopping in his walk and facing round, "as soon as she is otherwise fit to be moved you ought to ship her off to London without losing a day, for the sooner that you get her under the care of some really good specialist the better hope there'll be of her recovery."

"Ah!" said Sir Harry. "Then that will just fit in with

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something else that I've been thinking about. How soon do you think she might be moved?"

"If nothing happens to throw her back she might be moved to her cabin on the *Calypso* in ten days or so."

"Very well," said Sir Harry. "I hope we shall be nearly ready to start by that time, but she won't go in the *Calypso*."

CHAPTER XXIV.

HOMEWARD BOUND.

LATER on in the day, when the whole colony had become aware of the loss that Utopia had sustained through Renault's daring and all too successful crime, a regular council of war was held in Lieutenant Wyndham's room.

As the Utopians were too sensible to believe that the more talk there is on a problem the more likelihood there is of arriving at a satisfactory solution the council consisted only of Mr. Austen, Adams, Ambrose Miller, the veteran mariner who had piloted the colonists to Utopia, Sir Harry, and, of course, the wounded Lieutenant, who had sufficiently recovered from the exhaustion consequent on his wound to be able to listen a good deal and talk a little.

As all had thought the question well out beforehand, and as no one had any desire save to find out the best course to pursue, there was very little talking done, and the most of it was done by Adams, who now, as on all important crises in the fortunes of Utopia, acted as the colonists' spokesman.

"I am afraid there is only one thing to be done," he said, in response to Mr. Austen's request that he should state his view of the case first. "I am afraid it will seem a very extreme view of the case, and, of course, if anyone can suggest another way out of the difficulty that offers the same chance of safety I shall be most happy to agree with them.

"So far as I can see, however, this treachery of Renault's has placed everybody in Utopia in a very serious position indeed. Of course, as Mr. Austen said last night, if the air-ship had only been armed and had her ammunition on board, there would be none of us left alive by this time. Renault would simply have hovered over us and killed us, and then he would have wrecked the settlement, so as to make sure that no one was left alive in possession of the secret of the motive power upon which, of course, everything depended.

"The only thing that we can do is to get out of Utopia before he returns."

"The discovery that Markham made in the *Nautilus* clearly proves that he intended to destroy the only vessel that could compete with the *Destroyer*. I am afraid there can be no doubt now but that Renault was an Anarchist in disguise, and that he came out with us solely for the purpose of getting hold of the secret that Mr. Austen gave us, and also, as events have proved, of stealing the air-ship when it was completed.

"No doubt he recognised Lieutenant Wyndham, and saw that he might be exposed at any moment, and that, to my mind, is why he took the air-ship for a trial trip that night that the Lieutenant and Sir Harry saw her over the hills, and also why he laid his plans hurriedly and got away with the air-ship instead of waiting, as I daresay he would have done, to try and corrupt enough members of the colony to help him to steal the *Nautilus* as well.

"With the personal violence and the dastardly crime that he was guilty of against Miss Milton and Lieutenant Wyndham, I do not think we have any concern at present——"

"No," said Sir Harry grimly. "We'll see about that later on when the day of reckoning comes; but we'll have to get on something like equal terms with the scoundrel before that."

"Yes," continued Adams. "So we can put that aside for the present. Now, obviously, Renault, having got possession of the air-ship, must do one of two things. Either he must content himself with the mischief that he can do after he has got her armed, and run the risk of our building another vessel swifter and more powerful than the one he has stolen, or else he will get her armed, come back here, and exterminate the colony in order to prevent our doing so. To my mind there is no choice between the two courses. He will certainly come back, and that as soon as he possibly can, therefore the only thing that we can do is to get out of Utopia before he returns."

When Adams ceased there was silence for two or three minutes. He had suggested the one course that held out any reasonable chance of safety, but it was also a course that meant the abandonment of the colony and all the bright hopes that had grown up round the venture, which had been overwhelmed with such sudden and unexpected disaster.

They knew that the Utopians had got to love their island paradise so dearly that it would be a terrible wrench for them to leave it, perhaps for ever, at a few days' notice; and so it was in a sadly serious tone that Mr. Austen took up the parable, and said:—

"Yes, I'm afraid there's nothing for it but that. The man who could do what Renault did yesterday is capable of any crime, and I feel certain that he would not scruple even to come back and slaughter every man, woman, and child in Utopia in order to make sure that he alone possessed the secret of the air-ship's motive power.

"To solve a problem like that of aerial navigation is to incur enormous responsibilities, and, honestly, I wish now that my poor Fred had died with the secret untold, for I can see nothing but a series of terrible calamities to the world as the outcome of it.

"If, as I'm afraid must be the case, Renault is really in league with the Anarchists who have possession of the *Destroyer*, it stands to reason that with the immense amount of money that they must have stolen already they will be able to build a large fleet of air-ships like the stolen one, and that will give them the power of working untold evil and destruction both on land and sea.

"Our duty, both to ourselves and the world, is now perfectly plain. Whatever sacrifice to our personal feelings, we must leave Utopia at the earliest possible moment. We must finish the work on the *Nautilus* and get her home to England to receive her equipment. That done, she must take the water in search of the *Destroyer* and not rest until she has found her and sent her to the bottom. Meanwhile—we must have at least a dozen air-ships."

"Make it a score at least," put in Sir Harry with a short laugh. "If they cost £40,000 apiece I'll see that the money's found for them."

"Very well," continued Mr. Austen, looking round at him with a smile. "A score let it be, and I can promise you that they shall be both faster and more powerful for destruction than the *Volante*, as we were going to have called her.

"But by the time we have built these—and with the utmost expedition they will take at least six months to complete, even if we build them simultaneously—we must expect that Renault and his accomplices, with an equal, if not greater, command of money will have been able to build a fleet possibly as strong as this, and therefore, I am afraid, we shall have to prepare ourselves not only to hunt the Anarchists out of the world but to literally fight such battles as have never been fought before.

"In short, I am afraid we must take it that, within the scope of the air-ship's powers, and as soon as she has been properly armed, Renault is virtual master of the world. It seems an extravagant term to use, and yet it must be granted that he is so; and we shall have to fight him for that mastery

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and take it away from him, or be destroyed in the attempt. There is nothing else for it, so far as I can see."

"No, there is nothing else; we must go," said Adams and Ambrose Miller, almost in a breath.

"That's it!" said Wyndham. "I must get well as soon as possible and take the *Nautilus* on the war-path, and then I'll either sink that *Destroyer* or get sunk by her; and as soon as you've got an air-ship for me to command, I'll get into the clouds and bring Monsieur Max to book. I wish to Heaven I was only ready to set out to-morrow."

"All in good time, Bertie, old man," said Sir Harry, rising to his feet with the others. "For the present, you pay all your attention to getting well. We'll do the rest, and when the day of battle comes, we'll see which of us shall make it hottest for those blackguards who have stolen a march on us and on the world at large."

The result of this brief conference was that that evening the colonists of Utopia assembled to the number of about a thousand souls on the beach beside the landing-stages, and heard from Adams' lips the gist of what had already been said in private. Everyone, of reasoning years, was compelled to admit that, mournful as such a step undoubtedly was, there was nothing for it but to forsake their beautiful southern home.

As long as Max Renault remained at liberty and in command of the air-ship there was no chance of safety for anyone in Utopia, and, therefore, they must abandon it. Some day, perhaps, when the peace of the world should be restored, they might return and continue the work that had been so rudely interrupted; but for the present they must forsake it.

But when Adams had done speaking, Sir Harry jumped upon the block of coral upon which he had been standing, and, in a few well-chosen hearty words, claimed the opportunity of making a return for the hospitality he and the company of the *Calypso* had received in Utopia by placing a little seaside town in Yorkshire, which he owned from the foundation to the chimney-pots, at the disposal of all who chose to go and live there as his guests until they found opportunities of settling down again into English homes of their own.

The invitation was accepted in the same spirit in which it was given, and with the next sunrise the Utopians set to work, with heavy hearts, but a settled conviction, that they were doing the best possible for themselves and their children to make all preparations for leaving the island at the earliest possible date.

Of course, the work on the *Nautilus* was pushed on with the utmost speed. Everyone who could give any assistance was set to work, and relays of workers wrought night and day on her and the *Calypso* with such hearty good will that on the tenth day of the new year the *Calypso* was floated out of the dry-dock and, in the presence of all the assembled colonists, Miss Dora put her dainty fingers on the electric button connected with certain mechanism which, set in motion, sent the *Nautilus* gliding down the well-greased ways of the slips, and despatched her with a graceful plunge into the waters of the basin.

By noon the following day everything was ready for the exodus, and the colonists embarked on the three vessels that were to take them back to England. The *Irene*, the two thousand-ton transport steamer which had originally brought them out, and the *Calypso*, which had also been fitted up as a transport, were to go by way of the Panama Canal, the *Irene* carrying the *Mermaid* as a tender. Ambrose Miller went in command of this portion of the expedition, and the *Nautilus*, in charge of Adams and Mr. Austen, and carrying Violet and the Lieutenant, Sir Harry, Doctor Roberts, and Mrs. Merton and Dora, who had undertaken the care of Violet between them, was to go round the Horn in order to avoid the undesirable notice she would be bound to receive in going through the Canal.

Though neither knew it, she actually passed the *Destroyer*, outward bound for Utopia, within ten miles of her, between the island of Trinidad and the coast of South America.

Travelling at an average speed of forty knots an hour the *Nautilus* covered the fifteen thousand odd miles between Utopia and the Straits of Dover in the miraculous time of seventeen days. So far the voyage was eventless. The strange low-lying craft, mastless save for a single signal pole, had crossed the world almost unobserved. The Lieutenant's wound had healed, and he was so much stronger that he took a regular watch every day in the conning-tower to familiarise himself with the working of the vessel, while Violet, though, of course, still almost helpless, had improved wonderfully in both health and general spirits.

They were running quietly and swiftly along through comparatively smooth grey sea, almost due east of the Admiralty Pier, at a distance of about eight miles, in the early night of the 27th, when the first interruption occurred. Without warning the long white blinding ray of a war-ship's searchlight flashed out of the gloom towards the land.

It fell for an instant on the platform of the swiftly-moving *Nautilus*, then came the short flat-toned bang of a blank cartridge, conveying an unmistakeable information to stop. The Lieutenant happened to be in the conning-tower with Adams at the moment. Adams, who was at the wheel, looked at him inquiringly and said:

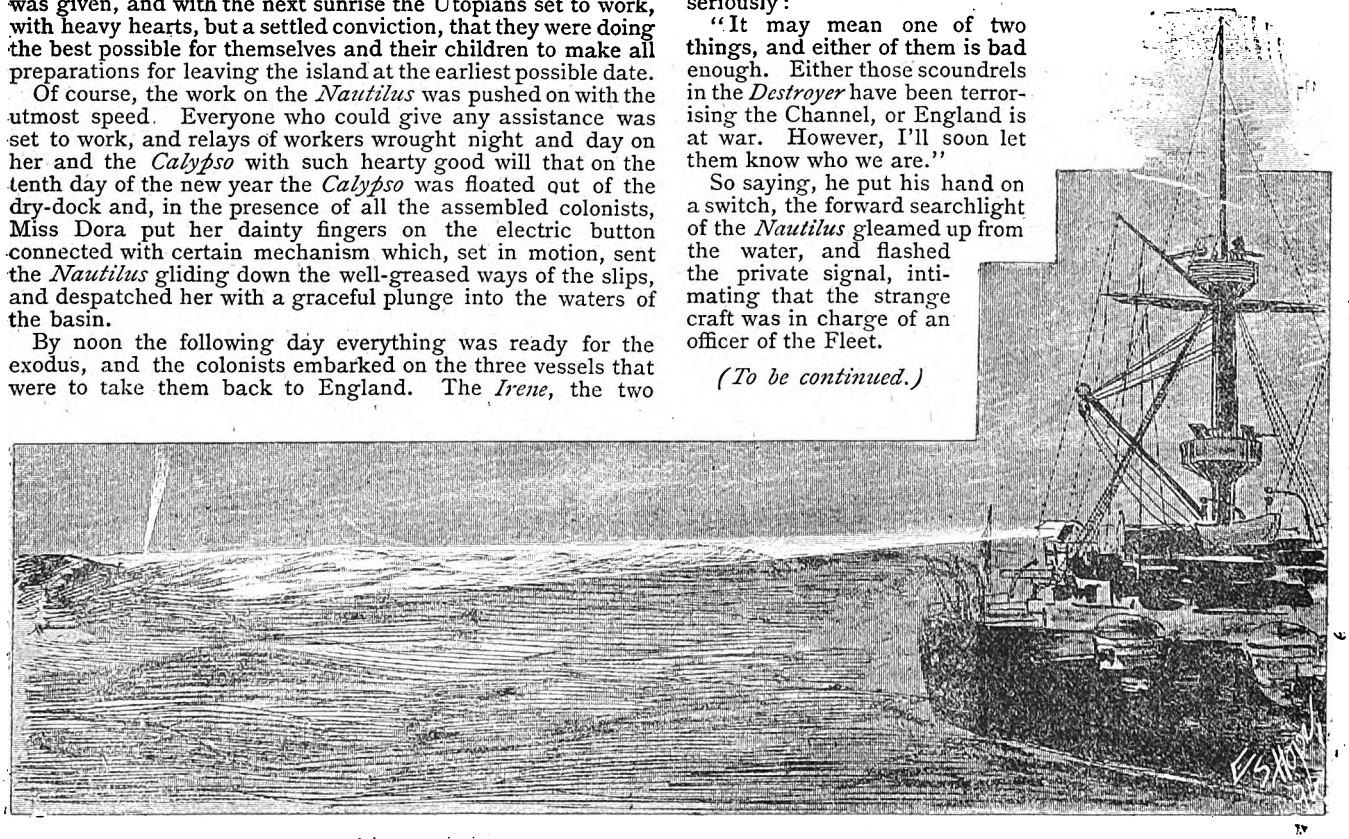
"What does that mean?"

Wyndham was silent for a moment, and then said very seriously:

"It may mean one of two things, and either of them is bad enough. Either those scoundrels in the *Destroyer* have been terrorising the Channel, or England is at war. However, I'll soon let them know who we are."

So saying, he put his hand on a switch, the forward searchlight of the *Nautilus* gleamed up from the water, and flashed the private signal, intimating that the strange craft was in charge of an officer of the Fleet.

(To be continued.)



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Miss Esperanza O'Shea.

It was just on the stroke of nine. The lower balcony of the Casino at Narragansett, the fashionable American watering-place, was crowded, and even on the broad stretch of stone pavement the chairs were so close that the passer-by had to pick his way, politely mindful of women's trains and men's feet. Outside the seawall the ocean lay long and level, part of it paled by moonlight, and here and there on its darker expanse specked with the small, steady lights of anchored yachts. The scene was picturesque—a black arch spanning a moonlit roadway, a gate-tower, dark against the sky, with a round, bright moon shining over its shoulder, a glimmering of white waves seething about broken rocks. From the corner of the balcony, where the musicians sat, floated the strains of Wolfram's "Song to the Evening Star," with its undertone of ineffable, piercing sadness.

It was just at this propitious moment that the crowd at the far end of the balcony became aware that the crowd at the end near the main entrance were enjoying a sensation. There was a rustle of crushed silk as the women moved in their chairs, a universal turning of heads, a raising of girls' lorgnettes, an adjusting of men's glasses, a murmurous intermingling of queries, and then a running fire of comment, not too carefully suppressed—"Well, did you ever! Who are they, for pity's sake? Has she ever been here before? Where are they from? Did you say it was an actress?" And all the heads slowly revolved on the craned necks as all the eyes turned to follow three new arrivals walk down the balcony.

Miss Esperanza O'Shea had often been stared at, but never to this extent. As a Californian, a beauty, and an heiress, she had known what it was to be looked upon with curiosity, admiration, and envy. But she had never before left her native State, hence she had never been subjected to the broad, unwinking stare of the cultured East. Nevertheless she bore it with the impassive *aplomb* of one born and bred in its fierce, bright glare, and, at the head of the family, walked slowly down the long verandah, the little *cortège* trotting at her heels, as it had done, figuratively speaking, ever since she had been old enough to walk at all.

Miss O'Shea invariably led her family in all things. She had done so since her tenderest years. Her papa, a big, florid, grizzled man, in a high grey hat and a loosely hanging grey suit, always obeyed Esperanza. As to her mamma, she was a Mexican, and though she had lived for twenty years under the shadow of the American flag, she had never been able to master the intricacies of the English language, and could, therefore, hardly be expected to guide the steps of her extremely self-confident daughter.

Close upon the musicians Miss O'Shea paused, her darkly circled eyes falling upon three vacant chairs. She indicated them with the gesture of one used to command, and her obedient parents silently seated themselves. Mr. O'Shea took off his hat, ran a fat, short-fingered hand through his grizzled hair, and inhaled the sea-air, then turned his eyes inward and made no sound.

Mrs. O'Shea, whom the lights revealed to be a dark, fat, waistless, formless lady, with ink-black hair and a moustache, the possession of which would have made the heart of an undergraduate sing, indulged in soft Spanish mutterings, and went to sleep with the promptitude of one who knows what is expected of a well-trained Spanish mother. Miss O'Shea alone remained alert and watchful, and gave the crowd stare for stare.

It was not surprising that a crowd should stare at this brilliant young lady. She was made up with an open and unblushing frankness that bespoke ignorance of the popular prejudice against this form of decoration. Rice powder was thick on the bridge of her nose. There was pink on her cheeks, and red on her lips.

Her hair, curled down to her eyebrows, was bleached a bright bronze-red; she was tall and well-formed, with square, broad shoulders and a good figure. Her foot, peeping from the hem of her skirt in a white kid slipper worked with gold, was by no means small. Neither were her hands, but they were white as milk, beautifully shaped and covered with superb rings. As for her dress, it was an indescribably gorgeous creation of white and gold, with a bodice of dead white *suède* braided from neck to waistline in gold arabesques. But neither paint, powder, nor bad dressing could hide that she was handsome and young.

"Where on earth has she come from?" breathed the crowd, with the wide eyes of lively amazement.

Had this query been put directly to Miss O'Shea, she would have answered with unruffled good humour that she had come straight from California for the purpose of "having a good time."

After a serious perusal of the papers, Esperanza O'Shea had come to the conclusion that Narragansett was the best place to go in pursuit of the vaguely specified good time. Moreover, it appeared to be a place where a dazzling wardrobe would meet with an intelligent appreciation. At breakfast one morning Esperanza announced her intention of spending the summer there.

"All right, Espy," said Mr. O'Shea, "I'll telegraph for rooms to-day."

"Si, si," murmured the Señora O'Shea, raising the heavy lids that once shaded the finest eyes in Mexico, and casting a sleepy glance at her daughter; "yez, cettanly, of cos," and then once more she relapsed into smiling somnolence.

The wardrobe did its work at Narragansett, if its work was to make its wearer stared at, talked about, and grudgingly admired. It was certainly a remarkable one. In a place of remarkable wardrobes it made its mark, had its own niche with the other wardrobes, and its share in the day's talk. Miss O'Shea wore it with an impassive front, and greatly enjoyed the sensation it created. As a wardrobe to be stared at it was a brilliant success. On its own ground none of the other wardrobes could compare with it. Arrayed in one of its masterpieces no one was as conspicuous, no one as gorgeous, no one, truth to tell, despite the powder and the paint, was as handsome as Esperanza O'Shea.

But there is admiration and admiration. The unsophisticated Esperanza had not grasped this fact. That the glances and stares of one of the most ill-bred crowds in the country were not all admiring, did not penetrate her simple mind for some time. That people were slow in extending the right hand of fellowship to her, she did feel with a slowly dawning, hurt surprise. It never occurred to her that any one could possibly object to making the acquaintance of a young lady because she had red-gold hair when Nature meant her to have dark brown, or because she plastered her lips with a crimson glue for all the world to see.

But Eastern folks were not very friendly. She announced this with the customary candour of the Californian to a lady who sat next her at table. The lady said: "No, they are not expansive," and then smiled and drifted out of the dining-room, and afterward proved to be one of the least expansive of the people toward whom Esperanza made friendly overtures.

Yes, they were very stiff. She sat in the Casino every evening with her papa and her mamma, and nobody came to talk to her. Up in the tower, with its stone supports black

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against the horizon, the red electric lights showed friendly, cheerful, merry people sitting in groups, and sometimes sipping cool drinks at the little round tables. Their laughter floated down and mingled with the faint washing of the waves on the rocks. They undoubtedly were having a good time.

So were the people on the balcony and the paved terrace, drawn together in little gay, chattering parties, from which the breeze bore scraps of sentences and the light, high laughter of women. Esperanza envied them with the pent-up intensity of her eighteen years. Silent, between her silent parents, she looked at the gay groups round her with her eyes full of a childish and pathetically candid envy.

"Don't seem to me, Espy," said her father suddenly, "as if you were having such a rattling good time."

"Well, not exactly, popper," she said, heaving up a great sigh from the bottom of her pensively covetous heart, "but may be I'll get there later."

The next evening the O'Shea party resolved to try a change, and ascended to the tower. It was even gayer than usual. Groups sat about at the round table, sipping chilled liquids in tall tumblers. A long steam yacht, which had run into port a few hours before, was now only vaguely distinguishable, but its lights pierced the darkness, moving with the moving swells. Its blue-coated, white-trousered yachtmen roamed the Casino, occasionally stopping to greet friends.

At ten o'clock the silent O'Sheas picked up their wraps and departed for their hotel, which was close by the Casino. But as they emerged from that building Esperanza, who had been struggling with her long cloak of white silk, discovered that she had carried away the cape of the lady who had been next her. She remembered having seen it on the chair beside her and recollected throwing her own cloak over it. Calling to her parents to go on, that she had forgotten something and would join them presently, she hurried back to the tower. But the lady and her friends had already gone.

Not finding its owner, Esperanza gave the cape to one of the waiters loitering about, then slowly retraced her steps toward the corridor. There were only a few people now left in the tower and the gallery, and these were mostly couples who had tucked themselves away in corners, and were enjoying murmured conversation. Miss O'Shea, smiling to herself, looked over the road to see if she could catch a glimpse of her parents, then trailed her long skirts of pale blue brocade along the passage to the stair-head.

As she reached this, a quick step on the verandah outside announced the approach of a man. Miss O'Shea dreamily speculated that he must have seen her as she walked down the gallery. With her fingers extended for the balustrade, she turned and saw him enter. He was a tall, handsome man, in the dark blue coat, white duck trousers, and blue-peaked cap of a yachtsman. He wore eyeglasses, and looked somewhere in the vicinity of thirty. His face, as he stood there looking at her, left upon her memory a lasting impression.

Then, as she extended her foot for the first step, he took off his hat and said, smiling:

"How do you do? Isn't it a lovely evening?"

She was startled and made vaguely uncomfortable by this unexpected address. Looking at him in frank astonishment she murmured a hesitating "Yes, lovely," and was about to continue her descent when he drew a step closer and said:

"Don't go back yet. Let's go into the tower and have an *absinthe frappé*."

Miss O'Shea stopped on the step and made no further attempt to descend. The words themselves made little impression on her. In the manner of the man lay the sting. Even Miss O'Shea, with her limited range of experience and her beautiful belief in mankind's invariably chivalrous intention, felt it.

And then she forgot the little—the very little—training she had ever received, forgot what Dr. Watts tells us of our hands not being made for the purpose of tearing out each other's eyes, forgot that the only weapon society allows a lady is her tongue, forgot what society says a lady is indeed, and what it maintains she should always be, and a great wave of fury swept over her. The fiery blood of Indian and Spaniard rushed into her face, the fierce spirit of her Castilian forefathers, who had conquered a world with Cortez, burst once more into life. With the closed fan in her hand she struck the smiling face a stinging blow. The fan-sticks snapped, the bronzed skin beneath them crimsoned. Smothering a furious ejaculation the man threw a hand up over his cheek and eye, and Miss O'Shea, panting and darkly flushed, swept down the stairs.

Then as she hurriedly descended, he, smarting with pain, his anger surging, hurled himself on the balustrade and looked over at her. All he saw was the top of her red-gold head, the wavering pulse of diamonds that trembled through her hair, the long sweep of her pale-blue dress, the ivory nape of her neck where the pearl necklace fastened with a sapphire clasp. The next moment she had passed out of sight, and he heard her rapid, decisive step on the balcony below.

He turned back, intending to watch her from the upper verandah, but in the doorway met a friend who accosted him with a jocular:

"Hullo, Beverwyk, what have you been running into?"

"Oh! I turned suddenly to look at that woman just go down the stairs and ran into that door; thought both doors were open—hurts like the dickens," returned the other glibly.

And arm-in-arm they passed down the verandah, talking together and laughing.

When Miss O'Shea got back to her hotel her breath had regained its usual evenness; her colour had gone down, but her eyes were brilliant under their lowered lids. Her father sat in the darkened sitting-room in his shirt-sleeves with his high hat on—his habitual costume when at ease in the house. When she came in, tossed her cloak on a chair, and stood silently pulling off her gloves, he regarded her for a moment or two, then said, as if the idea had just struck him:

"Where've you been all this time?"

"Oh, I just went back to return that lady's cape. I gave it to a waiter. It was all right." She tore off her gloves, and stretched and bent her plump fingers, turning round her rings.

"Look here, pop," she said, twisting the "marquise" on her little finger back into place, "I guess we'd better leave this place."

"Well, I think so, too," said the old man mildly. "Guess you don't like it much, Espy?"

"I don't belong here," she said with a sort of rough shyness. "I'm different."

The old man extended his hand and drew her up to him.

"You'll do," he said, fondly patting the velvety hand.

"May be I will for you," she answered with the same air of dogged embarrassment, "but I'm too different. It's not comfortable."

Whether Mr. O'Shea understood or not he queried no further. He patted the smooth hand in silence, then he said:

"Well—what do you want to do?"

"I want to go to Europe for a long time—a year. I want to know things. I don't want to be so different."

"Well, now, Espy," said the old man deprecatingly; then, as two soft arms went round his neck, he added: "But you can go if you want."

Two weeks later the O'Shea family sailed from New York on the *Umbria*.

Once arrived in the effete monarchies Miss Esperanza O'Shea went seriously, if a little blindly, to work to reconstruct herself. She went to school in Paris and stayed there all the winter, studying hard. Her companions showed no surprise at her presence. They had heard that she was an American from California, which in the effete monarchies explains many things.

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In their refining society Miss O'Shea was gradually restored to her original self. Her red-gold locks went through as many changes as the dying dolphin, but at length arrived safely on the homeward path to the deep dark-brown of nature. She put away all the little pots of red and white that had made her dressing-table look like that of an old belle who dies hard. A very demure phœnix began to rise from the ashes of the once gorgeous Esperanza O'Shea.

With the native shrewdness of the women of the West who make their own positions and fight their own fortunes she was quick to see and adopt the style and manners of the young girls about her. By the spring the elaborate beauty who had created a sensation at the Narragansett Casino had passed from phase to phase of subduing process, and, compared to her old self, was as a wren to a peacock.

Instead of looking like a woman of thirty she now looked what she was—a girl of twenty—a tall, ivory-pale, velvet-eyed girl, with thick coils of smooth uncurled, dark hair, and a stately carriage, such as romance-writers are fond of ascribing to princesses. The Parisians thought her very foreign and picturesque. She looked like Doña Sol or Elvira. All she wanted was the dusky droop of the mantilla shadowing the warm pallor of her cheeks, a black curl on her temple, a red rose in her hair.

The elaborating process did not finish at Paris. Miss O'Shea took her family and a governess travelling. They "did" Europe, with couriers and libraries of books of travel, and a governess, who in some embarrassment called herself "a companion." They studied art in Italy, and music in Germany. The governess was almost worked to death, but the pupil, insatiable in her desire to be as ornate as the young person of any place or any country, would permit no respite. They met a good many people, too. Miss O'Shea began to be spoken of as the great beauty and heiress of the American colonies of different capitals.

A tall, ivory pale, velvet-eyed girl.

French noblemen whom she had never seen wrote to her offering her their hearts, hands, and coronets. English noblemen followed her about, meditating proposals, but German noblemen generally proposed to her on the first meeting. Before her return to New York, after a three years' absence, her coming was heralded with a flourish of newspaper trumpets that crowded into small type in an obscure corner the arrival of Herr Glumberg, the most eminent of German anthropologists, who crossed in the same steamer.

As the immortal Begum would say, the O'Sheas were "took up" in New York. That metropolis is always glad to know any one who has met with the approval of the effete monarchies. It had heard of the foreign nobleman, and it immediately proceeded to light its taper before the same shrine.

Miss O'Shea was pronounced a very wonderful young woman, perfect in her style, *distinguée*, singularly simple, sweet and fine and true. Such a dazzling creature had never before come out of the West. She knew everything, spoke half a dozen languages, played on musical instruments—rumour wasn't sure that she didn't play two at the same time Her parents came in for a little of the general approbation.

Society characterised Mrs. O'Shea as a most cultivated woman, and when she fell asleep before its eyes said that "her manner was marked by a truly Southern repose."

But the crown of the O'Sheas' glory was reached when it became evident that Beverwyk Van Duyvil had succumbed to the charms of the beautiful Esperanza. To understand what this really meant one ought to know that Beverwyk Dan Duyvil was the last of the Dan Duyvils—that illustrious family which, tradition says, was one of the few families that before settling in New Amsterdam enjoyed distinction in the mother country. The Van Duyvils had never been butchers or bakers, or even shoemakers. There was, therefore, nothing left for them to be but gentlemen of leisure or governors.

The last representative of this honourable race was very rich, very much of a person, not a cotillon-leader or a ball-organiser, but a man of parts and position. And now he sighed at a pair of Californian feet that had once run brown and bare on the dusty by-roads about Merced.

Even old O'Shea was flattered in his pride. His sturdy democratic heart could not subdue a throb of vanity when he thought that the sole survivor of the house of O'Shea—recently discovered to be descended from the kings of Waterford—should mate with the last representative of the house of Van Duyvil. The only person who remained haughtily indifferent was the young lady herself. She was distant and cold to her suitor, rarely spoke of him, made excuses not to see him, was out when he called. It would not have been strange if Beverwyk Van Duyvil had felt discouraged by the attitude of his lady fair.

But to be a Van Duyvil means more things than to be merely great and illustrious. It means to possess a self-confidence that earthquakes cannot shake. That the young lady was cold and unresponsive proved to Beverwyk Van Duyvil that she was a trifle more original than the scions of the first families whom he had heretofore honoured with his regard. It was meet that a future Van Duyvil should hold herself high.

When he finally asked her to marry him this most difficult task was accomplished with truly graceful tact and admirable manner. Beverwyk Dan Duyvil proposed, as he did everything else, with perfectly finished grace. It must be admitted that, of the two, the descendant of the lordly Dutchman was more self-possessed and agreeable than the descendant of the Milesian kings.

Miss Esperanza O'Shea received the flattering offer in ungracious and frowning silence which may be peculiar to kings but is not accounted charming in beautiful young Californians. Then, as Van Duyvil attempted to take her hand and press it gently between his own, she abruptly withdrew the member, and fixing on him a pair of darkly angry eyes, said: "I will send you your answer to-morrow." And without waiting for him to reply, she rose and walked away, not looking back, leaving him to follow with his eyes her graceful figure as she passed down the long room, and to sit silent, absently drawing his gloves through his hand in pleasing meditations.

The next afternoon, when Beverwyk arrived from down-town in his apartments, he found a package awaiting him. It was long and narrow, wrapped in paper, and directed in the small round hand of Miss O'Shea. He opened it, puzzled. From the unrolled paper dropped a fan of pale blue-painted gauze, with four of its sticks snapped in two. Round the broken sticks was twisted a piece of paper, on which was written:

"For the second time Mr. Van Duyvil has made a mistake.
ESPERANZA O'SHEA."

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THE MAIDEN'S THREE GIFTS

A POOR woman gave birth to a daughter.

On the third day after its birth three fairies came to visit the mother, and seeing how beautiful the infant was, they promised it three good gifts.

The first fairy, touching it with her golden wand, said: "The day that she is twelve years old a rose shall fall from her mouth every time she laughs."

The second fairy then touched it with her golden wand: "The day that she is twelve years old," she said, "every time she weeps pearls shall fall from her eyes."

And lastly the third fairy with her golden wand also touched her, saying: "Before your eighteenth year has passed a prince shall marry you, and you shall become a princess."

The mother listened to all these promises and her heart rejoiced exceedingly. She was very poor, but she brought up her daughter as well as she could until she was twelve years of age. The evening of the day on which she completed her twelfth year the girl laughed right out with joy at something which her mother had said and immediately the first rose fell from her lips, and when the mother saw it she remembered all the fairies had promised, and her motherly heart rejoiced, for she said, "If one promise be fulfilled the others will surely follow in their turn."

It was winter, and the queen was going to give a great ball at the palace. She had a beautiful gown and it was rose colour, so she wanted to have some real roses on her head and at her breast to wear with it. She therefore ordered the royal gardener to bring her some, but he said that so much snow had fallen that all the roses were spoilt, and that he could not find even one. The queen was very angry at this, and told him straightway that she did not believe him, but that he preferred to leave them to perish in the royal garden, adding that she should go and seek for herself another gardener and dismiss him forthwith.

The poor gardener sighed upon hearing this, and went to look at every garden far and near to see if he could possibly find any roses, but he found none. In the course of his wanderings he happened to pass by the cottage in which dwelt the poor woman and her daughter.

The gardener was so bewildered by his anxiety that he did not see where he was going, and never observing a stone that was lying before the cottage, he stumbled over it and fell down. There was something comical in the way in which he fell, for he did not hurt himself, but his *fez* rolled off his head into the mud.

The girl, who was looking out of the window, could not help laughing when she saw the gardener fall, and down dropped a rose from her mouth and fell into the road right in front of the gardener. When she saw what had occurred she felt a little bit ashamed, and drew back to hide herself, but the gardener, as soon as he saw it, never stayed to pick up his *fez* but ran quickly to seize the rose. He could not believe his own eyes. How did it come there? Perhaps it was done by magic. Anyhow, it was a real and beautiful rose, and smelt better than those of April; but one rose was of no use to the queen. He must have ten, and where could he find the others?

So without any more ado he knocked at the door, which the mother immediately opened, "Well, my good man, what do you want?" she asked.

And then he told her all about the queen and the ball, and how he had suddenly found a rose outside her house, when he was almost in a state of despair. After the mother heard all this, she said: "Take this one then, and go to the queen, and tell her that there is only one rose tree which is able to produce such roses, and that on the day of the ball I will cut some and take her as many as she desires."

When the day of the ball arrived the queen ordered the gardener to fetch both the woman and the roses, and about noon the mother arrived at the palace, bringing with her a covered basket, and, after she had saluted her Majesty, she uncovered it and presented the roses to her.

"Madam," said the queen, "I have a favour to ask of you. Sell me the rose tree which bears these roses."

But the mother answered, "Much honoured queen, I cannot do this with my rose tree. I cannot sell it. Only one thing I can do if you are willing. You have a prince, and I will bestow it on the prince, to have it for his own, and to keep it honoured and loved as if it were a living princess."

"Your wish shall be granted, madam, so that we may only have the rose tree in the palace; and you may come with it, and live near us also."

"May God grant you a long life, my queen. Come by yourself to-morrow, and take away the rose tree from my house."

The next morning the queen lost no time before going to secure the rose tree. When the prince heard of the agreement which his mother had made with the woman he jumped for joy and got a golden vase ready in the palace in which the rose tree was to be planted. The queen and prince went together in a golden chariot and, stopping before the humble cottage where the mother dwelt, they alighted.

As soon as the mother and daughter went out to receive the royal visitors the daughter, as she bent down to kiss the queen's hand, smiled merely from a grateful feeling, and a rose fell from her mouth.

At one and the same moment the queen and the prince understood it all. The queen became very angry because she remembered directly that she was bound by her oath to receive the girl as a daughter-in-law. She turned, however, to look at her again, when she saw that the girl was really so very beautiful and so very good that without a moment's longer reserve she threw her arms around her, saying aloud as she kissed her, "You are a poor girl no longer, but a princess henceforth. You shall come and live in our palace, you and your mother also."

"Now that it has all turned out exactly as you wished it," she added, addressing the mother, "tell me, lady co-mother-in-law, how your daughter acquired so great a charm as to shower roses from her mouth whenever she laughs."

The mother immediately told her all about the fairies and their three promised gifts to her daughter when she was an infant and how the first and the last promise had both come true.

"The second has not taken place, then," said the queen with some curiosity; "how was it that did not happen? for poor as you were, had pearls fallen from her eyes you could have sold them."

"That did not happen," answered the mother, "because I never made her weep. I sought only to see her happy and smiling, preferring to live poor in my daughter's gladness than to become rich by her grief."

When the queen heard these words she embraced and kissed her, saying, "You have indeed been a good mother, and it is an honour to a queen to become connected with you."

The girl, who had listened to all that her mother had said, was now so overcome by emotion that her eyes filled with tears and two large pearls rolled down. The prince stooped to pick them up.

"These are not tears of sorrow," he said; "they are tears of joy. I will take them and have them made into earrings and you shall wear them on the day on which you become my princess."

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WHAT AILED THE FIRE?

The cool weather of autumn was come. After sunset there was really a frosty feel in the air. "We had better make up a little fire in the grate to-night," said my wife; "it's chilly sitting here without." "Yes," said I, "let us make the fire now." So I went at it, putting on plenty of dry wood and coals enough to light up nicely. But it was no use—the fire wouldn't burn. It would just spit and sputter and make a smudge fit to put your eyes out. We gave it up and went to bed early. Next morning I investigated and found the chimney nearly closed with swallows' nests. The wood was right, the coal was right, but the draught wasn't. I evicted the swallows, and cleared away their habitations. Result: Next night a good fire and pure air. Dear me! such a simple thing is hardly worth telling, is it?

Perhaps not, but here is our friend, Mr. Joseph Smith, who talks like this: "*I had no relish for my meals*," he says. Now, why not? The meals were good, he had time to eat, he needed the refreshment food would give him; but all the same he hesitated as though meat, potatoes, tarts, &c., were things to look out for and guard against. This was not his habit; not at all. He and his meals had always been on the best of terms until September, 1891. Then they fell out. He speaks of it thus: "I took a chill in harvest time, and seemed to lose all power and energy. I couldn't imagine what had come over me. There was a bad, coppery taste in my mouth, and what little I did eat gave me pain at the chest and side. I was constantly spitting up a sour fluid and belching wind. After a while my breath got short, and I was so weak I could scarcely walk across the floor. In a few weeks I lost nearly two stone in weight. I consulted two doctors, but was none the better for the medicines they gave me. They didn't appear to know what ailed me. One of them said, 'The sooner you get into the infirmary the better.'

"On the strength of this I obtained a recommendation, and in November, 1891, I went to the Lincoln Infirmary. After being there seven weeks I returned home as bad as ever. But I am glad I went to Lincoln, nevertheless, for there I met a friend who advised me to give up taking drugs and doctors' stuff and, instead, to try Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. I got a bottle from Mr. Sharp, the chemist, and in a few days I had some appetite, my food agreed with me, and my breathing was easier. After that I went straight ahead, gradually getting stronger and stronger, and all the credit of my recovery is due to Siegel's Syrup. If you think fit you are at liberty to publish the facts in my case. Yours truly, (Signed) Joseph Smith, Rectory Street, Epworth, *via* Doncaster, December 23rd, 1892."

Mr. Sharp, the chemist named by Mr. Smith, remembers the latter's illness, and can vouch for the accuracy of his statement.

After having read our friend's plain and clearhcaded letter, we need hardly ask again why he had no relish for his meals. The reason is the stomach, afflicted with indigestion and dyspepsia, sore, torpid, and inflamed, was in no condition to handle food. The more it received, the worse off it was. It was like our fire under the choked chimney—the more coals the more smoke and smudge. So the oppressed stomach sent up word to the palate, "Don't give me any more material to work on; I can do nothing with it." On this the palate spoiled its owner's appetite (in his own interest), and waited for help.

The help came, finally, in the form of Mother's Seigel's Curative Syrup, which put the digestive machine in order again. Then the stomach telegraphed to the palate, "Turn on the appetite and send down the food; am now in shape to attend to business."

As to Mr. Smith's chill in the harvest field, that came because his blood was poisoned by the indigestion, not from cold. People often freeze to death without a sign of what we call a "chill." Fires don't go out because the weather is cold.

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ONCE BOUGHT, ALWAYS BOUGHT.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 310.] FOR WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 8, 1894. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

IF YOU INTEND TO BUY

Buy New Carpets at the Price of Old.

It would be ridiculous to buy old carpets, old designs, shop-worn, out-of-date goods, when you can purchase a stylish GENUINE, WOVEN, REVERSIBLE TRIUMPH CARPET suitable for Drawing-room, Dining-room, Bedroom, etc., for

4/- Each. **4s. Postal Order or 50 Stamps,** **4/- Each.**

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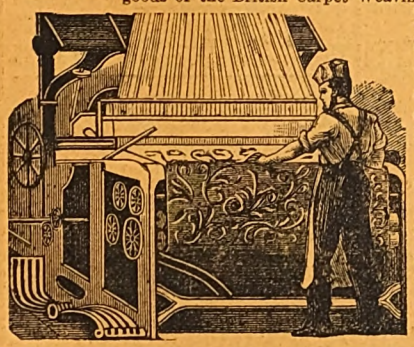

With every carpet we shall supply a very handsome Rug to match, for 1s. 3d. extra.

SPECIAL OFFER—Two Carpets and Two Rugs for 9s. 6d.; Four Carpets and Four Rugs for 18s.; Eight Carpets and Eight Rugs for 35s.

Money willingly returned if not approved.

The *Queen* says: "Decidedly stouter and handsomer than any of the kind, the price being the astounding part of the matter." *Schoolmistress:* "For style, durability, and cheapness they cannot be beaten." *Penny Illustrated Paper:* "Manufactured in every variety of colour, and is one of the most surprising bargains I have seen." *Church Bells:* "Truly wonderful value."

Hundreds of unsolicited testimonials are being received from delighted purchasers who have had these carpets in use for years.

Stafford Road Post Office, Wolverhampton. M. A. Dudley, writes:—"Having purchased two of your Carpets between three and four years ago, I am thoroughly satisfied, and have recommended them to several people, who I know have tried them, and are equally satisfied."

65, Abbey Street, Nuneaton, Warwickshire. "Mrs. Bostock will thank the British Carpet Weaving Co. to send her one of their Carpets, for which she encloses postal order. She has had one of these Carpets in constant wear for some years now, and finds it the best wearing and cheapest carpet she can get."

Do not miss this opportunity, it may not occur again.

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On receipt of this order form, and Postal Order or stamps, we guarantee to send any goods, as above, to your address in any part of the United Kingdom. Money returned if not approved.
(Signed) THE BRITISH CARPET WEAVING CO.

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SOLD EVERYWHERE IN BOTTLES AT 1/1½, 2/9, AND 11/- EACH.
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SAMPLES FREE ON RECEIPT OF POST CARD.

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BLUSHING

permanently cured. A pamphlet giving sound practical advice, and full particulars of a successful treatment for a rapid, simple, and inexpensive home-cure, forwarded free to all upon receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—Prof. F. W. Holt, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London. (Mention this paper.)

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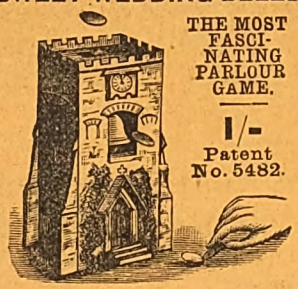

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For the most obstinate cases. Will not injure the most delicate. Price 7s. 6d. (Strongest, 11s. per bottle); post free, 6d. extra. Herbal Institute, 1a, Hackney Road (opposite Shoreditch Church), London, N.E. Send at once stamped directed envelope for particulars and proofs. I will forfeit £100 for every testimonial that is not genuine, and they can be seen at any time.

Sold also by all Chemists.

£2 WEEKLY UPWARDS may be HONESTLY REALISED by persons of EITHER SEX, without hindrance to present occupation.

For Samples (returnable), &c., enclose addressed envelope to EVANS, WATTS & Co. (P 228), Merchants, Birmingham.—*This is genuine.*

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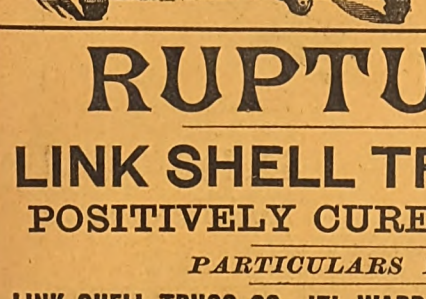
ONLY 4/- MONTHLY.



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permanently and absolutely by an entirely new and harmless self-treatment. Total destruction guaranteed. This marvellous remedy has never yet failed. Pamphlet, giving full particulars, sent on receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—Prof. F. W. Holt, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London. (Mention this paper.)

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A lady who has permanently destroyed Superfluous Hairs on herself, will be happy to forward free, to all similarly afflicted, full particulars of a simple, inexpensive and harmless self-treatment. Send stamped addressed envelope in confidence to Mrs. "T. S.," 87, Strand, London. Mention Short Stories.

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TO LADIES
Especially to those who wish to know of a safe, certain, and speedy remedy for all irregularities and obstructions, a remedy which, under the most trying circumstances and in the most difficult and
OBSTINATE CASES,
NEVER FAILS TO AFFORD
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No case hopeless, failure is simply impossible, as Mrs. Snow, of Denmark Hill, Camberwell, writes:—
"By adopting your treatment my anxiety and misery was over within twenty-four hours, although I had been daily taking pills and other things in vain. Half the quantity you sent proved effective, to my intense joy and surprise.
A sworn guarantee is enclosed with all testimonials and medicine, which is inexpensive, as one bottle at 4s. 6d. (by post, 4s. 9d.) is usually sufficient for any case.
Full particulars will be gladly forwarded to any lady on receipt of addressed envelope.
Write privately to—
Mrs. P. S. S.,
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TOWLE'S PENNYROYAL & STEEL PILLS

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QUICKLY CORRECT ALL IRREGULARITIES, REMOVE ALL OBSTRUCTIONS and RELIEVE the distressing SYMPTOMS so prevalent with the sex. Boxes 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. (the latter size contains three times the quantity), of all Chemists, or will be sent anywhere on receipt of 15 or 34 stamps, by the maker,

E. T. TOWLE, Chemist, NOTTINGHAM.
Beware of Imitations injurious and worthless.

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Collins' Marvellous Female Remedy.

Mr. COLLINS (who was 30 years a member of the Royal College of Surgeons of England), will forward free of Charge, full PARTICULARS of a REMEDY, which during an extensive practice both at home and in the Colonies, he has never known to fail in the most OBSTINATE CASES of OBSTRUCTION and IRREGULARITIES. Send addressed envelope for full particulars, and waste no more time and money on useless Pills and so-called Remedies, &c., which, in the majority of cases, are nothing but PURGATIVES, and cause SICKNESS, PROSTRATION, and PAIN, without having the desired effect.

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POSITIVELY CURES.—Vide *Lancet.*

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RUPTURE.

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 310.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 8, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

My Cousin from the Bush

(This Story has been written up from the plot which secured the Prize in the recent Plot Competition.)

"RANDON GRANGE, SEDLEY,
"*August 25th*, 1892.

"MY DEAR FRANK,—I don't suppose there is any necessity for me or anyone else, to remind you you are due here on the 1st, and so I don't write this with that object, but simply to put the circumstances under which you are about to visit us plainly before you, so that there may be no mistakes or misunderstandings which might lead to unpleasantness and heartburnings hereafter. You know already that my niece and ward, and your cousin, Violet Lennox, has come back from Australia an orphan, and fairly well provided with pin-money, but not by any means rich or even what I daresay you would call well off; by this I mean to say that, matrimonially speaking, she is not a catch in the pecuniary light in which the business is looked at nowadays. As for herself, as I have told you already, she is a very pretty girl, well brought up, and well educated; in fact a girl that would do credit to any man's home. Having said this much I must now tell you of a rather curious provision in my father's will which puts me into an equally curious position with regard to this young lady. He left the Grange property and the bulk of his fortune to me as the elder son subject to two conditions. I was to pay my brother Tom an income of £800 a year out of the estate during his life or mine, and if I died childless, and he had children, the property was to go to his eldest child, who was to be my ward. This is why I have not been able to do as, if I had been a free agent, I should have done—make you my heir. I have left you what I could and that with the income which you are earning by your own talents and industry will, I think, make you pretty comfortable when I am gone.

"Now as I can't leave the property to you, and as the idea of any man not belonging to the old stock some day reigning over it is absolutely hateful to me, there is only one other way of getting out of the difficulty and keeping the property in the family: you must come down here and devote yourself seriously to the task of falling in love with your cousin, and bringing her in the same state of mind with regard to yourself. If you can do that everything will go well and as merrily as the marriage-bells which I hope to hear ringing for you at Randon before I die. I say 'must,' but, of course, my dear boy, you understand what that means, and also what I mean by writing this way to you. If you have already made your choice, or if there are any other reasons that make it impossible for you to fall in with my wishes, you have only to say so, and my little scheme must fall to the ground. I don't want you to make any mere marriage of convenience for my sake, so if you can't come heart-whole and prepared to fall in love on such provocation as Miss Violet may be pleased to give you, say so without hesitation, and either come as if you were paying an ordinary visit or put your visit off just as seems best to you; but, remember, whichever, course you take, I am always,

"Your affectionate uncle,
"PERCIVAL LENNOX.

"P.S.—The partridges are in splendid form and promising abundance, so if you do come you will have plenty of work for your gun."

This was the letter that I found waiting for me at my rooms in town on my return from a month's cruise in a friend's yacht round the Channel Islands and the coast of Brittany. To say the very least of it, it was an interesting communication for a man rising twenty-seven to receive from one of the best old uncle's that ever was blessed with a nephew.

To make one or two points rather more clear, I ought to say that I am the son of old Sir Percival's only sister who was disinherited by her father, whose fine old crusted Toryism had been irrevocably outraged by her marrying a clever and good-looking young civil engineer, instead of a brother baronet old enough to be her father who owned many broad acres in Blankshire adjoining the Lennox estate. It was for this reason that old Sir Ralph had so arranged matters in his will that the bulk of the fortune and the estate, which was unentailed, should be removed as far as possible from my mother and her childen.

I had followed in my father's professional footsteps, and thanks to his excellent training and the connection I inherited from him, I was quite independent of the Lennox estate even without the £500 a year which Sir Percival had allowed me since I came of age and which, as he had told me, he had secured to me by will out of the property that he had inherited from his mother. This was all he could do to repair the

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A slight, graceful figure seated on the driving-seat.

injustice which his father had done in his will. But now he evidently considered that the Fates had given him an opportunity of going into partnership with them, and playing the rôle of fairy godfather, by bringing the ill-natured intentions of his crusty old father to naught without doing injustice to anyone.

As for me, heart-whole and fancy free as I was, neither better nor worse than the average man of my class, the prospect, if a trifle out of the common was, I must confess, by no means an unpleasant one, and if any vague ideas about sacrificing myself and my bachelor freedom for the good of the old family, and the satisfaction of the best of uncles, flitted through my mind, the gentle glow of virtue to which they gave rise was made still more pleasant by the brief but satisfactory description that Sir Percival's letter gave of my unknown cousin from Australia.

I admit, also, that the eyes of an exceedingly virtuous person, who had never been subjected to the same temptation, might have seen a mercenary element in the intentions of a man deliberately making up his mind to, if possible, fall in love with a pretty cousin who had it in her power to make him master of a fine old estate which had been in his family for thirteen or fourteen generations. Possibly, too, if I had been the hero of a penny novelette, I should either have been already devoted to a fair and virtuous milliner's assistant, who was the sole support of her widowed mother and crippled sister, or else I should have replied to my good old uncle's letter in a strain of lofty and quite unnatural disinterestedness, and told him that not even broad acres or a pretty cousin, nor yet even both combined, could unbend that stiff-necked rectitude to which the mere suspicion of a marriage of convenience was utterly abhorrent.

As it was, being just an average professional man, whom his associates were wont to call somewhat hard-headed, I found the prospect by no means unpleasant. If my pretty cousin was as heart-whole as I was, then, other things being equal, I hadn't the slightest objection to getting into a suitable frame of mind for meeting the fate which was coming to me in such a pleasant guise. I didn't even wait to write. I just sat down and smoked one pipe over the letter, and then wired to Sir Percival—"Expect me thirty-first. Hope to be able to meet your wishes." And so the die was cast.

I concluded, of course, that Violet herself—I got to call her Violet in my soliloquies within five minutes after sending the telegram—would be in a state of blissful ignorance of the trap that was being so cunningly and so amiably laid for her unwary footsteps. This added a delightful element of uncertainty and almost of romance to the situation. Granted that I went down to Randon ready to melt into that mentally flaccid condition known as being in love at her first smile, would she believe that I had fallen in love at first sight, or only think that I was making a fool of myself?

If I was too precipitate she might think that I was just making use of her for purposes of amusement; if I was too tardy, Sir Percival might think I was playing him false, and then, worse than all, there was the danger that I might go and see and be conquered in all honesty of purpose, while she might enjoy the fun of bringing me to her feet only to tell me in the end that she could never be anything more to me than a cousin. Evidently the situation that I was about to face was one in which it behoved me to walk with wary feet and with open eyes. Although I have only the average allowance of sentiment, I am not ashamed to admit that I dreamt of her every night, and that my dreams invested her with such a pleasant personality that as the train slowed down to run into the little station at Randon, my usually well-regulated heart was actually beating fourteen and fifteen to the dozen. One of my uncle's men was on the platform and came forward to open the door, touching his hat as the train stopped.

"Morning, sir!" he said as I alighted. "Glad to see you again, sir. Sir Percival's compliments, and he hopes you'll excuse him coming down to meet you as his foot's been giving him a bit of trouble lately and he's saving himself up for to-morrow. Miss Violet's drove over for you in the dog-cart and the bay mare. Rare whip she is, too, sir. Drives as if she'd been born to it. Learnt it in *Horse*tralia, I suppose."

"Very probably, Thomson," I said rather jerkily. "How long have you been thinking of that joke?"

"Joke, sir? No, sir—fact I can assure you," replied the worthy Thomson with a stolidly puzzled look on his well-trained features. "Young lady drives uncommon well. Might have been born with ribbons in her hand."

"Might she, really!" I said, looking rather anxiously to where the well-known dog-cart and bay mare stood on the other side of the low, white palings. "Well, then, take my Gladstone and tell them to send the rest of the luggage up and I'll go and introduce myself."

I believe I did introduce myself in something like proper form, but all I remember of the ceremony is a vision of a slight, graceful figure seated on the driving-seat, a pair of soft laughing brown eyes looking down from under a broad-brimmed and pleasantly unfashionable hat, and the firm clasp of a strong little hand gloved to perfection. It was about two miles and a half to the Grange and I remember that we got there in an absurdly short space of time. Dear old Sir Percival met us on the doorstep, and when Violet disappeared to take off her hat he took me into the breakfast-room and, putting his hand on my shoulder, looked inquiringly at me and said:

"Well, my boy, you are looking very well, but a trifle flushed. It isn't very hot out of doors, is it?"

"Oh, no; it's cool enough," I said laughing, perhaps a trifle nervously; "but the fact of it is I'm afraid I'm in for an attack of heart disease, and that affects the circulation you know."

"Eh? What? Heart disease! Hang it all, my boy, you don't mean that, surely? Eh? Oh, you young rascal, that's it, is it? You caught it between here and the station, did you? Well, I can't say I hope you'll get better. In fact, I tell you plainly I shall be disappointed if you don't get worse. But, come now, frankly, what do you think of her?"

"I haven't thought at all yet, uncle. She hasn't given me time to. It really seems quite too good to be true—that is, of course, if she——"

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"Ah, yes, of course," interrupted the old gentleman. "That's the unknown quantity you've got to find out. As far as I have been able to see, there is no one else in the question, so you've got a clear course before you. You're riding to win, and you must make the running. But now is there anything you want to ask me before the campaign begins?"

"It has begun," I said, in so serious a voice that I laughed at myself the next minute, "and the first shot has gone very much home; but I should like to know whether or not Miss Lennox has any idea, well, that my visit here has any other object than the slaughter of partridges."

"Certainly not," said Sir Percival. "I'm rather too old a hand to scare the game in that way. Violet knew that she had a cousin who comes here to shoot every year, and that you were coming this year. And that's all she knew. I have carefully refrained singing your praises or doing anything that might prejudice her against you, and from her conversation I shouldn't even think that her poor father had told her anything very definite about her actual position here. She knows, of course, that she is my ward, and as such has expectations, but I think that's all, so if the conspiracy isn't a brilliant success I'm afraid you'll have nobody but yourself to thank for it."

"There shall be no failure if I can help it, I can tell you," I replied. "Quite apart from external reasons, for if she hadn't a penny in the world I should consider myself a fool not to try and win her now I've seen her."

"A very satisfactory sentiment," said Sir Percival with a chuckle, "especially as matters stand. Now be off and wash your hands and shake down into your room. Lunch will be ready in half an hour."

There is not the slightest necessity for me to dwell on the various stages by which I reached the point I knew I was destined for, as soon as I had set eyes on the fair face of my cousin Violet; nor yet need I expatiate, as I could very easily do, on the mental and physical charms which so speedily reduced me to a state of helpless, but by no means unpleasant slavery. I went to bed the first night with aggravated symptoms, and I got up worse, and naturally the longer the aggravating cause continued to act the more serious became the symptoms of the malady which was its effect.

What made matters still more serious for me was the fact that for the life of me I couldn't tell whether or not there was any chance of the only possible cure being applied. Violet was as tantalising as she was delightful; two qualities by no means infrequently found in a girl who is at once very pretty and very "nice," and knows it. She was everything that was pleasant and kind and cousinly, but after I had been living under the same roof with her for a fortnight, I was forced to confess to Sir Percival that I had not the slightest reason to believe myself in any degree favoured beyond other men.

Professional matters, meanwhile, made my return to town necessary, and I had to say good-bye to Violet until Christmas. The night before my departure Sir Percival managed to arrange matters so that Violet and I were the sole occupants of the drawing-room just after dinner.

I felt that my time had come. Unless I was to make a complete fool of myself and grievously disappoint my excellent old uncle, I must say something, and that to the point. Not a formal declaration and proposal, for to do that after only a fortnight's acquaintance would be to give my beloved the enemy a loophole of escape which I didn't propose to leave open, and so, taking advantage, with what skill my inward agitation permitted, of a somewhat formal expression of regret at my departure, and a hope that we should meet again at Christmas, I screwed my courage up to the sticking point and told her in so many words that my coming depended entirely upon the kind of welcome I might expect from her. Of course, she saw my meaning at a glance, and you may imagine my feelings when I saw just the faintest perceptible flush creep up into her bonny cheeks and heard her say:—

"Glad to see you again? Yes, of course I shall be! Perhaps even just a tiny bit more glad than I was to see you this time. Now if you don't mind we'll change the subject till——"

"Till Christmas," I said, looking her in the eyes and holding out my hand.

Her eyes dropped suddenly, and I felt her hand tremble ever so little as she put it into mine. I never made so great an effort in my life as I did then to keep from picking her up in my arms and kissing her, and taking all the rest for granted, and if I had known how long the three months or so between then and Christmas were going to be I believe I should have done so, and risked the consequences.

However, Christmas came in due course, and my welcome was so far satisfactory that I felt pretty certain I should go back to town a doomed man; in fact, I determined to let the shortest interval compatible with decency elapse before making finally certain of my fate. Still the course of true love never does run quite smooth, although one would have thought that in our case every possible precaution had been taken to make it do so.

One night two or three days after my arrival I happened to be coming back from a lonely stroll in the park, a stroll which I had, in fact, taken for the sole purpose of arranging with myself the time, place, and terms of the declaration that was to finally settle my fate, when I happened to glance in through the window of the dining-room. The lights were lit and the table was laid, but the blinds had not been drawn down, and so I could see everything in the room distinctly.

I stopped for a moment admiring the contrast between the cosy lighted room and the bleakness of the leafless park sprinkled here and there with patches of the newly fallen snow, and, as I stood looking in, the door opened and Violet came in shutting it behind her. I went nearer to the window to get a

She took up the decanter.

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better view of her, half intending to open the French window and surprise her, but before I had taken half-a-dozen strides I stopped rooted to the ground with sudden horror at what I saw.

Violet, after carefully closing the door behind her and taking, as I thought, a hurried glance round the room, went to my uncle's seat at the head of the table, and taking the stopper out of a little decanter filled with a very special brown sherry that he kept for his exclusive use, emptied into it the contents of a little white paper that she held in her hand; then she took up the decanter, shook it gently, looking to see if what she had put in was dissolved, then set it down again and left the room.

What was I to think, and, still worse, what was I to do after making such a discovery as this? No one is so suspicious as a man in love, unless, perhaps, a woman in the same state. Instantly a crowd of terrible thoughts swarmed into my brain. I remembered being struck with the fact that Sir Percival was by no means as well as he had been in September; he was nervous and irritable and seemed to have lost flesh considerably. This change instantly connected itself with Violet's more than suspicious action.

Could it be possible that this beautiful, light-hearted, and seemingly innocent girl to whom he had given the shelter of his home was slowly poisoning him, murdering him by inches, in order that she might come into the inheritance of which I now felt convinced her father must have told her? Could it be possible that she thought the probable remainder of his life too long a period to wait for what she knew would one day be hers, and that, therefore, she was staining her soul with this hideous crime in order to hasten the end?

I took him in my arms and kissed her.

And if this was so, might she not have another motive, might she not have some penniless lover, nay, even a husband, out yonder in the Australian bush for whose sake she was guiltily anticipating the course of Nature? It seemed too monstrous, too horrible to believe, and yet, what was I to think? Had I not seen her empty the paper into my uncle's wine! She knew that no one but himself drank it. What could her motive be if not the worst, and if it was that, what was I to do?

To let Sir Percival drink the wine was to connive at his murder, to be accessory to it before the fact, and make myself equally guilty with the girl whom I—good heavens!—had just resolved to ask to be my wife before the night was over. More than that, not to tell him of what I had seen would be to leave him unwarned and unprotected at the mercy of a murderess, while to tell him would be to give him such a shock as might complete the work that she had begun.

In a perfect agony of rage and perplexity, I let myself in at the side door with my latch-key, and went straight to the dining-room. Happily I met no one either going or coming, and when I got up to my room I had the decanter of sherry with me. I had just time left to dress for dinner, and I scrambled out of one set of clothes and into the other, hardly knowing what I was doing.

When I got downstairs again, the first thing I heard was Sir Percival rating his butler soundly for forgetting his sherry. The man protested that he had put it on the table as usual, and this made Sir Percival worse. I got into the dining-room just as he was calling him a liar, and telling him to go and fetch it at once.

At this moment Violet also came into the room, looking as pretty and self-possessed and perfectly dressed as ever. But when Sir Percival, after sending the discomforted butler out of the room, explained what was the matter, my suspicion-quickened eyes saw her start slightly, and, as I thought, turn pale. Sir Percival was too angry to notice it, but to me it was only an added proof of the fearful suspicion that was now fast becoming a conviction.

How I got through that evening I hardly know. All I do know is that I watched everything that my uncle ate and drank in fear and trembling, wondering whether the sherry was the only thing that the beautiful wretch who sat at his table had put her secret poison into. As for her, after the first shock she seemed to at once recover her spirits and, if possible, increased my new-born horror of her by rallying me on my own manifest low spirits and absent-mindedness.

By the time I went to bed, I had decided what to do, and as soon as it was light the next morning, I was up and round at the stables with my spirit flask full of the poisoned sherry. As soon as my horse was ready, I rode off post haste to my uncle's doctor, who lived on the other side of the village about four miles away. I caught him just as he was sitting down to breakfast, and as soon as I was alone with him in his surgery I gave him the flask of sherry, and, without any explanations, asked him to analyse it.

"May I ask where you got this sherry, Mr. Burton?" he said, sniffing at it, and looking at me with a curious twinkle in his eye.

"Got it!" I said. "Well, to tell you the truth, doctor, if you'll excuse me, I would rather not say anything about that until you have analysed it. The circumstances are so painful and to me so distressing that——"

"Ah!" said the doctor. "I thought so. Very creditable to you, Mr. Burton, considering that you, no doubt, have suspicions which must be very terrible to you. Well, you may thank your stars you have taken the sensible course you have done in coming to me first, for I presume you have said nothing to anyone else."

"No," I replied. "My suspicions are horrible enough and distressing enough, God knows, but I have kept them to myself."

"Good!" said the doctor, brightening up in a way that almost disgusted me for the moment. "Then I can tell you what this sherry contains without analysing it. It contains strychnia——"

"Ah!" I exclaimed, recoiling a step. "Strychnia!"

"Yes," replied the doctor calmly raising the flask to his lips and taking a pull. "It contains strychnia, nux vomica, and carbonate of iron, in medicinal doses, as prescribed by myself for your worthy uncle who, I regret to say, has not only been in a very low state of health lately, but has also unhappily become a convert to homeopathy, and has sworn that he will never speak to me again if I ever attempt to dose him with the orthodox abominations of the pharmacopœia. This being the case you see——."

"All right, doctor, I see," I interrupted, snatching the flask from his hand and flinging it under the fireplace as though it were something accursed. "I see quite enough to show me that, in addition to being one of the greatest fools on earth, I have entertained the most horrible and the most miserably false suspicions about—good heavens! no, it would

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be sacrilege even to speak of her in such a connection now. I shall never be able to look her in the face again. I shall be off to town to-day."

"No, you won't," interrupted the doctor. "Not unless you really want to make yourself the fool you have just called yourself. I suppose you saw Miss Violet putting this stuff into your uncle's sherry. Of course, it was very unfortunate that you should have seen her doing anything that looked so curiously suspicious, and, grave and all as your suspicions were, you were quite right according to your lights in doing what you have done, but there the matter begins and ends. No one but you and I know anything about it, and all the harm done is that Sir Percival has missed one of his doses.

"If you'll wait five minutes I'll put up half-a-dozen more and you can take them to Miss Violet and ask her from me to put them into your uncle's sherry according to directions, as before. After that you may perform any penance that your remorse may suggest; but if I were you I wouldn't tell her anything about it just yet. Wait till you've been married a few months and then you may have a good laugh over it. By the way, should I be taking too great a liberty if I asked whether the happy day has been fixed yet."

"No," I said; "but unless I have all the bad luck that I deserve, it very soon will be."

I couldn't find courage to follow the doctor's advice until Violet had been Mrs. Burton for nearly six months. When I at last did tell her she heard me to the end in stony silence, and then she raised her eyes and looked at me and said very seriously:

"You great goose! Is *that* what you've been burdening your mind with all this time? Why, do you suppose I didn't suspect it was you all the time who took the sherry away? I knew you were outside the window, for I saw your shadow on the snow, and I also knew of that mysterious visit of yours to the doctor's the next morning. I felt very miserable and very angry that night I can tell you, but I comforted myself with the reflection that you must be just as bad, and that you must have felt a good deal too small for your clothes as you rode home from the doctor's, so I forgave you."

"Yes," I said, as I took her in my arms and kissed her now laughing lips. "If ever a self-respecting man felt cheap enough to be given away with a pound of tea it was my miserable self riding home to breakfast from the doctor's that morning."

THE GREATEST SACRIFICE OF ALL.

TING-A-LING! Ting-a-ling! the convent bells were ringing. Ting-a-ling! ting-a-ling! came the sweet sounds from the high white cupola. They floated far away out on the warm summer air, fragrant with the smell of Indian hay, or *Foin Sauvage*, that the "habitants" were cutting in the meadow by the river.

In the distance, the tin roofs of the old French Canadian city glittered in the sunshine, and the great river shone like gold as it glided on majestically to the waters of the Gulf.

The convent lay in its own grounds, carefully guarded by high stone walls, though a good many came in and out of its portals, as it was the "Providence" of the neighbourhood, and welcomed the little orphaned ones and the sick and the aged poor of the district. The sunlight filtered through the whole building. It fell in slanting lines in the long passages, with their rush-bottomed chairs and spotlessly-scrubbed floors.

Sister St. Stéphanie sat at her desk, and she was tired. It had been a long hot day, and the children had not been attentive. The room was empty now, for its little occupants, in their checked blue pinafores and thick shoes, had all been dismissed into the garden for the welcome play before the evening meal. Now she was free to walk in the garden for a little while.

Sister St. Stéphanie was not as young as she was once, and her figure was portly—but, in spite of the lines that come at fifty, it was a face that had been most charming in the spring-time of her life.

She knelt a few minutes at the little oratory on the stairway, and then, quietly crossing herself, went down the wide verandah steps to the garden. Sister St. Mary Clopas was with the children, who were wending their way to the little spruce wood by the big meadows; so, free from her responsibilities, the nun took the path to the kitchen garden.

It was pleasant here on the lovely summer afternoons, and a look of sweet content came into the nun's face as, folding her hands within her wide sleeves, she paced quietly up and down the path. From the river came the breeze, laden with incense of the long swaths of hay.

How familiar was that odour to Sister St. Stéphanie. It carried her back thirty years, long years, when she was only sixteen years old. She was not called Sister St. Stéphanie then, but was Gabrielle St. Pierre, the youngest daughter of the respectable merchant of the little village of Sainte Priscelle.

The St. Pierres lived in an old steep-roofed house on the banks of the Ottawa. Gabrielle's father and mother were old people, and she was the child of his second marriage, and there were long years between her two elder sisters and herself.

Little Gabrielle was a happy, restless child. Her hair was blue black, but it had many little ripples in it. Her eyes were big and brown, with a soft, pathetic light in them like the deer in the fir woods, and the flush on her cheek like the wild rose that blossoms on the dusty highway.

At eleven years of age, she went to a great convent near Montreal, and she was happy and learnt many things—to write a delicate copper-plate hand, to play very sweetly on the piano, and to do endless and gorgeous pieces of wool-work. Her voice, clear and fresh, was an important factor in the convent choir.

The nuns loved her well, and little Gabrielle was content that her lot should be cast with theirs one day. For the St. Pierres had always given, when possible, a son or daughter in each generation to the Church. So she accepted this career with the same sweet docility with which she had accepted the dresses they sent her, or the studies they desired her to pursue.

At seventeen, she came home for a little while, and for a time the life she led was peaceful enough. But one day, as M. St. Pierre sat in his shop reading his small weekly paper, while his mild young apprentice attended to the wants of the few customers, a stranger came in. He was young, perhaps twenty-three or four, tall and straight, with curly yellow hair and big blue eyes that had almost an infantine look of innocence. He came up to the fat merchant and asked him, in very tolerable French, where he could get lodgings in the village, as he wanted to fish in the St. Andre River, where the big pink trout gambolled up and down the foaming brown water.

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As M. St. Pierre gazed at the wonderful jointed fishing-rods and new leather gun cases that a humble "habitant" brought in just then, he thought of the good dollars they represented and wondered why the stranger should not occupy the large empty room in his house.

. . . . . .

That afternoon Mr. Jack arrived with his trunks, dogs, gun-cases, and fishing-rods, and the dark old house seemed to wake up from that time. He took his meals with the family, and his sunny smiles, his merry laugh, and his broken French even drew smiles from quiet and faded Madame St. Pierre.

But to Gabrielle he did not say much. She was too shy. She came in the evening he arrived; she did not know anyone was there beyond the usual family circle. How pretty she looked in a pink cotton dress and her long braids hanging down her back, and the brown eyes under her curled lashes.

"Where have you been, my daughter?" said her mother, as she poured out the tea in the thick handleless white cups.

"I have been decorating the church for the Feast of St. John," said the young girl in her pretty French. Her tones were low and clear. How delicious, thought Jack to himself, and how mediæval.

The house was full of noise now. Such barking of dogs and chattering of various Canadians, who were good "voyageurs" and knew the woods well, and came to guide the young fellow in his expeditions after trout or bears.

After a time Gabrielle got to look for his coming and to find the day so long when he was away. Unknown to herself, the child-heart that was slumbering woke up to find itself that of a woman glowing with its first deep, entrancing love; so little does it take to make this change. One or two little strolls in the garden in the evening, the discussion of an illustrated paper, the few words spoken at meal times. Naturally it was all very restricted, for a young French girl has not much liberty; but her smile was sweeter for him and he could make her laugh.

So the stranger stayed on till the late August days. He was out fishing all the last morning, but he came into the garden to bid Gabrielle good-bye. Jack knew where she would be, and he went to the end of the garden, where some willows grew beside a spring, and there was a little seat and some beehives. Gabrielle was sitting there, with a little shawl over her head.

"I came to say good-bye, mademoiselle," said Jack; "I knew where I should find you. You hid yourself, but I could not go without seeing you."

He was going then, and the beautiful brown eyes, in spite of herself, filled with hot tears. There was a moment of silence, and Jack suddenly bent forward and took the slender hand, roughened with work, in his. She tried to draw it away, but he held it fast. The autumn sunlight fell on him as he stood there, with the dim old house behind him.

"Oh, Monsieur Jack, you must not," she said trembling, drawing her hand away.

"But Gabrielle," said Jack hurriedly, "are you not sorry I am going away? I hate to go," he said, speaking breathlessly in his emotion, "for I have learned to love you so much."

She was trembling like a leaf now, but she turned her dear eyes to him, and there the answer was written so plainly.

"Darling," said Jack, as the long whistle of the steamer was heard coming round the point, "say one little word, for I must run to catch the boat. You love me, don't you, dear little Gabrielle? Say my name just once."

"Yes, ah, yes, Jack," came the answer, almost in a whisper—how sweetly she said the word "Jack."

Nearer and nearer came the throb of the paddle-wheels of the steamer. Jack bent forward and raised the cold little hand to his lips, and kissed it so tenderly and lovingly. Until he told of his love, he did not know its deep and overwhelming tide.

"I will write," he said, looking back at the girlish figure and beautiful young face, so full of love for him.

He went down the short path to the wharf, holding his hat in his hand and smiling on her, though there was a graver and more earnest look on the merry young face than had ever been there before.

The sound of the paddle-wheels stopped for a few minutes, then went on again, grew fainter, fainter, till all was quiet. The sun had set, and Gabrielle went into the house.

The brilliant autumn passed, and then the long winter came, and for some time Gabrielle lived in a dream—a dream known only to herself. But she never got a letter. Jack had written, but M. St. Pierre had opened his letters without scruple, and, thinking they were only the effusions of a boyish love affair, said nothing about them to Gabrielle. Her thoughts were otherwise employed. When the letters became more frequent, and glowing with a manly love that the old man could in no way misconstrue, he thought it time to interfere, and confided in Madame St. Pierre. She was overwhelmed with the perfidy of Gabrielle, and there was a consultation with M. le Curé.

Poor little Gabrielle was called in, and the storm burst upon her, terrible in all its fierceness. She, promised to the Church, had been deceitful and underhand! She had spent the summer, as no modest girl should, in covert interviews with a heretic! She, whom they thought so pure and good and open as the day, had made all sorts of promises to this light-of-love.

Gabrielle said not a word, only grew whiter and whiter, and looked with terror at them. M. le Curé was kinder than her father and mother, for he said quietly:

"I know Gabrielle of old; leave her to herself for reflection. The good God in His mercy will bring her to a better mind. The saints also have been woefully tempted."

And Gabrielle looked at him gratefully, and when her father and mother asked her if she had anything to say, she murmured with white lips, "No, no;" and crept upstairs to the little cold room, where the frost drew beautiful ferns and palms on its many-paned windows, and sat in dumb agony by her bed. All the light of life seemed gone out.

M. le Curé, who had been her good friend before, spoke to her rarely, and then with a subdued sadness that was more keen than wrath. So Lent passed, and it was nearly Easter.

Tempted by the sunshine, Gabrielle went out into the garden to the little seat by the beehives, where she had seen him last. There was a strange agony of pleasure in doing this. Gabrielle sat with her hands folded, looking at the great wide river rolling on, with now and then a block of ice on its black surface. How well she remembered the stroke of the paddle-wheels which had borne him away.

There was a click at the gate, and M. le Curé came slowly down the path.

"My child," he said gently, "you are in great misery. Let me talk to you, let me help you."

At these words of unexpected kindness, the tears rose to Gabrielle's eyes, and her lips trembled. The wind blew M. le Cure's long grey hair from his forehead and waved the worn black soutane.

"My child," he said, his deep voice full of emotion, "could I but show you a place of peace, a place of rest! What would you say if I told you I too have suffered as you do, and conquered and gained an infinite peace, an infinite glory! The struggle was bitter—yea, even to death. Think, think of the glory and beauty reserved for those who have given up father, mother, child, yea, lover too, for God!

"My child, let me comfort you," he continued, his rugged face lighting up with enthusiasm. "It is near the holy Eastertide; come, cast thyself at the foot of the Cross and bring thy sorrows to Him who suffered all. Oh, come to thy Easter Communion as the Bride of Christ, and oh, the greater the temptation, the greater the triumph! This trial is the furnace of thy life. Come through it in His strength, and what joy will be thine!"

He left her, passing swiftly down the garden path.

The stern priest had struck a different chord. He had not taunted her and upbraided her. The girl's heart was so weary, so weary! Perhaps he spoke truly. She stood in deep thought under the willow, then turned suddenly, went swiftly through the gate and across the grassy open plot into the church.

Gabrielle went quickly over to the altar, all draped in black, where the big plaster groups of the Entombment stood, and

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knelt there long and still. It grew quite dark, and the sacristan stood clinking his keys to arrest her attention.

When Gabrielle entered the house supper was ready. The family ate almost in silence, and then, at the bidding of Madame St. Pierre, sank on their knees before the plain black crucifix on the wall.

When they arose from their knees Gabrielle left the room. Marie, her faithful waiting-maid, followed her into the hall and slipped a note into her hand. No one saw this little incident, but Gabrielle's heart gave a great leap, and she fled up to her room and shut the door tight, bolting it to make it secure. Then she looked at the letter.

It was square and white, with firm black writing on it. So unlike the letters they generally received—cheap yellow envelopes with thin scratchy writing on them in pale ink. She opened it quickly, and the words burnt themselves on her brain:

"My own Darling.—Why have you never written one word to me? I have written again and again, giving the address carefully each time, and have never had a single line. I know there is something underhand going on. But, dear one, I am quite near you. Marie has told me what you have been enduring. I shall be at the landing down by the river at ten. Come, as you love me, my own poor little darling.—Your most loving, "JACK."

"I shall be at the landing down at the river at ten." Had she gone mad, and was she dreaming? She would see his face once more. Gabrielle held the letter in her hand a few minutes. Remember, it was her first love letter. She gently passed her hand over the lifeless thing. Then, holding it over the candle, burnt it deliberately, till it curled in blackened scrolls on the floor, where it seemed to writhe in torture like a living thing.

Presently the old clock struck ten, and getting up she slipped quietly down the stairs. How they creaked! The door by which she must leave the house was not locked, as Marie had purposely seen that it was left unfastened.

Gabrielle sped down the path, light and sure of foot. It was bright moonlight, and the great elm trees cast black shadows on the silver water, and their roots looked like twisted snakes. By the biggest elm, Jack was standing. Yes, Jack, and the moonlight fell on his light hair, making almost an aureole about his head.

"Oh, Heaven! help me to be firm in this time of need. I am so weak, so weak," Gabrielle prayed.

Jack gave a sudden leap.

"Gabrielle! Gabrielle!" he said, coming forward with arms outstretched. How beautiful he was with the love-light in his eyes.

"No, Jack, you may not kiss me," said Gabrielle in such a sad, sad tone. "It is all, all over for ever."

"You are mad, Gabrielle," said Jack, looking at her in amazement; "they have turned your mind with their bigoted cruelty. Oh, I do not believe you!

"Come with me, darling," he said, so tenderly, so gently, "away from this death in life. Dear one, in my love you will find all this false reasoning disappear like a bad dream. My poor little persecuted one! Come, come to-night on the steamer. I know the stewardess on the boat; she is a kind, good woman, and will take care of you till we get to Carrillon, and then we will be married by the rector of the English church, and in your church, too. It will be so simple, darling, dear one. Speak, speak, Gabrielle!" he said, his voice trembling in his great agitation.

"Do not say more, Jack," she said, her voice sunk almost to a whisper; "my temptation is bitter enough. It cannot, cannot be. I will never marry you—you will never understand—never, never!"

Jack was getting very angry now. But, as he looked at the slight little figure, so frail, so scrupulously neat in its old-fashioned grey dress, the anger melted and pity came instead. He drew near her, and sinking his voice to its sweetest, gentlest tones, almost as a mother might speak to a suffering child, in accents to move the coldest heart:

"Darling, have pity on me—I who have hungered and thirsted for you day and night, who have written so patiently and been so deceived. Let me plead with your father, or come now, now with me. Your life will be so bright, my people are kind and good hearted. Oh, Gabrielle, Gabrielle darling; come, come let me shelter you in my love. Have you ceased to love me?" He looked pale now, and so wistful.

Gabrielle seemed to swallow something, and then her voice rang out clear and firm, with a note of exultation:

"Oh, dear one! You will never understand. It is not my father or mother, or the priest who prevents me now. At first they did, but now it is of my own free will. I will give myself to the Church. You will never know the agony I have passed through, but I have been helped. Do you not think my soul yearned for your love? But it may not be. That is the best life had to offer, and that is my sacrifice to God!"

And turning swiftly to Jack, her face almost supernatural in its calm and beauty, she raised her hand:

"May the good God bless and keep you evermore, evermore! Adieu, beloved, adieu." And she fled swiftly up the hill.

Poor benighted little Gabrielle, we say. But we may say that of all those who have suffered for their faith in the course of ages. She had only lived up to her ideal, after all.

Gabrielle crept up to her little room and fell upon the floor unconscious. Nature cannot bear too great a strain. The mice crept fearlessly about, undisturbed by the silent figure. None knew of what had happened that night—only M. le Curé, and he was a man who spoke seldom.

And Jack, you may read his name again among those who belong to the great commercial interests of the world. He is a good man and well known. Yes, he is married and has sons at college and in business. But he, too, may have his memories for all we know. His purse is always open to good causes, he gives abundantly to "those excellent women," as he calls the Sisters of Charity.

But all this is so long ago, thirty-seven years or more, and time is very merciful. Sister St. Stéphanie knows great peace and love in her busy life. The little ones love her, and trot after her, holding withered little bunches of flowers in their hot chubby hands, and the old people pour out their garrulous troubles in her willing ear.

Ting-a-ling! ting-a-ling! the convent bell is ringing for the children's supper; and Sister St. Stéphanie must go in now. The waggons are coming up from the long meadows laden with new cut hay.

Ah, me! what memories the Indian grass that grows by the great river will always bring back to her in the bright Canadian summer-time.

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THE OUTLAWS OF THE AIR.

By George Griffith,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," etc.

SUMMARY.

Max Renault—leading spirit of Anarchist Autonomie Group No. 7, who has joined the Utopians (a Socialistic colony on an island in the South Pacific) in order to steal the air-ship they are building, which he succeeds in doing.

Franz Hartog—a German engineer, in league with Renault, who steals a very fast torpedo-boat destroyer from the Russian Government to levy blackmail on the Atlantic.

Sir Harry Milton—a wealthy young English nobleman, who by chance comes across the island of Utopia, in his yacht, the *Calypso*, and subsequently devotes the whole of his fortune to hunting down Renault and Hartog.

Herbert Wyndham—a lieutenant in the British Navy who is travelling with Sir Harry for the benefit of his health, and who determines to resign his commission and couple his energies with those of Sir Harry in destroying the Anarchists, on account of the fact that he has been stabbed by Renault when the latter attempts to carry off Violet in the air-ship.

Frederick Austen—the inventor of the air-ship, who shares its secret with Edward Adams, Dr. Edwards, and Ambrose Millar, three other Utopians.

Frank Markham—the young captain of the Utopian yacht, *Mermaid*.

Violet Milton—Sir Harry's sister, and Lieutenant Wyndham's sweetheart, is terribly injured by throwing herself out of the air-ship on which Renault has tried to carry her off.

Dora Merton—a fair Utopian, who has made an impression on Sir Harry.

Lucy Summers—another fair Utopian.

Renault in the air-ship *Vengeur*, and Hartog in the torpedo-boat *Destroyer*, levy blackmail on the high seas. Just as they have annihilated a combined British, French, and Portuguese fleet sent to discover them, a Maxim aeroplane, the *Britannia*, comes on the scene, and is captured by the *Vengeur*. Those on it are put ashore, and one of the crew shoots at Renault and wounds him. A few weeks later Renault and Hartog set out for the island of Utopia for the purpose of destroying its inhabitants, but find it deserted. On the discovery of Renault's treachery, the whole colony had gone back to England, Wyndham, together with Adams, Austen, Sir Harry, and his sister Violet, travelling in the *Nautilus*, a newly-built torpedo-boat of great speed, which, while coming up the English Channel, is challenged by a British cruiser.

CHAPTER XXV.

News of War.

As the answering signal was flashed from the warship's search-light, the *Nautilus* slowed down to ten knots and swung round to port, describing a three-quarter curve which brought her alongside a large, grey-painted armoured cruiser which, with her attendant brace of torpedo boats, was cruising under easy steam about six miles from the land.

As the *Nautilus*, with nothing of her showing above the water except her platform and conning-tower, and an expanse of plated turtle-back deck fore and aft of it, and with no funnels, and, consequently, no smoke or steam issuing from any part of her, ran up alongside the cruiser, all who were on the deck of the British vessel crowded to the bulwarks and portholes, and up into the rigging, to get a closer view of the strange craft.

The captain himself was at the gangway as she came alongside, looking with no less curious eyes than anyone else at this strange visitor, which seemed the nearest approach to an actual submarine vessel that he had ever heard of. By the time the gangway steps had been reached Wyndham had come on deck dressed in his uniform as a Lieutenant of the Fleet, and returned the salute with which Her Majesty's cloth was immediately recognised.

"What craft is that, and where do you come from?" asked the commander of the cruiser. "And how long have you been in commission? I never heard of a thing like that in the Navy. Who are you?"

"Well, sir, I'm Herbert Wyndham, late Lieutenant of the *Sandfly*, gun-boat on the West African coast, invalided on sick-leave, picked up by a friend's yacht, and landed on an unknown island, where I found the craft that I am now temporarily in command of. If you'll allow me to come on board I'll explain myself more fully."

"Certainly. Come on board by all means, Mr. Wyndham," replied the captain. "According to what you say you ought to have some adventures to tell."

"Yes," said Wyndham, who by this time had got on to the gangway ladder and was mounting slowly with the assistance of one of his own crew. "You must excuse my coming rather slowly for I was wounded again less than a month ago, and am rather shaky still."

"Why on earth didn't you say so, man," exclaimed the captain, as a couple of bluejackets ran down the ladder in obedience to a sign from him. "I could have sent a chair down for you if I had known that."

"Oh, I'm not quite bad enough for that, thanks," said Wyndham, as he accepted an arm from one of the bluejackets, and so arrived safely on the cruiser's deck. From the gangway he was at once taken straight down to the captain's cabin, and there told him all that it was necessary for him to know of the origin and mission of the *Nautilus*.

"And now," he said, in concluding his story. "We are going to run up to Elswick and get our armament on board. It was ordered months ago, and will no doubt be ready for us by the time we get there. When we've got it all on board, and I'm a little stronger we are going out to hunt that blackguard of an Anarchist down. In fact, I'm going to resign my commission in the Navy on purpose to do it."

"I don't think you can do that," said the captain of the cruiser seriously. "At least, from what I have heard of you I feel pretty certain you won't attempt to do so under present circumstances."

"Indeed?" asked Wyndham lifting his eyebrows. "And why not? I hope I wasn't right in guessing, as I almost did when you fired the shot to tell us to heave to, that England's at war."

"Yes, I'm sorry to say we are," replied the captain, "and between you and me I am still more sorry to say we're not prepared for it."

"Oh," said Wyndham, "is that really so? I haven't heard anything about that. Who are we fighting?"

"Russia, at present," replied the captain. "And I'm afraid we shall be at loggerheads with France, too, before very long.

"I suppose you're a good way behindhand with the news now, but you'll remember that, after the compromise that ended the war between China and Japan by giving the Japanese the suzerainty of Corea and the control of the Corean ports, we found it necessary to re-occupy Port Hamilton in order to keep a check on the Russian naval developments in the East.

"Well, for the last year we've been quarrelling about that with Russia, who was very much sold because Lord Salisbury put his foot down and absolutely refused to give her an ice-free port in Corea when the Chino-Japanese quarrel was settled, and matters came to a crisis about a month ago, when the Russians attempted to occupy Port Lazareff by force, and our China Squadron stopped them, also by force.

"They fired on us first, and there was a regular pitched battle, in which the Russians were soundly thrashed. Of course, that could only mean war, and so war it is. France is holding her hand for the present, in spite of the 'arrangement that most people think there is between her and Russia. The moment she draws the sword Germany, Austria, and Italy will join us; and, for my own part, I fancy that she's just waiting, for the present, to see how the cat jumps between us and Russia.

"We've had no actual fighting here yet, but, of course, everyone is on the *qui vive*. The Russian Baltic Fleet will be shut up in the ice until April, and the moment the Black Sea Fleet attempts to force the Dardanelles, Turkey is to join us, and there'll be a general row.

"Meanwhile, we are keeping one eye on Russia, and the other on France, the Mediterranean Squadron is being strengthened every day as fast as we can get the ships into commission, which is precious slowly, I can assure you, thanks to the normal torpidity of the Admiralty; but still, we are

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nolding our own very fairly, and if we only have Russia to tackle, I think we shall be able to confine the war to the sea, and give her a good hammering when the ice breaks up and we get properly to work. By the way, I wish we had a dozen or so craft like that *Nautilus* of yours. Couldn't we get that one into commission and have some more built, don't you think?"

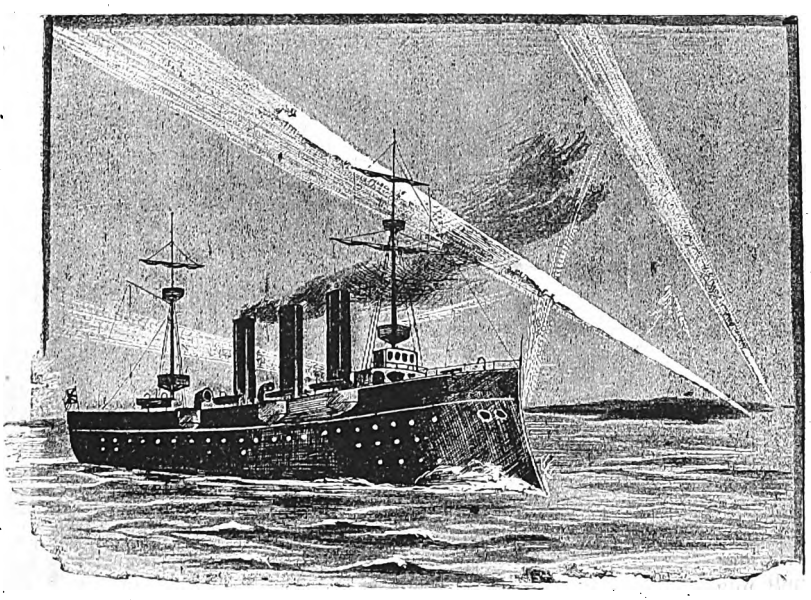
Wyndham was silent for a moment, and then, with a shake of his head, he replied:

"I don't feel altogether sure of that. Of course, as there's war, it will be impossible for me to resign my commission, as I intended to do for private as well as public reasons, and, therefore, if I am ordered on service, when I am fit for it, I shall go; but, you see, the *Nautilus* is private property.

"She's been built outside British jurisdiction by people who own no allegiance to Britian or any other country, and, more than that, she's driven by a motor-power of the composition of which I haven't the faintest notion. In fact, I've given my word of honour not even to ask what it is, and if you had fifty ships like her they'd be very little use to you if you had to drive them by steam-engines in the ordinary way.

"I suppose you thought we were some new-fashioned sort of Russian torpedo ram trying to sneak through and do what damage we could in the narrow waters. Of course, we're nothing like that; but still, I ought to tell you that I am really only a sort of guest on board her, and those who actually do own her may have plans of their own that I should be sorry to interfere with."

"H'm," said the captain. "That makes it a little awkward, doesn't it? Could I see one of these gentlemen, do you think? Perhaps we might be able to come to some arrangement, though, of course, you understand I have no power to treat on behalf of the Government; still, I have some interest at the Admiralty, and I daresay that a report from me might be favourably considered, especially as their lordships seem to be a little bit alarmed by the row that was kicked up when the declaration of war actually came and they weren't able to put three-quarters of the ships into commission."



Signals were being flashed from the outer waters of the Straits.

"If you'll send down and ask Mr. Austen to come on board," said Wyndham, "I think he'll be the best man for you to talk to. He is, well, practically the designer of the *Nautilus*, and I have no doubt his word would go a long way if he chose to give it."

The captain at once rang for an orderly and sent him down to the *Nautilus* with an invitation to Mr. Austen to come on board the cruiser. The invitation was accepted, and within five minutes he was seated at the captain's table. Then a somewhat lengthy conversation ensued; the end of which was that Mr. Austen consented to a report, embodying a description of the *Nautilus*, being laid before the Admiralty, with a proposal that a dozen such vessels might be built at the expense of the country for the purposes of home defence, on condition that they should be furnished with motor fuel by Mr. Austen and his friends, who were to have sole control of the engine-rooms, and that no attempt was to be made to discover what the motor fuel was.

The ships might be commanded by British officers, and used as they thought best, but only for the duration of the war, after that they were to be given up to the Utopians, to be used according to their discretion. These conditions were taken down by the captain of the cruiser to be embodied in his despatch, and then he was invited on board the *Nautilus* and shown over her without reserve. To say that he was amazed at what he saw would hardly be doing justice to his feelings by the time he had seen everything that was shown to him.

"For offensive or defensive purposes," he said, when he at length returned to her saloon and had been introduced to the rest of her company. "I would rather command a craft like this properly equipped than the biggest battleship in the British Navy."

"Yes, I should think you would," said Wyndham, with a laugh. "I know more about her capabilities than you have been able to learn in such a short visit, and I can tell you I should be very sorry for you if you were in command of the *Royal Sovereign* or the *Majestic*, say, and I had the *Nautilus*, and it was my business to send you to the bottom. You wouldn't have a chance against me. You might, perhaps, knock the platform into bits; but the next moment the ram would be into you, and you'd go down like a stone."

"Yes," replied the captain, with a perceptible shudder, "I suppose we should. Forty-four knots an hour did you say you could make? Honestly, you know, that seems to me almost impossible. Why, even that scoundrel who has been terrorising the Atlantic wouldn't be in it in a race with you at that rate, and rumour says he can do nearly forty."

"Nevertheless, it's a fact," replied Wyndham. "We've just travelled over fifteen thousand miles in seventeen days and a half, and if you work that out you'll find that it comes to about forty knots an hour on the average, and if it was only daylight you should see for yourself. Hullo, what's that?"

As he spoke there came the dull boom of a gun out to sea, followed by a rattle of sharper reports. The captain of the cruiser jumped up from his seat at once and made towards the door of the saloon, followed by Wyndham, Sir Harry, Mr. Austen, and Adams.

When they reached the platform they saw search-light beams darting out from a score of points at once, and signals were being flashed inland from the outer waters of the Straits. The captain of the cruiser after one glance round ran up on to the deck of his own vessel and had a hurried consultation with his first officer; then he came to the gangway and called out:

"Now, then, Wyndham, there's a chance for your *Nautilus*. A couple of strange crafts, steaming like the very deuce, are running up under the French land to the north-west. They'll probably run inside the limit so we can't chase them, though our fellows are after them. You can do as you like. Suppose you overhaul them and see what you can make of them. They've got about a twenty-mile start of you now. Do you feel inclined to tackle them?"

"Oh, I'm agreeable, of course," said Wyndham. "What do you say gentlemen?" he continued, turning to Adams and Mr. Austen.

They glanced at each other and nodded.

"Yes," said Adams, "I don't see why you shouldn't, as long as there isn't any unprovoked bloodshed."

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"Oh, of course not," said Wyndham. "I don't suppose you want me to sink them, do you, Captain Andrews?"

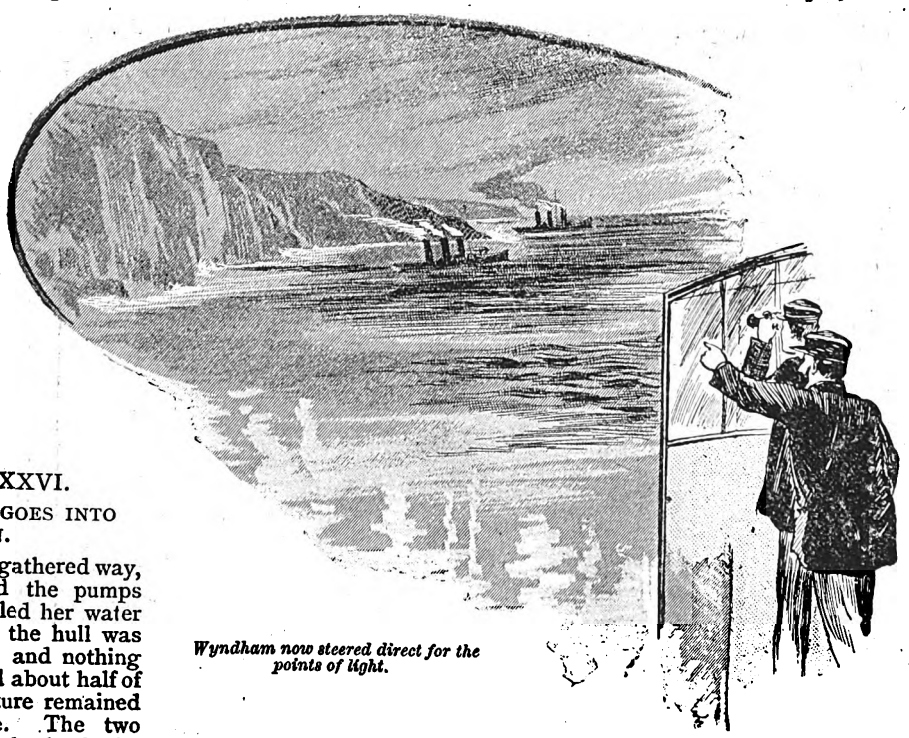
"Well, no, not unless they absolutely refuse to give an account of themselves, and in that case, of course—well, you can just use your own discretion."

"I see," said Wyndham in reply. "We won't hurt them unless we are obliged to. What course shall we steer?"

"You can make it nor'-west by north from where you lie till you make the French land. By that time you'll see the flames from their funnels, I expect, and then, of course, it will only be a question of heels."

"All right. Good-bye. Keep those torpedo boats of yours out of the way," said Wyndham, "because if we hit anything it'll get hurt. Good-bye, I'll bring you news back in an hour or so or else you'll hear something startling in the morning."

The captain waved good-bye from the deck as Wyndham went forward into the conning-tower, accompanied by Adams, who was going to take the wheel for him, while Mr. Austen and Sir Harry disappeared down the after companion-way. Those on board the cruiser heard the companion-slide and the door of the conning-tower shut with a smart snap. Then they heard the muffled tinkling of an electric bell, and the *Nautilus* moved slowly away from the cruiser's side. As soon as she was clear of her and her consorts there was a sound as of rapidly churned-up water, a mass of boiling foam rose astern of the *Nautilus*, two clouds of spray leapt up ahead of her, and the next moment she had vanished into the darkness on her errand of investigation.



Wyndham now steered direct for the points of light.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE NAUTILUS GOES INTO ACTION.

As the *Nautilus* gathered way, the Lieutenant had the pumps set to work and filled her water compartments until the hull was entirely submerged and nothing but the platform and about half of its supporting structure remained above the surface. The two wings of spray which she had thrown up when she started now subsided. The night was calm though cold, and the water rushed away on either side of the swiftly moving platform in long, dark, smooth swirls without a trace of foam either fore or aft.

This was accomplished by means of a device which, in designing the *Nautilus*, Mr. Austen had made use of for the first time in naval architecture. Far forward in the hull, just behind the ram, the plates were pierced with scores of tiny holes arranged along the top and sides of a cylinder, and through these, fine jets of oil were forced, and these, rising to the surface or spreading themselves along the upper sides of the hull, both diminished the skin-friction and prevented the water breaking into foam forward of the platform.

A double advantage was derived from this arrangement. The reduction of skin-friction meant a considerable increase in speed, and the absence of any "bone in her teeth," to use a nautical term, enabled her, as the present expedition clearly proved, to approach close to another craft at night without giving any warning of her presence. Had she been running thus submerged when coming through the Straits, the probability is that she would have got through without anyone being a whit the wiser; but this manœuvre was only intended to be resorted to when in action.

The apparatus for supplying pure oxygen and keeping the air in her interior perfectly fresh was capable of performing its work continuously for twenty-four hours. There were no furnaces or boilers to heat the air or vitiate it with smoke and noxious fumes, and not even Violet, lying on the couch in her cabin fifteen feet below the surface of the water, suffered the slightest inconvenience as the wonderful vessel bore her at a speed of nearly forty-five knots an hour through the depths. In fact, so absolute was the confidence in the strength and capabilities of the *Nautilus* with which her voyage had inspired those on board her, that Violet had point-blank refused to be put on shore at Dover for fear her brother should have felt bound to accompany her, and so would have missed the excitement of the chase. As for any harm coming to them, the idea never even suggested itself.

Within half an hour from the start the plumes of flame from the triple funnels of the two strange craft were distinctly seen from the conning-tower to the north-west under the looming shadow of the French land. Slightly altering the course of the *Nautilus* to the northward, Wyndham now steered direct for the points of light. The hostile torpedo-boats, if such they were, were evidently bound on some important mission, for it was obvious that they were steaming for all they were worth.

Another half hour brought the *Nautilus* close enough to them for Wyndham to see that they were two large torpedo-boats of the class known in the French navy as *torpilleurs de haute mer* and that they were travelling at a speed of over thirty knots an hour. This gave him an advantage of from twelve to fourteen knots, and so the distance between them rapidly decreased. When the chase had lasted for a little over an hour and a half he was within five or six hundred yards of them and dead astern. They still kept on under the land and within the three-mile limit of the French shore which no British vessel could pass for any hostile purpose without a breach of neutrality.

"I'll be hanged if I can make out what those fellows are up to," said Wyndham to Adams when he had reduced speed so as to keep his distance from the torpedo-boats. "They're evidently on some special errand or other, or else they wouldn't be going at such a speed. British they are not, or they wouldn't be over here. If they were French and merely running from one port to another in the ordinary way there would be no reason for all this hurry, because we are not at war with France, and they have just as much right to steam through the Straits as our ships have.

"On the other hand, if they are Russians, how did they get here? They can only have come from a French port or from the Mediterranean; and yet, if they have come from the Mediterranean they must have coaled either at sea or at a French port or they wouldn't have enough coal on board at this time to be steaming at that speed. We can't ram them on mere suspicion of being Russians, so I suppose

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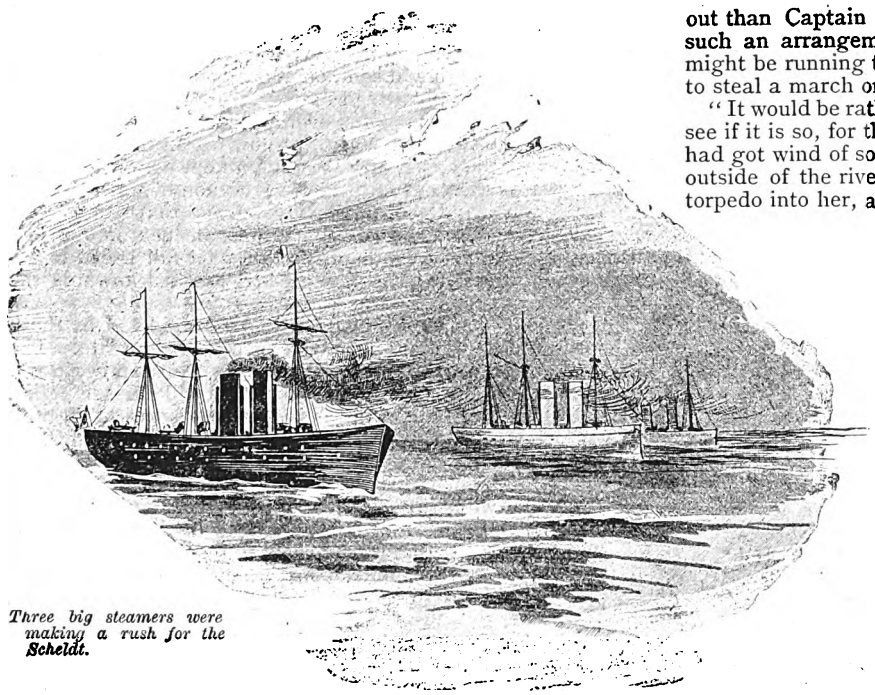

Three big steamers were making a rush for the Scheldt.

there is nothing for it but just to follow them up for the present.

"There are the lights of Dunkirk on the quarter, so in half an hour we shall be outside French waters, then perhaps we shall see what their game really is. Fortunately it is all on our way to the Tyne."

"It looks to me," said Adams, "as though they were either carrying some secret despatches to a fleet in the North Sea or else they're on a raiding expedition somewhere. I don't really see that we can do anything else but watch them."

"No," replied the Lieutenant, "I don't see that we can; but still, I am satisfied that there is some pretty dark game afoot or afloat. They don't seem to turn to the north either. If they mean a rush across to the English coast after sneaking through the Straits in neutral waters they'll make it pretty soon. I'd give something to know what they really are up to."

For two hours more they ran along in the rear of the two boats without seeing anything that gave them any clue to their character or the object of their cruise. This brought them, as nearly as the Lieutenant could calculate, off the mouth of the Scheldt.

A few minutes later they sighted the lightship marking the entrance to the river, and almost at the same instant the two torpedo-boats made a rapid turn and ran out to the eastward in slightly diverging directions. Then the sparks and flames that had been shooting from their funnels disappeared, their speed decreased, and the Lieutenant had to turn the *Nautilus* inland to keep out of sight as he slowed her down.

"Oh, that's it, is it?" he said as he saw the manœuvre of the two boats. "Whatever they are, they have come to watch the entrance to the Scheldt. Now the question is, what are they watching for? Either for something coming in or something going out. It can't very well be anything coming out, unless it's a passenger steamer, and they wouldn't take all this trouble for that."

"Do you think it likely," said Adams, haphazarding a guess, "that Britain has made any secret arrangement with Belgium to garrison Antwerp, as I've often heard she would try to do in case of a war, and——"

"By Jove, I believe you've hit it!" exclaimed Wyndham. "The trouble with France may really be much nearer breaking out than Captain Andrews knew, and it's just possible that such an arrangement has been made, and that our people might be running two or three transports across by night so as to steal a march on the Frenchmen.

"It would be rather a risky move; but, any how, we shall soon see if it is so, for these fellows certainly look as though they had got wind of something of the sort, and mean to patrol the outside of the river mouth to waylay a troopship and shove a torpedo into her, and then get back again into French waters as if they'd never done anything. If that's so, it's a very good job that we followed them, and I think we shall be able to spoil their little game very effectually.

"We'll just run round behind them and get out to sea in front of them. Yes; they're evidently looking for something coming in, or they wouldn't be running out at quarter-speed like that."

The *Nautilus* now made a wide curve round the landward side of the boats and then, keeping well out of sight, put on speed and ran away to sea. When she got out ahead of the boats Wyndham noticed that they showed no lights visible from a vessel bow on to them, and from this he rightly concluded that his surmise was correct, and that they were lying in wait for something coming from seaward. Nor was it very long before he and Adams made out a huge black mass looming dimly against the dark background of sea and sky to eastward. It was showing neither masthead nor side-lights, so evidently its mission was also a secret.

"That's the craft they're looking for," said Wyndham after a long stare through his night-glasses. "I shouldn't be surprised if that's one of the big P. and O. boats being used as a trooper. Those fellows haven't sighted her yet, I think, for they're a good dozen miles behind us. We'll run along and tell that chap what there is ahead of him. Hullo, there's another behind him," he continued as a second black mass loomed up astern of the first one.

In a quarter of an hour the *Nautilus* was alongside of the leading steamer, and Wyndham, throwing open the door of the conning-tower, hailed the deck and rapidly explained the situation to the officer who answered his hail. Adams'

Prisoners of war.

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conjecture proved perfectly correct. War with France was considered to be imminent and liable to break out at any moment. A secret engagement which had long been in force between the Belgian and British Governments was being taken advantage of to put ten thousand British troops into Antwerp, and three big steamers were making a rush for the Scheldt that night.

Secret intelligence of this must have been conveyed by spies to France, and the two torpedo-boats had been sent out to intercept and sink the troopers, if possible, without any one being aware of their fate. It was a desperate move, and in flat defiance of the law of nations; but in practice there could be no doubt that the troops were being conveyed to a neutral country for hostile purposes, and this would go far towards justifying the action of France, provided always that it was successful.

If unsuccessful, the moral effect would be so bad that the Government would probably repudiate all responsibility for the action of the two boats. Wyndham's trained mind saw all this at a glance, and his course of action was immediately taken. He warned the second and the third troopships of their danger, and, as the three slowed down and went at quarter-speed to the northward, he headed the *Nautilus* in for the land again, saying to Adams as he did so:

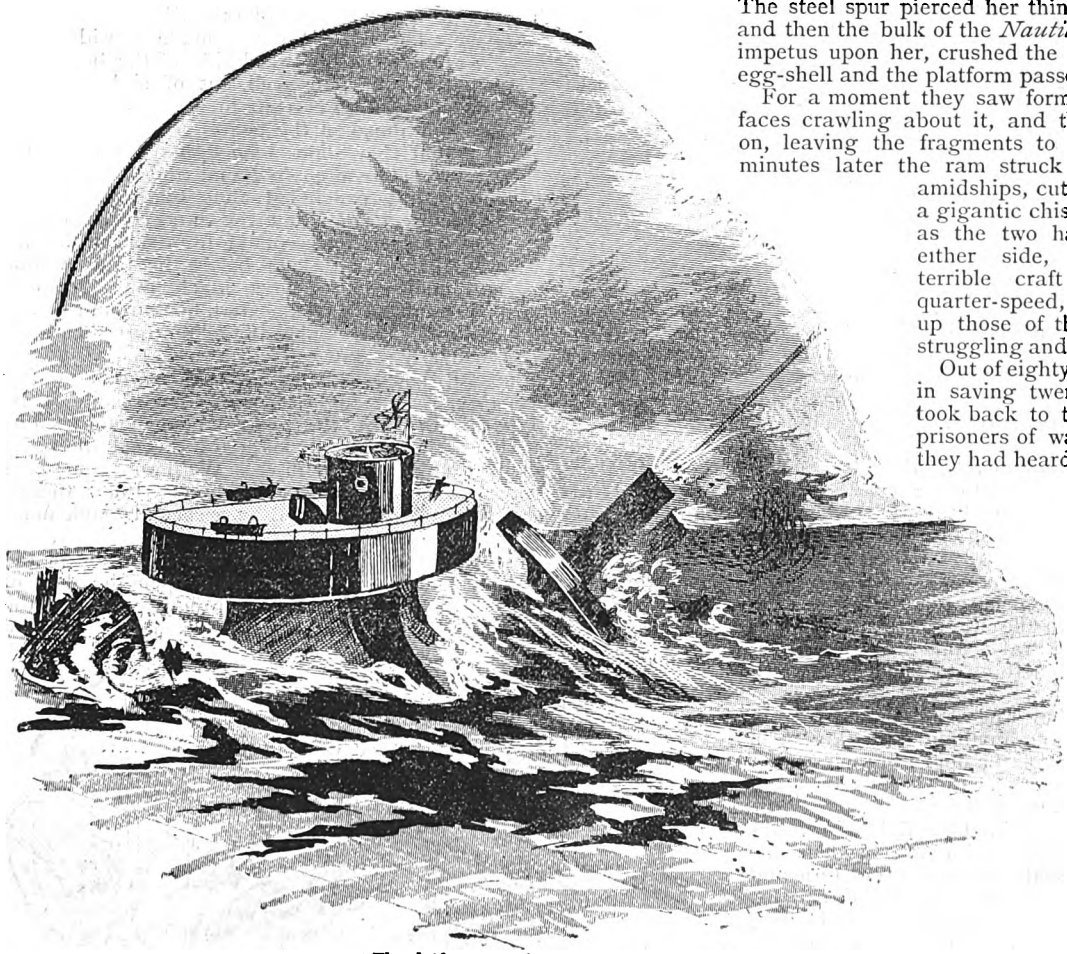
"There's nothing else for it. We must send those two fellows to the bottom without mercy. They are there to commit a breach of the law of nations and to sacrifice thousands of lives without even the sanction of regular warfare. The *Destroyer* herself has really done nothing worse than that. What do you think?"

"I am afraid I must agree with you," replied Adams gravely. "It seems a terrible thing to do certainly, but it would be infinitely more dreadful to see them sink those steamers with all the thousands on board them."

"Yes," said Wyndham. "And if the Frenchmen once catch sight of them they'll send one, at any rate, of them to the bottom, for we can only attend to one torpedo-boat at a time; so we'd better get the business over as soon as possible."

The low platform of the *Nautilus* now began to glide faster and faster over the water, and Wyndham kept her on a curving course towards the land until the two French boats—for such they really were, and bent on the very errand that Adams had guessed—were in line broadside on, and the nearer one was about a mile away. Wyndham signalled for full speed to the engine-room and the *Nautilus* rushed forward towards the unsuspecting enemy.

Not until she was close upon her was she detected by those on board the first torpedo-boat, and then it was too late. The submerged ram went at her with a speed of an express train. The steel spur pierced her thin plates like tissue paper, and then the bulk of the *Nautilus*, hurled with frightful impetus upon her, crushed the flimsily built hull like an egg-shell and the platform passed over the wreck.



The platform passed over the wreck.

For a moment they saw forms of men with agonised faces crawling about it, and then the *Nautilus* swept on, leaving the fragments to sink in the sea. Four minutes later the ram struck the second one square amidships, cut her in two as cleanly as a gigantic chisel might have done, and, as the two halves dropped away on either side, Wyndham swung his terrible craft round, signalled for quarter-speed, and ran back to pick up those of the crews who were still struggling and swimming for their lives.

Out of eighty men they only succeeded in saving twenty-four, and these they took back to the leading troopship as prisoners of war. They confessed that they had heard of the movements of the troopships from spies in England, and had come out to sink them. But whether they had done this by the order, or even with the sanction, of the French Government they flatly refused to tell.

The result of this, the first warlike action of the *Nautilus*, proved to be of immense importance. When France woke up the next morning there were ten thousand British troops in Antwerp. The French press stormed in its usual hysterical fashion, but war was not declared. For the time being, at any rate, the rapid and well-planned move was checkmate in the game that the two Governments were playing.

Of course, all sorts of rumours were soon flying about concerning the exploit of the *Nautilus*, but officially nothing was said on either side. The ram went on her way to Elswick and shipped her guns, torpedo armament, and ammunition, and underwent a thorough overhauling at the hands of Armstrong's most experienced engineers.

Sir Harry, Adams, and Mr. Austen at once applied themselves to the task of getting the various parts of the twenty air-ships into the hands of the different firms who where to construct them, and orders were given at Elswick for the building of another ram on the lines of the *Nautilus*, while that redoubtable craft was taken round to Southampton in readiness to sally forth into the Atlantic on receipt of the first news by ship or

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cable of the appearance of the *Destroyer* on the high seas, or to act as torpedo-boat destroyer and scout in case of an outbreak of hostilities with France, and any attempt on the southern coast.

In this way a month and then two months passed, and still they waited in vain for any sign of the pirate who a few weeks before had been the terror of the Atlantic. She had disappeared as utterly as though a shot from one of the big guns of a battle-ship had blown her out of the water. Liners went to and fro unmolested, and even the air-ship that had given such terrible evidence of its powers had evinced no further sign of its existence.

A series of crushing naval defeats in Eastern waters had shown Russia the folly of measuring her strength afloat with the Power that was still the mistress of the seas. France, isolated by the alliance of Britain, Belgium, Germany, Austria, and Italy, still withheld her hand, chiefly in consequence of the wisdom and strength of President Casimir-Périer, who had set his face like flint against war save in defence of territory, and so the combatants waited until the breaking up of the ice in the Baltic or the forcing of the Dardanelles should enable Russia to make an effort to retrieve in the West the disasters she had sustained in the East.

(To be continued.)

AN ENGINE DRIVER'S STORY

MINE is a railway family. My father was an engine-driver when I first remembered him, and he stuck to the foot-plate till he was shunted by old age and rheumatism, and ended his days in the most comfortable siding we could make for him. By that time both my brother and I had qualified for men's work—been through the shops, and all that—and Jack, he'd blossomed into a full-blown goods driver, while I held a small stoker's berth.

"We were not working together at the time. I was firing on passenger work with a careful old driver, who'd never hardly had a black mark scored against him in all his time. We used to work a lot of mail trains through between London and Seatown. One night, when it was just time to get out of the shed and take the seven o'clock express, one of the cleaners comes running to me to say, 'Jim, old So-and-so's took suddenly bad, and the doctor says he won't do any more driving for days to come. You'd better see the superintendent.'

"Well, I trots off to the office, and when I got there, to my big surprise, I found the boss talking to my brother Jack. He'd just come in off a journey, and the superintendent was telling him he'd have to work the express through that night. 'Here's your brother,' says he, 'will be with you, and you both of you know the road thoroughly well. You're about the only man on the spot that I can trust, and when I tell you that my own wife and little ones are going down by the seven o'clock you'll see how much confidence I have in you.'

"Now, Jack, he'd never drove an express before, but orders were orders, and we were nearly a minute behind as it was. So off we goes to the shed, Jack putting on the pea-jacket he's just taken off, and shouting to one of the lads to get him a tin bottle of tea and a crust. When we started out we were nearly three minutes over the time, and it was one of those journeys where we had to look lively at ordinary times. We had to pull up those minutes somewhere on the line, and we went in to make the engine do her level best over a bit of straight road when we knew everything would be clear for a run of fifteen miles.

"We had got her up to a speed of over sixty miles an hour. We were fairly flying, and the old lady went leaping along like a greyhound. It's thundering hard work, let me tell you, is firing on a job like that. You'd hardly believe how the coals are gobbled up before you've hardly got them into the furnace.

"And a driver wants just two pairs of eyes and three hands, besides a cool brain to look after his work, let me tell you. It looks easy enough to stand there and hang on to a lever, and just keep your eyes open for signals, but an engine wants just as much humouring as a racehorse; and the quicker you go, the more she wants watching

"Well, Jack had just started the whistle in the usual way as we ran into a tunnel two miles long when a dreadful thing happened. The connecting rod on the right side of the engine broke, and I just heard Jack give one terrific yell as he saw it fly up and inwards, when something seemed to come down upon me like forty thousand tons of pain and blackness, and I knew no more about it. I never heard exactly how it happened, but Jack said that everything seemed to go to pieces in front and around him, and he lost his senses too.

"He woke up presently—it could only have been a second or two—in awful agony, burnt and scalded and almost blind, to find himself lying on the tender, with the flesh all peeled off his hands. And then he remembered how the engine was rushing away to certain smash if he couldn't manage to get to the valve and shut off steam.

"He said afterwards that he could see the whole of the people in the carriages like as in a mental photograph, laughing and chatting and carrying on, unconscious of the danger in front of them; and especially he thought of the superintendent's little yellow-haired chickabiddy and his good-natured wife, cuddling up in each other's arms as we had seen them just before we started.

"How he did it he never could tell, for besides the rest of the damage one of his legs was badly broken; but he crawled down from the top of the coals, right into the blinding steam that kept on escaping from the broken gauge, and shut off the steam and wound down the brake. There was no Westinghouse then, and all we'd got was the old-fashioned style of thing.

"When the front guard jumped out to see what was the matter, he found that Jack had fallen insensible in the six-foot way. As for me, they picked me up nearly a mile back of where the train came to a stand, and the pair of us were taken away to the nearest house, while the guard went to the next signal-box and got them to telegraph for help.

"It was many a weary week before I was able to get about; and poor Jack, he lay between life and death for weeks longer. But he pulled through, and I must say that all the time we lay bad nobody could have been kinder than the officials of the company. As soon as we could go they sent us down to Seatown, and there we lived like fighting-cocks till we were on the upward grade again.

"At last, when we were just beginning to go for short walks together and pick up a bit, there came a sudden message that we were wanted at a meeting in the Assembly Rooms, and off we toddled, wondering what it could be about. When we got there, the room was nearly full of gentlefolks, and there was the chairman of the line and the mayor of the town on the platform, and a whole crowd of directors and other swells around them, with our superintendent and his wife and daughter. As soon as we entered there was such a hooray as you never heard before, and we were pushed along to the

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platform and helped up the steps before we'd time to ask a question. Then they gave us a seat each, and the chairman of the line he got up to speak.

"Well, to cut it short, it turned out there'd been a collection made, and there was a gold watch and chain for Jack on the table, and a silver ditto for me, and a nice new silk purse chock full of sovereigns for my brother, and a crisp ten-pound note for yours truly.

"Then Jack, he gets up and rubs the tears away with his sleeve, and he lifts up the child and kisses her. But he wouldn't take the money. Instead of that, he takes hold of one ringlet of her pretty hair, and says, quite quiet like, 'Can I have this instead, ma'am?'

"And the superintendent's wife, she says, 'To be sure you can!'

"And then they cheered again and again, till you'd have thought the roof would split, and Jack and me were driven home to our lodgings in the mayor's carriage, and there was no end of a to-do. And when we were well enough there was a big dinner in Jack's honour amongst the publicans of the town, and another from the Aquarium people, and free tickets for us to everything in the place; and the ladies were sending him presents of books, and a harmonium, and all kinds of nice things, till you couldn't rest until the nine days' wonder was over. And then they forgot us just as punctually as they always do in such cases.

"Did I refuse to take my ten-pound note? What do *you* think? No. I always admired Jack, both before and since those times; but, if ever there was a soft-hearted fool—well, no matter. We're not all made of the same metal, you see; and p'rhaps it's as well we're not. It's all over and done with now."

BON GARÇON

HERE is a little corner in Southern Italy where Arcady still lingers. Once I was in the habit of spending every spring there, but I shall never go again. Yet it is to me the most beautiful place in the world.

One lands at the Marina and climbs the hill winding up, up, the long, white highroad, which is like a shelf along the edge of the cliff. High above one's head hangs the mountain, leaning forward stark and grim; below the wall of the road the ground falls sheer away to the sea. One sees nothing but the great, shining plain and the threatening mountain.

Round and round curves the road between those two silent, watching enemies, till suddenly, without any warning, one reaches the plateau and comes out in a land of desire. It is only to climb a wall and then to walk onward without let or hindrance through the wheat-fields, under the olives, where the young green wheat-blades are like swords for keenness, and their colour strikes on the soul like a song too sweet for words, and yet brave withal.

And below the wheat on the lower terraces are the bean-fields, sweet and heavy, where a man may lie full length on the short grass of the thread-like paths and feel nothing but the warm odours, the little winds over the blossoms, be conscious of nothing but the glory of the wheat, the flickering shades of the gnarled olives in the afternoon light, and, if he lies still enough, the sound of the nightingale learning its song. And yet he may be sick at heart.

As I lay there the livelong April day, neither reading nor thinking, nor grateful to God for His wind and fields of wheat, but with my fingers in my ears to shut out the sound of the nightingale's song. For, instead of a young springtide, I saw nothing but a woman in white from head to feet, with bare arms and shoulders, a wreath of brown winter ivy round her golden head, and a great garland of it on her gown.

There she stood and looked at me with a straight, grave glance—not the look she gave me as a rule; I found that out soon enough, for if ever there was a coquette it was she—Suzon. I used to watch her often as she talked to men with that quick grace she had, and being used to analysing faces—it is my profession, for that matter, I who am a doctor—I saw that she, whom most women hated for her lovers, whom most men adored and thought a soft, warm plaything, a true woman, was in reality as cold as a stone image.

It was a pretty play that went on around her, with often a change in the *jeune premier*, but she did not act in it herself. She piped carelessly, and all her court danced, but she neither grew warm nor weary.

I am not sure how I came to be so friendly with her; I think she began it. I am sure I should not have presumed. But we fell into a way of walking over the hills together and sitting on the cliffs in the noondays, looking out over a sea like to the glory of God for light and colour, talking of many things sometimes, sometimes silent, lying in the sun—I with my hat over my eyes, drinking in the scenes of the spring air, just seeing the splendour of a bush of yellow broom standing out against a violent sea; she with her head flung back on the short dry grasses, often with a cigarette in her mouth.

As the days went by we grew quietly nearer one another—insensibly, till one evening I asked her something.

The fact was, all the place was ringing with her doings. The men with whom she had amused herself for a time, not all being gentlemen, handled her name in the *cafés* without too much courtesy. And the women had always hated her for her beauty, her toilets, her artistic reputation. Young as she was, she had had a mention at the Salon.

So I asked her if it really amused her enough to be worth the price.

She shook her head.

When she was not painting she grew horribly *ennui*; she must do something. And then it was not all her fault, she said.

"It is to a great extent," I told her. "You lead men on horribly. As soon as they make love to you they disgust you. You fling them over none too gently, and, well—they talk."

She nodded. I fancy she knew quite well what sort of reputation she had. But presently she said with amusement:

"So you do not care about me, do you?"

"I like you so much that I do not care to have them speak of you as they do. You are always *bon garçon* to me," I cried, turning sharply on her. "Why cannot you translate it literally, and be a 'good boy' always? Drop your coquetry, take life frankly; you would do better."

She did not answer.

The sun was hot, she began to look tired and said she had work to do, and must go home. I thought she did not like what I had said. But I walked to her villa with her, and as I stood in the loggia and bade her good-bye, she put her hand into mine.

Something prompting me, I said very low:

"Be a good boy."

She looked me in the face.

"I will," she said, as though she were making a vow.

And she did, I know, for I never again saw in her that light manner which I had always disliked; I never again heard her talking to men as I had heard her often enough.

And we were rather more together than ever. She would

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not let me treat her as a woman; she was the only woman I ever knew who knew the meaning of *camaraderie*.

But my relation to her was getting all pose, and I knew it.

"*Mon camarade, mon beau garçon*, my friend," I said to her; in my soul I called her, "*Mon rose blonde, ma cherie.*"

I made up my mind to go away; it was all I could do. She knew nothing about my wife, and of course I knew I must tell her.

So one very windy, unpleasant day, as we were sitting in a little sheltered cove on the shore, I screwed my courage to the sticking point and told her I must go to Rome.

I had had a very tiresome letter and was out of tune, like the day, and I did not say it nicely.

"Why do you go?" she asked, looking at me where she sat, close against the eternal rock, the glorious strong sea crashing and foaming at her very feet.

I threw a stone into the water and waited to see where it fell. Then I said, quite steadily—

"Because there is no use in my staying."

"Certainly not; since you are well enough to go back," she assented (for I go to my Arcady, because I do not sleep in Rome). Yet I knew she had understood me.

She threw a stone into an incoming wave in her turn, then she spoke slowly and carefully:

"Are you going back to your wife?" she asked.

"Who told you?" said I, not having voice for more.

"The princess, I think. The morning you came into the studio and she was there."

I seldom entered Suzon's house. One morning I had gone to ask her about photographing a picture, I remembered, and Princess Mathilde was there.

"What did she say?" I asked.

"Precisely? She said what a handsome man you were, and what a sad story yours was."

"Ah!" I said stupidly.

"Where is your wife?" Suzon spoke with careful civility. "I suppose you will join her in Rome?"

"My wife, mademoiselle, suffers from incurable homicidal mania."

"I beg your pardon," said my comrade softly, and held out her hand.

I took it as it was offered, and let it go again.

She did not ask me any more, nor did I tell her. Of what use was it to say that three times had that woman tried to murder me when crazed by drink, till her own people had had her shut up? Or why should I say to my *bon garçon* that I had only that day received a letter from the doctor at the asylum, telling me that my wife had escaped, and he did not know where she was; could I tell him of any haunt in which she was likely to be found?

I saw no sense in telling all this to Suzon. When a man at the age of twenty-three marries a woman thirteen years older, and finds out soon after that, besides being addicted to drinking, she is of unsound mind and makes festive attempts to murder him, she and her doings are not a subject on which he is likely to dwell. So I held my tongue.

I never thought she could find me out in my present land, though she had been there once with me long ago. I never thought that, in her mad hatred, she would remember how I invariably spent the spring months there after my winter's work. But I fancied I should find her in Rome.

"What are you going to do?" I asked Suzon.

"Work," she said quietly.

She never spoke of it, but I knew she painted for her bread, and that she had no idea of saving money, but lived from hand to mouth. So I was anxious about her. I could not trust myself to think about it. I would keep *au courant* with her doings; that was all I could do for her, though I knew she was horribly poor, and the life of a beautiful woman in Paris is not easy in that case.

"We will have one more walk before I go," I said to Suzon, and she said "Yes."

So the next day we walked up the terraced high road, up and up till we reached the olives and the wheat, and then the bean-fields, and, wandering on at our own sweet wills, were happy and innocent.

We sat down at last on the long grass at the edge of the cliff overhanging the sea, where a little wind came up to us.

We did not speak of this being our last day; we talked as usual, comrade to comrade, while a nightingale somewhere about kept trying his voice in broken ecstasies.

It was like heaven.

I lay on the grass; Suzon, not far off, read Leopardi aloud. Why she chose that philosophy of despair, she who had still some joy in life, I do not know. But presently I ceased to hear her voice. I do not sleep at night, and, like all people who have insomnia, am utterly unable sometimes to keep from falling into a deep sleep, especially in the open air.

And so I did that day. And while I slept that woman must have been creeping up to us. For I started, dazed, from my sleep to see Suzon struggling in the grasp of a mad woman on the very verge of the cliff!

Of course I knew who it was. I was on my feet like a flash, but not in time; for before I could reach her, I saw my comrade flung out over that awful height.

Then two men who had been working in the fields came running and caught my wife. I did not wait to hear them tell how they had seen her creep up to me, not seeing I was not alone; how, just as she held the knife at my back, Suzon had leaped like a cat and caught it from her hand, and how my wife had turned on her. All that I heard afterwards. Now I ran down that zigzag path to the shore and knelt by my little comrade.

I thought she was dead, for nearly every bone in her body was broken and her eyes were closed in stupor. I groped for her heart with my hand (I who had never touched her). She was alive, for I felt it stir, and then she opened her eyes and looked at me.

She knew me, but she did not, I think, remember where she was or what had happened. The poor lips tried to speak and failed.

"Try again, my darling!" I cried. "Tell me, are you in pain?" though I did not think she was, for her back was broken.

"Say it again," she whispered.

"What?" I wondered.

In despair I called her by every name I had for her, and had never used except to my own soul.

"My darling, my love!"

"What you said—I always was—to you," she gasped fretfully.

"My comrade, *mon bon garçon*," I said, hardly able to get the words out.

"*Bon gar*——"

The murmur died in her throat and her eyes closed. Presently I could no longer feel her heart. When I knew she was dead I took her in my arms and carried her up to the little plateau, full of wondering peasants, where the gendarmes were taking away my wife. But I did not see them; I went straight to her house, and laid her gently on her bed.

It is two years since then. My wife is shut up once more, safely watched now that it does not matter.

I am at my work. Sometimes I am so tired that I can hardly undress at night—actually too tired to sleep.

But this spring I longed so for my old Arcady that I came in spite of myself. It is all the same, all—yet to-day I lay face downward in the fields, and if I lifted my head I could not see the young wheat for tears.

HOW TO SUCCEED.

Under this title a most interesting and instructive series of articles has just been commenced in the columns of *PEARSON'S WEEKLY*. The series will embrace the opinions of the editors of the chief trade papers on the all-important subject of "Success in Business and How Best it can be Obtained." Each trade will be taken in turn, and some most valuable advice will be given by men of life-long experience. Articles upon the following trades are already in hand: Grocer, Butcher, Tailor, Saddler, Dairyman, Publican, Newsagent, Tobacconist, Laundryman, Hosier and Glover.

PEARSON'S WEEKLY, ONE PENNY. EVERY SATURDAY.

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AFTER dinner at the First Avenue Hotel, we retired to a cosy corner of the smoking room, my newly made American acquaintance and I.

"To resume the subject we were discussing at the table," he began, "let me give you an instance that came across my notice some years ago.

"It wasn't the first affair of honour that I had had to do with in one way and another, but not even the first had unnerved me like this did.

"My friend, Paul Graham, was a young lawyer. We had played together in infancy and we were chums at college. We spent our vacations together, shooting and fishing.

"More than once I had heard him declare that in his opinion duelling was morally and socially wrong. Once I asked him:

"'Would you refuse a challenge?'

"'I shall never send one,' he answered, 'and it would be cowardice in me to accept one.'

"'But——'

"'I have not answered the question, you are about to object. I cannot answer it in a word. If I ever accept a challenge it will be for the simple reason that I am afraid of what people would think and say.'

"All this I remembered when the affair with William Cuthbert came up. Graham sent for me. I knew he would. There was little to say, except that Cuthbert's friend, Milam, had called upon him, Graham, that afternoon.

"'There is only one thing for me to do. Will you carry my answer?' he said.

"It did look cold-blooded. This man was—well, he was sacrificing himself. Cuthbert was a crack shot and had killed his man. Graham was a miserably poor shot and a novice.

"'Will you carry my answer?'

"'On condition that you consent to my arrangements as to the distance, and that you promise me, upon your honour as a gentleman, to shoot to kill.'

"'Do as you please.'

"'Good. Well, thank Commodore Decatur for the suggestion, and make the most of it. And promise me that you will kill him if you can.'

"He shook his head.

"'You know what I believe about these matters. I shall not try to hit him in any event. If I killed him it would be murder.'

"'Idiot! And what would it be if he killed you?'

"'Murder.'

"Of course, I refused to have anything to do with the matter. In fact I came near going to Cuthbert and explaining the situation fully in gross violation of confidence. I didn't know what to do, and finally did nothing but lose some sleep over it. I even refused to go as surgeon; but consented reluctantly when Graham insisted.

"His second was an ass named Morrow—a consummate ass! He agreed to ten paces, when he might have known that Cuthbert's being disconcerted—as the British officer was by Decatur's arrangement in behalf of the midshipman, by bringing the principals together—was Graham's only chance.

"For many reasons then, I was low-spirited that morning. Our ride was as solemn as a funeral procession.

"Cuthbert and his friends had just reached the grounds when we arrived.

"No time was lost in making ready. Graham's second lost the toss for position, of course. Even yet the thought of that—but my opinion of Morrow, beyond question the most addle-pated of imbeciles, is not material to the narrative. He lost the toss. That much is relevant. I never lost the toss in my life. Never!

"'One—two——!'

"Then a very irregular and somewhat dramatic thing happened. Graham raised his left hand, meaning that a halt must be made for some reason. Was it, could it be cowardice? Was he afraid to be shot at? In an instant I knew better, because I knew him so well, but the others didn't.

"'Jim,' he said, without moving from his tracks, 'come here a second.'

"Cuthbert and Milam bowed their consent.

"I went to Graham's side. In a perfectly steady voice he asked for a piece of paper. As I tore a page from a small notebook he put his pistol carefully under his left arm and drew a pencil from his pocket. He scribbled a few words and then folded the paper.

"'Keep that,' he said to me.

"I drew aside, thinking less about this singular interruption than about Graham's manner. There was absolutely no trace of faltering. His face was firm. But something in his very deliberation and coolness was wrong—a stiffness, a sort of paralysis that could not be defined. His movements had a mechanical, an automatic appearance.

"'I am very sorry to have been obliged to interrupt,' said Graham quietly. 'I am quite ready now. You had counted two.'

"'Three—fire!'

"My friend drew his hand to his breast at the report of Cuthbert's pistol and came near falling. He steadied himself grandly and fired without aim, at random. Then he fell.

"I cut open his shirt, and saw at once that the wound was very serious—not necessarily fatal, so far as a superficial examination showed, but with the chances against recovery.

"'You'd better get over the line,' I said to Cuthbert. 'He is likely to die.'

"Graham revived a bit, and tried to whisper my name.

"Brusqueness is a characteristic of mine; frankness is another. On this exceptional occasion I was reasonably smooth spoken, and I lied to my patient. I told him that he was in no real danger.

"'Cuthbert?' he questioned in a barely audible tone as I leaned over him.

"'Why,' said I, 'there he is.'

"'Is he hurt?'

"'No. Can't you see him right over my shoulder?'

"'I—I was afraid—I might—might have hit him.'

"Then for the first time I looked closely into Graham's eyes. They were blank, sightless. I remembered the case of his father, remarkable from a professional standpoint, who was suddenly stricken with blindness. This had happened to the wounded man.

"Suddenly, I thought of the note he had given me. It was the single sentence:

"'I am blind.'

"And yet they thought this man had hesitated through fear! They had sneered at his awkwardness!

"'Jim,' he said earnestly, though still in a broken whisper, 'if God spares my life I shall go to preaching, and I'll stop duelling, disgrace or no disgrace.'

"He kept his word, as he always did. His first convert to the Anti-Duelling League was William Cuthbert."

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Should Stout Persons STARVE THEMSELVES?

We are afraid that semi-starvation as a cure for corpulency prevails very much to a dangerous degree. Mr. Archer, the late well-known prominent jockey, was in the habit of going without food for a long stretch in order that he could ride a certain horse at its weight, and there is not much doubt that the debility resulting from this habit of abstemiousness was certainly not conducive to combating the dire attack of fever, which was, perhaps, indirectly responsible for the untimely end, in the zenith of his fame, of this unfortunate but accomplished horseman. Even Mary Jane in the kitchen will eat sparingly of the food allowed her, while she will seek to reduce her fat by copious draughts from the vinegar cruet, and succeeds only in injuring the coats of her stomach—the forerunner of dyspeptic trouble which will be difficult to overcome.

The Continental medicos seem to advocate this great reduction of ordinary foods, but one of these savants suggests that the stout person should eat considerably of fatty meats, in order that the appetite be appeased, and consequently less food required, so that practically this is indirectly advocating semi-starvation. On the other hand, Mr. Russell, the British specialist, takes a different course. He says, "Eat as much as you like," and as it is an acknowledged fact that under his treatment persons lose from 2 lb. to 12 lb. per week, it beyond doubt stands out pre-eminent against those so-called starvation cures "made in Germany." Some claim that Mr Russell has to insist upon his patients drinking hot water every morning, but on the contrary he avers that it is dangerous to do so, and has, of course, never advised it. No; the success of Mr. Russell's treatment is incomparably beyond other specialists, for he resorts to no stringent dietary, and simply prescribes a harmless vegetable tonic combination which is the outcome of years of study and botanical research. We advise all those interested in this question to get this book, the price of which is only 4d. It is entitled, "Corpulency and the Cure," 256 pp., and is published by him at Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. It can be had direct, or through any bookseller.—*The Million.*

A POSITIVE REMEDY FOR CORPULENCE

Any remedy that can be suggested as a cure or alleviation for stoutness will be heartily welcomed. We have recently received a well-written book, the author of which seems to know what he is talking about. It is entitled "Corpulency and the Cure," 256 pages, and is a cheap issue (only 4d.) published by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. Our space will not do justice to this book; send for it yourself. It appears that Mr. Russell has submitted all kinds of proofs to the English Press. The editor of the *Tablet*, the Catholic organ, writes:—"Mr. Russell does not give us the slightest loophole for a doubt as to the value of his cure, for, in the most straightforward and matter-of-fact manner, he submitted some hundreds of original and unsolicited testimonial letters for our perusal, and offered us plenty more, if required. To assist him to make this remedy known, we think we cannot do better than publish quotations from some of the letters submitted. The first one, a marchioness, writes from Madrid:—'My son, Count ——, has reduced his weight in twenty-two days 16 kilos—*i.e.*, 34 lbs.' Another writes:—'So far (six weeks from commencement of following your system) I have lost fully two stone in weight.' The next (a lady) writes:—'I am just half the size.' A fourth:—'I find it is successful in my case. I have lost 8 lbs. in weight since I commenced (two weeks).' Another writes:—'A reduction of 18 lbs. in a month is a great success.' A lady from Bournemouth writes:—"I feel much better, have less difficulty in breathing, and can walk about.' Again a lady says:—"It reduced me considerably, not only in the body, but all over.' The author is very positive. He says:—'Step on a weighing machine on Monday morning and again on Tuesday, and I guarantee that you have lost 2 lbs. in weight without the slightest harm, and vast improvement in health through ridding the system of unhealthy accumulations.'"—*Cork Herald.*

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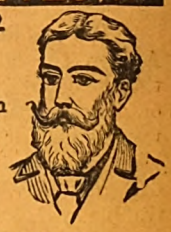

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Parents will not realize the fatal error of neglecting the first symptoms of delicacy in their children. Looking at the matter from a purely selfish point of view, it is a considerable saving to one's purse, for medical authorities all admit that one single dose of medicine given in time will be worth 999 after the mischief is done. Once allow the seeds of ill-health to sprout, and remember you will have a harvest to cope with.

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Because your children are delicate and weak, do not imagine for a moment that they need remain so, for youth responds readily to a tonic treatment.

No matter how undermined the constitution may be, it can be permanently reconstructed by putting new blood tonically into the system.

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ONCE BOUGHT, ALWAYS BOUGHT.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 311.] FOR WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 15, 1894. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

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THE NEW "ECLIPSE" MODEL STEAM ENGINE.—The rage of the Season. These wonderful Engines work with a real oscillating cylinder (which if purchased by itself cost 1s.), strong metal boiler, funnel, large fly wheel, with pulley wheel attached for working other models, furnace, and filler complete. Carriage free 1s. 6d. Smaller size 1s.

Don't miss this grand opportunity.

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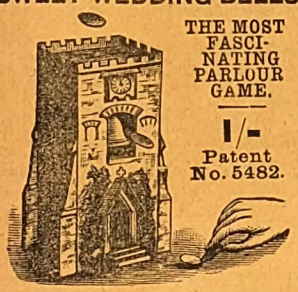

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 311.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 15, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

BLACK MINTY

SHE who told the story was a beautiful lady, with eyes blacker and softer than those of any antelope, and she began in a low, musical voice, almost as though she were speaking to herself, while all her party, sitting outside the Métropole at Brighton, bent forward eagerly to listen.

"When I was a girl, and lived with Uncle William in America on his plantation in Old Virginia, I used to read in the Northern papers that Southern masters were cruel to their slaves, and laugh. So far as I knew, masters and mistresses were very kind to their people, and for their own sakes never hurt them so as to impair their value. Uncle William never did, nor Aunt Laura.

"They were an idle, good-natured, soft-voiced couple, who never took the trouble to be angry, and who agreed in everything—particularly in averring that 'niggers' were necessary evils, who must be taken care of, and were a great expense and torment.

"Once or twice I knew the overseer had whipped Dick, or Sam, or Ned—refractory field-hands who either shammed illness or were impertinent—but that was no more to be thought of twice than the wise flogging of a dog or horse for its own good. And, when a few were sold, it was natural the rest should not like it. As a general thing, uncle bought, rather than sold. He liked to keep his servants about him, and had a host of old, helpless creatures to support, who certainly never did anything but cut up wood or nurse the black babies.

"He was called a 'kind massa,' for I have heard the slaves so speak of him a hundred times, and, I suppose, never fancied that he did not do more than his duty to those beneath his care.

"The house servants were legion, and the one among them whom I liked best and remembered longest was old Aunt Jennie. She was black as ink, and her kinky wool was snow-white. On her head she always wore a tall, bright-coloured 'kerchief,' and in her ears two great hoops of gold—a present from my aunt. Her province was to cook, and such corn-bread was never made as that of old Aunt Jennie. She was mistress of her art, and proud of it beyond everything in the world, except her daughter.

She was a bright mulatto.

"That daughter was three years older than myself, and waited on my aunt. She was a bright mulatto, and as handsome as anyone with a taint of negro blood could be. She had a singular disposition. We should have called her proud had she been a white lady; as it was, she earned the title 'sulky.' Whatever she felt she kept to herself, and even when ill hid the fact as long as possible. Once she fainted while braiding my aunt's hair, without having let us guess how weak and ill she was.

"I liked Minty. She was handy at my toilet, and could do things daintily and quickly; and with a girl's instinct, I suppose, I found out first that Colonel Garronne's man Ned was her chief favourite. On holidays he used to come and see her, and afterwards she would be all smiles and blushes; and once, when I asked her who gave her a bright blue handkerchief she wore about her neck, she answered:

"'The colonel's Ned, Miss.'

"On plantations in slavery days many a slave had a wife who lived miles away, and whom he only saw now and then, and I made up my mind Ned was going to marry Minty. About that time dreams of weddings and bridegrooms may have been oftener in my head, because I had just met the only gentleman I had ever much admired in my life. My uncle did not favour him, but my aunt admired his fair bright face and tender blue eyes, and told me in a whisper that we would make a pretty couple. And, pretty or not, we were going to like each other very well.

"Every day told me that, and at last I owned to myself that when he asked for my heart I could not say no. So after a long winter passed, for the most part, in each other's company, I found myself one day with my hand in his, and, though I had not said one word, he bent over me and whispered:

"'My own for ever!'

"We were betrothed, and, though my uncle was not pleased, he gave his consent, for nothing could be said against Mr. Lathrope.

"Those were happy days, and it is not to be wondered that I grew selfishly wrapped up in my own hopes, and took little notice of others, especially when those others were slaves.

"I fancy Minty had been 'sulking' a good while, when I suddenly discovered her want of spirits, and asked old Jennie what ailed her.

"'Pears like Ned's massa don't let him come no more,' said Jennie. 'Some says he's soldiering. I dunno; we don't see nuffin' ob him.'

"If anything could have touched me just then, it was the picture of two lovers parted from each other. I made inquiries. Ned was sold—miles away. I did not tell Minty. What was the use? But every day Minty grew quieter, and crept about more like a ghost.

"My aunt complained, and declared she was tired of sulks. I interfered.

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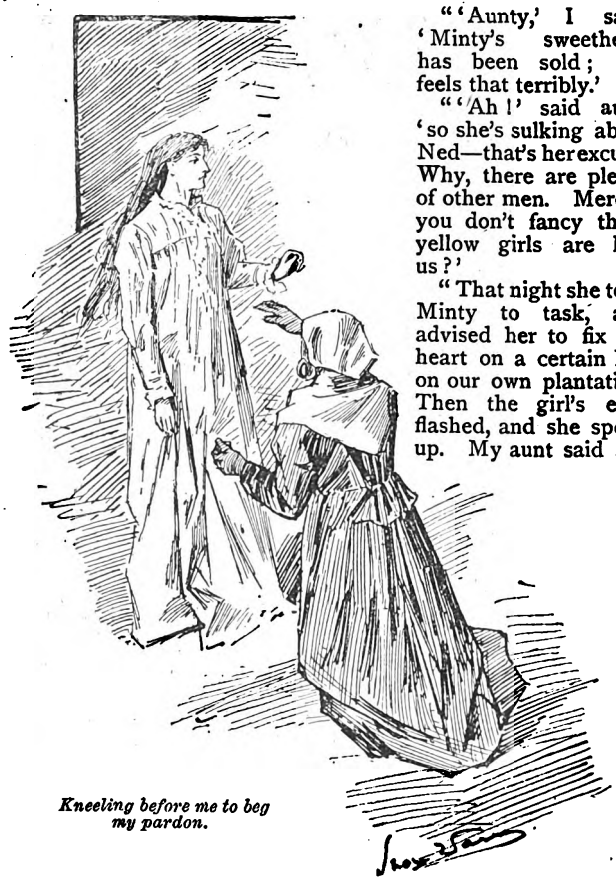

Kneeling before me to beg my pardon.

"'Aunty,' I said, 'Minty's sweetheart has been sold; she feels that terribly.'

"'Ah!' said aunt, 'so she's sulking about Ned—that's her excuse! Why, there are plenty of other men. Mercy! you don't fancy these yellow girls are like us?'

"That night she took Minty to task, and advised her to fix her heart on a certain Bill on our own plantation. Then the girl's eyes flashed, and she spoke up. My aunt said she had never heard such impertinence from a nigger, and seemed quite alarmed.

"Minty was sent back to the kitchen in disgrace, and my aunt had a whispered conference with my uncle. I heard her say:

"'I agree at last; she's done it herself. I am afraid of her in her tantrums.'

"I might have guessed the truth from those words—and from what followed.

. . . . . .

"In the moonlight—the beautiful moonlight of Virginia—I stood upon the porch waiting for Mr. Lathrope, when a coarse laugh from my uncle's study startled me, and in a moment he came out, accompanied by a neighbour of ours—a vulgar brute, whose money was his only recommendation.

"I shrank to one side to avoid him, and, as they passed, heard through the tangled creepers that concealed me a brief conversation.

"'It's a bargain,' said my uncle. 'She's worth double the sum, Mr. Evans.'

"'I don't know about that,' said the other. 'But she's a likely gal; I don't begrudge her price.'

"And then they said good-night and parted.

"I knew a slave had been sold, but never guessed which one, or why.

"My wedding day was fast approaching. A white robe and veil lay ready, and my uncle and aunt were going to the nearest city on business connected with that time.

"I knew this, and knew that Minty was also to go with my aunt—that was usual—and I saw them leave the door without suspicion.

"The carriage did not return until dusk; then, as I sat in the parlour reading, I heard it roll up, and soon my uncle's voice, in unusually cheerful tones, rang through the house. Before I could go to meet them, both he and my aunt came in.

"My uncle held a small parcel in his hand, and sat down opposite me, laughing.

"'Guess what this is, and you shall have it,' he said.

"My aunt laughed.

"'No, she never can.'

"'I'm not good at guessing, uncle,' said I; and he answered:

"'There, don't tease her, wife. Look, Puss,' and before me lay a casket, in which glittered a splendid set of diamond ornaments.

"'Your wedding present,' said he; 'we don't want your lover to take you quite a beggar.'

"'Oh! how good—how kind,' I said. 'They are lovely! Diamonds have always been my ambition; these are fit for a queen!' and I flashed them in the light.

"Our hands were all together over the casket, when, sudden as a flash of lightning a great black hand came down on the table between us, and an almost unearthly voice cried:

"'Massa, whar's Minty?'

"My aunt spoke quickly:

"'All safe, Jennie; what a fidget you are!'

"Jennie did not seem to hear her. She spoke again:

"'Massa, whar's my Minty?'

"'It's no use, wife,' said my uncle, 'she's bound to know sometime. Don't take on, Jennie, and I'll give you a new gown. Minty is sold—close by—to neighbour Evans. I needed money.'

"'Money! For dem?' asked Jennie, pointing to the diamonds.

"'Well, yes, for them,' replied uncle.

"And then quiet, pious old Jennie, from whose lips we had never heard an evil word in all our lives, went down upon her knees and cursed us all in such awful language, she made my blood run cold with horror. My aunt fainted, and my uncle rang for the men. They carried the old woman off, still cursing us, and left her, as they said, to 'sleep it off.'

"My heart was as heavy as lead. I hated the diamonds; they seemed to burn my hand when I touched them. The old woman's words rang in my ears, and it was hours before I slept.

"When I did slumber I dreamed fearful dreams, and from one of them started awake with terror.

"The light was out, but the rays of the moon fell through the window on the floor, and over it, snakelike, crept a figure.

"I thought I was dreaming again. It seemed too frightful to be true. But in a moment I felt, as well as saw, old Jennie standing there with a long knife in her hand. Her hand was on my throat, her eyes glittered on me, the knife descended, but at that juncture I caught her wrist. She struggled, but was too old to match my young strength.

"I took the knife from her, flung it through the window, and stood over her as she grovelled on the floor.

I spread the money before her.

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"'Jennie,' said I, 'did you intend to murder me? What have I ever done to you?'

"'You sold my chile for dem shiney stones,' said she. 'I hates you; I wishes you was dead. You'd ha' been if you hadn't woke. Sold my gal to dat white brute. Lord! I wisht you was dead!'

"'Jennie,' said I, 'it was not my fault. I knew no more than you. I had rather never have a jewel than have them bought so. Do you know, while I lay awake I was thinking of poor Minty?'

"The old woman lifted her head.

"''Pears like young missus speaks de trufe,' she said.

"'I do, Jennie.'

"'Lord bress you den; but cuss massa all de same! Oh! my purty Minty—she hates dat brute so!'

"'Jennie,' said I, 'you know I could have you punished.'

"'Yes, missee.'

"'But I will not. Be quiet and respectful to my aunt, and I will promise you that Minty shall be bought back.'

"'Oh, missee!—Lord bress missee! only massa won't.'

"'I know it, Jennie; but *I* will.'

"'Oh! when, missee—when?'

"'To-morrow.'

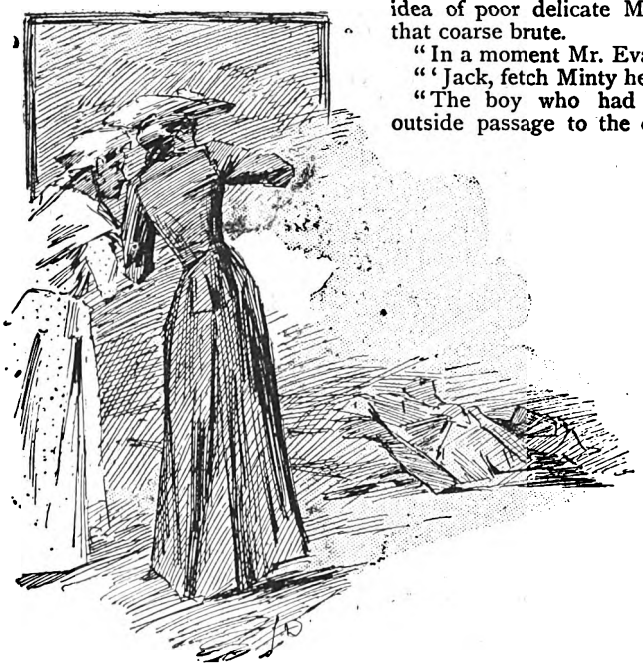
"So, kneeling first before me to beg my pardon, she crept out of the room, and I, locking my door, slept until morning.

"At daylight I rose, and taking my diamonds and a valuable watch, dressed myself for a journey, and started towards the nearest town. I knew a wealthy old jeweller in that place, and to him I went at once, offering my jewels for sale, with the remark that the money could be spent in more useful things.

"Diamonds were his hobby; he bought those without demur, and the watch, as he said, to please me. I returned to our home with a little fortune in my purse, which I grasped all the way with both hands, as though all the world knew its contents.

"I called Jennie into my room, and spread the money before her.

"'Look!' said I; 'I have sold those diamonds, and now I am going to buy Minty back. She will be all my own, and no one will have a right to sell her, for I shall give her her freedom. Are you sorry you tried to kill me, Jennie?'



"Jennie sobbed and prayed for me, and helped me with her trembling hands to attire myself in my riding habit; then she followed me to the door, and watche ' me as I rode away. Half an hour after I saw her creeping along by Mr. Evans' garden-gate, trying to hide from me as I dismounted.

"'Jennie,' I said, 'you ought not to be here. It can do you no good.'

"'I knows it, missee,' said Jennie, 'but please let me stay here until she comes. 'Pears like I'll go crazy.'

"I could not deny her, and without another word rode up to the door.

"'Mr. Evans in?' I asked the boy who opened it, and he answered in the affirmative. After a short absence he returned, and our neighbour followed him.

"His brutal face was flushed, his eyes were bright with rage. He could hardly command himself sufficiently to address me politely. But he made an effort.

"'Good day, Miss Thurston. Happy to see you.'

"'I'm glad of that,' said I, coquettishly, 'for I've come to ask you a favour.

"'Indeed,' said he; 'most happy to oblige you, I'm sure.'

"He waited.

"I smiled on him—the only way with this man was flattery.

"'No lady ever found Mr. Evans anything but gallant,' I said. 'I want to buy Minty back; she's my maid, you know, and no one else can do my hair.'

"The man's face turned almost black with rage. But for the fact that even a brutal South American never uses an oath in a woman's presence, he would have burst into a volley of execrations.

"At last he found voice for decent language, and said:

"'What you want of such a sulky nigger I don't know, but I'll sell her back and welcome. She's had three trouncings for impudence since she came, and I locked her up an hour ago in the cellar. You can have her back at the price I gave.'

"My heart leaped with joy. I asked the sum, and counted out the money. While he gathered it up, I caught sight of old Jennie's face among the bushes, and nodded 'Yes.' I saw her black hands clasped in prayer, and felt very thankful. It was only by an effort, however, that I kept down my wrath at the idea of poor delicate Minty quivering under the lash of that coarse brute.

"In a moment Mr. Evans called:

"'Jack, fetch Minty here.'

"The boy who had opened the door went by an outside passage to the cellar, and called, 'Minty! hello, Minty!' twenty times.

"'Won't answer, massa,' he said, coming back, with a queer sort of expression on his face; 'sulky, I reckon.'

"'Sulky, eh? We'll see,' said Mr. Evans, as he strode towards the cellar, the black following.

"He vanished a momen from my sight; then came an exclamation of horror from the man, and a yell from the boy.

"'Oh, missus!—she's gone done it!' said a slave woman who was at work in the garden. 'Oh, poor soul! she's gone done it!' and she clasped her hands and burst into tears. One moment both stood petrified. Then we rushed toward the spot whence the cries had come, and were within the cellar.

"I heard Mr. Evans cry:

"'Keep the lady back; it's no sight for her.' He then took a step forward, but it was too late. I had had one glimpse of an awful object lying on the floor, with a knife in its dead hand. I heard the woman scream:

"'Poor Minty's cut her throat!'

"Then I saw the face of old Jennie at the door. After that I knew no more for many hours.

"By the time I was well enough to mingle once more with the family circle, I had passed too near the gates of death to be blamed for any act I had committed.

"The diamonds were never mentioned by either my uncle or my aunt. They told me only that poor Minty lay at rest in the churchyard, and that her black mother happily slept beside her.

"But I never forgot the scene; and years afterwards, when I was a happy wife in England, I rejoiced when the glad tidings reached me that the evils of slavery had been for ever abolished."

When she finished, a dead silence reigned over the little circle of listeners. Then they quietly dispersed, leaving the beautiful lady, looking far out over the sea, alone with her thoughts.

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PIERRE

—o—

THE burning sun of the Canadian summer was beating down upon the rock on which was perched the fortress-city of Quebec. The steep, narrow streets lay white and deserted beneath its heat, and from the river its light was reflected in a silvery glare. Even the lilies over the chateau hung drooping and lifeless. Particularly the sunlight fell through the high, curtainless windows of the Laval Seminary, where, in a large bare room, were gathered the children of the town. Father François was teaching them.

The father was tall and thin. His high, small forehead overhung his worn face, of which every feature marked the ascetic; every line and furrow told of self-conquest. He had come to the Canadas dreaming of Iroquois martyr-fires. He was fulfilling the will of his superiors in teaching the children of Quebec their *Aves* and *Paternosters;* yet he did not complain. It was but another thorn in the crown; the cross could not be far beyond, and he was patient.

On this day, however, he found his task terrible. The children were restless, almost umanageable. At last the crisis came; the fierce spirit within him was stirred and he started to his feet, his eyes blazing, his lips trembling with the words which anger would not let him utter. The children gazed on their master in fear, waiting for what would follow. The words came at last, but they were only:

"Ah, well, *mes enfants*, let us repeat our exercise. Now!"

The brown fingers were clasped, the little heads were bowed, and the shrill quavering treble of the children mingled with the firmer tones of the priest. Then there was a rush and a tumult. Father François waited only for the lame child who went out after the others to disappear before he should throw himself on his knees, when he saw one boy still sitting in his place.

"Come, Pierre, we are free," said the father, but the boy did not move. He sat with his chin resting upon his hands, and did not even look up. The father approached him, and laid his hand kindly upon his head.

"What is it, little Pierre?"

The child roused himself, and turned his face up to the priest's.

"Father François," he said timidly, "what does it all mean, the exercises and the *Ave?* Why do we say them? Why do we call upon the blood of Christ and the Passion of Christ?"

"Ah! my little one," interrupted the father, "I cannot tell thee now. Some day, perhaps——"

Then as he saw the boy's puzzled face, he pushed back the chestnut locks from the open forehead, and looked long into the boy's eyes turned up to his own. Beautiful eyes they were, brown and clear and deep, shaded by long lashes. The priest saw something there which he had not seen before, something which made him look more attentively and murmur to himself. Then, as the boy trembled beneath his gaze, he started and said:

"Yes, little Pierre, thou shalt know all some day, for thou must be a priest."

"A priest," repeated the boy doubtfully. Then he rose. When he had reached the door he turned and saw the father's eyes still upon him. He made his bow.

"Good-day, Père François," he said gravely.

Pierre shut the door behind him, and was hurrying after the others, when he felt a light touch on his hand.

"Ah!" said he, "you here, Blanchette?" his troubled look changing into a smile. The children took hold of hands and ran down the hill, kicking the pebbles on before them. When they reached Dame Jupont's cottage, they separated, and Pierre went on alone.

"A priest," he thought again, "yes, I should like that, to live in the Seminary with Father François. But then," he added, "Blanchette could not come, and I love Blanchette."

. . . . .

The short, hot Canadian summer was over, and the cool, pleasant autumn was slowly fading into winter. One day, Pierre went out into the forest. There was a tall pine which he knew, head and shoulders above its brethren. Slowly he wormed his way up the smooth, straight trunk, and then swung himself lightly from branch to branch, higher and higher, until even Quebec lay far beneath. All about stretched the woods.

That forest ocean which girt like an island the little world which he knew—what a strange fascination it had for every Canadian boy! Scarcely a season passed but some of them, listening to its call, forgot all, defied the laws of the governor and the curses of the bishop, and went forth to live their wild, roving life beneath its shadow. That fascination which made rovers of his comrades was upon Pierre as he sat in his watch tower. Some day, he, too, would break the feeble bond of Canadian civilisation, and go out into the forest with Jacques Hertel or Nicholas Marsalet, or some other famous outlaw.

He would penetrate to the depths of the great wilderness and behold its mysteries for himself—the lakes, rivers, mountains and cataracts which it concealed. He would fill his canoe with beaver and marten skins, and return, floating down the great river, to purchase pardon of the priests, and deck Blanchette with presents.

Suddenly, he heard a voice calling his name, "Pierre, Pierre." He looked down and saw Father François far below him. He scrambled to the ground in haste, and took the priest's hand, and they went on together. When they were near Pierre's home, his mother came running out with a small bundle.

"There, my little one, are your clothes. Be good, and mind Father François."

She kissed him, and with a curtsey to the priest disappeared in the house. She was a good mother and loved Pierre, but she had eight others to labour for. Food was scarce, and the winters were hard in Canada, and, as the good fathers had offered to take Pierre, he must go. So Pierre went on with Father François to the Seminary.

The years rolled by. Pierre grew to be a tall, handsome youth, who, for his strength, was appointed to bear the sacred image of Christ in the processions. As he passed along amid the crowds of kneeling and praying worshippers, he sometimes saw Blanchette.

"Ah! but she is beautiful," he thought.

Still the years passed. Pierre was a priest now, bound by his three vows, and looking forward to a great mission in the future. Every missionary who returned to the Seminary kindled his zeal. To explore new regions and gaze first upon their wonders, to preach to the Indians and win new empires for Christ; to die, silent and heroic, by cold or hunger, by tomahawk or fire; these were the dreams that coursed through the brain of the young priest.

One day Pierre received a summons from the Father Superior of the Seminary. A band of Algonquins living near Lake Nipissing had come begging that a missionary be sent them, and the choice had fallen upon Pierre. The young priest's cheeks flushed, his eyes glittered, the blood tingled in his

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veins, but he suppressed his excitement and asked respectfully when he should depart.

"Of that we will warn thee," replied the Superior. "Meanwhile do thou diligently prepare thyself for thy mission."

Then, as the venerable father waved a blessing, Pierre withdrew to throw himself on the stone floor of the cell in a transport of joy and enthusiasm.

The Indians at Lake Nipissing spoke a mixture of Huron and Algonquin. To learn this dialect was Pierre's first duty. There was an old Huron who came often to the Seminary to bring game and poultry. To him Pierre turned, eagerly availing himself of his visits to pick up a few words and phrases.

The Huron gave him what help he could, but at best it was hard work translating the lofty hymns and prayers of the breviary into the perversities of an Indian tongue. Perhaps Pierre would have become weary but for the encouragement of Father François. The father was feeble now, but he seemed to renew his youth in sharing the hopes of Pierre.

"Ah! my son," he would say, "thou shalt go forth to the heathen, perhaps to martyrdom. And in that last glorious hour bethink thee of François, who longed for it himself likewise, many, many weary years, but was not found worthy."

Despite his increasing infirmity, Father François continued to perform his regular duties. Among them he was accustomed each week to go for an afternoon into the cathedral of Nôtre Dame to hear the confessions of the faithful and absolve the penitent.

At last one day he found himself unable to leave his cell, and reluctantly sent Pierre in his place. The cathedral was a bare, rude structure, but it seemed noble and glorious in the eyes of the simple Canadian priest. He walked about softly through the chancel into which the light fell in coloured squares from the great painted window.

He paused a moment before the sad-eyed Virgin, and, falling upon his knees between the lighted candles, murmured:

"Holy Mary, Mother of Mercies, pray for us poor sinners, now, and in the hour of death."

Then he went on to the narrow confessional box, above which was written the name of Father François. There was a bench within, on which he might sit, and a shelf to lean upon, which brought his ear near to a small opening, through which came sounds of confession and penitence, and through which he uttered words of rebuke or pardon.

The light from above fell upon his head with a soft radiance. Never had Pierre so felt the height and holiness of his priestly office. He sat long after his last penitent had departed, pondering and praying. At last the dim light warned him that the short winter afternoon was far gone.

He rose, but just then he heard soft, hurrying footsteps. Although the prescribed time was long past he could not endure that one soul should bear for another day the load of unshriven sin. He sank again on his seat. A gentle, musical voice pronounced the words:

"I, a poor, sinful creature, acknowledge before God and you, a priest, standing in the place of God——"

The gentle voice faltered. Instead of the hackneyed formula, came a despairing cry:

"Holy father, thou knowest my sin. I have fasted and prayed——oh! I have tried to pray, but I cannot. When I kneel before the Blessed Mother and gaze into her face, I see only him. I went yesterday to the shrine of St. Anne and knelt there, but, when I looked up at the great white Christ, they were his eyes that were upon me. Holy father, what must I do? I cannot wed another, I cannot give him up. I love him so——"

The words ceased, as if choked in utterance, and there was only the sound of a woman sobbing and gasping.

At the first tones Pierre had become pale and cold. He recognised the voice. It was Blanchette's. Then, as the words came faster, he felt himself turned to stone. He knew as if by instinct that it was of him she spoke. After she had ceased, he stood long in silence leaning against the wall for support, his hands clenched so that the nails cut red arcs in his palms. He repeated to himself again and again mechanically:

"Holy Mary, Mother of Mercies, pray for us poor sinners."

But he must rouse himself. Already Blanchette was alarmed at his silence and was crying:

"Father François, Father François, speak to me. For the love of Mary, speak."

Then he spoke with deep hollow chest tones.

"Blanchette Jupont, thou hast sinned mortally in setting thy carnal affections upon a priest of God. Yet repentance is still permitted thee. The saints shall plead for thee. The Crucified is still an atonement for thee. Verily, the sin killeth, but atonement maketh alive."

The sternness with which he begun failed him, and his last words were pleading and tender.

He ceased. The last sound came back to his ears in a hollow, echoing murmur. Then there was silence. Perhaps Blanchette had fled. He pushed open the door. The cathedral was dark, except where two feeble candles burned before the picture of the Virgin. He stood for a moment, reaching out his arms hesitatingly, as a blind man. The other side of the confessional box was open. In his groping he felt the door swung back. He breathed freely once more and took a quick step forward. Then he drew back with a cry of horror. Blanchette lay at his feet. He had almost trodden upon her.

One instant he turned his face upward in the darkness.

"Holy Saint Anthony, pray for me, pray for me," he murmured.

The next he threw himself on the ground, crying, "Blanchette, Blanchette," chafing her hands, one of which he had crushed. There was some holy water in the chancel, and raising her prostrate form in his arms, he staggered to the little circle of light and sprinkled her face with the sacred drops. At last she stirred and opened her eyes on his face, bending close to hers.

"Pierre, my Pierre," she whispered, still but half-conscious.

Pierre drew back into the shadow and watched her slowly returning to life. The dim candle-light fell on her face, pale with grief, her eyes large with weeping, her hands thin and worn with the tale of the beads. And as he watched, he felt a great pity and love surge up in his heart. The years of priestly training were swept away in a moment. Forgotten were the saints and martyrs whom he had reverenced. Forgotten the Virgin before whose shrine he had lain prostrate so many hours. In his soul there was another adoration.

The candles burned low; one of them expired. Then the doors of the cathedral opened wide, and the upper end shone brightly in the light of the torches borne by the priests marching slowly to the music of their processional hymn. At their head the Bishop of Quebec, tall and stately. After him came the Fathers of the Jesuit establishment; curés from the outlying parishes; missionaries from distant stations, bronzed with exposure; perhaps mutilated by the tomahawk or fires of their adversaries.

Pierre turned his head. In that advancing procession of emaciated, black forms, and cold, stern, set faces he saw the symbol of all he had been taught to consider worthy or heroic. Before him, with the feeble gleam of the candle upon her, was lying the embodiment of all that he should think impure and shameful. Was her face really the home of the frail, the false, the vicious? The fathers, even Father François, had said so. Was she a devil to tempt him, or an angel sent to guide and bless him?

"*Audi preces cum fletibus*," sang the fathers.

The words came to Pierre as from a great distance. He did not realise that in a moment the glare of those torches would be upon him. Already half the Cathedral glowed and flickered in their light. Then Blanchette spoke in a low whisper, "Pierre." He was at her side. She was frightened, and had called for help. He lifted her in his arms once more, and fled lightly and swiftly across the chancel and out into the night.

. . . . . .

The winter died at last, even in Canada. The snow mantle grew thin and ragged, letting the earth appear in great brown patches. Then a little verdure showed itself creeping along

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the black branches of the forest. The leaves grew larger and coloured the woods with the vivid green of early summer.

The green turned to crimson and gold. Then the leaves fell and lay in heaps beneath the trees. The breeze came from the north, and it became higher and sharper, one could almost hear the great winter coming down with stealthy footsteps through the forest in the sound of that north wind blowing over the rustling leaves.

On the bank of one of the streams which flow southward into the valley of the great lakes stood a small wigwam, a wretched affair made of a few saplings bent together and covered with bark. It was quite alone; for leagues in every direction there was no human habitation. Near the wigwam was a mound of fresh earth, beside which stood a man in the black cowl of the Jesuit Order, chanting the office of the dead:

"*Miserere mei, Deus, secundum magnam misericordiam tuam.*"

The voice was hoarse and rough at first; but, as it grew clearer and mellower, it thrilled and vibrated with grief, rising and falling in solemn mournful cadence:

"*Requiem æternam ei dona, Domine.*"

The priest stood still beside the grave. He was bareheaded; his sunken, lack-lustre eyes looked out from under his long, matted hair; his face was gaunt with famine; his cassock was confined about his emaciated body by a girdle of wild vine. At last he started, and with a look backward at the deserted wigwam and unmarked grave, he strode quickly toward the river.

A birch canoe was drawn upon the bank. He pushed it before him into the mid-current of the stream and threw himself prostrate into its bottom.

The canoe floated on, shooting through narrow gorges where the river foamed and boiled, or gliding over wide spaces where the current scarcely made itself felt. The priest remained immovable. The noon sun and the cold dew of evening alike fell on his upturned brow, but he did not raise his head. The river bent itself between two jutting capes and was lost in the larger body of water beyond: the canoe rocked uneasily upon the surface of Lake Ontario.

A wave struck its side. It tipped, and the water ran in over the edge. It partly sank for an instant. Then, turning itself over, it rose again. The black-garbed form had disappeared beneath the water, but the canoe continued to float bottom upward on the surface of the lake.

"I LOVE YOU"

A GOOD many people have heard or read of Beermouth. Not quite so many, seduced by the prospect of "a clear bracing atmosphere, charming surroundings, refined associations, seaside and country combined, etc," have visited the place, and fully ninety-five per cent of the last named have vowed they will never on any consideration set their foot in Beermouth again.

How or why I came to Beermouth, it is needless to explain. But there I was, and there I was likely to remain; for at half-past four, on a dun-coloured autumn afternoon, I learnt to my disgust that I should have to wait something like a couple of hours before I could get a train which would land me anywhere within twenty miles of my destination.

And so there was nothing left for me but to throw myself on the mercies of that fully-licensed house, the Bull and Pup, which stands close to the railway station.

I established myself in solitary dignity in the bar-parlour, and there, while I smoked an excessively rank pipe to the accompaniment of some remarkably bad beer, I did make all manner of blessing upon Beermouth and its inhabitants, and particularly its railway service.

It was a positive relief to see the swing door pushed open. Anybody would have been welcome then. I could have found it in my heart to be hail fellow well met even to the oldest inhabitant.

Three men came into the parlour. The first, a slim, fashionably-dressed man of forty or so, favoured me with a slight bow and a cheerful "Good afternoon," as he advanced to the fire. There was nothing remarkable about the other two, who were squarely-built, middle-aged men, and from their attire might have been anything from commercial travellers downwards. They took their places on a settee near the door, and one of them ordered a couple of pints of ale from the barmaid.

"And a large brandy and soda for me, miss," struck in the slim gentleman, "and you need not trouble to put in all the soda. It is a trifle cold for ærated waters this kind of day. Miserable weather," he went on, addressing me, "When I think of what it is in Nice I positively shudder."

And very realistically he did shudder as he rubbed his hands over the cheerful blaze.

"Ever been to Nice?" he asked, as he seated himself opposite me and took a sip from the glass the barmaid had placed at his side.

I told him I had.

"Then there is no need to tell you of its beauties, its fascinations. No need to discourse to you upon the glory of the vine and olive-clad shores of the Mediterranean, along which the 'player's train' speeds daily on its way to Monte Carlo. A man can never be said to have lived until he has been to Monte Carlo, sir. It is there alone that you can love, that you can hate, that you can rejoice, that you can suffer; aye, until a man with the most powerful of wills, the most cast-iron of determinations, can say, and say truly: 'I have not lived in vain.'"

"It was last year at Monte Carlo that I met my fate," he went on, after a short pause, and a renewed application to his glass. "And, as we are likely to be here for the next twenty minutes or so, I will, if you will permit me, tell you the tale." I bowed assent.

"When a man plays at Monte Carlo," he continued, "he comes away either a winner or a loser, for the simple reason that, whatever his position may be at any period of the game, he must either win more or lose less, and so he goes on until either he has broken the bank or the bank has broken him. So it was with me.

"The first night I sat down and wagered a five franc piece simply for the excitement of the thing. It went, I put down another to get the first back. It went. To cut the matter short, I lost forty five-franc pieces, and then I judged it expedient to retire to my hotel and dream on it. The next night—the next, and the next, I returned to the field of battle with precisely the same result.

"Each evening I took with me to the table forty pieces of five francs, neither more nor less. Each evening I as regularly rose from my seat without a sou. And, mind you, there was not in my case any alternations of hope and despair—not even the faintest gleam of that shallow luck which at rare intervals serves to gild the career of even the most ordinary of gamblers. I lost unvaryingly and unceasingly, until I had compassed the

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(for Monte Carlo) phenomenal record of having backed the wrong colour two hundred times in succession.

"The loss of a thousand francs is nothing to cry about. Moreover, I had plenty more behind it. Still it annoyed me, particularly as on that fifth evening the well-dressed mob fairly crowded one another solely to have a peep at the 'unluckiest man who had ever been seen at Monte Carlo.'

"On the sixth morning I was in a most unenviable frame of mind, and after breakfast I strode up and down the terrace of the hotel trying to soothe my irritation with a pipe; the while I strove in vain to solve the problem offered by my extraordinary ill-luck. All at once she came, passing through one of the doors on to the terrace—my love, my life. My destiny, though little I knew it then.

"She was not a girl, but a woman of thirty, or perhaps a year or two more. She was not what the world at large would call beautiful. But it was the glory of her wondrous Spanish eyes which took my heart captive then and there. In an instant I knew that I loved her better than ever woman was loved in this world. I was not long in finding out who she was—the wife of a wealthy English manufacturer—a man much older than herself. She and her husband had arrived at the hotel the night before, and were likely, so the manager said, to remain there for some time.

"The same night I again went to the tables, this time with a single note for a thousand francs in my pocket. I found a seat, and after watching the course of the game for a few minutes, I ventured my stake on the red. Red it was, I left the money down—stake and winnings—and again red came up. As I drew my four thousand francs I glanced over my shoulder, and there was the lady just behind me.

"I rose and offered her my seat. She took it and began to play. Less than ten minutes settled her. By the distressed look she cast around the table I could see that she had lost all her money. For me to pass her one of my notes was the work of an instant. She took it with a smile and a bow, and put it on the black. Up popped zero. In quick succession I handed her the remaining three notes. They all went in on the black, just as they had come to me on the red.

"As the croupier was raking in the last of my crisp pieces of paper, the lady's husband stepped behind her, and laid his hand heavily on her shoulder. She rose and faced him. What he said to her, I know not, for he spoke in Spanish—a language I do not understand. But her face grew deathly pale, and her blue-black eyes blazed with anger. Then he turned to me.

"'Sir,' he said, 'you have lent my wife money. It was a chivalrous action, but from my point of view, considering the purpose for which the money has been applied, your generosity has been misplaced. However, I have only to beg you to tell me the amount in which my wife is indebted to you so that I may reimburse you.'

"'*Vingt mille francs*,' came the answer, sharp and clear, in the purest Parisian from the lady.

"I opened my mouth to protest, but the lady laid her finger on her lip and, like a fool, I was silent.

"'A cheque shall be sent you this evening,' he replied, with which he took his wife's arm and led her from the hall. When I reached the hotel that night a letter was handed me by the clerk. I opened the cover. It contained an open cheque for eight hundred pounds, signed by the manufacturer.

"Next morning I was once more on the terrace. I felt like a knave, and, no doubt, I looked like one; for was not that accursed cheque burning its way from my waistcoat pocket literally to my heart-strings? Again the lady appeared. This time she came straight to me.

"'Sir,' she said, speaking rapidly in French, 'last night you did me a great favour; to-day you can do me an even greater one. I told my husband I owed you twenty thousand francs, because I had urgent need of sixteen thousand, and it was the only means by which I could get the money. Here are your four thousand francs, and now please give me my husband's cheque.'

"I hesitated.

"'I know you will,' she pleaded.

"'Why?' I stammered, as I handed her the slip of pink paper.

"'Because—I love you!' and turning swiftly on her heel she sped into the hotel.

"That afternoon she and her husband took their departure from the hotel—whither, I knew not—nor did I take any particular trouble to find out. I am a fatalist, sir, and I believe that everything comes to the man who waits. I waited patiently weeks and months, till last June. One night I was in the stalls at the Queen's Theatre. *She* was in a private box. She beckoned me up with her fan, and I sat by her during the whole of the performance. Can you doubt that I ventured to tell her of the deep love that was in my heart for her? She listened, and when I had finished, she said:

"'My friend, what I told you at Monte Carlo is true. I love you. But one obstacle bars our path to happiness. My husband. You must kill him!'

"'In a duel?' I asked.

"'Duel! No!' and she laughed merrily. 'He is one of your solid, respectable Englishmen, and if you spoke to him of a duel he would hand you over to the care of the police in less than no time. You must murder him!'

"'Never,' I gasped.

"'Why not?' she asked. 'You have robbed for me. Why should you not murder? Is it not written somewhere or other that the man who will steal needs but little to induce him to murder? Listen, my husband has gone to-night to one of those solemn commercial dinners which I abhor and detest. He will return on foot, and will reach home at a little before one. Here is the address,' and she thrust an envelope into my hand. 'Choose your time—kill him!'

"That night I killed him; placed a stiletto in so neat and workmanlike a manner between his shoulders that he fell without a groan. There is the making of a fine art in murder," and my companion chuckled merrily.

"You killed him!" I gasped, as I moved my chair back a few feet.

"Certainly," was the matter-of-fact reply; "what is a husband more or less when he is in the way? But, listen, that is not the worst; the murder remained a nine days' wonder—one of those hidden mysteries which go towards making up London's sum of happiness. After a reasonable delay, I called upon the widow—*my* widow. She was not alone. Another man was seated in the drawing-room. Do you know what she told me before him? That the love which had been mine was his, that she was to marry him the next day, and that I was to be left."

Then, bending forward, my companion whispered hoarsely:

"I killed them both with the poker. I will show you how!" And, springing to his feet, he grasped the poker from the fender and swung it above his head; but only for a second, for the two men were on him, and in a trice he was handcuffed, and a broad strap bound around his legs. Oh, how he howled and shrieked, and blasphemed and prayed by turns!

"Stark that, will yer?" growled one of the men. "Oh, yer won't! Then we'll try how this suits yer," and a hastily-improvised gag was thrust into his mouth. "Sorry to disturb you, sir," the man added, addressing me; "but he'd have brained yer with that poker in a couple of shakes if we hadn't stepped in. His friends kep' him at home till to-day; but now he's turned dangerous, and we're taking him to the asylum. There's the trap, Bill. Come along," and, one taking the head and the other the feet, the men carried their writhing burden out of the room.

Calmly and methodically the barman came in to remove the glasses, and then informed me, in the most matter-of-fact fashion, that such scenes were of frequent occurrence in the bar parlour of the Bull and Pup, while keepers and patients, who had arrived by train, were waiting for a conveyance to take them to the asylum, some eight miles distant.

"But," I asked, "do you think it wise to serve a raging lunatic with a large brandy and soda?"

"Brandy and soda, indeed!" and he sniffed contemptuously. "Not much! That was toast and water. We knows them 'ere loonatics, we does."

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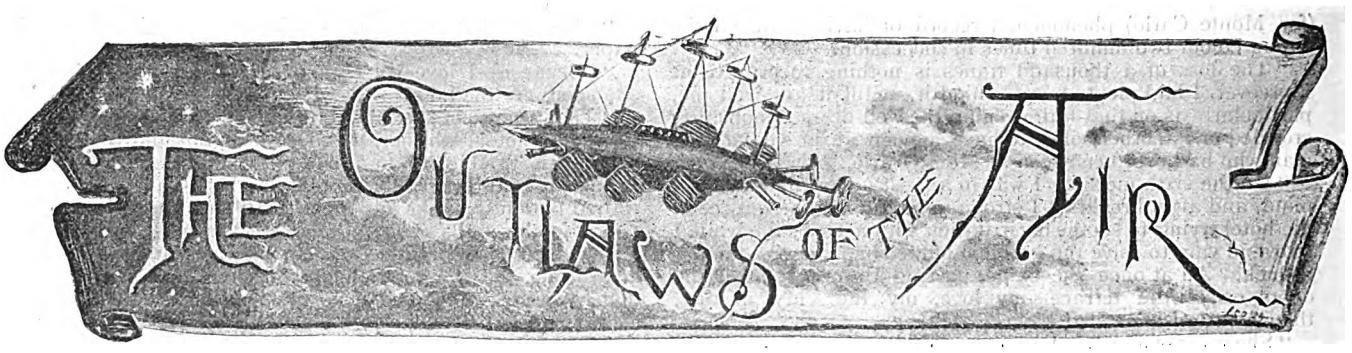

By George Griffith,
Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," &c.

SUMMARY.

Max Renault—leading spirit of Anarchist Autonomie Group No. 7, who has joined the Utopians (a Socialistic colony on an island in the South Pacific) in order to steal the air-ship they are building, which he succeeds in doing.
Franz Hartog—a German engineer, in league with Renault, who steals a very fast torpedo-boat destroyer from the Russian Government to levy blackmail on the Atlantic.
Sir Harry Milton—a wealthy young English nobleman, who by chance comes across the island of Utopia in his yacht, the *Calypso*, and subsequently devotes the whole of his fortune to hunting down Renault and Hartog.
Herbert Wyndham—a lieutenant in the British Navy who is travelling with Sir Harry for the benefit of his health, and who determines to resign his commission and couple his energies with those of Sir Harry in destroying the Anarchists, on account of the fact that he has been stabbed by Renault when the latter attempts to carry off Violet in the air-ship.
Frederick Austen—the inventor of the air-ship, who shares its secret with Edward Adams, Dr. Edwards, and Ambrose Millar, three other Utopians.
Frank Markham—the young captain of the Utopian yacht, *Mermaid*.
Violet Milton—Sir Harry's sister, and Lieutenant Wyndham's sweetheart, is fearfully injured by throwing herself out of the air-ship on which Renault has tried to carry her off.
Dora Merton—a fair Utopian, who has made an impression on Sir Harry.
Lucy Summers—another fair Utopian.

Renault in the air-ship *Vengeur*, and Hartog in the torpedo-boat *Destroyer*, levy blackmail on the high seas. Just as they have annihilated a combined British, French, and Portuguese fleet sent to discover them, a Maxim aeroplane, the *Britannia*, comes on the scene, and is captured by the *Vengeur*. Those on it are put ashore, and one of the crew shoots at Renault and wounds him. A few weeks later Renault and Hartog set out for the Island of Utopia for the purpose of destroying its inhabitants, but find it deserted. On the discovery of Renault's treachery, the whole colony had gone back to England, Wyndham, together with Adams, Austen, Sir Harry, and his sister Violet, travelling in the *Nautilus*, a newly-built torpedo-boat, which, while coming up the English Channel, is challenged by a British cruiser. It appears that England is at war with Russia, and war with France is imminent. The *Nautilus* is sent in pursuit of two French torpedo-boats, and destroys them both.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A Visit to Paris.

While these events were taking place in England, the crews of the *Destroyer* and the *Bremen* were enjoying what they no doubt considered a well-earned holiday amidst the tropical beauties of Utopia. Renault and Hartog had decided for the present at any rate to take possession of the island and the dock-yard, keeping a sharp look out for unwelcome visitors, and to take advantage of their leisure to fit out the *Bremen* as a floating workshop for the construction of the air ships, as soon as the necessary materials could be obtained from their agents in America, England, and Europe.

They knew that they would be free from interruption at any rate for a period of some weeks, it might even be months, since it would be absurd for an expedition to be sent out to attack them in the island, unless it could be supported by at least two or three air-ships, and these Max knew from experience could not possibly be built and made ready for flight in less than four months from the time that work was commenced on them. He knew that Sir Harry and his friends would push on the construction of their vessels with the utmost possible speed; and he also saw clearly that, if there was going to be a fight for the empire of the air, the side that got its fleet on the wing first would have an immense advantage over the other.

So convinced was he of the paramount necessity of expedition that, after he had been a fortnight in Utopia, and had seen Hartog get everything into working order, he determined to run the risk of a journey to America and Europe, in order to personally visit his agents and push on the construction of the various parts of the air-ships to the utmost possible speed.

It was not, however, only reasons of policy which impelled him to this decision, for Max Renault was a man who possessed all the strong passions usually associated with his masterful type of character, and of these, next to the ruling passion which had made him the implacable enemy of all organised society, the strongest was his love for the beautiful girl in whom he had recognised a soul kindred to his own, which, while admitting his superior strength as a leader and an organiser of the forces of Anarchy, had tacitly asserted an authority of its own over him, an authority which she knew he was willing to bow to the moment that she gave him the permission she had hitherto coldly and consistently withheld, because in the nature of the case it must involve the surrender of herself to him.

His attempt to carry off Violet in the air-ship from Utopia had really only been the result of a passing fancy, strengthened by a savage desire to inflict an irreparable injury upon her and her brother, and the friend who was perhaps her lover, simply because they were members of the class that he hated with the whole strength and bitterness of his perverted nature. Had the attempt been successful—if Violet had been cast in a less heroic mould, and had not chosen the peril of almost certain death to the slavery which he would have imposed upon her—he would, probably, have amused himself with her as long as the fancy lasted and then killed her in cold blood to remove an obstacle to the execution of his plans.

But with regard to Lea Cassilis, his feelings were very different. He really loved her with the love that such a man as he only gives once and to one woman, no matter how many others might claim or win the admiration of the passing moment. And now his thoughts had gone back to the challenge that she had given and he had accepted in the little upstairs room in the back street off the Caledonian Road more than four years before.

She had tacitly admitted that if the projects of that memorable night were realised it would be for him to take and keep that which he chose should be his—and did she not well know what that would be? Now the power to carry out those projects was finally his. He was no longer the nameless Anarchist lurking in the obscurity of city slums and planning murders and outrages in the dark. He was the acknowledged and unquestioned leader of a band of desperate men who had declared open war upon the world and had so far proved themselves invincible.

Then they were poor; now they were wealthy, and their wealth skilfully used would enable them to turn the resources of civilisation against itself. They could spend money like water, and every pound would buy as much for them as it would for everyone else. There was no fear of their spending too much. The wealth of the world's commerce was theirs to

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draw upon as they needed. There was no answer but submission to the demands which came from the unassailable vantage ground of the air.

Would Lea still hold to her part of the implied bargain between them? Would she think that he had accomplished enough of his part to claim the performance of hers, or would she tell him to wait until the now inevitable struggle for the empire of the air had been fought and won, and society lay helpless before the most formidable and implacable enemies that it had ever had?

It was to receive an answer to these questions and others that were shaping themselves in his heart and setting his cool, evenly-flowing blood aflame that, after a two months' voyage, during which he had visited every agent in America and England, and with his own eyes seen and inspected the progress of the work on the materials of the air-ships, that he set the *Vengeur's* head towards Paris and dropped her to the earth one dark night in the forest of Fontainebleau.

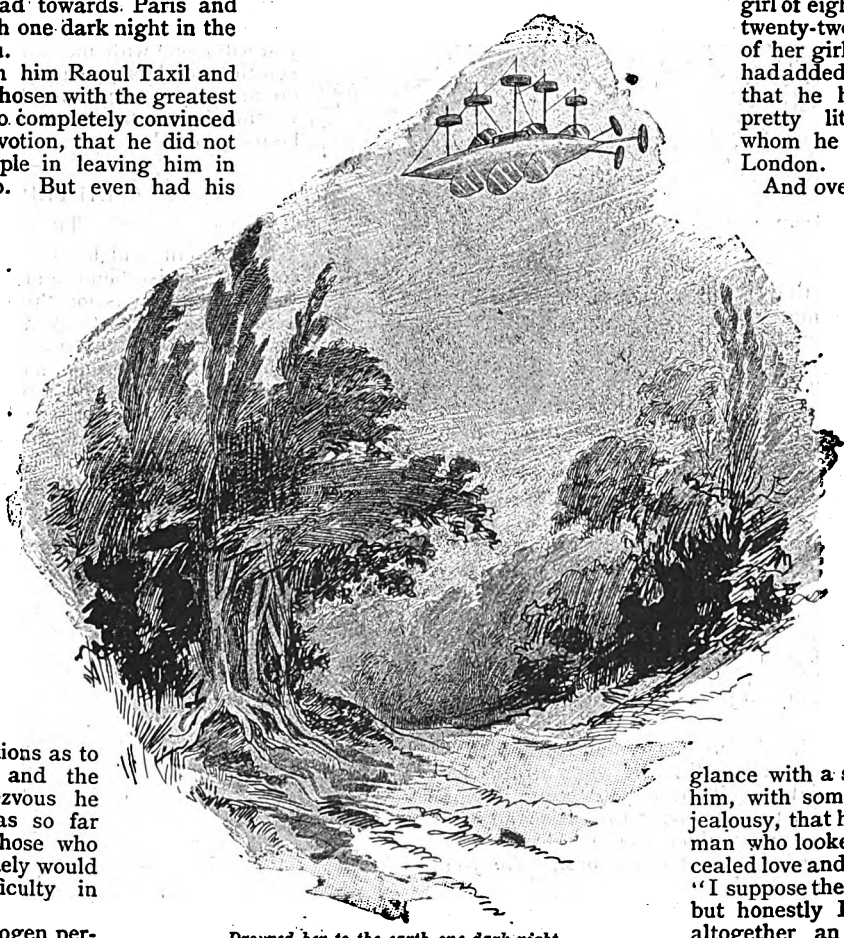
He had brought with him Raoul Taxil and six men whom he had chosen with the greatest care. Taxil had now so completely convinced him of his personal devotion, that he did not feel the slightest scruple in leaving him in charge of the air-ship. But even had his estimate been wrong he knew that treachery was impossible, if only because everyone on board the *Vengeur* was convinced it would not pay. He was the only one who was able to prepare the motor fuel which worked the *Vengeur's* engines. Not even Franz had been admitted to the secret. It fact Max had told him point blank that he would put a bullet through the head of him or any one else that he even suspected of trying to share the secret with him.

When he left the air-ship, after having given Taxil full instructions as to evading observation, and the keeping of the rendezvous he had appointed, he was so far disguised that even those who knew him most intimately would have had some difficulty in recognising him.

A liberal use of hydrogen peroxide had bleached his hair from glossy black to the bright bronze tint which had been so popular among beauties, professional and otherwise, a few years before. His dark eyebrows had been lightened by the same means, and a neatly trimmed moustache and imperial to match had been skilfully affixed to his clean-shaven lip and chin.

With a light valise in his hand he made his way into the town of Fontainebleau, and caught a train there which landed him in Paris shortly before midnight. He slept in a small hotel near the Lyons station, and occupied the following forenoon in fitting himself out with clothes which would be less conspicuous in Paris than the quaint ill-fitting odds and ends that he had been obliged to borrow from his men.

Before doing this, however, he had despatched a telegram addressed to Madame Cora Dail, 5, Rue Vernet, Champs Elysées, and the consequence of this was that when at four o'clock that afternoon he sent up a card inscribed; "François Laroche," and having an almost imperceptible pencil-mark in the top left-hand corner, to the first floor, the concierge informed him that he was expected, and touched a bell which brought a smart English footman to conduct him to Madame's presence.



Dropped her to the earth one dark night.

As the portière of the luxuriously-furnished boudoir fell behind him, a slight and still almost girlish figure rose with a nearly inaudible rustle of soft draperies from a low couch in a delightful little curtained alcove formed by a deep window looking out on to the broad tree-lined avenue.

"Welcome, Monsieur Max," said a well-remembered voice, and as he took the little, cool, soft hand that was placed in his, he looked up and their eyes met. It was Lea, but Lea glorified; and the sight of her beauty dazzled him for the moment and seemed to deprive his usually ready and deliberate tongue. The four years which had transformed the girl of eighteen into the woman of twenty-two had touched nothing of her girlish freshness, but they had added to it a reposeful dignity that he had never seen in the pretty little dressmaker, with whom he had fallen in love in London.

And over and above this there was the glamour that wealth, which only emphasises the coarseness of the common human material, enables innate refinement to glorify itself with. Madame Cora Dail, the alleged widow of the millionaire slayer of hogs in Chicago, was a very different person from Lea Cassilis, the clever and precocious girl-member of the Autonomie Group No. 7, and this Renault saw at a glance before she had uttered her second sentence in greeting to him.

"You are somewhat changed I see," she went on, meeting his glance with a steadiness that warned him, with something like a pang of jealousy, that he was not now the only man who looked at her with unconcealed love and admiration in his eyes. "I suppose the change was necessary, but honestly I can't say that it is altogether an improvement. That moustache and imperial—may I ask whether they are a natural growth or only assumed for the occasion?"

There was a slight suspicion of mockery both in her tone and her words that irritated him not a little, and seemed to tell him that he was likely to find the distance between them as great as ever, but he kept himself well in hand and replied in similar tones.

"Unfortunately, the change which has the misfortune to fail to please your ladyship was necessary, but, happily for me, it is not permanent. The moustache and imperial were purchased with the hair-dye, and have only been in position since last night. A pretty fair growth for the time, aren't they? But, to turn to a more interesting subject, permit me to offer my compliments in exchange for your welcome. To use the old simile of the butterfly and the chrysalis ——"

"Thanks, Monsieur Max, we will take it as spoken," she interrupted with a half curtsey and a smile that dazzled him

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A slight and almost girlish figure rose.

afresh. "I was in hopes that you had brought some more interesting conversation with you than that. Let me assure you that since I have been the widow of an American millionaire, with half Paris at my feet, my ears have been so sated with pretty sayings that I could almost thank anyone who would be absolutely rude to me.

"But come," she went on, with a sudden and, to Max, very pleasant change in her manner. "I suppose we have something better to talk about than this. Ah, there is the coffee. I have given instructions that I am not at home to the President himself, if he should do me the honour to make an afternoon call, and so for the next two hours at least we can entertain each other with all the news that we have to exchange. For instance, I am literally dying to hear all about your life on that wonderful island of Utopia where ——"

"Utopia!" he interrupted. "How did you know that was its name?"

"Why from Leo Marcel, of course. When I heard that he had got back from Africa, as he did just when all Europe was ringing with your aerial exploits over the Atlantic, I sent him a telegram asking him to come over to Paris and tell me all he could about you—I mean about your adventures and the air-ship. Ah, that reminds me, tell me first, have you brought her with you to France?"

"I am more than delighted by the knowledge that you thought me worthy of so much interest," replied Max, obeying the gesture which invited him to seat himself on the dainty silk-covered sociable on which she was reclining. "Yes, I have brought her. Last night she landed me in the forest of Fontainebleau, and by this time she should be safely hidden in some snug little ravine in the Pyrenees."

"In the Pyrenees!" exclaimed Lea; "that is a very long way off, isn't it? Are you not afraid of your lieutenant or your crew running off with your priceless craft, and going into the general destruction business on their own account?"

"Not in the slightest," laughed Max, with a shake of his head. "I can trust them because they know that they can do nothing without me. I am the only one who knows how the *Vengeur* is driven, and, when they had used up the motive power that there is on board, they would have to get out and walk, for they couldn't make her fly another yard to save them from the guillotine. As for the distance, you forget that aerial travelling is not exactly like going by train or steamboat. The Pyrenees are only a three hours' flight from Paris, and if I had her here now you should dine in London this evening if you wished to do so."

"Marvellous!" she replied, looking at him this time with a real interest in her eyes. "But, of course, I had forgotten for the moment what Marcel told me about your speed. And now tell me, when may I expect a trip to the clouds in this wonderful cruiser that owns you as her master?"

"She will be back in the same spot at Fontainebleau at ten o'clock to-morrow night," said Max; "and then, if you think you can safely trust yourself with me, she shall take you, not only to the clouds, but beyond them, to the heights where the sun shines all day and the stars all night, and then she shall carry you to any spot of the world you may choose to see. If you would like to be the first woman who has ever set eyes upon the North Pole or the South, you shall see it, for the earth has no obstacles that the *Vengeur* cannot laugh at.

"I tell you, Lea, that the conquest of the air means more than you have ever dreamed of; and if you will come with me to-morrow night, I will show you the wonders and glories of a kingdom such as no man ever ruled over before, and which is only waiting for the fairest woman on earth to come and be its queen."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

TRAPPED.

No woman, and least of all women, Lea Cassilis, could have mistaken the meaning either of the words or of the low, passion-thrilled tone in which they were spoken. She looked at him as he sat there, leaning slightly towards her and possessing an unlikeness to himself that was almost grotesque. And as she looked she thought of the scene in the little clubroom, when she had snatched her hand away from under his and told him that it would be time enough to ask when he had the power to take.

Since then many things had happened. She had reigned for a season as the belle of Paris, spending money as she

A snug little ravine in the Pyrenees.

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pleased with both hands, worming her way into intrigues which laid bare before her eyes the inner workings of the vast machine that is called Society. Before her radiant beauty and lavishly-spent wealth, all doors had flown open. She had mingled with the great ones of the earth; she had learned their secrets and won their homage; and she had seen that the management of nations was carried on by means of just the same petty trickery and sordid selfishness as she had witnessed in the conduct of the business of the fashionable dressmaker who had once been her mistress.

The further she had seen into Society, the less she liked anything save that gay, brilliant, idle aspect of it which was already beginning to bore her. Since she had come to Paris, fortunes, titles, and vast estates had been laid one after another at her feet, only to be rejected with a smiling tolerant disdain that had made some of the wits of Paris remark that "*la belle Americaine*" would be contented with nothing less than a crown.

Perhaps, after all, it was a crown that she was waiting for; and, if so, the hour and the man had come, and the crown would be hers for the taking, if she would but put out her hand for it. True it would be no tiara of gold and jewels, such as the queens of the earth wore, yet it would be such that the proudest of them might well envy her its possession. It would be the diadem of an empire without frontiers, of a realm that included the whole earth, and from whose throne she could hurl her lightnings alike upon palace and prison, striking down the mightiest and the meanest with a more than royal impartiality, and all this would be hers if only——

He picked Lea up in his arms.

"Monsieur Max," she said, with a new light in her eyes, and a brighter flush on her cheeks, when her thoughts had run thus far, "I know what you mean. You are thinking of what we said at the club that night. Well, I have been thinking of it too. I remember what I said and what you said, as distinctly, perhaps, as you do. Tell me now truly, for the sake of our common hatred of society, have you literally and actually the power to do what you said you would do then, and, therefore, to take what you—well, what you led me then to believe that you wanted?"

"I have," said Max, laying his hand on hers just as he had done that night: "I have the power and I have the will, and yet——"

"And yet what?" she asked, dropping her eyes for a moment before the steady gaze of his passion-lit eyes.

"Yet, though I have the will, there is something else that prevents me permitting it to put the power into action—something that makes me, virtual master of the world though I shall be in a few weeks from now, yet not master of myself."

"And that is?"

His grip tightened upon her hand as he answered:

"There is no need for me to tell you what you know already, Lea. A man does not love a woman like you and remain his own master long, and it is just because I love you that I cannot use the power which would force you to choose between surrender and destruction. If I loved you less than I do, it would be easy for me to wait my opportunity and carry you off in the *Vengeur*——"

"As you tried to carry off Violet Milton, eh?" interrupted Lea, looking into his eyes with a cold, searching glance, and speaking in the even tones of the merest common-place.

Such an unexpected facer would have disconcerted ninety-nine men out of a hundred, but Max Renault was the hundredth.

Inwardly, the shock of Lea's words seemed to him to drive every drop of blood out of his heart; but, outwardly, his iron nerves gave no sign of discomfiture. Like a flash, he saw that Lea's keen subtle wit had, with the single question, purposely created what might be the crisis of his life.

On his answer to it would depend her answer to the supreme question that he had put to her by implication in his last speech. His splendid nerves responded instantly to the call. Without the quiver of an eyelid, or a quaver in his voice, he replied:

"Ah; so you have heard of that little romance, have you? and that means that you have made the acquaintance of some of the Utopians or their visitors. May I ask who?"

If she had obeyed her first impulse, she would have struck him across the face, and ordered him out of the room, at whatever risk to herself. But the mood passed as quickly as it came. A glance at the strong, stern face and the steady eyes before her told her that in this stronger nature than her own she had met her master, and, as she was a woman, she liked him none the less for it.

As the sudden anger passed out of her heart, it was replaced by something that had never been there before, and her voice had just the least perceptible tremor in it as she answered his question.

"Sir Harry Milton brought his sister over to Paris nearly two months ago to put her under the care of Roulier, the great nerve specialist, and I met him while he was here. You didn't kill her, you know, when you threw her out of the air-ship—or, I forget, did she throw herself out?"

"Oh, she threw herself out," replied Max, with a note of astonishment in his voice. "But you amaze me by telling me she didn't die. Why she pitched herself out headlong when the air-ship was over a hundred feet from the ground—nearly two hundred, in fact. The girl must have as many lives as a cat."

"And suppose she hadn't thrown herself out, what then?" asked Lea, with a quite indescribable inflection of her voice.

"What then? May I smoke?" said Max, taking out his cigarette case.

Lea nodded, not having a word ready to reply with. He struck a match, lit his cigarette, and went on, in a voice that could not have been more imperturbable if he had been discussing the day's prices on the Bourse:

"Well, then I suppose I should have acted as any other man who was also a good Anarchist would have done under the circumstances. You see, under those same circumstances Miss Milton would have had the disadvantage of being at the same time a really decent-looking girl and the daughter of a race which every good Anarchist is, by the very principles of his being, impelled to reduce to the last extremity of degradation, and so——"

"And so," said Lea, leaning forward, her lovely face all aglow with what was now genuine, uncontrollable admiration for the masterful spirit of the man who, without a perceptible effort, had thus put her desperately meant home-thrust aside—"and so there isn't the slightest need for you to say any more about it.

"Max, I've met my master, and, like any other woman who is a woman, I'm glad of it. There's my hand. Take it or leave it, as seems good to you. When the *Vengeur* comes back to Fontainebleau, you will only have to renew your invitation, and I will take that trip to the clouds and beyond them—as your guest, remember—and you shall show me all these kingdoms of the air and the world and the glories thereof, and after that—well, we shall see. Now, does that content you?"

Max made no reply in words, simply because no words occurred to him which to his mind were capable of doing justice to the situation. He rose to his feet, picked Lea up

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bodily in his arms, pressed one long lingering kiss on her willingly surrendered lips, and then put her down again. Then seating himself beside her, he put his arm round her waist, drew her head down on to his breast, and said quietly:

"It is so! If ever mortal man had reason to be content, then I am content. I have offered you what no man was ever yet able to offer to woman, and you have accepted it. May the Fates cover all my plans with confusion if ever, for a moment even, you have reason to regret the choice that you have taken!"

And then he bent his head down and kissed her again, and after that she raised her head and looked him in the eyes, and said in a low, steady tone:

"Even so. You have given to me what never was given to woman before, and I have given you in return all that a woman can give, and if either of us fails in justice to the other, may that other be able and willing to exact the last penalty of vengeance that human hate could wish for! And now let us talk."

The hint was obvious, and Renault took it, and so for nearly an hour this strangely-betrothed man and woman sat and talked just as any other man and woman in all Paris might have talked, saving only for the subject of their conversation. Each told the other in quiet, matter-of-fact narrative what his or her experiences had been since the last time they had met, and then they went on to discuss the prospect that now lay before the ruthless apostles of the propaganda by force.

They discussed the fate of nations as though they had been the joint arbiters of Destiny, and they decided whether monarchs and statesmen should live or die as best suited their purposes; whether the war that had been declared between Britain and Russia should be allowed to go on, or whether either State should be paralysed by blows which they alone could strike at its head; and whether those who now held the guiding reins of the world should be allowed to hold them a little longer, or whether, by striking them down, one after the other, in swift succession, the States of Europe should be thrown headlong into the demoralisation of leaderless anarchy. As the little clock in the boudoir chimed six, Lea rose and said:

"Now, for the present, or till to-morrow morning, *au revoir*. As I told you I have a card for the President's reception to-night at eight, and you may be sure that I shall not fail to do what is necessary. By to-morrow I shall have made the necessary arrangements for our journey, and you will find me at the Lyons station at eight o'clock, by which time those whom it may concern will understand that I am somewhere else. Happily rich American widows in Paris are expected now and then to be guilty of some eccentricity and this will do for one of them. And so, *mon maitre bien aimé, à demain, au revoir!*"

When the train left Paris for the south at a quarter past eight the following evening, Max and Lea were seated in a first class *coupé*, and by ten o'clock they had reached the little open space in the forest in which Lea for the first time saw the, to her, strange shape of the *Vengeur*, as the air-ship, prompt to the minute of the rendezvous, dropped slowly through the darkness on to the soft brown turf.

Five minutes later they were on board, and Lea saw the tree-tops swiftly sinking down beneath her as the *Vengeur* soared up again into her element. The night was dark and cloudy, but through the clouds the pale glimmer of half a moon could every now and then be seen. As soon as the *Vengeur* was well clear of the trees, Max took Lea with him into the conning-tower and, inclining the slats of the air-planes, he sent a signal for full speed to the engine room. Then slipping his arm round Lea's waist, partly perhaps with the object of keeping her steady during the air-ship's upward flight, he said:

A huge shadow of the "Vengeur."

"Now watch with all your eyes!"

The next moment the *Vengeur* leapt forward and upward; the cloven air sang and whistled past her, and the black curtain of cloud seemed to fall bodily towards the earth. For a moment the grey billows rolled noiselessly about them, and then, in wondering admiration too intense for words, Lea saw a vast, limitless sea of snowy cloud-fleeces spread out beneath her, and above she saw the unclouded vault of heaven gemmed by myriads of stars, amidst which the golden crescent of the moon floated stainless and serene, her white light casting a huge shadow of the swiftly flying *Vengeur* on the snowy cloud-sea beneath them.

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There was no sleep for Lea that night. In vain Max tried to persuade her to go to her cabin as the larger hours of the morning approached. Intoxicated with the strange beauties of the scene and the bewildering novelty of her first aerial voyage, she insisted on remaining with him in the conning-tower until the beauties of the moon-lit night were eclipsed by the glories of the sun-rise over the sea of clouds, which still lay outspread beneath them as far as their eyes could reach.

Then, when weariness at last overcame her, she went to her cabin to sleep and dream of all the marvels she had seen, and Max, after sending for Taxil to take command, went to his to dream other dreams no less entrancing. About two o'clock in the afternoon, Lea met Max again in the saloon, and after their greeting, said:

"Well, where has this wonderful voyage brought us to by this time?"

He pulled back the slide from one of the side windows and pointed through a great rift in the clouds that lay a thousand feet below them. Her eyes followed the direction of his finger as he pointed downwards, and she saw beneath the clouds another cloud of grey blue smoke, through which a thousand roofs and spires were dimly showing.

"There's London," he said. "To-night we will dine at the Métropole and then run up to the Criterion and see a comedy, of course adapted from the French, which I think will amuse you. There's a burlesque Anarchist in it, not at all a bad character from the capitalist point of view. The interesting part about it is that in the last act it almost becomes a tragedy."

Not many hours later Lea remembered these lightly-spoken words, in the midst of the first real agony of terror which she had ever passed through. The *Vengeur* was brought to ground in the midst of a dense bank of fog which lay along the Essex shore of the estuary of the Thames, a little to the north of Southend-on-Sea, and Max and Lea landed with one of the crew to carry their two valises and to act as messenger between them and the air-ship if necessary.

Taxil had, of course, received minute instructions as to keeping in touch with them; and, as they took their way towards the station, the *Vengeur* rose in the air again and vanished in the fog.

He was completely trapped.

That evening, as Max had promised, they dined at the Métropole, and afterwards went to the Criterion Theatre to see the comedy and the burlesque Anarchist.

Of all the theatres in London, that was the worst one they could have chosen to visit on that particular night, for, as the fates would have it, while they sat in their stalls, one of the side boxes in the second tier was taken possession of by four gentlemen, who were no others than Sir Harry Milton, Lieutenant Wyndham, Captain Maxwell (late of Her Majesty's ship *Devon*), and Lieutenant Pelham (late of the æroplane *Britannia*), both of whom had been cashiered, one by a court-martial and the other by the syndicate which had sent the *Britannia* to do battle with the *Vengeur*.

In such a place it was impossible that Lea's brilliant and uncommon beauty should not attract almost universal attention. Sir Harry recognised her at once, and then began to look curiously at her companion. Of course, he pointed him out to Wyndham, and then the two opera glasses came earnestly into play. Max's disguise was quite good enough to deceive even an intimate acquaintance passing him casually in the street, but it could not stand the searching examination that he was subjected to for the next two hours.

Feature by feature, gesture by gesture, he was identified without having an idea of what was going on. For, the moment their suspicions were aroused, Sir Harry and Wyndham kept themselves and their friends well in the background of the box. At length when the performance was over conjecture had so far become certainty that all four had determined to take the risks and act.

Just before the curtain came down they left their box and stationed themselves among the well-dressed idlers who were already lounging about the entrance to the theatre. As the occupants of the stalls and dress circle and boxes came slowly up the steps which led from the theatre, they watched each rank narrowly until Lea at last appeared leaning on Max's arm. This was Sir Harry's cue. He walked forward and raising his hat to Lea, said:

"Good evening, Mrs. Dail. Who would have dreamt of seeing you in London! What has London to offer so superior to the delights of Paris?"

Before she could reply, Wyndham stepped quickly up from the other side, with one swift movement of his left hand he snatched the moustache and beard from Max's face, and, taking him by the collar with his right, said in a loud clear voice:

"Good evening, Mr. Max Renault, Anarchist and murderer. Who would have thought of seeing *you* here to-night!"

Max, taken utterly off his guard, tried to wrench himself free and force his way through the excited crowd, which Wyndham's startling words had instantly brought about them, but it was no good, the surprise had been too carefully planned, and he was completely trapped. Captain Maxwell and Lieutenant Pelham elbowed their way through the crowd, each with a policeman at his heels, and when the crowd divided again, it was to allow the officers of the law to go out holding the famous Anarchist securely handcuffed between them.

(*To be continued next week.*)

HOME NOTES! HOME NOTES!! HOME NOTES!!!

The Special Double Winter Number on sale THURSDAY, DECEMBER 13th.

A New Story by Mrs. HUNGERFORD commences in this issue.

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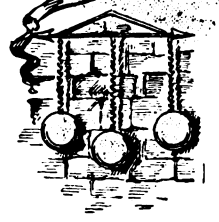
THE LAY BROTHER'S RING.



MONSIEUR LAGRANGE sat behind his window at No. 28, Seymour Street, Pall Mall, looking over his accounts. The window was draped after a fashion that displayed both art and science. A few pieces of old lace and antique jewellery were exhibited in such a way as to inform the initiated passers-by that such articles were bought, sold, and taken in pledge on the premises; while true science was shown in the arrangement by which the master of the establishment could see into the street without himself being observed.

It was a convenient plan; and it enabled M. Lagrange to notice that a tall, pale, clean-shaven young man was peering in at the window in an inquisitive way. He had a semi-clerical aspect, wearing a low-crowned, black, soft felt hat, and that voluminous garment known as an "Inverness cape." His manner was nervous and hesitating, as of a man who found himself in an unwonted or embarrassing situation. He made as though he would pass on, stopped, looked at the name on the brass plate a second time, glanced up and down the street, and then, with an air of affected unconcern, walked into the establishment.

M. Lagrange's street door opened noiselessly, and admitted the visitor to a small, carpeted hall, in which the only apparent aperture was a window like that of the booking office at a railway station, formed chiefly of ground glass. The open part was close to the seat occupied by M. Lagrange, who had, of course, observed all the movements of his visitor.

After standing opposite the aperture for a minute or two without seeing anybody, the stranger rapped gently with his knuckles on the window sill, and shortly afterwards M. Lagrange, with the air of a man who was taking a gentle constitutional, sauntered past the spot.

"I have got a ring," began the stranger, speaking with a marked French accent.

Lagrange gave his visitor a bold look, before which the young man's eyes dropped, and held out his hand for the trinket.

With some hesitation the stranger produced a plain gold ring of a peculiar pattern, and laid it on the desk before him. It was very much like one of those old-fashioned rings which were made with a hollow space for a morsel of the hair of a deceased friend; only, in this case, a scroll-work took the place of glass; and this scroll-work was of a very delicate pattern, here and there pierced with minute holes. Lagrange had seen such rings before, and knew that in former days they had often been used as the repository of some small articles of value, such as a gem or a precious medicine.

Taking it up in his fat, shiny fingers, Lagrange (without a word of apology to the owner) carried the ring to a large plate-glass window under pretence of examining it under a better light. The pawnbroker then weighed the trinket in his hand, peered at it curiously through a magnifying glass, shook it a second, a third, a fourth time with increased interest, for he was certain that he heard something rattle inside.

Bending a little backwards, M. Lagrange took an observation of his visitor through a convenient hole in the ground glass, and then, moved by a feeling that the stranger's face was not unfamiliar to him, he wrote a few words on a scrap of paper, which he despatched through a tube.

"This is a quaint little thing," observed the pawnbroker, returning to his customer.

"A—yes."

"Have you any objection to give a reference? It is usual."

"Well—a—I'm not sure that the Father-Superior would like it. The ring belongs to our Order—the Order of St. Simeon. We lost all our property during the reign of the Commune in Paris, and then the French Government banished us with the other monks."

"What is all that to me?" asked the pawnbroker impatiently.

"One of the Fathers," said the stranger, in a humble tone, "told me to try and borrow a little money on the security of this ring. But, you understand, I must not sell it. It is a kind of relic, for it belonged to Father Clerc, the Superior of our Order, who was shot by the Communists in 1871. He got it conveyed out of prison to one of our friends."

"How?" asked Lagrange, who was beginning to feel interested.

"I cannot tell, I did not belong to the Order then."

"But you do now?"

"Yes, I am a lay-brother."

"Well, I don't mind lending you a sovereign. It's only worth the weight of the gold."

"But we *must* have more than that, Monsieur," and the lay-brother leant forward through the window and spoke in a low, eager tone: "We are all convinced that there is something remarkable about the ring. I have heard that Father Clerc always wore it, and warned us not to part with it, because it would one day bring back prosperity to our community."

"He sent that message out of prison along with the ring?" asked the pawnbroker, in a careless tone.

"So I have heard," responded the lay-brother

Could it be, Lagrange asked himself, that the imprisoned priest had used this ring as a means of conveying a secret message to the rest of the community? He felt interested and curious. Eventually he agreed to lend Brother Antoine three pounds on a special contract, which provided that if the ring was not redeemed within a month it should become the absolute property of Lagrange.

The young lay-brother cast a regretful glance at the ring, signed the agreement, slipped the sovereigns into his pouch, and left the establishment.

No sooner had the door closed behind his customer than Lagrange touched a bell which summoned his confidential clerk.

"Did you recognise the gentleman who left the house a moment ago?" he asked.

"I cannot be certain," answered the clerk, "but I fancy he is M. Le Comte Desnoëttes, a nobleman who used to visit monsieur years ago in Paris."

"Ah! Very likely. I fancied I knew the face. I thought I had assisted at the funeral of the gentleman's gay career! He tells me he has joined a religious order. Those poor devils often do when they are sold up. That will do, Marot."

Then the pawnbroker fell to examining the trinket which Brother Antoine had left with him. He even tried, by slightly enlarging one of the tiny holes in the scroll work, to catch a glimpse of the small object which his sense of hearing told him was concealed in the cavity of the ring. But in this he was quite unsuccessful, he could see nothing. All he could learn was, that if a precious stone was inside, it must have been wrapped in something to deaden the sound of rattling.

Not daring to break open the ring, Lagrange waited thirty days with the utmost impatience, hoping, almost against hope, that the young lay-brother would find himself unable, or would neglect, to redeem the trinket on the appointed day, and thus suffer it to become his property. He was convinced that the Superior of the Order would not have taken the pains to convey this ring to his brethren when he was in such imminent peril

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unless it contained something of value. Sometimes he felt as if he would give half his fortune to cut the trinket open.

One by one the days went by. Unluckily the month had thirty-one days. M. Lagrange reviled the idiotic arrangement of dividing the months of the year, and waited till the next day. As the afternoon drew to a close he became more anxious, more eager to possess the jewel and its hidden secret. He could not sit at the window. Every man who passed made his heart beat with the fear that it was Brother Antoine come for his ring.

At length Lagrange convinced himself that six o'clock had struck. He locked, and double-locked his door, drew down his blinds, seized an instrument, and in the twinkling of an eye hadcut the ring in two.

A tiny pellet of paper tumbled out.

Carefully and slowly the pawnbroker unrolled it. It was a morsel of very thin paper, closely covered by writing, so fine that it had evidently been written with the point of a pin. The colour was a reddish-brown—the colour of blood when it is dried.

With the help of a magnifying-glass, Lagrange read the secret message which the paper contained, written, of course, in French:

"My children, I die to-morrow, and I send you my blessing. The church plate is in the cistern of our own house, which has a false bottom. But our savings, amounting to nearly four million francs, I caused to be buried in the right-hand corner of the cellar of Jacques Guégan's house in the Rue St. Louis. He knows nothing of this. Courage and hope!—E. C."

Lagrange's fingers trembled, so that the paper fell from them on the desk before him, and his face became pale with excitement.

Four million francs—one hundred and sixty thousand pounds. Lagrange looked at his watch, seized a time-table, and turned over its pages with feverish haste. That night he crossed the Channel.

He could easily understand that the accumulated wealth of the Order of St. Simeon (which numbered many well-born men in its ranks) should reach the sum of four million of francs. And nothing was more probable than that the Superior of the Order should have buried the money in the house of some obscure sympathiser at the time of the siege of Paris. But the fear that haunted M. Lagrange's mind during the tedious midnight journey to Paris was—What if the secret has leaked out? or, What if the money has been accidentally discovered by someone who has had brains enough to hold his tongue? Once or twice the thought crossed his mind that this treasure did not belong to him. The poverty into which the Fathers of St. Simeon had fallen was probably due to the loss of this treasure, coupled with their expulsion from French territory. But M. Lagrange silenced his conscience with a growl. He had not carried on the trade of a money-lender in London for twenty years without being able to do that.

Having arrived in Paris, Lagrange sought out the Rue St. Louis, and found Guégan's house without much difficulty. It was a small, mean-looking place, hardly bigger than a cottage. Guégan was a shoemaker in a small way of business.

Lagrange paved the way diplomatically by ordering a pair of shoes, and then asked the shoemaker whether he had any cellars to let.

"Cellars! my faith, no!" answered the man of the lapstone. "The only cellar I have is paved with earth, but two metres either way. How could I let that? What do you want it for?"

Lagrange saw that he had made a blunder.

"I want it for a—a—store-place. But you are right. It is too small. I should need the lower flat also. Perhaps you would let the house?"

"Well—I have not thought of that," said the shoemaker, with a suspicious glance at his customer.

"What do you say to forty francs a month?"

"Not enough."

"But I should only occupy it a week."

Lagrange could have bitten his tongue off as these words escaped him, for he saw that they had roused the landlord's suspicions effectually.

It was in vain that he offered a higher and higher rent; the very fact of his being willing to pay a month's rent for a week's occupation of the premises seemed to make Guégan determined to refuse to let the place at all.

Lagrange saw that he would have to purchase the house out and out. Well, what did it matter? he said to himself. He could sell it again. The cottage and garden might be worth ten thousand francs.

"Would Guégan sell the house?" he asked.

"Yes," answered the shoemaker, with a grin. "What would the gentleman give?"

"I'll give you ten thousand francs down," said Lagrange.

The man darted a keen look at the stranger, shook his head, and calmly went on with his work.

"Eleven thousand—twelve thousand?"

"No."

Then Lagrange stopped. He saw that he must affect carelessness, or he would never get the house at all, and curtly saying, "Twelve thousand is too much; good-day," he abruptly left the shop.

But he could not rest for a moment. What if that horrid old man, who knew that the cellar was the centre of the eccentric stranger's interest, took it into his head to dig there in the meantime? Lagrange went to the Paris correspondents of his London bankers and provided himself with the equivalent of three thousand pounds. Then he provided himself with a notary, and, accompanied by this functionary, went back to the Rue St. Louis.

The old man proved a tougher customer than he had been before. He evidently saw that Lagrange had set his heart on buying, and he ran up the price till the pawnbroker, in despair, offered the man seventy-five thousand francs—the whole of his three thousand pounds. This was accepted; and that very afternoon the deeds were signed.

Lagrange, trembling with excitement, remained in the house during the rest of the day, and towards evening the shoemaker, having pocketed his money, went for a van and went off with his belongings.

Then the treasure-seeker set to work with pick and shovel, and dug deep into the solid earth—dug till the sweat poured from his brow, till his arms ached, till the walls of the house threatened to fall down and bury him.

If M. Lagrange could have peeped into the next street, and seen Guégan and the pretended lay-brother with a bottle of brandy between them, dividing, with many a joke and burst of laughter, the three thousand pounds which he had paid for the tumble-down cottage, he would have left off digging sooner.

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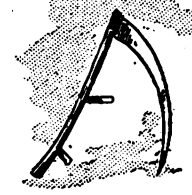

ARRESTED, convicted, and sentenced to be hanged for murder—that is, the law called it murder. The prisoner had thought it all over many times, and he couldn't see that it was murder. He had taken up a stray mule. The owner came along and refused to pay the trifling sum demanded for expenses.

There was a fight, of course, and when mountaineers fight they mean to kill each other. He killed the owner of the mule. What was there wrong about that? Didn't he receive five knife wounds in the man's efforts to kill him? Wasn't it kill or be killed?

And why should they arrest him and confine him in gaol? He had no idea of going away. Why should he go? And why must he have a lawyer, and a jury, and a trial lasting four days when he could have told the judge all about it in five minutes? He summed up the whole case in his quaint, ignorant way when he rose in reply to the formal query, and said:

"Why, Jedge, I reckon they want to hang me, but doggone if I kin see what I've done to desarve it."

He received the sentence with a puzzled look on his face. Why put off its execution two months? It seems foolish to wait beyond a day to hang a man who had been sentenced to die on the gallows. He knew every man on the jury, and he couldn't understand why they were all down on him.

There were men who had slept in his cabin, eaten at his table, and hunted over the mountains with him, and the idea that they should bring in a verdict of guilty astounded him. It wasn't neighbourly. It wasn't doing as they would be done by. The gaoler tried to console him, but was waved aside with the exclamation:

"Don't, George! My head is so full of this fussin' around that I can't stand any more. Jest think of it! They called it murder, and ar' gwine to hang me for it!"

Twenty-four hours later he was imperturbable—stoical—as cool and calm as a man sitting at his own fireside. It had become clear to him that he was to die. It wasn't that he deserved it, and he could scarcely recall an incident of the trial, but he had to die, and that ended the matter for him.

He differed from an Indian only in the colour of his skin. One day his wife was admitted to see him. She had said to one of her neighbours:

"So they-uns ar' gwine to hang my Tom?"

"Yes, reckon he'll just hang."

"Shoo! 'Pears like a right smart of fussin' over nothin'. Tom had ter do it."

"Reckon he had."

"Reckon I orter go down and see he-un."

"Yes, I reckon yo' had."

"Then I will."

And one day, after a walk of twelve miles over the mountain roads, she arrived at the gaol and quietly remarked: "You-uns has got my Tom locked up yere."

"Yes."

"And he-un is to be hung purty soon?"

"Yes."

"Shoo! How triflin'! Reckon I'd better step in and see he-un fur a bit."

They brought him out of his cell into the corridor. He advanced and sat down beside the woman as if at their own doorstep, and she glanced all around her before saying:

"Heap better place than our old cabin, Tom?"

"Yes, heaps better, and good eatin'. How's the crops git on?"

"Mighty pore, Tom. Reckon that co'n never will be knee deep, and them taters is all dried up in the ground."

"Reckon yo'll git along somehow, arter all."

"Bound to, Tom—bound to. Doan't you-un worry 'bout me 'tall. What they-uns gwine to hang you fur?"

"Fur that killin', yo' know."

"Shoo! Yo' had ter do it."

"Of co'se."

"That yere Sam Andrews was just a-slicin' of yo' ter dawgmeat."

"Of co'se."

"Cut yo' mighty bad afore yo' did fur him."

"I showed 'em the cuts."

"But they-uns ar' gwine to hang yo'-un jest the same, eh?"

"Jest the same."

"How triflin'! Waal, Tom, what yo'un gwine to do 'bout it?"

"Jest hang, I reckon."

"Hain't gwine ter raise no fuss?"

"How kin I?"

They sat side by side, staring at the cell door across the corridor, for three or four minutes without another word. Then she said:

"Yo'r brother Jim will kill Bill Andrews, in co'se?"

"In co'se," he replied.

"And I'll shute, if I kin find the chance."

"Fur shoo. Reckon yo'd best cl'ar 'em all out, wimin and all."

"Yes, reckon I had. Gwine ter talk when they-uns hangs you, Tom?"

"Reckon not, I never did like talkin'."

"Reckon I'd best cum down that day."

"Do as yo' mind, but I reckon folks might talk."

"Yes, reckon they would. Reckon I'd best stay home. Gwine ter say any mo' to me, Tom?"

"Skassly. Doggone mean to hang me!"

"So 'tis, but they-uns is determined, I reckon. Mebbe I'll cum down next week—mebbe not."

"Jest as yo' mind. Gwine home now?"

"Yes, gwine right back. Good-bye, Tom."

"Good-bye, Linda."

Not a tear—not a kiss—not a handshake. It was their way. It was born in the flesh. She did not come again. When he was taken out to suffer death before a crowd of two thousand people he did not look about as if hoping to see her face once again.

She seemed to have gone out of his memory entirely. He did not even take a farewell glance at earth and sky. He just died—that was all. He was there to die, and he died. It might as well have been a log of wood at the end of the rope.

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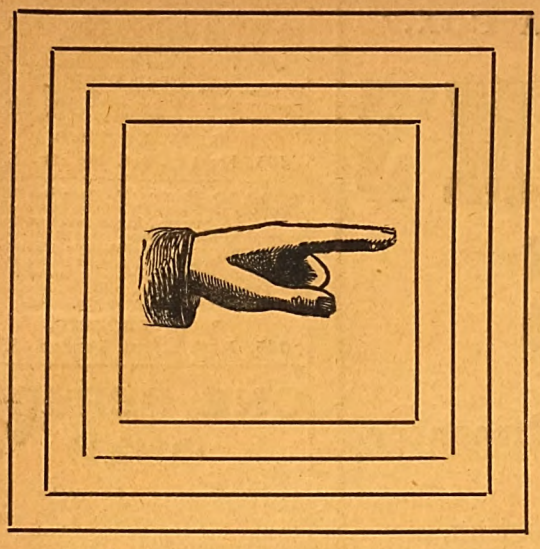

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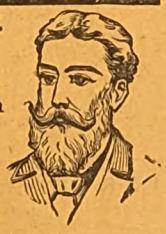

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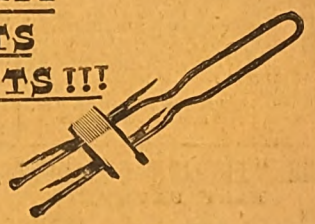

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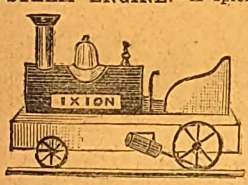

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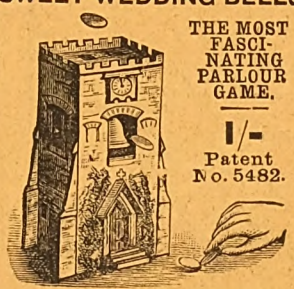

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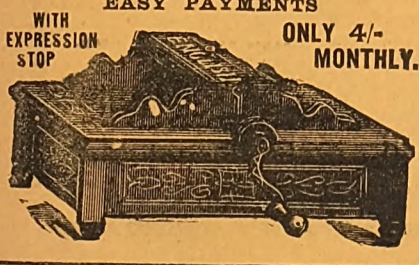

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 312.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 22, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

THE REVENGE OF LUIGI SFORZA

"HATE, jealousy—pooh, my dear sir, why you don't even know what they're like under those cold suns and fog-laden skies of yours. It is only here in the South, where the hot sun gets into our blood and brain and sets our very souls on fire, that such things are really known. Why I could tell you a story that happened not very long ago in Naples yonder, that would show you how an Italian can love and hate, and how his jealousy, when once aroused, can make him forget even his love in his hate, and change him into something worse than a wild beast; for I can tell you that the fiercest of wild beasts is like a tame dog compared with an Italian whose love has turned through jealousy to hate."

We were standing on the promenade deck of the North German liner *Baiern* as she steamed out of the Bay of Naples, watching the town lamps flash up out of the light haze which lay over the town, and the lazy smoke-cloud of Vesuvius changing to all sorts of strange colours in the level rays of the setting sun. I was an Englishman doing the usual globe trot, and my companion was a well-bred Italian of about five-and-thirty, whom I had met at one of the clubs to which I had an introduction, and who happened to be going out to Ismailia by the same steamer in which I was going to Colombo.

"Well," I said, "I am ready enough to be convinced, and still more ready to hear the story, so, as it is too early to turn in, and as we don't know a soul on board, save each other, yet, how would it be if you passed the time in telling the story, and I in listening and being convinced?"

"Very good," he replied. "Story-telling is, after all, more interesting than argument, especially when the story is one from real life, as this is, for I can tell you it caused a tremendous sensation in Naples at the time that the drama really occurred. I know the circumstances well, too, so far as they are known, and far better than the reporters of the newspapers or even the police officials got to know them, for all the characters were known to me personally, and the heroine was one of my dead wife's dearest friends."

"The police officials!" I echoed. "So then, of course, there is a crime in the story."

"A crime!" he said, with a laugh that at the time I thought strangely savage and bitter. "Yes, there was a crime—a crime so cunningly conceived and so ruthlessly carried out that I think only an Italian, and a Neapolitan at that, could have imagined and executed it.

"In telling the story to you, a stranger," he continued, leaning over the rail and flicking the ash of his cigar into the swirling bubbles that were drifting past the side of the moving ship, "I need only call the characters by their Christian names. It will be simpler, and serve the purpose quite as well, without needlessly going into family particulars which there is no reason to talk about. There were only three characters in the drama—two men and a woman; but, as you

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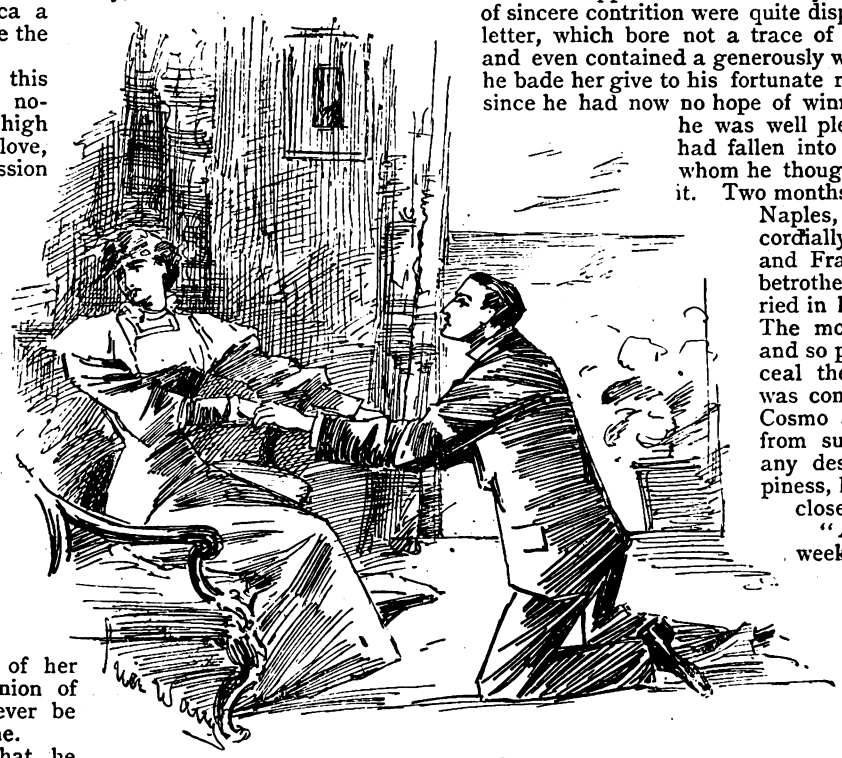
will see, quite enough to make a tragedy. The woman's name was Francesca, and the men's were Cosmo and Luigi.

"Of Francesca it will be enough to say that she was young, well-born, and beautiful—yes, beautiful as you could imagine one of the angels of heaven would be incarnated in a human form. Cosmo and Luigi were also young and well-born and, for Italians, rich. Cosmo was a fine, tall, handsome fellow, with blue eyes and fair brown hair, for you will have seen enough of Italy by this time to know that all Italians are not dark; but Luigi was dark, with black hair and eyes, strong and a man of good presence, though not so tall as Cosmo by a good inch.

"I suppose it will hardly be necessary for me to tell you that both of them were in love with Francesca, and that hence sprang the tragedy; but there was this difference between them—Luigi had grown up with Francesca almost from childhood, and so, too, he had grown up with his love for her till it had become as much a part of his life as the very blood that warmed his veins. Cosmo was a Roman whose acquaintance Luigi had made in the Eternal City, and whom he had himself introduced to Francesca a little over a year before the tragedy took place.

"It was soon after this that Luigi, suspecting nothing and as full of high hopes as he was of love, finally declared his passion to Francesca, and asked her in return to give him the love that he had always believed would one day crown his life with delight. I can well imagine, and so can you, northerner though you are, the blackness of the gulf of rage and despair into which the heaven of his expectations changed when Francesca, with tears in her eyes and a sob of real sorrow in her voice, told him that he had mistaken friendship for love, and that the affection she had for him as the friend of her family and the companion of her girlhood could never be called by a warmer name.



In vain he pleaded his hopeless cause.

"It was in vain that he pleaded his hopeless cause with all the burning eloquence that his passion lent him, in vain that he besought her on his knees to tell him that the fate her lips had spoken was not final, that now she knew he had loved her long and deeply she might permit him still to woo her as a lover in the hope that love might beget love.

"But it was all of no avail. Francesca heard him to the end, and then told him, gently and kindly, but with a firmness that struck a chill of despair to his heart, that she could not permit him to hope where she knew there was no hope, and then Luigi rose to his feet, his love changed to unreasoning anger and his pleading into reproach, and told her that she had played with his heart for years and now that it was laid at her feet spurned it aside as a toy that had ceased to interest her. He swore that she had loved him, though she refused to admit it now, that she had wantonly given away to another the love that had been his, and should have been his to the end; and, when she turned on him and dismissed him in the wrath of her wounded pride, he swore that he would find the man who had robbed him of the fruition of all his dearest hopes, and take a revenge worthy of the wrong that had been done him.

"Then he left her with his evil words ringing ominously in her ears, and the next day she heard that he had left Naples to spend the winter wandering about the Eastern Mediterranean. From Athens he wrote her a long penitent letter, imploring her to forgive and forget the foolish words that the violence of his passionate despair had forced him to utter in her presence, and to think of him once more as her old friend and playmate, and as a man who was trying to live down his hopeless love and make himself worthy still to be her friend.

"The letter produced the effect that he had hoped and expected it would, for Francesca's anger had soon melted into pity, when she came to think how fearful a thing it must be for a man to love and hope for so many years and then to hear the voice of the woman he loves pronouncing the death-sentence of all his dearest hopes; so she wrote back assuring him of the forgiveness he asked for, and telling him that by the time he came back to Naples both of them must have forgotten the only angry words that had ever marred their friendship, and that they would be to each other as though these words had never been spoken.

"Whatever apprehensions she may have had on the score of sincere contrition were quite dispelled by Luigi's next letter, which bore not a trace of malice or resentment, and even contained a generously worded message, which he bade her give to his fortunate rival, telling him that, since he had now no hope of winning the prize himself, he was well pleased to hear that it had fallen into the hands of the man whom he thought most worthy to win it. Two months later, he returned to Naples, and his first act was to cordially felicitate both Cosmo and Francesca, who were now betrothed and were to be married in little less than a year. The months passed quickly, and so perfectly did Luigi conceal the inward passion that was consuming him that both Cosmo and Francesca, so far from suspecting that he had any designs upon their happiness, looked upon him as the closest of their friends.

"At length, only a few weeks before their marriage was to have taken place, Luigi's long waited opportunity came. Cosmo, who owned a large property in Sicily, found himself obliged to pay a visit to the island to make certain arrangements in connection with the marriage settlements. He went to Messina, and from thence to Palermo, and there, after a fortnight's absence in all, he disappeared. Not a trace of him or a clue of his whereabouts remained. He had been engaged nearly all one day with his lawyers and the agents of his estate, he had gone to bed in a hunting lodge on his estate, and the next morning he had vanished.

"There is no need for me to tell you of Francesca's sorrow and despair at this sudden and mysterious shadow that had fallen over the bright promise of her life; but, great as was her suffering then, it was as nothing in comparison with the agony that was to follow. Of all her family and friends none seemed to sympathise more heartily or to feel more deeply for her than the man whom she had rejected in favour of her missing lover.

"As soon as it was certain that Cosmo's disappearance could not be explained without supposing that he had been the victim of foul play, he went to Sicily and did all that money and industry could do to trace the missing man; but after ten weeks of constant searching he returned to say that he had failed and that there could no longer be any doubt but that Cosmo had either voluntarily fled for reasons of his own, or had

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been slain by some unknown hand for some equally unknown purpose.

"As far as appearances went one of these two seemed the only possible explanation, and yet in a few days both were proved to be false by a letter, bearing the Palermo post-mark and addressed to Francesca. It told her in just so many words that Cosmo was still alive, but that he was dead so far as she was concerned. If she wished to save him from a fate worse than death she must marry one who had loved her longer and better than ever Cosmo had done. The writer would wait a month for the publication of the news of her marriage in the Neapolitan papers. If it did not appear a further communication would be sent.

"No name was mentioned in the letter, and there was no signature to it; but it had the effect of plunging Francesca still deeper into sorrow and despair, and sending Luigi once more to Sicily on a second search that proved as fruitless as the first. The month passed, and of course the news of the wedding did not appear. Two or three days later, Francesca received a little oblong box bearing the Messina post-mark. She opened it with trembling hands, looked into it, and then, with a low wailing scream sank senseless to the floor. Her mother, who was in the room with her, summoned assistance and then looked into the box. It contained a man's forefinger cut off close to the hand and a slip of paper promising another similar communication in a month if the marriage advised by the writer had not taken place.

"I know it will be no use for me to try and tell you how great was the horror produced by this dreadful message. But, saving Francesca herself, no one seemed so deeply affected by it as Luigi. There could be no doubt but that he was the man whom the unknown sender of the summons ordered Francesca to marry under a penalty as unheard of as it was horrible, and equally there was no doubt as to whose finger it was that lay in the box. Still there was not a jot of evidence to connect Luigi with the hideous crime that was being perpetrated in some unknown spot.

"Though the details were, of course, kept private, the matter had been in the hands of the police from the beginning, and both the Italian and Sicilian police agents—detectives as you call them in England—had been using every effort to trace the unhappy man who was evidently the victim of as diabolical a conspiracy as a human brain had ever conceived.

"The second month passed, and then came a little square box addressed to Francesca, but this time bearing the Roman post-mark. Her father had given orders that all her letters were to be brought to him first, so he received the box and opened it. It contained a man's left ear and a slip of paper intimating that the right one would follow in another month, unless the marriage had taken place. The box and its contents were sent to the police, who redoubled their efforts, but still without avail.

"Francesca's father then appealed most solemnly to Luigi to confess privately to him if he had any hand in the horrible business, pledging his oath to let him escape scot free if Cosmo were set at liberty. But Luigi passionately repudiated the aspersion, and volunteered to go before the Judge of Instruction and submit to any examination as to his doings and whereabouts during the whole period. He called Heaven and all its saints to witness that, not only was he innocent of any complicity in the crime of the unknown miscreant, but he would willingly give his whole fortune to bring him to justice, and set Cosmo free to save Francesca from the slow death she was now dying from sorrow and horror.

"As for the suggestion that Francesca should marry him to save Cosmo, he declared that nothing would make him a party to such a hideous contract. Much as he had loved her and still respected and pitied her, he would rather follow her to the grave than lead her to the altar under such awful circumstances. After this there was of course nothing more to be said against him, for Francesca had never told anyone of his threat to be avenged on her and the man who had made his suit hopeless, and even she had forgotten it in the agony and perplexity of the hour.

"So the third month passed, and in due course the threat was mercilessly fulfilled. The right ear came in a box from Genoa, accompanied by precisely the same warning as before, saving only that the souvenir was to be of necessity varied next time. As far as was possible these latest horrors had been kept from Francesca, but it availed little, for she guessed that the threat of the first letter was being fulfilled, and the torture of her uncertainty was as great as that of knowledge would have been.

"At length, unable to bear it any longer she contrived to meet Luigi alone one day and implored him to tell her the truth. They happened to be in the same room in which she had refused his first and only offer of love. For some time he held out, but at last yielded to her supplications and told her all. Then, beside herself with the torment that she could no longer bear, she flung herself at his feet, almost on the same spot in which he had knelt at hers, and besought him to end her agony and save Cosmo by marrying her.

"No jealous lover's revenge was ever more complete than his was now, and yet he was not satisfied with it. He raised her from the ground and with tears in his eyes implored her to think of all that such a horrible sacrifice meant for them both, and for Cosmo too, even though it should rescue him from a fate which, hideous as it was, he would rather endure than escape it at such a price. In the end he succeeded in persuading her to wait yet another month, promising that if no deliverance came by that time he would place himself unreservedly in the hands of her parents and do whatever seemed best to them.

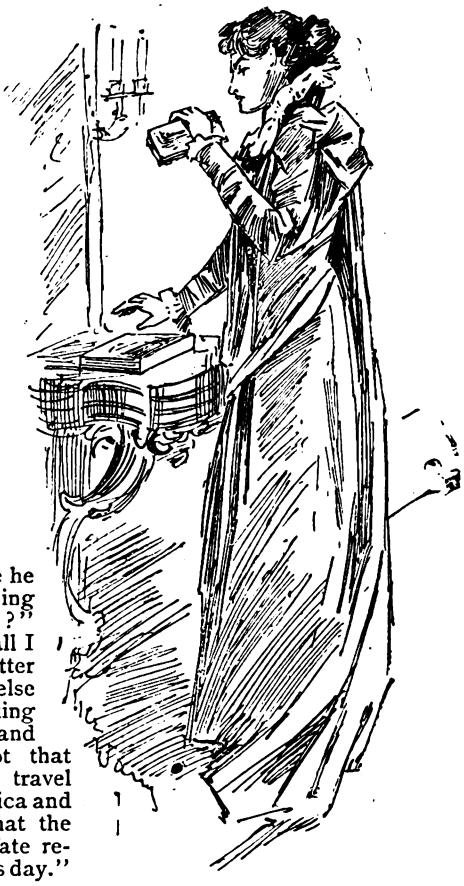
"Thus the fourth month passed, and on the very day that Luigi was to put his case before Francesca's father and mother, there came another larger box, this time from Turin, and this, through the stupidity or corruption of a servant, got into Francesca's hands instead of her father's. She opened it and in it found, severed cleanly from the wrist, a hand that had often clasped her own, and still bearing on its third finger the the troth-ring she had given Cosmo in exchange for the one she was wearing herself.

"Half an hour later, Francesca's mother came into the room and found her laughing softly to herself and stroking the dead hand gently with her own. She was mad — hopelessly mad, and the marriage was now a legal impossibility.

"That is my story, Signor, what do you think of it?"

"Horrible!" I said. "Hideous, almost beyond belief; but surely you have not told it all? What became of Cosmo and Luigi? And was it ever proved that he had a hand in the ghastly business, as of course he must have had according to all the probabilities?"

"I have told you all I know, and for the matter of that, that anyone else knows," said he taking out a fresh cigar and lighting it, "except that Luigi went away to travel for two years in America and the far East, and that the mystery of Cosmo's fate remains a mystery to this day."



Opened it with trembling hands.

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Nearly two years had passed since I had said good-bye to my Italian acquaintance when he landed from the *Baiern* at Ismailia. I was sitting in the Café Ranieri in the Via Maria de Fiori in Rome, enjoying an after-dinner smoke and looking through the papers. I picked up the *Tribuna*, and as I opened the inside pages three or four staring head lines caught my eyes. One of them would have read in English:

"SOLUTION OF THE GREAT NEAPOLITAN MYSTERY."

And what follows here is a condensed translation of that portion of the report, filling nearly five columns of the *Tribuna*, which alone concerns the readers of the foregoing narrative:—

"Although all that was done had necessarily to be done with the strictest secrecy at the time, the police have now permitted the details of this extraordinary affair to be made public.

"It appears that Paolo Marini, after he had been sentenced to death for brigandage at Palermo, purchased the commutation of his sentence to penal servitude for fifteen years by giving the police information which led to the final breaking up of the band of the notorious Guiseppe Montani, who had for the last seven years been the terror of Palermo and its district. As is already known, Montani and the greater number of his followers fell under the bullets of the soldiers and gendarmerie, fighting desperately till the last, but still many were taken and paid the penalty of their crimes.

"In connection with this information, Paolo made a statement which at last clears up the mystery of that terrible tragedy which thrilled, not only Naples, but all Italy, about two and a half years ago. In spite of all his protestations of innocence and the entire absence of proof against him, Luigi Sforza was, as many have all along suspected, at the bottom of the vile conspiracy which wrecked the happiness of an honourable family, destroyed the reason of one of the fairest daughters of southern Italy, and ruthlessly sacrificed the life of one of its most promising sons.

"Luigi Sforza, strange as it may seem, was the foster-brother of the infamous Guiseppe Montani, and with him he hatched the horrible plot which, in one sense, succeeded all too well. Sforza's object was, of course, as is well known, revenge on the Signorina Francesca Cervigni and her family for the rejection of his suit, and on Signor Cosmo Tasselli for having, as he believed, supplanted him in her affections. Sforza advised Montani of Signor Tasselli's visit to Sicily, and he kidnapped him from his hunting-lodge on the night of his disappearance, carrying him off to one of his then unknown strongholds in the mountains.

Found her laughing softly to herself.

"Here he was kept while the first letter was sent, and when Sforza went to Sicily, ostensibly to search for him, a diabolical bargain was struck between the two scoundrels. Montani was to terrify the Signorina into a marriage with Sforza by the horrible and unheard of expedient of sending her portions of his unhappy victim's body coupled with threats to continue the mutilation till she consented to sacrifice herself. In order to baffle inquiries these ghastly fragments were sent through the post from various towns by the bandit's agents.

"Montani's price for this hideous work was to be the half of a very large fortune which the Signorina Francesca's only uncle had made in South America and left to her in trust, to be paid over to her on her wedding day provided she married with her father's consent. It has since been learnt that this portion of the plot would also have succeeded but for the insatiable thirst for vengeance which made Sforza overreach himself at the last moment, for the Signorina had actually yielded and consented to the unnatural marriage, but Sforza, then believing himself safe, preferred, with literally inhuman malice, to prolong her agony for another month.

"At the end of this time, and a day or so earlier than Sforza expected, the last of the horrible packages fell into the Signorina's hands by mistake, and under the horror of the sight of what it contained she became hopelessly insane. She was now, of course, incapable of both marriage and inheritance, and so the second part of the plot fell through. Montani then killed Signor Tasselli in a fit of fury, and several months afterwards he inveigled Sforza to Sicily on pretence of letting him still further satisfy his vengeance by seeing his rival killed before his eyes.

"It seems meanwhile that remorse or fear had driven Sforza to drink, and one night in a fit of drunken foolishness he boasted to Montani that he could have married the Signorina a month before the final catastrophe, but he did not think she had been punished enough. The knowledge of how nearly he had gained an immense sum of money, and of the vindictive madness that had lost it to him, so infuriated the brigand, that the next day, when Sforza was sober, he tied him to a tree, and made his men put him to death by just the same torments that his victim had suffered. The miserable man was literally cut to pieces, member by member, and limb by limb, as long as a spark of life, or a thrill of feeling, remained in his body. No man ever conceived a viler crime than he did, but it is doubtful if any criminal was ever so terribly punished. We subjoin a portrait of him taken a little over two years ago."

I looked at the portrait, and recognised it as that of the chance acquaintance who had told me the story on the promenade deck of the *Baiern*.

PEARSON'S PHOTOGRAPHIC PORTFOLIO

OF

FOOTLIGHT FAVOURITES.

The Second Part will be Published on

THURSDAY, DECEMBER 20th.

AND WILL BE

Twice as Good as Part I.

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Miss Agnes Huntington: A Reminiscence of "Paul Jones."
Mr. Henry Irving as Matthias in "The Bells."
Miss Mimi St. Cyr: A Study.
Miss Ellaline Terriss as "Cinderella."
Miss Julia Neilson in "The Tempter."
Miss Jessie Preston as Little Jack Sheppard.
Madame Patti: A Study.
Miss Maude Adams in "The Marked Ball."
Miss Millie Hylton in "Don Juan."
Mr. Fred Storey in "Ruy Blas," and "Cinder-Ellen Up Too Late."
Miss Mary Ansell.
Miss Alice Lethbridge.
Mr. E. S. Willard in "The Middleman."
Madame Jane Hading.
Miss Janet Achurch.
Miss Marie Tempest as Manon.
Miss Loie Fuller as a Skirt Dancer.
Miss Moore in "Little Christopher Columbus."
Miss Billie Barlow as Little Boy Blue.

NOTE THIS:—Part I. was sold out almost on publication, and many would-be purchasers could not obtain a copy. Part II. will sell out even quicker. Order your copy now.

33 BEAUTIFUL PHOTOGRAPHS FOR SIXPENCE.

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"TWENTY POUNDS REWARD."

"I TELL you, sergeant, I had it when I entered the train. I particularly remember looking at the time as we left Cannon Street, because it was then eleven minutes past five, and I remarked to my neighbour that we were nearly four minutes late."

Mr. Joseph Horsfall, J.P., of 71, Leadenhall Street, and Highfield Court, Highfield, was manifestly excited. His face was flushed; his overcoat, in defiance of the penetrating November fog, was unfastened and thrown open. There was something positively pathetic in the anxiety with which his eyes travelled from his undecorated waistcoat to the perplexed countenances surrounding him.

He was the centre of a small group of officials—the station master, the booking clerk and a couple of porters—one of whom, catching sight of the sergeant of police passing the level crossing just below the station, had with commendable promptitude run out and stopped him.

The man in authority was already busy with his note-book.

"What about your fellow passengers, Mr. Horsfall?" he inquired, with his pencil poised in readiness to enter the reply. "Did you notice them at all?"

"Three of them were residents and season ticket holders—Mr. Brookes, of Caldwell, Mr. Denny, and Colonel Pierce. A gentleman with whom I have constantly travelled, though we are not personally acquainted, went on to Dorking."

"Mr. Beale, of that town," put in the station-master, "I noticed him when I opened your door, sir. He was the late mayor. Well, it can't be any of *them*."

The booking clerk murmured something about the prevalence of kleptomania among the upper classes, but nobody listened to him.

"And the others, sir?" the sergeant continued; "any females?"

"Dear me, no, Troyle; it was a smoking carriage. Let me think." Mr. Horsfall put his hand to his head. "There were two other passengers. They left the train at some intermediate station. One was a clergyman, and the other—yes—a young man who sat on my right. He *looked* like a gentleman."

"There's nothing more deceiving than looks," Mr. Troyle averred sententiously. "Now this young gentleman, what was he like?"

"Like any other young man, wore an overcoat and a silk hat."

"Clean shaved, perhaps."

"Oh, no, a small moustache, and an eyeglass like the rest."

"Now, Mr. Horsfall, if you please, a description of the stolen property. A gold 'Albert' chain, I think you said, without locket or seal. And the watch——"

"A valuable gold repeater, a very valuable watch indeed. It was the gift of a most esteemed client—a deceased client. It would be quite irreplaceable."

"Any monogram or crest?"

"Both crest and shield were on the reverse of the case, and two initials, with a date engraved inside."

"Then it won't be offered at the pawnshops. They'll probably pop the case into the melting pot, unless it is detained in hopes of a reward."

"I will offer the reward at once." Mr. Horsfall's voice literally shook with anxiety. "I would not on any consideration have that watch destroyed. It shall be advertised in all the London newspapers. 'Twenty pounds reward'—I will gladly give that sum for its recovery."

"That ought to fetch it," said the sergeant, thoughtfully. "I should like to have a go for the thief—always taking for granted that the watch was stolen; but perhaps as you are so keen on this particular bit of jewellery, it may be safer to advertise."

"There's just a chance of its turning up at Dorking," suggested the station-master, who had wired forward instructions to search the carriage. "That is the answer," he added, as his ear caught the sharp tinkle of the telegraph call from the inner office. The answer proved unsatisfactory: "Have made careful examination of No. 222. No trace of missing property."

"I shall advertise," said Mr. Horsfall, dejectedly. "I have no desire to prosecute the thief; I am only anxious for the restoration of my property. I would not lose that watch on any consideration. The late Lord Sprintham presented it to me with his own hands, and I will gladly pay twenty pounds for its return."

"Twenty pounds reward, and no questions asked," groaned the sergeant aside. "It's a regular premium to pickpockets. However, it isn't my business. If I might offer a suggestion, sir," he added aloud, "I should say put 'No further reward will be offered' in your advertisement, or the gentry as have the watch may stick to it till they run you up to a cool hundred."

"Certainly, Troyle, certainly; a very good idea of yours. I will add 'No further reward will be offered' to my advertisement, though for the gift of the late Lord Sprintham I should not grudge even a hundred pounds. I shall have time to telegraph the notice to the *Times* and *Standard* to-night. They know me."

Mr. Horsfall bustled away through the fog, bent on reaching the post office as quickly as possible.

In due time the advertisement appeared in all the principal papers:

"Twenty Pounds Reward.—Lost between Cannon Street Station and Highfield, in first-class smoking carriage of 5.8 p.m. train, a gold repeater watch, engraved with shield and crest; also a heavy Albert guard. Anyone bringing the same to Messrs. Horsfall & Quills, 71, Leadenhall Street, will receive the above. N.B.—No further reward will be offered."

Mr. Horsfall read the little paragraph with much satisfaction. He went to town fully expecting to return with Lord Sprintham's gift once more in his pocket, but, as the hours wore on without any tidings of the missing watch, he grew less cheerful and less sanguine.

The two following days only served to deepen his depression. His usual good temper deserted him, he was morose with his clients, and snubbed an inoffensive clerk for bringing up a card just as the senior partner was preparing to leave the office.

"I can't wait," Mr. Horsfall said testily, "tell the gentleman he can see Mr. Quills."

"I did say you were just going, sir, but the gentleman thought it would be all right when you saw this."

This was a visiting card, neatly engraved with the name of "The Rev. Athelstane Bede," and at one corner, in smaller type, "The Clergy House, King Street, St. Giles, Grosvenor Gallery Club." Attached was a cutting of the advertisement of the lost watch.

"Eh, what?" Mr. Horsfall was all attention. "Let me see, I shall have ten minutes to spare if I drive. Get me a hansom, Dixon, and show the gentleman in at once."

The Rev. Athelstane Bede was a thin care-worn man, below the average height, and with an unmistakable air of impecuniosity about him. His clothes were worn, and decidedly glossy about the knees and elbows. There were dark circles round his preternaturally bright eyes, and a hollowness about the sallow cheeks, which created an uncomfortable impression that the Rev. Athelstane Bede was insufficiently fed.

His manner, however, was admirable, and the quiet dignity with which he introduced himself did not fail to impress Mr. Horsfall, whose respect for the Church was only second to his reverence for the State.

"I come on behalf of a young parishioner of mine," began the visitor courteously. "I am sorry to detain you, Mr. Horsfall, but I need not trespass long upon your valuable time. I think this advertisement will explain my errand. You offer a handsome reward for the recovery of a watch."

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At this neat reminder, Mr. Horsfall took out his cheque-book.

"Yes," he answered with an air of satisfaction; "that watch you see was the gift of a valued friend, the late Lord Sprintham. The cheque has been filled in ever since the advertisement appeared." He tore off the slip of paper and stood with it in his hand. The clergyman unbuttoned his thin overcoat and drew from his pocket the watch and chain.

"You will be kind enough to give the crest and initials, Mr. Horsfall," he remarked with a pleasant smile. "Quite unnecessary, really; but as I am only a deputy in the matter, it is perhaps as well to observe the usual formalities."

"The crest is a hound, passant; the initials J.H., from G.O.V.S.; date, May 28th, 1887."

"Quite correct. I have much pleasure in restoring the gift of your esteemed friend. You will understand that, acting on behalf of another, I am not at liberty to refuse the advertised reward; but you may rest satisfied that the money falls into most deserving hands, and will be both gratefully acknowledged and wisely spent."

He pushed the watch gently across the table; his long thin fingers lingered over it as if they liked the touch of the smooth metal.

Mr. Horsfall folded the cheque and handed it politely to his visitor, with a few words of thanks. He glanced at the watch as he restored it to his pocket.

"You will excuse me, I am sure," he began; "but——"

"You are anxious to catch your train," said the clergyman as he pocketed the cheque. "I will not detain you."

The two men went downstairs together. As they reached the outer door, Mr. Horsfall turned towards his companion. "I should like to know—purely as a matter of curiosity, you understand, the little affair is a thing of the past now—but as a matter of curiosity, Mr. Bede, I should very much like to know *where* your young friend found my watch."

The Rev. Athelstane Bede hesitated for a moment, and looked hard at the elder man.

"Mr. Horsfall," he said suddenly, "your generosity in this matter inclines me to trust you, but an explanation would place me unreservedly in your hands. If I speak freely, have I your word, as a magistrate and a gentleman, that you make no attempt to take advantage of my information—that it shall, in short, remain a dead secret between us." Curiosity is a passion not wholly confined to the weaker sex. Mr. Horsfall readily gave the required promise.

"I am aware that I am about to give myself away," pursued the clergyman; "but with a man of your untarnished honour my secret will be safe, and to you I cannot lie. Your watch, Mr. Horsfall, was not *found*. It was stolen."

"Stolen!" gasped the magistrate. "Then Troyle was right."

"Deliberately stolen from your person," continued Bede, solemnly.

"By that young fellow who sat next the window?"

"By no young fellow—my sin shall not be imputed to an innocent man—I, Athelstane Bede, committed the theft. Hear me out, Mr. Horsfall; listen to the story of sore temptation before you judge the fallen sinner. I have laboured hard in the vineyard. I have not eaten the bread of idleness. I have allowed myself no luxuries. But my stipend is barely sufficient for the necessaries of life, and I meet with many who need help. I have given to the starving the money which should have been paid to my tradespeople. Bills accumulated. I was pressed for payment; my creditors would not be denied. Before me lay ruin and disgrace. I tried in vain to borrow money.

"When I entered your carriage last Monday evening I was in despair. You took out your watch. I saw its value, and the tempter assailed me. He whispered: 'Take it! A reward will be offered. You can claim it; pay your debt; save your reputation. It is doing evil that good may come. In the future you may save the sum, and return it anonymously through the post.' In my old 'Varsity days I had taken lessons in prestigiation, and had frequently, with the assistance of a friend, given entertainments for the benefit of various charities. My skill had not deserted me. I fell. Now you know all. Spurn me, despise me if you will. At least, I have not lied to you."

His eyes were fixed on the ground. Sorrow, remorse, shame, were depicted on his thin, worn face. Mr. Horsfall's kindly heart was touched.

"Upon my soul," he said, "I am very sorry for you, Mr. Bede. It must have been a great temptation, a very great temptation. We never know our weakness till it is put to the test. Bless me, I might have done the same thing myself! Had I been acquainted with the circumstances, I would gladly have lent you the money. Consider it as a loan, to be repaid when you are a rich man. It was an ingenious device, though. Really," his curiosity getting the better of his delicacy, "you must have had great practice at some time. You did it very cleverly. My overcoat was buttoned up, I remember."

"Had you worn half-a-dozen coats it would have made no difference. The method is unique."

"Most extraordinary—extraordinary!" murmured the old gentleman. "Really it makes one quite curious to know how it is done. I suppose, now, you would not—just to illustrate the principle——"

He stopped, rebuked by the sorrowful surprise and dignity visible in the clergyman's countenance.

"Beg your pardon, I'm sure. Quite forgot what I was saying. Pray think no more of it," stammered the abashed magistrate. "Good evening, Mr. Bede. I shall hope to meet you again under pleasanter circumstances. You must excuse me. I shall only have just time to catch my train. Good evening."

Mr. Horsfall hurried into the hansom, bidding the man drive quickly. He was rather late, and as they drew near the station he unfastened his overcoat to get the shilling ready for his fare. Fumbling in his waistcoat pocket for another sixpence he made a discovery which put all thoughts of returning to Highfield out of his head.

The newly recovered watch and chain were gone for the second time. Mr. Horsfall was fairly staggered. He leaned back in the cab breathing heavily, and could hardly gather voice on arriving at the station to send a porter for the police inspector.

Meanwhile the cabby, with the aid of another railway servant, made a careful examination of the hansom; but, of course, they found no trace of the late Lord Sprintham's token of friendship and esteem. Acting on the advice of the inspector, Mr. Horsfall had recourse to the nearest police-station, whence, after stating his case, he drove, accompanied by an officer, to King Street, St. Giles, first calling, however, at the office, whore they found the clergyman's card still lying on the table in Mr. Horsfall's private room.

The constable was inclined to consider the whole affair a plant.

"Likely as not there's no Clergy House in King Street, or, if there is, we shall hear that they don't know any one of the name of Bede."

But, as it happened, the constable was wrong. There was a Clergy House in King Street, easily to be recognised by the big brass plate on the door; and, to Mr. Horsfall's inquiries, the servant replied that Mr. Bede was expected back immediately. "Would not the gentlemen step inside and wait?"

Accordingly, Mr. Horsfall and the constable were conducted to the long bare-looking visitors' room.

There was a constant stir in the house. Bells rang, people came and went, voices without gave hurried directions. Presently the servant was heard explaining that a gentleman was waiting to see Mr. Bede; he "had not given any name; said that Mr. Bede would know him."

Then the door was flung open by a big muscular young man arrayed in clerical garb of the most correct cut and style.

"Sorry to keep you waiting," he began pleasantly, "I was obliged to go up West this afternoon, and have only just returned. It is about the School Board, is it not?" he added interrogatively, glancing from Mr. Horsfall to the constable.

"I think," hesitated the former, "that there is some mistake. It was for Mr. Bede I inquired."

"It is all right; my name is Bede."

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"The Rev. Athelstane Bede, the Clergy House, St. Giles, and the Grosvenor Gallery Club?"

"That is my address. What can I do for you?"

Mr. Horsfall looked despairingly at the policeman.

"It is quite a different person," he said helplessly. "There is not the least resemblance between the two gentlemen."

"Case of mistaken identity?" inquired the curate.

"Case of swindle, I think, sir," responded the constable. "I told the gentleman all along as 'ow it was a plant."

"I must beg you to accept my humblest apologies," protested Mr. Horsfall when he had explained the situation. "You see, I had not a moment's doubt as to the truth of the story. The man looked like a gentleman, and a clergyman too. How was I to suppose him to be an impostor? There was his card. I have it with me. You will notice that it bears your name and address."

"Ah! that is quite possible. I had the misfortune about three weeks ago to have my pocket picked. There were four or five cards in my letter case (this most probably is one of them); there were also, I regret to say, three five-pound notes, the numbers of which I had not taken. We are brothers in misfortune, and I am afraid, sir, that your watch has shared the fate of my pocket-book."

"It looks like it," admitted Mr. Horsfall, gloomily; then his face cleared a little. "I'll stop that cheque," he said; "we shall catch him that way. I will write to the manager to-night."

The letter was duly written and posted, but circumstances for once were against the sacred cause of justice.

A dense fog delayed the bank-secretary's arrival at his post the next morning till half-an-hour after his usual time, and while Mr. Horsfall's letter lay unopened, amidst the pile of correspondence on the manager's table, his cheque was presented by a well-dressed young man, who received payment across the counter in gold.

Though a fresh reward was offered, coupled with a significant hint that no inconvenient questions would be asked, nothing more was heard of Lord Sprintham's gift. It had gone, most probably, as Sergeant Troyle had suggested, into the melting-pot, and not all the efforts of Mr. Horsfall, backed by the assistance of the Detective Department, could bring it back.

LASHED TO THE TOPMAST.

STRANGER to Canada, I think you said? First visit to Ontario? Well, you're heartily welcome to Indian Creek. Take a chair on the verandah till dinner's ready—we dine early in these New World parts.

Fine farm? Well, yes; Indian Creek is a nice place, if I do own it. All, as far as you can see—grass-land, corn-fields, woods, and creeks—all belong to it.

Stock, too—they call it the best-stocked farm in Ontario, I believe, and I dare say they're right, and yet I came to Canada twelve years ago, without even the traditional half-crown in my trousers' pocket. You look surprised. Would you like to hear the story? There's a good half-hour to dinner time yet, and it's a story I never tire of telling, somehow.

I began life as the son of a village carpenter in the south of England. You know that class pretty well, I dare say, and what a gulf was fixed between me and the vicar of the parish. And yet—and yet—from the time she was seven years old and I eleven, and she fell down in the dusty road outside the carpenter's shop and cried, and I picked her up, and smoothed the little crumpled pinafore, and kissed the dust out of her golden curls, I loved but one girl in the world, and that was the vicar's daughter, Winny Branscome.

Madness, you say. Well, perhaps so, and yet a man is but a man, and a woman a woman; and love comes, whatever one may do.

There's no class distinction recognised by childhood, and we were playmates and friends till she went to boarding school. If Miss Winny had had a mother, no doubt things would have been very different; but we were alike in never having known a woman's care; and the old vicar was blind to everything but his theological treatises.

But when she came back from the London boarding school, a beautiful young lady, all smiles and laces and little lovely ways—then I knew.

I had tried my best to study and work, and make myself more like the men she would meet; but what can a lad in an English village do?

I just had enough education to make every other lad in the place hate me, and beside the men in her world I suppose I cut an astonishing figure.

Yet the love of her was so beyond all else in me, that made hopeless as I felt it, I had no power over myself; and the first time I met her alone in the woods—she avoided me I saw, and I had to wait for a chance—I told her the whole story, and waited for the answer. She grew scarlet—a rush of colour that dyed her fair, sweet face—then deathly white.

"Dick," she said, and she trembled from head to foot, "you know it can never, never be; you know you are wrong even to dream of such a thing. Some girls would think it an insult—I know you better, but if my father heard of this he would say you had abused his kindness to you; he would never forgive you. Forget your madness." And she ran from me.

I let her go. I had seen the blush and the tremor, and I guessed that if I had been Mr. Loftus, the young squire, instead of Dick Hawtry, the carpenter's son, her answer might have been different.

A great resolve sprang up in my soul, and I took a solemn oath in those June woods. That very night I sold the old shop (my father was dead, and I had taken to the business), and with the money I bought an outfit, and started at once for Canada.

It was pretty tough work at first; but I worked like a galley-slave—starved, and pinched, and saved, and never spent a penny on myself, except for the books I sat up half the night to read and study.

Well, in this country the man who works and doesn't drink is sure to get on, and I had a mighty purpose in my head. By-and-bye I bought some land dirt cheap, and sold it for three times what I gave for it. Then I began to make money fast.

I should call my luck wonderful if I believed in luck, and didn't prefer to think I was helped by a Power far abler than my own. At last, ten years to the very day after I set foot on Canadian soil, I bought Indian Creek Farm, and began to build this house, till the neighbours thought my good fortune had turned my brain; for I fitted it up and furnished it for a lady, down to the little rocking-chair by my study table, and a work-basket with a tiny gold thimble in it.

And when all was finished, I took the first ship for Liverpool.

Ten years builds a city over here. It doesn't make much change in a Devonshire village. The very gates were still

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high off their hinges, as I left them; only the people were a little older and a trifle more stupid, and there was a new vicar.

Old Mr. Branscome had been dead six months—died very poor, they told me; there was nothing left for Miss Winny. My heart gave one great leap when I heard that. And Miss Winny? Oh, she had gone governessing with some people who were just off to Canada, and the ship sailed to-morrow from Liverpool.

The Liverpool express never seemed to crawl so slowly before. I got there to find every berth taken on board the *Antarctic*, and the captain raging at the non-appearance of two of the crew. Without a moment's pause I offered for one of the vacant places.

I was strong as a horse, and active enough, and, though the captain eyed me rather askance—I had been to a fashionable tailor on my way through London—he was too glad to get me to ask any questions.

So I sailed on the ship with my girl, little as she knew it. I saw her the first day or two looking so pale and thin that she was like the ghost of her old self, and yet sweeter to my eyes than ever before. The children she had charge of were troublesome little creatures, who worried and badgered her till I longed to cuff them well.

We had an awful passage. It was late in November, an early winter, and the cold was intense. It blew one continuous gale, and some of our machinery was broken, and we could not keep our course.

As we drew near this side of the Atlantic, we got more and more out of our bearings, and at last the fogs told us we were somewhere off the banks of Newfoundland, but where no one was quite sure. It seemed to me it had all happened before, or I had dreamed it or read it. At all events, it was hardly a surprise to me, when on the tenth night, just after midnight, the awful crash and shock took place—a sensation which no one who has not felt it can imagine in the least—and we knew that the *Antarctic* had struck.

It is a fearful thing, if you come to think of it—a great steamer filled with living souls in the full flow of life and health, and in one moment the call coming to each of them to die.

Before you could have struck a match the whole ship was in a panic—cries, terror, confusion, agony. Oh, it was awful! I trust never to see such a sight again. I made my way through it all as if I had neither eyes nor ears, and got to the state-room I had long ago found out was the one which belonged to my girl.

"Winny!" I cried, "come out! Make haste! There is not a moment to lose!"

The door opened as I spoke, and she stood just within, ready dressed, even to her little black hat. The cabin light had been left burning by the doctor's orders, and it fell full on me as I stood there in my sailor's jersey and cap. I wondered if she would know me. I forgot the danger we were in—forgot that death was waiting close at hand—forgot that the world held anyone but just her and me.

"Dick!" she cried; "oh, Dick, Dick!" and she fell forward in a dead faint on my shoulder.

All my senses came back then, and I lifted her up and ran for the deck. A great fur-lined cloak had been dropped by the door of the ladies' cabin. There was no light now, but I stumbled over it as I ran. I snatched it up, and carried it with me.

Up above all was in the wildest chaos—the boats over-filled and pushing off, the ship settling rapidly, people shouting, crying, swearing. One hears tales of calmness and courage often enough at such times which make one's heart glow as one reads them; but there was not much heroism shown in the wreck of the *Antarctic*.

The captain behaved splendidly, and so did some of the passengers; but the majority of them and the crew were mad with terror, and lost their heads altogether.

I saw there was not a chance for the overcrowded boats in that sea, and I sprang for the rigging. I was not a second too soon; a score of others followed my example, and with my precious burden I should not have had a chance two minutes later.

As it was I scrambled to the topmast, and got a firm hold there. Winny was just coming to herself. I had wrapped her round like a baby in the fur cloak, and with my teeth I opened my knife to cut a rope which hung within reach. With this I lashed her to me, and fastened us both to the topmast.

The ship sank gradually; she did not keel over, or I should not be telling you the story now; she settled down, just her deck above water; but the great seas washed over it every second, and swept it clean. The boats had gone!

One or two of the crew, floating on loose spars, were picked up afterwards—no more. The rigging was pretty full, at least in the upper part; down below, the sea was too strong. The captain was near me. I felt glad to think he had been saved—he was not a coward, like some of the others.

How long was the longest night you ever knew? Multiply that by a thousand and you will have some idea of that night's length. The cold was awful; the spray froze on the sheets as it fell; the yards were slippery with ice. I stamped on Winny's feet to keep them from freezing. Did you not notice that I limp a little? I shall walk lame as long as I live. Sometimes there was a splash in the dark waters below, as some poor fellow's stiffened hold relaxed, and he fell from his place in the rigging. There was not a breath of wind—nothing but the bitter, bitter fog.

Death stared us in the face; we seemed to live ages of agony in every minute, and yet, will you believe me, all that seemed little in comparison to the thought that, after all the struggles and the sorrows, after all those ten weary years, I had my girl in my arms at last!

She had pulled one corner of the cloak round my neck (I stood on a level just below her), and her hand lay there with it—it was the hand that warmed me more than the cloak—and her cheek rested against my own.

Often I thought its coldness was the coldness of death, and almost exulted in the thought that we should die together.

And then I would catch the murmur of the prayer she was uttering for us both, and knew that life was there still, and hope lived too.

Well, well! Why should I dwell on such horrors, except to thank the mercy that brought us through them all? Day dawned at last, and there was the shore near by, and soon rockets were fired and ropes secured, and one by one the half-dead living were drawn from their awful suspension between sky and sea, and landed safe on shore.

They had to take Winny and me together, just as we were, and even then they had hard work to undo the clasp of my stiffened arms about her. I knew nothing then; not for long after. And it is wonderful that Winny was the first to recover, and that it was she who nursed me back to life and reason.

And how did I ask her to marry me? Upon my word, now you ask me, I can't remember that I ever did. That seemed utterly unnecessary, somehow.

Somehow I was glad it was so; glad my girl had taken me, in my cap and jersey, for a common sailor, and yet loved the old Dick through it all; glad she never dreamed I was owner of Indian Creek Farm, and the richest man in this end of Ontario, and had wealth and position higher than Mr. Loftus, the young squire at home.

The people she was with had all gone down on that awful night; she had no one in the world but me. We were married at Montreal—and the captain of the *Antarctic* gave her away—and then I brought her home to Indian Creek.

To see her face when she saw the rocking chair, and the work-basket, and the thimble! Heaven bless her!

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THE OUTLAWS OF THE AIR.

By GEORGE GRIFFITH,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," &c.

SUMMARY.

MAX RENAULT—leading spirit of Anarchist Autonomie Group No. 7, who has joined the Utopians (a Socialistic colony on an island in the South Pacific) in order to steal the air-ship they are building, which he succeeds in doing.
FRANZ HARTOG—a German engineer, in league with Renault, who steals a very fast torpedo-boat destroyer from the Russian Government to levy blackmail on the Atlantic.
SIR HARRY MILTON—a wealthy young English nobleman, who by chance comes across the island of Utopia in his yacht, the *Calypso*, and subsequently devotes the whole of his fortune to hunting down Renault and Hartog.
HERBERT WYNDHAM—a lieutenant in the British Navy who is travelling with Sir Harry for the benefit of his health, and who determines to resign his commission and couple his energies with those of Sir Harry in destroying the Anarchists, on account of the fact that he has been stabbed by Renault when the latter attempts to carry off Violet in the air-ship.
FREDERICK AUSTEN—the inventor of the air-ship, who shares its secret with Edward Adams, Dr. Edwards, and Ambrose Millar, three other Utopians.
FRANK MARKHAM—the young captain of the Utopian yacht, *Mermaid*.
VIOLET MILTON—Sir Harry's sister, and Lieutenant Wyndham's sweetheart, is fearfully injured by throwing herself out of the air-ship on which Renault has tried to carry her off.
LEA CASSILIS (alias MME. DAIL)—a member of Autonomie Group No. 7, with whom Renault is in love.
DORA MERTON—a fair Utopian, who has made an impression on Sir Harry.
LUCY SUMMERS—another fair Utopian.
Renault, after levying blackmail with Hartog on the high seas, returns to Utopia with the object of destroying the colony, but finds it deserted. After a time he goes to Europe in the air-ship *Vengeur*, and together with Lea Cassilis visits the Criterion Theatre, London, where he is recognised by Sir Harry, and Lieutenant Wyndham, who effect his capture.

CHAPTER XXIX.

A SCENE AT BOW STREET.

THE arrest of Max Renault occurred at a few minutes past eleven, and before midnight the news—embellished, of course, by the wildest rumours and exaggerations—had spread far and wide over London, and had been flashed over the wires, not only to the provinces, but to the Continent and America as well.

Some accounts said that he had been arrested in the act of throwing a bomb on to the stage, and that it was only on his examination at the police-court that the real importance of the capture had been discovered. Others, again, said that the now famous air-ship herself had descended in Hyde Park, and had been captured with all hands on board; while yet a third rumour said that she was still at large and had gone to attack Windsor Castle out of revenge for her captain's arrest. The true facts were, however, as they were set forth at the end of the last chapter. Renault offered no resistance, and did not even utter a word of protest as soon as he saw that he was fairly in the toils. All he said was confined to a couple of sentences addressed to Sir Harry and that was:

"I am not going to deny my identity; I only wish to say that Mrs. Dail had, of course, not the slightest idea of it. I hope that, as a gentleman, you will see that she suffers as little inconvenience as possible."

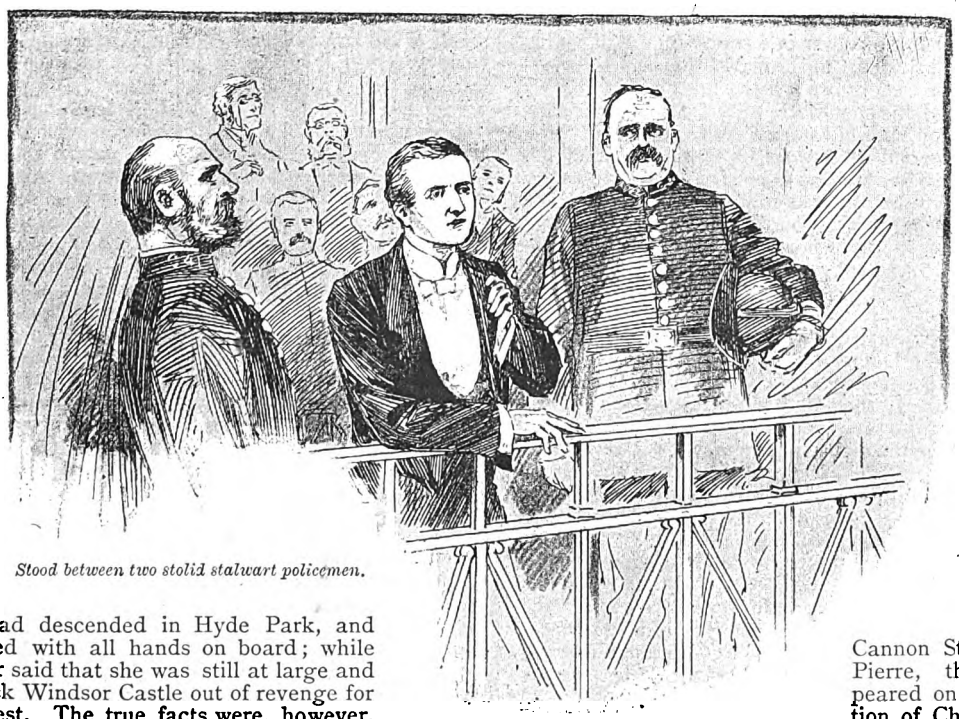
Sir Harry bowed in reply and at once offered his arm to Lea, who took it, and, after one brief frightened glance at Max between the two policemen, she went out with him, saying as she did so:

"What an awful thing!—and, would you believe it, Sir Harry, I have almost been silly enough to allow that man to persuade me to marry him. What an escape! Ugh! it makes me cold all over to think of it. Please get me a cab. I'm staying at the Métropole; my maid will be there waiting for me, and I shall get back to Paris first thing in the morning.

"No, please don't trouble to come with me. Really I would rather not. I shall be quite safe and——well, you see, I left the hotel with one gentleman, as he called himself, and it would hardly do to go back at this time of night with another, would it? Those hotel people do talk so. Thanks, this will do nicely. Good-night, and a thousand thanks for your kindness!"

She waved her hand to him from the cab, in farewell, and he called another and drove off to Bow Street to join Wyndham and his two friends. Lea drove to the Métropole, had her valise and Max's brought down, paid her bill, called another cab, and drove off at once to Charing Cross.

As she gave the direction, a man who had been lounging about the hotel entrance turned away and sauntered up the Avenue towards the station. He was the man who had left the *Vengeur* with them to act as means of communication between them and the air-ship, if necessary.



Stood between two stolid stalwart policemen.

When Lea had dismissed her cab at Charing Cross, she took a ticket for Cannon Street, and the man, following close after, took one for the same place, and got into the same carriage with her. She managed to find an empty first-class compartment, and by the time the train reached Cannon Street she had given her companion an account of what had happened, and a lengthy and minute message to Taxil. At Cannon Street they parted. Pierre, the sailor, disappeared on foot in the direction of Cheapside, and Lea got into a cab and drove to Aldersgate Street station.

There she watched the cabman out of sight, took a ticket for Farringdon Street, and then, leaving the station, got into another cab and told the man to drive her to an address in Westbourne Terrace where, three-quarters of an hour later, she was telling the story of Max's arrest to Rolland and his wife.

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The next morning there was hardly anything on the newspaper placards but the great black letters which announced the event of which all England was already talking: the unexpected and almost grotesquely easy capture of the famous Anarchist and captain of the still more famous air-ship, which, as all the world knew, had destroyed, single-handed, three powerful cruisers and the same number of torpedo boats, and captured the aeroplane *Britannia* in mid-air to boot.

When Max was brought before Sir John Bridge at Bow Street at ten o'clock the next morning not only was the Court packed to suffocation but Bow Street itself was filled with an anxious, excited crowd, bent on getting a glimpse of those who had played the chief part in the capture of the prisoner. As Sir Harry and his friends drove up the crowd parted and cheered them as they went through. Outside reporters took snap shots at them as they entered the court and rushed off to have them reproduced to embellish the sensational narratives of their adventures in Utopia and on the Atlantic which the nimble fingers of hundreds of compositors were already setting up to form a sequel to the police court proceedings.

The proceedings themselves were of the simplest possible character, but they were none the less interesting on that account. When Max was brought into the dock he stood leaning on the rails in front, between the two stolid, stalwart policemen who guarded him, with an unconcern that could not have been more absolute if he had been a spectator watching the most trivial of cases. He politely but firmly refused all offers of legal aid, and with equal politeness disregarded the magistrate's warning that anything he said might be used against him at the Assizes if he were sent for trial.

First Lieutenant Wyndham, then Sir Harry, then Captain Maxwell and Lieutenant Pelham appeared in succession in the witness-box and told what they knew of the accused, his merciless crimes and his extraordinary exploits. The quietly-told, circumstantial narratives were spoken in the midst of a breathless silence which was broken for the first time when Sir Harry described Max's attempt to carry off his sister in the air-ship, and then all eyes were turned for a moment on to the accused, and a low murmur of irrepressible indignation ran like a fierce growl through the crowded Court.

Max simply lifted his eyebrows a little, and, with an almost imperceptible shrug of his shoulders, turned to Sir Harry and waited for him to go on with his story. When Captain Maxwell told of the destruction of the *Devon* and described how first her men had been mown down helplessly by the storm of Maxim bullets from the air, and then how the shells had riddled her decks, set her interior on fire, and at last exploded her boilers, the crowd in the Court moved uneasily as they sat or stood, and looked at each other with frightened, wondering eyes as much as to say:

"If that is possible what would happen to us if the air-ship came above the Court just now?"

Max saw this too and smiled. It was exactly the effect that he desired to be produced. Last came Lieutenant Clinton, and described the ill-fated expedition of the *Britannia* in detail, from the rescue of Captain Maxwell and his two companions in the sinking *Devon*, to the time when Taxil set them free after Peter Jackson had fired his momentous shot. Now, for the first time Max seemed to show a real living interest in what was going on. He followed every word with the minutest attention, looking alternately from the witness to the magistrate, and as soon as Pelham had stood down he said very quietly:

"Is it permitted for me to say anything now?"

"If you have anything to say," replied Sir John, "or if you have any reason to give why I should not commit you for trial, as I at present intend to do, I am of course bound to hear you, but I must again warn you, as you have refused the protection of any legal adviser, that anything you may have to say is, under the circumstances, more likely to do you harm than good.

"You are accused of the most terrible crimes, and, so far as this Court is concerned, the evidence against you is more than sufficient, seeing that you have already admitted your identity. It is my duty to advise you to say nothing now, but to take steps to engage proper legal assistance and then follow your counsel's advice implicitly."

"I am obliged to you for your advice, Sir," said Max in a low, even tone, which seemed strangely loud in the breathless stillness of the Court, "but at the same time I am quite prepared to take the risk of disregarding it. I care as little for your laws as I do for the assistance of a highly respectable lawyer who would only want hiring to defend even such a criminal and enemy of society as I have no doubt these good people here think me.

"We are at war, I and the society you represent. The last turn of the game has been in your favour. I and my people spared the lives of these gentlemen who have given evidence against me—evidence which I suppose is quite enough to hang me if you only have the power to do it. That shows how unwise it is to be too merciful in warfare.

"Still, I must compliment them, if not upon their gratitude, at least upon their moderation and their accuracy. I have listened carefully to everything they've said, and I have the pleasure of saying that it is all true. And now, Sir, you have given me well-meant advice; permit me to give you some in return. You say you intend to commit me for trial. That means, I suppose, that I shall be locked up in your cells till I make my next appearance at the Old Bailey. There the form of trial will be gone through, and I shall be condemned to death in the usual way.

"You will not hang me because you can't, but you will try to do so at your peril. I am stronger than the law, and if the law tries to injure me it will get the worst of it. I am alone here, but there is a power behind me which can and will exact such a penalty, even for the temporary inconvenience which you may put me to, that the wisest thing you could do would be to take steps to insure my liberation and safety. You have heard something of what that power can do. It will do nothing till sentence of death has been passed upon me. I need say no more, and, therefore, Sir, if you wish to send me for trial do so."

"I am stronger than the law."

As he finished his audacious speech Max stared straight at the magistrate and, without moving a muscle of his countenance, waited for his reply. It came, curt and sharp.

"You have outraged the laws of society and this country, and those laws will be vindicated without regard to any possible risk. You have been allowed to speak, and you have made a very foolish speech, in spite of its bravado, which in all human probability has finally sealed your fate. You are committed to take your trial at the Assizes which will be opened on Monday next, on the double charge of piracy and murder on the high seas. Let the prisoner be removed."

Then the tension which had held the crowd silent broke, and as Max was marched from the dock between the two policemen there was a rustle and a movement of feet and a low hoarse murmur through which angry exclamations broke as everyone thronged forward to get the last glimpse of him as he disappeared through the prisoners' door. Then as it closed behind him the Court slowly emptied of all save those whose duty keep them there. No one had any interest for the other cases that were coming on. There was only one topic for the public of London that day and no one cared to talk or hear or read of anything else.

In less than an hour the newspaper offices were pouring out special editions containing fuller and fuller reports until every word that had been spoken during the proceedings was set forth with the most minute accuracy. It was upon this

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that Max had counted when he made his speech to the magistrate. It was by no means so foolish as Sir John Bridge had honestly thought it to be.

Max knew that every word would be printed by the newspapers and he deliberately used them for the purpose of conveying his instructions to Taxil and the crew of the *Vengeur*. Those instructions were simply that the *Vengeur* was to keep out of the way, and nothing was to be done until sentence of death had been passed upon him. Then, by some means, which he trusted to them to devise, he was to be rescued, and after that, or if the attempt failed, vengeance was to be taken for his arrest or death as the case might be.

Soon after nightfall that evening Taxil dropped the *Vengeur* to the ground in a lonely glade in the centre of Epping Forest, and found Pierre waiting for him there by appointment with a bundle of newspapers under his arm. That was Tuesday evening. On Thursday morning London woke up to find posted in a hundred different places—on the walls of the Law Courts, the Government offices, the base of Nelson's column in Trafalgar Square, the Bank of England, the gates of Buckingham Palace, the Marble Arch, and even the terrace of the House of Commons—a small, red placard about eighteen inches square, of which the following is a copy:—

TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ENGLAND
AND THE
PEOPLE OF LONDON.

You are hereby warned that if Max Renault, at present in prison awaiting your so-called trial for murder and piracy, is condemned to death, the sentence will be executed upon you and your property. If it is carried out on him the vengeance exacted will be taken first on your Queen and Royal Family, and then upon the members of your Houses of Parliament, your judges and your lawyers, and after them upon yourselves generally. If Max Renault is placed alone and free on the gallery of the north Tower of the Crystal Palace at midnight on Saturday, London will be spared; if not, what is written here will be done at the proper time.

Signed, for the Anarchist
Central Executive,
RAOUL TAXIL,
In command of the air-ship
Vengeur.

A small red placard.

CHAPTER XXX.

SENTENCE OF DEATH.

THE impression produced on the collective mind of London by this audaciously worded poster may be safely left to the imagination of the reader. How in some quarters it excited derision and in others panic; how the timorous heard the news of it with dread, and how the secret enemies of Society read it with a smile on their lips and potential murder in their hearts; how the penny newspapers published leading articles ranging in tone from the alarmist speculations of the *Daily News* to the easy, if wholly insincere, banter of the *Daily Telegraph;* and how the halfpenny papers vied with each other in a contest of imagination and mendacity which stopped at nothing from the publication of entirely fictitious correspondence with non-existent Anarchists to an interview with the captain of the air-ship and author of the placard.

All this was visible on the surface, and so far differed but little, save in degree, from any of the thousand and one scares and sensations which had for many years been the amusement of the public and the livelihood of the journalist. But beneath this there was another feeling, a feeling which no one could express since no one had ever experienced it before.

There was no denying that the air-ship was in existence, or that her destructive powers were nothing short of appalling—her exploits in the Atlantic had conclusively proved that, and if she could destroy in swift succession three heavily-armed warships, what would she be able to do against a defenceless town? Granted that she made the threatened attack, what would its effects be like? Where and how would the blow be struck? Upon whom would the impending death that would be floating in the skies fall?

There would be no respect of persons. The Speaker in the chair of the House of Commons would be as much exposed as the beggar in the street. In a word London was confronted with a new terror—the terror of the unknown, and no matter what was said or printed in public, every reasonable man felt in his heart that the placard was no empty boast, and that the danger was a very real one.

The five days that elapsed between the proceedings at Bow Street and the trial of Max Renault for his life at the Old Bailey passed amidst ever-growing excitement and ever-spreading uneasiness, but the red placard had been the last sign made by the Anarchists.

The demand for the release of Max had, of course, been ignored—as his friends apparently expected it would be, since, as far as was known, they had not even come to the appointed place. Naturally, too, the newspapers informed them that this would be the case. Neither on land nor in the air had a trace of the *Vengeur* been seen, though millions of eyes were looking anxiously for her.

Max himself preserved an aspect of absolute indifference to the fate that appeared so certain. He declined all legal aid in the preparation of his defence, if he had any, and communicated with no one outside the walls of Holloway. Lea had reappeared in Paris two days after his arrest; and then, hearing that an outcry was being made against the English police for allowing her to go out of the country unquestioned, she at once returned to London, put up at the Métropole, and communicated with Scotland Yard, saying that if she could be of any service to the prosecution she was ready to give what evidence she could.

This had led to an interview with one of the heads of the Criminal Investigation Department, in which she managed to befog and mislead the official so utterly that, on his report, it was decided not to call her, it being, doubtless rightly, considered that there was more than enough evidence to hang Renault several times over, had that been possible or desirable

As for any connection between him and the wealthy and fascinating idol of half Paris which could be construed to her disadvantage, such an idea had never seemed to enter

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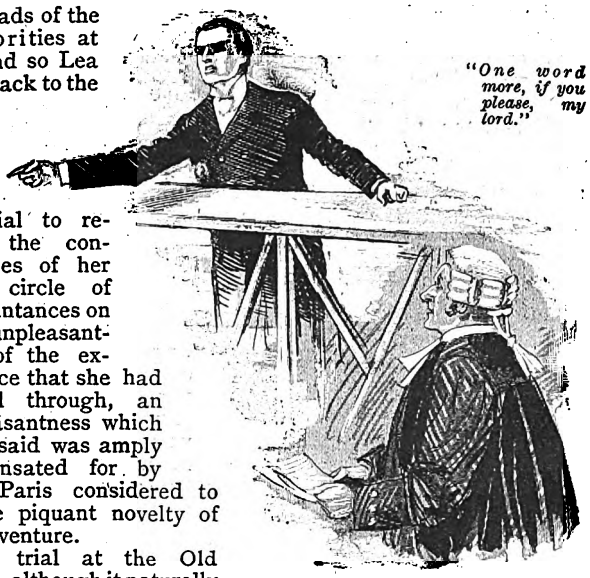
the heads of the authorities at all, and so Lea went back to the Rue Vernet before the trial to receive the condolences of her large circle of acquaintances on the unpleasantness of the experience that she had passed through, an unpleasantness which some said was amply compensated for by what Paris considered to be the piquant novelty of the adventure.



"One word more, if you please, my lord."

The trial at the Old Bailey, although it naturally excited an interest that was literally world-wide, was in itself almost devoid of sensational incident. As a matter of fact there was no question to try, since the prisoner had already admitted that the fatal evidence against him was true. When he was asked whether he pleaded "Guilty" or "Not guilty" he replied in a low, clear tone:

"Not guilty."

"Then are we to understand," said the judge, "that you do not adhere to the statement you made before the magistrate, and that you have evidence to call in your own defence?"

"I have no evidence to offer," replied Max, "and what I said in the police-court I am prepared to say here."

"But that contradicts your plea of not guilty," exclaimed the judge. "The same witnesses that appeared against you before the magistrate will be called here to-day and will give the same evidence. In the police-court you voluntarily admitted that that evidence was true, and yet you have just pleaded 'Not guilty.'

"I can hardly think that a man of very considerable intelligence, as you appear to be, standing in the presence of a court that is about to try him for his life, could find it possible to indulge in a mere play upon words. It is greatly to be regretted that you did not employ counsel, as I understand you could well afford to do, and, even if not, counsel would have been provided by the Crown. At any rate, you would have been spared the commission of an absurdity which, under the present circumstances, is something more than painful."

"My lord," replied Max, in a tone that took all respect out of the form of address. "I plead 'Not guilty' because I am charged with what you call murder and piracy, and to that plea I shall adhere. I and my comrades have as much right to make war, if we can, upon this country as this country has to make war on Russia. I care nothing for the sophistry which calls it war in the case of the nation and murder or piracy in the case of the individual.

"I fought the vessels which I destroyed fairly, and when some members of their crews fell into my hands I treated them honourably, much more honourably, in fact, than they treated me. Their lives were in my hand, and I let them go; for that I was fired upon, wounded in two places, and almost killed. If I had killed them when I had them defenceless, I should have felt bound to plead guilty to the charge of murder—supposing it could have been brought against me, as it could not have been."

Great and all as was the horror which Renault's crimes had inspired the whole of civilised humanity, there was yet something in the spectacle of this solitary man, confronting the sternest, though the most impartial tribunal in the world, disdaining all outside aid, and literally pronouncing his own condemnation beforehand rather than condescend to take advantage of a quibble or an untruth, which produced a marked impression on everyone in the crowded court.

The most stolid of the jurymen could not resist the suggestion of romance with which the whole situation was so pregnant, and even the judge's voice when he next spoke had something less in it of that tone of scornful toleration which is usually used from the Bench to those who are unable or unwilling to purchase the assistance of a professional advocate.

"It is no part of my duty to discuss such a question as that with you. I am here to interpret and enforce the laws of England as they stand, and, according to those laws, the offences for which you are about to be tried are capital offences, and there is an end of it. As a matter of form I will accept your plea of 'Not guilty,' and, therefore, the trial will proceed. Mr. Maudesley, I believe you open for the Crown."

As the leading counsel for the prosecution rose to his feet, amidst a faint rustle of garments and a low half-repressed murmur of anticipation, Max made an expressive gesture with his hands, and said in a slightly higher tone than he had used before:

"One word more, if you please, my lord. After what I said in the police-court, and after what you have just said here, this trial can only be a formality which will be very nearly a farce. I am in no humour to assist at an entertainment for these people here."

As he said this he jerked his thumb contemptuously towards those parts of the court which were packed with fashionably dressed men and women who had used the most strenuous endeavours to get places for the grim drama that they expected to see.

"Nor," he continued with an added note of contempt in his voice, "do I wish to be bored with the ready-made sentiment of this learned gentleman whom I could have hired to defend me if I had chosen. To save time and trouble, therefore, I will anticipate the foregone conclusion and withdraw my plea of 'Not guilty.'

"I did everything that your witnesses would swear I did, and I only regret now that I didn't do more, for had I done that, neither I nor they would be here to-day. I am guilty of what you call murder and piracy, and what I call war. Now, my lord, I hope I have simplified your task; but before you pass sentence of death, as I presume you will now proceed to do, let me repeat the warning——"

"Silence, Sir!" exclaimed the judge in quick stern tones which made the words ring like pistol shots through the crowded court. "You have been permitted to trifle with the law whose dignity I am here to uphold because you are undefended by counsel, and English justice condemns no man, however vile a criminal he may be, unheard, but I shall not permit you to insult it by the threats which you call warnings.

"You have pleaded guilty to a series of crimes and outrages which have caused the sacrifice of hundreds of lives. Your own life is therefore forfeit to the law, and the law will take its due, no matter what the consequences may be. Even if it were in the power of you and your followers to

"That is the death sentence of London."

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lay London in ruins before sunrise to-morrow, it would still be my duty to do that which I am about to do, and I shall do it.

"Gentlemen," he continued, turning to the jury. "You have heard the prisoner withdraw his plea of not guilty, and, with a bravado and callousness utterly shocking and disgusting alike to our sense of propriety and our feelings of humanity, glory in the commission of crimes which excel all similar crimes perpetrated by the abandoned wretches among whom he seems proud to number himself. Under such circumstances, happily unparalleled in an English court of justice, there can, I conclude, be no doubt as to your verdict. Do you find the prisoner, on his own confession, guilty or not guilty of the crimes of murder and piracy on the high seas with which he stands charged in the indictment?"

For a moment there was silence so intense that the throng in the court could hear their own hearts beating and their own breath going and coming. The foreman of the jury glanced inquiringly at his colleagues. Every head was bowed in unanimous assent, and then he rose to his feet and said in a voice that he did his best to keep steady under the excitement of the moment:

"We find him 'Guilty,' my lord."

"Prisoner at the bar!" said the judge, turning to Max and taking up the fatal square of black cloth in his right hand. "You have been found guilty, on your own confession, of the crimes of murder and piracy on the high seas. It is my duty to ask you now whether you have any reason to give why sentence of death should not be passed upon you."

Max leant his folded arms on the rail of the dock and, after one quick, searching glance, first at the jury and then at the throng that packed the court, looked the judge full in the face, and said with a sneer that he made no attempt to disguise:

"Since that will also be sentence of death on those who are my enemies, I have neither reason nor objection. Say on, my lord!"

Then he stood and, still with unshrinking eyes and smiling lips, watched the judge put on the black cap and heard him say the solemn words which, unless some miracle should be interposed to save him, consigned him to a shameful death and a felon's grave.

"—— and may the Lord have mercy on your soul!"

The last of the fatal words had scarcely died away in the hush that had fallen on the now breathless throng, when Max suddenly straightened himself up and, before the warders could stop him, cried in a loud, clearly-ringing voice:

"That is the death sentence of London! *That* for your law and your justice. Fichtre!" And with that he snapped his fingers in the faces of judge and jury, and the next moment was hurried from the dock by the two warders.

(To be continued.)

HER BOY.

AND now he was dead—her boy, the only one! She could not sleep; she could not think of anything else. She was conscious only of a feeling of inexpressible loneliness; all the sunshine and warmth had vanished, leaving a cold, dreary void. As she now sat by the side of the little bed, staring into space, so had she sat for hours—motionless, as rigid and white as the boy who lay there before her. He had been her second self—her all, her idol. And now he was gone!

Two children had been born to her and had died within a few weeks of birth. When she lost the second, a dull despair took possession of her, and the doctors began to despair for her reason. Then came this one—a boy, her bonnie boy—and from that moment she lived again—lived for him.

She would not allow any paid servant to attend to him; she herself watched over him—nursed, washed, and dressed him. His cot stood near her bed, and as he slept she sat by his side and listened to his every breath. Then she worked and sewed for him; nothing was too costly or too good for him. The prettiest and sunniest room in the house was set apart and fitted up for the baby boy. She gave up visiting and stayed at home that no harm should befal him through her absence. She herself cooked his food; everything was carefully prepared and tasted.

He learnt to walk by holding her hand. She stooped and crept along the floor with him, he disarranged her hair and her dress with his chubby fingers. What did it matter? She forgot all, except that she was his *mother!*

He was a bright, intelligent little fellow. He wanted to know everything, examine everything, and she was never tired of answering his questions. She invented games and tales to amuse him; all the treasures of a richly-stored mind, hidden from everyone else, she poured out for her darling. He should be prettier and cleverer—and better—than all!

As he grew, she began to make plans for the future. He should become great and famous! Her love made her ambitious, almost greedy. She scraped and saved, and urged her husband to continual work and restless endeavour. Life must be made smooth for her boy; he must never have to slave for a living, or be at the beck and call of everybody.

He had never been ill; not for one moment had he caused her any anxiety on that head. "A splendid little fellow," the doctor called him; every limb was like iron, and supple withal. He became the best gymnast in the school; and he grew up as good-mannered, and as polite to ladies who visited his mamma as a knight of olden time. She had reason to be proud of him.

Five days ago he was in good health; now he was dead. Diphtheria. Nobody knew how he had caught the fatal disease; he had not complained of feeling ill, but had looked pale and tired. She had brought him home, and the best doctors were called in; they did not hide the fact that his life was in great danger, but she would not believe them.

"He will live," she said, shaking her head. "He will live! It would be *too* cruel to take him from me. He is the only one I have in the world!"

She never moved from his bed day or night. She laughed and joked with him, and made plans about what they would do when he was well again. They would go to the mountains, and papa would buy him a pony, a pretty little brown pony. He had wanted a pony for a long time; he smiled at the realisation of his heart's desire, his whole face beamed with delight as he said: "Good papa!"

She left the boy for a moment to draw aside the curtains and let in the sunshine—he liked the sun so much. She turned to him with a smile.

"Do you like that, my de a

But he did not answer. "Good papa" had been his last words; he had died with the beaming expression produced by her promise.

She would not believe it. She threw herself upon the bed, pressed her lips against his, shook him, and called to him. "My boy! my boy!"

Dead!

She sat by the bedside unconscious of all that was taking place outside. She knew not whether it was day or night, whether the time was passing or standing still. Someone opened the door and came in softly; a tall, spare man, with tired-looking eyes, and an expression of deep grief on his cadaverous face.

"Will you not lie down, Elizabeth?"

"No!" she answered in a hard tone. "I cannot sleep. I will stay here."

He stepped to the head of the bed and bent over his son's body; he was going to kiss the still, wax-like face, when she uttered a cry:

"Don't touch him! Don't touch him, I say!"

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He looked at her with his tired, sorrowful eyes. "Poor girl," he said; and went away as softly as he had come.

Alone she watched by her dead. In an adjoining room she heard her husband's footsteps as he paced up and down, up and down, the monotonous tread interrupted occasionally by what sounded like a groan. Then the sounds ceased.

He was much older than she; a quiet, earnest man, whose profession occupied a great deal of his time. She had married him at the wish of her parents, and because she knew him to be trustworthy. The marriage had not been unhappy; he had always been very good to her, but she had been much alone. When this boy came and lived, she was happy. And her husband——?

She did not see much of him. He came home in the afternoon, and they had dinner together—except when she was busy with the boy, when he dined alone. And after the meal he retired to his room, and worked hard. He had a cold, narrow room at the back of the house; he had given up the one orginally occupied by him, because the doctor had said that it was the brightest and healthiest room in the house.

He never complained, and always gave way to his wife in everything; if the thing pleased her, that was sufficient. Year by year she was able to put by a respectable sum for the boy out of the liberal allowance that he was able to make to her by his constant work, and she looked forward to the time when she would be able to give the boy a grand start in life. Her love for the child was all-engrossing, and her husband was but a secondary consideration. It was always "*My* boy." But John never complained. She was usually asleep when he went out in the morning, and at night when she had a few minutes with him, her conversation was all about the boy's doings.

When the child was about two years old, his interesting ways caused John to go to the nursery on several occasions. The child was delighted to see the earnest-looking man who jumped him up and down, allowed him to "ride-a-cock-horse," and pull his whiskers. But the mother became impatient at games in which she had no part. Why should the child be so pleased?

At last she could bear it no longer. She called him to her, ut the boy refused to leave his father. A pang went through er heart; she spoke angrily to him, and the little fellow began to cry. His father sat him down gently and bade him go to his mother.

John did not go to the nursery again, and she was glad. John had his profession and his fellow-workers; she had only her boy. She blamed herself for her jealousy, but it was stronger than she. When her boy went to school she learnt Latin secretly so that *she* could help him and he would not be obliged to go to his father for assistance.

"Good papa!" She grudged him even that; the words struck her to the heart. "Look at me just once and say 'Mother,'" she moaned. It seemed to her that she could have borne the loss more easily if his last words had been for her. But he was dead, and his sweet lips would never say another word. "Good papa!"

Why did the words torment her so? They drew her mind from the dead to the living, to the elderly man in the back room who was sorrowing for his son. She had driven him away! "Don't touch him!" she had cried aloud; and in heart she had added: "He is mine, *mine!*"

The awful selfishness of her motherly love now became suddenly clear to her, and she shuddered.

How peaceful the boy looked! Several times, as the candle flickered and shone more brightly for a moment, and the light fell upon the dead boy's face, it seemed to her as if he smiled and his lips moved—"Good papa!"

She understood it now. "Yes, yes, he is a good papa! I will go and fetch him!"

The father sat in his old armchair, his face buried in his hands. The room was dusty and untidy, the picture of neglect. She had entered the room quietly, and he had not noticed her.

"John," she said softly.

He looked up quickly, with a vain attempt to hide his tears.

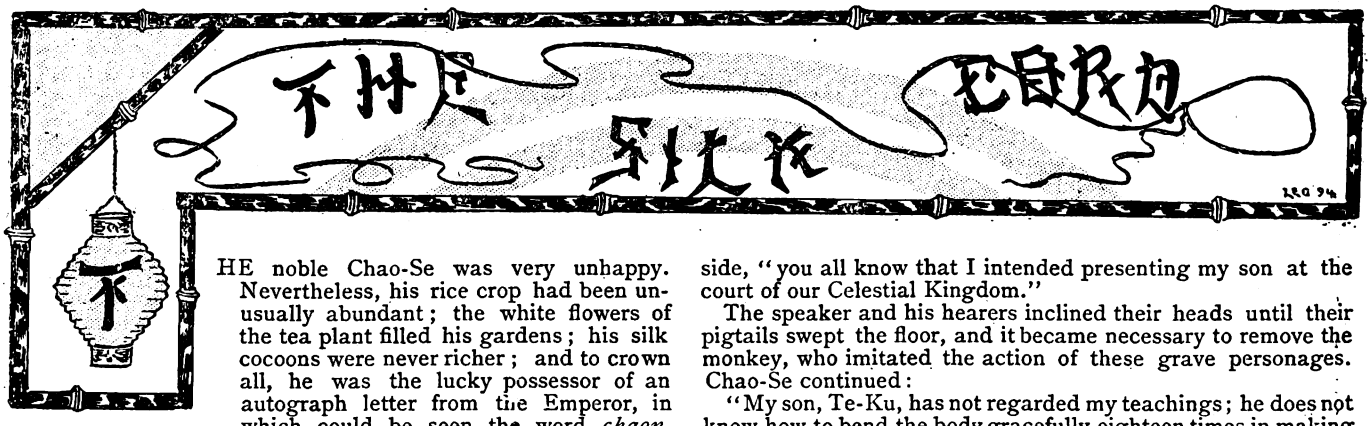
"What is it, dear? Can I do anything for you?"

His first thought was of her. Sympathy and compassion filled her heart now. She stretched out her arms to him. He hesitated, not understanding the movement; but the look in her eyes explained all, and he clasped her to his breast.

"My wife, my poor, dear wife!"

There, close to his heart, the first tears came to relieve her, and she sobbed bitterly. When the paroxysm was passed, she looked up at him and said softly and humbly:

"Come with me; come and see *our* boy!"



HE noble Chao-Se was very unhappy. Nevertheless, his rice crop had been unusually abundant; the white flowers of the tea plant filled his gardens; his silk cocoons were never richer; and to crown all, he was the lucky possessor of an autograph letter from the Emperor, in which could be seen the word *chaon*, a credential of long life.

Why, then had our noble Chinee ordered the image of Fo to be belaboured with sticks, leaving a mere wreck of that deity standing amidst fragments of his former porcelain and imposing figure? And that evening, at supper, why had he disputed with his ancient cook the excellence of a magnificent dish of roast dog that all the guests had pronounced exquisite, disdained a cup of the finest Kyson tea, and paid no attention to his pet monkey in spite of all its playful caresses?

"Respected kinsmen," said Chao-Se gravely, after the meal had ended, to the three venerable Chinamen squatting at his side, "you all know that I intended presenting my son at the court of our Celestial Kingdom."

The speaker and his hearers inclined their heads until their pigtails swept the floor, and it became necessary to remove the monkey, who imitated the action of these grave personages. Chao-Se continued:

"My son, Te-Ku, has not regarded my teachings; he does not know how to bend the body gracefully eighteen times in making our court bow, nor is he familiar with the unalterable forms of our celestial etiquette; he has rejected my old friend Ling's virtuous daughter, whose tiny feet could be encased in nut-shells; and, let this astonish you, dear friends, defied by Chung, whose honoured body now reposes in the tomb, he refused to disembowel himself, while his adversary expired triumphant with his body ripped open in the most approved fashion. In this disgrace I have called you together, being resolved to follow your advice as to the best means of saving the family honour."

"You should, above all, disinherit Te-Ku," said the eldest of the council.

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"And divide your possessions among us," added the second.

"And as the family honour is tarnished, a sacrifice is necessary," said the third. "You should strangle yourself, in order that the reputation of our house may not perish."

Such was the decision of the council. Chao-Se now, too late, regretted having convoked it.

. . . . . .

"What present is this you are bringing me?" asked the wife of Chao-Se, that same night, noticing that her husband had placed a small ivory box upon the table of her room.

"Beautiful and dearly beloved Tian, I have a surprise for you," replied the noble Chinee, gallantly.

Tian gathered herself up on her couch, exposing to view a pair of tiny feet, some two or three inches in length.

"You have been a good wife," continued Chao-Se kindly, "and I desire that you should figure in history as a model of virtue. Well then, the family council has decided that I must sacrifice myself to restore our lost reputation; but as I have a certificate of long life from my sovereign, it would be an act of ingratitude on my part to cut short my own existence. I have therefore selected you, dear Tian, as my substitute, that you may save our honour with the silk cord you will find in the box. I am sure you will be grateful to me for this mark of distinction and proof of my deep affection."

"Sir!" exclaimed Tian terrified, "I dare not kill myself. I am as timid as a chicken."

"Calm yourself, my dear; if you cannot do it alone, being as timid as a chicken, I'll get the cook to help you," and the noble Chao-Se embraced his wife tenderly, and withdrew from the apartment.

. . . . . .

Tian appeared calm; Kin, the cook, was uneasy.

"Dost thou wish to fly with me?" asked Tian gazing lovingly at the poor cook.

"My lady!" exclaimed he, trembling.

"To fly from a house where they do not appreciate thy roasts, to unite thyself to me and become master of my magnificent jewels."

Kin kissed the floor to express his gratitude.

"There is a way to accomplish all this. Thy master, Chao-Se, protected by the Emperor's decree, will yet live many years, during which time we shall be able to leave this earth and lose ourselves in space."

"I don't understand."

"It is very simple! I wish thee to accompany me in this journey. Take this cord and hang thyself outside the door whilst I gather up my jewels and prepare to follow thee."

Kin opened his oblique eyes in horror. Tian gave him a languishing glance.

"Good-bye," she said, "do not fail me," and pushed him gently towards the door, slipping around his neck the soft silken cord.

As Kin left the apartment he heard a noise in an adjoining room. "It must be the monkey," he said to himself, and then continued meditatively: "For two reasons I had better not kill myself: in the first place, because I have no certainty of reviving in the other world; and, secondly, because if I *do* come to life again, the mighty Fo will be able to take vengeance upon me for the beating I have given his image."

Again the noise was heard. It was not the monkey but Te-Ku who made it, robbing the treasure chest of his father. The garden window was open; the jewels showed glitteringly through the open mouth of the sack. Kin, indignant, could not do less than reproach him for his conduct, at the same time revealing to him the predicament in which he had placed the family.

Te-Ku implored him to speak lower, but Kin responded each time in a louder voice. At length the unhappy youth exclaimed, conscience-stricken: "Give me the cord; I am the true culprit, and to me should belong the sacrifice!" And making a noose in one end of the fatal cravat, he tied the other to the window frame, swung the bag of jewels to his shoulder for the expenses of the journey, and, embracing the cook affectionately, said to him:

"Go now, and leave me alone. I do not wish thee to witness my death agony."

Kin had not complete confidence in his young master, but did not dare disobey his command.

"I've got myself nicely out of that scrape," said Kin, with a sigh of satisfaction, passing his hand around his neck.

. . . . . .

The following morning at daybreak the relatives of Chao-Se, attired in white, the mourning costume of the Chinese, presented themselves at his house, prepared to render to his corpse the last tributes; but to their great surprise they found him awaiting them, also dressed in white, and maintaining a ceremonious attitude.

"What, still alive!" they exclaimed, indignantly.

Chao-Se related to them all that had occurred: his scruples, the timidity of his wife, the substitution of the cook, and the voluntary expiation of his son. The others, after an animated discussion, agreed to accept this solution of the difficulty.

"Let us go to the garden, into which nobody has yet entered," said Chao-Se, solemnly. "There we shall view the body of my unhappy son."

The committee made their way to the garden, but upon arriving at the scene of the catastrophe, were stupefied with amazement. Suspended by the silken cord, and swinging to and fro like a pendulum, was the rigid body of a monkey.

"That is not my son!" exclaimed Chao-Se, horrified.

"Sir, I saw him place the noose around his neck," replied the cook. "Without doubt the monkey has fled in the figure of your son, leaving his own image behind him. There is something of magic in this. . . . . The divine Fo is avenged!"

"No such thing," said the prospective inheritors of the estate, with decision. "It's the body of Te-Ku. Don't you see the resemblance to the father? It is his very image!"

"But, gentlemen," protested Chao-Se," defending himself, "look at that mouth!"

"It is your own, noble Chao-Se," replied the others.

"And those ears ——"

"Are identical with yours"; and in a whisper, "Remember that a victim was required!"

The distinguished Chinaman admitted at length that the body was that of his son, although certainly somewhat disfigured.

Consequently the death of Te-Ku was officially certified to, the remains were given a magnificent burial, and the family council declared the honour of the house of Chao-Se to be fully re-established.

. . . . . .

In spite of the certificate of long life, Chao-Se survived his son only a few months. Then came to take charge of the inheritance a young man who claimed to be Te-Ku, and declared that he had fled from the paternal mansion some time before, jumping from the garden window.

The case having been submitted to the highest tribunal in the land, a learned mandarin rendered the following decision:

"The death and burial of Te-Ku having been legally proven,

"No one having been missed from the house of Chao-Se on the night in question except a monkey, whose whereabouts are now unknown:

"Be it decided, therefore, that if the claimant speaks truly in regard to the flight, he can be no other than the monkey;

"And if he has failed to speak the truth he deserves to be executed with the cord that the relatives of the deceased still retain in their possession."

In this alternative Te-Ku decided to declare himself a monkey, and was forthwith handed over to a travelling mountebank.

TO OUR READERS.

In consequence of the Christmas Holidays, the next issue of SHORT STORIES will be published on Saturday, December 22nd, instead of Tuesday, December 25th. It will be our Special Christmas Week Number, and will contain five complete short stories of a seasonable nature, besides an instalment of Mr. Griffith's exciting serial profusely illustrated

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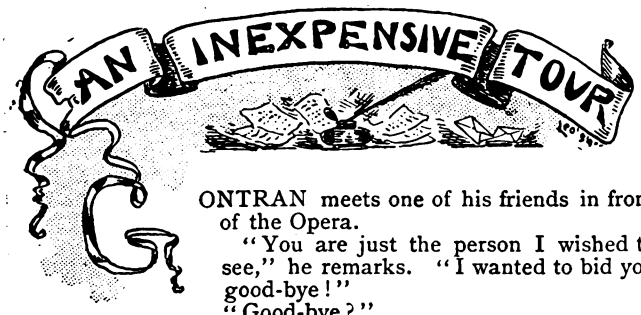

GONTRAN meets one of his friends in front of the Opera.

"You are just the person I wished to see," he remarks. "I wanted to bid you good-bye!"

"Good-bye?"

"Well! I am going away shortly. London is not fit to live in at present, and I do not understand how you, one of our set, consent to wander in these intolerable streets."

The friend bows his head and walks away somewhat humiliated. Gontran goes on his way triumphantly, announcing the great news to all his friends. One of these, little Lloyd, who is more inquisitive than the rest, asks him where he is going.

"I have not decided yet," answers Gontran.

"To a watering-place?"

"Pooh! I dream of Italy."

Little Lloyd, who wishes to find out just what is in Gontran's mind, remarks very seriously:

"They say it's a beautiful country!"

"I believe you," says Gontran ironically.

He then looks at him askance, and walks away. For fifteen days he takes pains to proclaim clamorously his departure, gives and takes commissions, and continually changes his plans.

At last, his friends, really tired of hearing always the same old story, begin to wonder when they meet him:

"How is it you have not gone yet? Still here? When do you start? Have you decided to remain?"

Gontran feels that he really must do something at once, and one evening, meeting his best friend, the Hon. Charles Seawell, remarks, "I have decided to start to-morrow."

"At last!"

"You will allow me to send you my impressions from time to time?"

"Thanks—delighted, of course."

"I authorise you to communicate an abstract of my notes to our friends of the club," adds Gontran.

"Certainly. Shall I accompany you to the station?"

"Thank you, no; it would be useless."

It would indeed have been useless, as, on the following evening, protected by the falling shadows, Gontran, with little luggage, mysteriously took a cab, directing it, not to the station, but towards the distant quarter of Stoke Newington.

There he took a room for four pounds a month in Cometa Street, a street in which one need have no fear of meeting any of the West End set. All the summer he remained there. He hired an old servant to attend to his wants, and also bought the necessary material for a large correspondence.

Eight days afterwards the Hon. Charles received a letter, of which the following is an abstract:—

"Steamship, *General Garibaldi*,
14th May, 18—.

"How beautiful the sea! How freely one breathes when surrounded by this immensity of water! Ah, my dear Charlie, how I pity you, who have to remain in that infected London. As you wish me to write all my adventures and sensations, I shall begin by remarking that I sailed from London on the *General Garibaldi*, a steamer plying between London, Genoa, Vecchia, and Naples. You know my social temperament, so that it is hardly worth while to mention that I immediately made the acquaintance of the captain by offering him cigars. Captain Austen is a dear old fellow! Going out of port the ship began to tip a little. How wretched it is to be seasick! Luckily I did not suffer long. I have not told you yet about the passengers of the *General Garibaldi*. All sorts of people! There is one girl who is enchanting—a little girl with a wealth of hair falling on her shoulders. She often looks at me, and I—Pst! I must not tell everything in a day.

"After all this talk, my dear Charlie, I stop writing to go on deck and admire the far-off lines of the Corsican coast on the blue horizon.

"Yours affectionately,
"GONTRAN.

"P.S.—You will receive this letter, as well as those which follow, through a third party who attends to my business interests in London."

A fews days afterwards a second letter came from Gontran, dated in Genoa:—

"Hold me, my friend, hold me, as I cannot restrain the great admiration which overcomes me, while I exclaim, Wonderful! delightful!—no one can imagine anything like it! Genoa is a city that does not resemble any other. It has a gulf, and oh! what a gulf! and marble everywhere, too much marble! They say the Ligures founded Genoa about seven hundred years before Christ. Later, the Romans united it to Gallia Cisalpina. After the fall of the Roman Empire it was taken and passed through the hands of different barbarous populations, until it became liege to Charles the Great. At the beginning of the fifth century, Genoa declared itself an independent city, and was governed by consuls, upheld by the senate. The people gathered in assembly on the public square, and took part in the administration.

"In 1379, the Genoese and the Venetians, who controlled the seas, began to fight each other furiously, and completely demoralised one another." (Here it may be well to remark that Gontran had, before departing for Cometa Street, bought a Baedeker Guide.)

"By the way; I have found my American girl of the steamer at Genoa. We live in the same hotel, and she is accompanied by an uncle, and two cousins with pointed teeth. I have been told that she belongs to one of the richest families of New York. The day after my arrival I began the attack. In love, I never waste time. A maid, generously bribed, has promised to convey to Miss Arabella (this is her name) a note, the triumphant result of which undertaking I patiently await."

When Gontran wrote these sweet words he had just dictated the items of his washing-list to his washerwoman, whose orthography had deeply interested him.

Thus the letters to the Hon. Charles followed one another for three months. It was a flood of rhapsody. The most wonderful and amusing adventures were described in them: Excursions in gondolas in Venice, fantastic serenades on the Lake of Como, battles with brigands, invitations to the Vatican. The last letter was dated from the foot of the crater of Vesuvius.

. . . . .

Three months later, at Ascot, a man throws himself into another man's arms:

"Charlie!"

"Gontran!"

"As you see!"

"You look wonderfully well. My best compliments for your beautifully bronzed complexion."

"Send your compliments to the sun of Naples and the breezes of Sorrento."

"Oh, yes, I know!"

"Did you receive my letters?"

"Every one of them!"

"Did they interest you?"

"They astonished me."

The Hon. Charles seems to think a minute, and then he asks with a smile:

"So you are satisfied with your trip, are you?"

"Can you ask such a question? Enthusiastic, my dear fellow!"

"If such is the case, I think you ought to pay me the rent of the room in Cometa Street, which you have unfortunately neglected to do. You see, my dear Gontran, I have only these small dividends to live on. My dear fellow, I am your landlord."

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HOW SHOULD STOUT LADIES DRESS?

Some considerable controversy has been going on in one of the American fashion magazines on this subject, started by the threatened inundation of crinolines.

Fancy a fat lady in a crinoline! Or better still, fancy ten fat ladies in ten fat crinolines, with, say, five a side in a none too fat omnibus!

The Yankee humorist says: "A fat lady can beat a fat man; she can stick a stiletto-like pin through her head till it comes out the other side and hold on her bonnet, but the fat man can't." Let's have those ten pins to complete the picture of those ten crinolines. Would we of the sterner sex not like to "lynch" the fiend who invented mountainous hats and feathers for front rows in theatres? Blondin can walk across Niagara on a tight rope, but can he walk a theatre corridor with three ladies' trains in front of him? The fashion miscreant, and the barbed wire inventor, have much to answer for. One fashion paper argues that if the portly lady adds a little slashing of light on a dark backgrouud, artistically and judiciously, it has the effect of *apparently* reducing her size by half a stone. How ludicrous all this seems! What is the seven pounds *imitation* reduction? We have known Mr. Russell, the eminent Specialist on Corpulency, reduce a lady eleven pounds in seven days, and not an *imitation* reduction, but an absolute fact, at a cost of probably less than is paid to the "faking" dressmaker. Those who are acquainted with his methods, or have read his work, "Corpulency and the Cure," can bear us out that he talks with as glib unconcern of fourteen-pound, twenty-eight pound, and even half-hundredweight reductions of unhealthy waste accumulations as a steamboat stoker would talk of coal. The dressmaker simply attempts to hide the disease—creating adipose, carried about by the unfortunate victim to obesity—whereas Mr. Russell (of Woburn House, 27, Store Street, London, W.C.) aims to remove the cause, and thus impart health. Of course, no lady likes the brute of a man who enters into a crusade against tight-lacing in a blunt common-sense way; but he is, however, right when he claims that tight stays with *embonpoint* is suicidal, especially when a few doses of a most pleasant, agreeable, and exhilarating tonic, made entirely from herbs, will reduce one's weight so easily with a corresponding improvement of health and strength, and with it that bright eye and healthy complexion which we all like to see in a lady. If our roof leaks and lets the rain in, we can shelter ourselves from it by opening an umbrella; but if we get the slater to stop the cause, he is the true benefactor, and not the umbrella maker. So it is with the reducer of fat and the dressmaker. The fair sex begin to see that he is their benefactor; he does not ruthlessly rip up the bodice, like uncouth Dr. Abernethy; he is better informed, for he actually knows that in twenty-four hours that identical inimical appendage will be in a state of subjugation. In other words, a dangerously tight lacing on Monday will be slack by Tuesday, after taking three simple doses of his mixture. "Has one to starve one's self?" asked a lady once. Not at all, for it is a singular fact that one eats more under his treatment.

It is perhaps not singular, if we investigate. A fat man is unhealthy; he is, in fact, diseased; as the disease is being cured the organs become healthy, the patient is more buoyant, and takes more exercise, and requires more food (it is also traceable to other reasons without exercise). Then, again, with stilt-like high heels, fashion—well, I think we had better drop this theme, we shall get into hot water with our fair readers; we are married. We generally get the old bachelor-editor to write on these subjects; he is not a bit afraid of women, as he calls them.

But seriously, if any lady, or gentleman, as far as that goes, wishes to reduce their weight, we commend them to Mr. Russell's work, "Corpulency and the Cure," which is published at Woburn House, Store Street, London, W.C., and only costs 4d. in stamps, post free. But to revert to the subject of crinolines, honestly we are pleased to see the really sensible and steadfast way in which ladies have made their standpoint, and we suggest that they should have a medium of their own to rule the fashions to their own liking, and not be the victims of the profit-seeking professional modiste.

DO STOUT PEOPLE LIVE LONG?

This is a question which has occupied the attention of medical authorities from time immemorial. Some argue that the lean kind take longer to shuffle off the mortal coil than their stout brethren. The statistics naturally favour this argument, and no doubt are correct to a great extent, because sufferers from obesity are more susceptible to disease in consequence of the debilitated state of the system when clogged with abnormal adipose tissue; but a curious fact has been overlooked, viz., that corpulency generally commences about the age of thirty-five to fifty, after which time it seems to decrease; therefore, before the proverbial "three score and ten" is reached, the whilom fat man is, by a natural process, again reduced to what may only be called moderate plumpness, and thus cheats the statistician. Stout persons can now, thanks to science, reduce their weight in a most extraordinarily rapid manner, without the slightest injury to their constitutions, or without resorting to those drastic remedies which only operate for a time, or by the continuance of the use of toxical drugs extending over such a period that renders it baneful to the long-suffering patient. An eminent Continental therapeutist recommends the victim to obesity to eat fat meat, while an equally eminent American prescribes lean ditto, and the stomach is to risk an accumulation of serious disorder by swallowing a pint of hot water daily, a most nauseous remedy, we should think, and not unattended with danger. The past master in the cure of corpulence is Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, London, W.C., whose book (256 pages), entitled "Corpulency and the Cure," price only 4 stamps, seems to impress us considerably, for he reduces more weight by his system than the Continental and American physicians, without any of the absurd restriction which would make life scarcely worth living. He uses simple herbs, the properties of which he seems to possess a more than usual knowledge of, and he makes but little secret of his method, so refreshing after the mystery made of most chemical and herbal concoctions of various complaints.—*Wetherby News.*

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Parents will not realize the fatal error of neglecting the first symptoms of delicacy in their children. Looking at the matter from a purely selfish point of view, it is a considerable saving to one's purse, for medical authorities all admit that one single dose of medicine given in time will be worth 999 after the mischief is done. Once allow the seeds of ill-health to sprout, and remember you will have a harvest to cope with.

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It is useless to patch up here and there; go to the root of the mischief and attack that, every organ will then come under its influence and become healthy. It is too well known that a delicate chest leads to consumption only when the child is imperfectly nourished; germs find no soil in a perfectly healthy body.

Infantina's Syrup must not be confounded with any of the old-fashioned out of date oily compounds, for it is quite different. It resembles in appearance and taste a fruit syrup, is pleasant to the taste, and far surpasses such nauseous mixtures.

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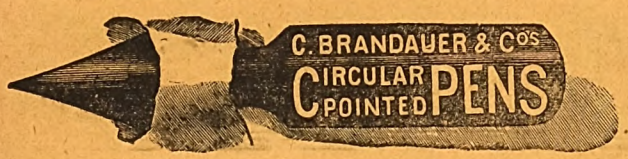

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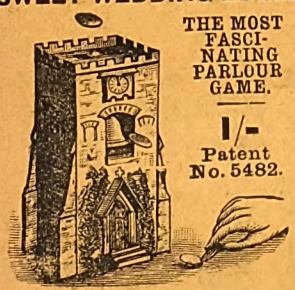

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permanently and absolutely by an entirely new and harmless self-treatment. Total destruction guaranteed. This marvellous remedy has never yet failed. Pamphlet, giving full particulars, sent on receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—Prof. F. W. HOLT, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London. (Mention this paper.)

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Beware of Imitations injurious and worthless.

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TO LADIES. Especially to those who wish to know of a safe, certain, and speedy remedy for all irregularities and obstructions, a remedy which, under the most trying circumstances and in the most difficult and OBSTINATE CASES, NEVER FAILS TO AFFORD RELIEF, GENERALLY IN A FEW HOURS. No case hopeless, failure is simply impossible, as Mrs. Snow, of Denmark Hill, Camberwell, writes:—"By adopting your treatment my anxiety and misery was over within twenty-four hours, although I had been daily taking pills and other things in vain. Half the quantity you sent proved effective, to my intense joy and surprise. A sworn guarantee is enclosed with all testimonials and medicine, which is inexpensive, as one bottle at 4s. 6d. (by post, 4s. 9d.) is usually sufficient for any case. Full particulars will be gladly forwarded to any lady on receipt of addressed envelope.

Write privately to—
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The most powerful and effective on earth.

For the most obstinate cases. Will not injure the most delicate. Price 7s. 6d. (Strongest, 11s. per bottle); post free, 6d. extra. HERBAL INSTITUTE, 1a, Hackney Road (opposite Shoreditch Church), London, N.E. Send at once stamped directed envelope for particulars and proofs. I will forfeit £100 for every testimonial that is not genuine, and they can be seen at any time.

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 313.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING DECEMBER 29, 1894.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

SANTA CLAUS.

A TALE OF THE FRANCO GERMAN WAR.

I.

PERHAPS it is rather a curious Christmas story after all.

Old Captain Rolland, the marine officer who was in charge of my division, and who was noted for his vigilance, had sent us forward on outpost duty along the Doubs river as far as Plommecy, twelve leagues or so from Besançon. We had been on the march all day, part of the time along the towing-path, where a foot of snow was lying, part of it on wide cross-roads, which troops of cattle had changed to so many rivers of mud.

Thanks to the winding of the river, in spite of all our short-cuts, it was close on nightfall when we reached Plommecy. Our fatigue had reduced us to a dull silence, as we tramped slowly along with the heavy, regular swing of weary troops. Every now and then a man hitched his knapsack up with a jerk of the shoulders. An old smuggler, whom we called "The Sapper," in allusion to his heavy beard, was the only man who kept a little gaiety, and was able to jest. He retained the light but firm step with which he had begun the day, and from under a moustache full of icicles he hummed the eternal refrain of an old marching song:

"My coat has two buttons,
March along, march along;
My coat has three buttons
Gaily march along."

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We regained a little of our former energy as we drew near Plommecy. On the distant river bank in front of us the snow-covered roofs were visible as great white spots upon the background of a grey December sky.

"Come, my lads," said the Sapper, "put your legs into it!" and he struck up another ditty:

"There's lots of drink ahead of us, lads,
There's lots of drink ahead!"

The detachment began to double as if by one accord.

As for the Prussians, they never came into our thoughts. We had been out looking for them since morning, and had not seen a solitary uniform.

All the same we began to think of them when we came to the outskirts of the village. There was no movement in it; not a light to be seen, and a silence of the dead. It occurred to us that it was just possible that we were walking into a Prussian ambuscade. Each man changed his chassepot from half to full cock, and brought the trigger within easy reach of his finger. Tired legs recovered their elasticity; stiffened backs grew supple enough to crouch behind walls, and so we entered the end of the village street, ready to find rest from our day's march in a night of fighting.

"By Jove! the place is a graveyard!" someone said. "Suppose we knock at this door. The inhabitants will tell us what is afoot. At any rate we shall find someone to speak to, even if they answer us with lead."

He knocked at the door. No one answered. Someone knocked at the next door, with the same result When we tried the third, our lieutenant kicked at the lower panel with al his strength. The door gave way before the shock, and he entered the house, revolver in hand. Ten men followed him. The other five of us waited in the street to keep watch for an attack.

In three minutes, our comrades emerged with anxious faces and the news that the house was empty. The next and next that we tried were standing open. It was the same everywhere; the village was deserted.

"Diable! diable!" said our lieutenant. "The Prussians must have passed through here while we were watching the waters of the Doubs. The peasants must have taken refuge at Haume. We shall have to keep a sharp look-out to-night."

He proceeded to place a sentinel at each end of the street, and a third upon a cross-alley that led out to the open country. The rest of us followed him to a farmhouse that seemed the

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chief building of the village, in order that we might cook our supper and prepare the night's lodging.

But our leader had scarcely opened the yard-gate when all our suspicions were confirmed. It was here that the Prussians had had their quarters. We could see marks of their presence in the over-turned water-trough, the hay so prodigiously taken from the barn and littered about the stable, the burst door of the cellar, and the empty bottles scattered among the straw on which the troops had evidently passed the night in the yard, their officers sleeping in the house.

Three bounds carried us indoors. There was no longer room for doubt. A table littered with dirty plates, half-emptied glasses, wine-bottles with their necks broken off, all bore witness to a gluttonous orgie. In the fire-place, a huge heap of logs, piled up on top of one another, was still burning. The bed was in disorder of the wildest description. Muddy boots had left their marks on the sheets of fine white linen.

Whilst our lieutenant was considering if there was no possibility of successfully pursuing the villains, the Sapper, who had gone off to rummage the stables, and see if he could light upon a few eggs, called to us suddenly from across the yard. We all hastened to the sound of his voice.

The Sapper was endeavouring to comfort a little fellow of some twelve or thirteen years, who was weeping as if his heart would break. He had picked the child up in his arms, and kissed him, smothering his sobs in his great beard. As we came up he was saying:

"I promise you we'll catch them. Don't cry, laddie. You shall have one of them to kill yourself."

He entered the house, revolver in hand

We could not understand what was the matter. But the officer found and lit a lantern. As its light suddenly illuminated the stable, the whole story became clear. Two bodies were lying in a corner near the rack, a man and a woman. Behind them on the wall were spread two large splashes of blood and brains. The two corpses were holding each other by the hand.

"Father! mother!" wailed the little fellow, without heeding the Sapper's attempts at consolation. At the sight of us, however, he grew quieter, and was able finally to tell us the story of his misfortune. The peasants had left the village three days before at the news of the Uhlans' approach. His father and mother had been the only ones willing to stay. The Prussians had come and plundered everything.

At the moment of their departure, his father had not been able to refrain from insulting the officer in command of them. The officer had struck the old man, who had sprung at him, and tried to throttle him. Then the Prussian had ordered the man and woman to be dragged into the stable, and had himself blown out their brains with his revolver.

"Oh! I shall know him again, the brigand," cried the child; "and I'll kill him when I see him!"

Then he suddenly turned to our lieutenant and asked:

"Will you take me for one of your volunteers?"

The officer saw that to refuse would be to plunge the child into despair, and thought that it would always be time enough to show him the absurdity of his desire when his grief was appeased. So he answered simply:

"Yes."

"Then give me a gun and I'll go with you to kill Prussians."

"I have not a single spare rifle, my good boy," answered the lieutenant. "Come with us to Besançon. We can find you one there."

The child, a little consoled by this promise, allowed himself to be taken to the fireside in the kitchen whilst we buried his parents as well as we could. The next day he returned with us. At the end of five or six leagues he was utterly worn out with fatigue. The Sapper put him astride of his own knapsack to the end of the day's march, and marched gaily along with his light, firm step, still humming his interminable refrain:

"My coat has a hundred buttons,
March along, march along,
My coat has a hundred and one buttons,
Gaily march along."

II.

The next day and the next again the child spent in our company, and no one could muster courage to tell him that volunteers of thirteen were not accepted. Each day he became more urgent in his demand of a gun, and grew more vexed that he was not already clothed and armed like a soldier.

"If you were ordered off to-morrow," he said, "I should not be ready, and you wouldn't take me with you."

That was on Christmas Eve. We had planned to have a little feast of a kind in the house of the good fellow who boarded ten of us in the Chaprais suburb of Besançon. The child was to be with us. Our gaiety might cheer him up. So we sent him to bed at seven, and promised to wake him up at midnight.

At half-past eleven I arrived, a little ahead of the rest. I went up to the room in which the child was asleep, so as to leave the dining-room free to Mother Gaudot, who was preparing the supper, and my light did not wake him. It was cold in the room, and I looked mechanically towards the fire-place.

Behold the strength of habit! The child had forgotten his grief for a time, and had hung up his stockings over the chimney-piece, as he was accustomed to do in the good days when Santa Claus never failed to bring the Christmas presents.

The poor little fellow had no idea that, his mother being dead, Santa Claus was dead too. He was quite hopeful, and had fallen asleep to wait tranquilly for the gifts of Providence.

What a miserable waking he would have! To be thus, as it were, abandoned by heaven would put the last touch to his

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woes. His parents were slain, and he was alone in the world, and now Santa Claus had forgotten him, too. The orphan was bound to feel himself doubly orphaned.

The Sapper was endeavouring to comfort a little fellow.

Of a sudden an idea came into my head. I turned and rushed downstairs.

"Mother Gaudo," I cried, "the child is asleep upstairs. Try and see that no one wakes him before I come back. Tell the other fellows that it is for his sake. Wait till I come before you begin supper."

I ran as fast as I could to the armoury, where I knew one of the guards. At a few minutes past the stroke of midnight I was back again. All the rest were waiting for me.

"Hollo, what is the meaning of this?" cried the Sapper.

"Let me pass, you fellows," I answered, hiding my burden under my greatcoat. "The lad is not awake, I hope?"

"Not he, parbleu!"

I crept upstairs as softly as I could, without confiding my errand to anyone.

"Now," I cried, as I entered the dining-room again, "call him if you like, but don't go up."

They called and hammered on the ceiling. In less than a minute the child appeared, radiant and smiling, in his night-shirt, with a shako on his head, and a cartridge-pouch girded about his waist. In his hand he brandished a short cavalry carbine.

"Merry Christmas!" he cried. "See what a fine gun Santa Claus has brought me!"

III.

The next day we were ordered off on an expedition. Four days later we fell in with the Prussians near Belfort, and a skirmish ensued.

It was early in the day on the outskirts of a forest. The mist that clung about the underwood was torn here and there by the flashes of rifles. We could hardly see the enemy. Of a sudden our little volunteer uttered a loud cry:

"There he is! there he is! I see him! There, behind the big oak."

He pointed at a tree standing by itself in a clearing, behind which, in fact, we seemed to see a horseman moving. The boy had recognised the officer of Uhlans. He rushed forward too hastily from his shelter. His spring left him uncovered, and he fell with a bullet in his breast. The officer had brought him down with his revolver.

"You coward!" cried the Sapper. And he brought his rifle to his shoulder with a steady hand. Crack! the officer's horse fell with a broken foreleg, and dragged its master down below it.

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Miss Agnes Huntington: A Reminiscence of "Paul Jones."
Mr. Henry Irving as Matthias in "The Bells."
Miss Mimi St. Cyr: A Study.
Miss Ellaline Terriss as Cinderella.
Miss Julia Neilson in "The Tempter."
Miss Jessie Preston as Little Jack Sheppard.
Madame Patti: A Study.
Miss Maude Adams in "The Masked Ball."
Miss Millie Hylton in "Don Juan."
Mr. Fred Storey in "Ruy Blas," and "Cinder-Ellen Up Too Late."
Miss Mary Ansell.
Miss Alice Lethbridge.
Mr. E. S. Willard in "The Middleman."
Madame Jane Hading.
Miss Janet Achurch.
Miss Marie Tempest as Manon.
Miss Loie Fuller as a Skirt Dancer.
Miss Moore in "Little Christopher Columbus."
Miss Billie Barlow as Little Boy Blue.

NOTE THIS:—Part I. was sold out almost on publication, and many would-be purchasers could not obtain a copy. Part II. will sell out even quicker. Buy your copy at once.

33 BEAUTIFUL PHOTOGRAPHS FOR SIXPENCE.

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"Forward! Avenge our little comrade!" cried the Sapper.

We covered the clearing at the double. The Prussians, seeing their leader down, gave way before us. The Sapper was the first to reach the dismounted officer, and received a bullet in his shako.

"Fire away, old fellow!" quoth he, as he gripped the Prussian's wrist with a hand of steel. The four remaining chambers of the revolver emptied themselves harmlessly in the air, and the Sapper, flinging his prisoner to the earth, put his knee on the officer's chest.

"Bring the lad along?" he cried. At that moment the lad was in the throes of the death agony.

"It's impossible," someone cried, "he's dying."

"Sacrebleu!" cried the old smuggler, "he shall not leave us without his bit of satisfaction."

Seizing the Prussian round the waist, and keeping his arms fast behind his back, the Sapper carried him bodily off to where the boy was dying. The child smiled feebly, and life seemed to come back to him.

"Coward! coward!" he gasped.

We had placed him with his back against a tree. The Sapper forced his prisoner to kneel in front of him.

"Kill him, my lad! Come, kill him! You know I promised you you should."

The boy fumbled weakly at his carbine, which was lying on the earth between his legs. Suddenly a convulsive movement seized him. Throwing all his remaining strength into one last effort, he brought the stock up to his wounded bosom, pointed the barrel at the German's face, and pulled the trigger as his eyes were closing. The officer's brains were scattered on the ground. As for the boy, he was quite dead when we lifted him.

"Poor little fellow!" said the Sapper, swallowing a lump in his throat. "In spite of everything, he had a fine Christmas present!"

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MATTSPELLE: A SWEDISH CHRISTMAS STORY

EARLY one morning a light gleamed in the barn chamber. Mattspelle, who had risen a half-hour earlier than usual, had lighted a bit of candle stuck in a bottle, and stood arranging his hair before a cheap little looking-glass, hung on the window sash. It was Christmas eve and he must look his best.

He had a most obstinate shock of tow hair. On weekdays it stood out in all directions round his calm, good-natured face, with its round cheeks and light blue, absent-minded eyes. On Sunday, cold water was brought into use; the mat lay in order only as long as it was wet, and then it was the old story again.

But on holidays it occasionally happened that Mattspelle looked really tidy, for he had procured some tallow wherewith to anoint his locks, and for several days afterwards his hair shone so that it was hard to tell what was its original colour. To-day he combed and brushed, and brushed and combed, until not only his hair but his face shone.

He was glad that it was Christmas Eve. He thought of the porridge and ham and all the good things, and of the presents which the master and mistress never failed to provide for their servants.

He was in luck to get such a good place with Mr. Stenstrom. It was a year last summer since he had come here, and he might have come sooner if he had only been confirmed. For two years he had tried in vain. He was so stupid; he could scarcely answer a single question. The third year it was the same way, with regard to questions, but this time he knew something—he could repeat the catechism from cover to cover. If he were asked how many persons there were in the Trinity, he blinked from under his tow head and said not a word. But if someone started him on the catechism, he could rattle on like running water. So he was confirmed, for surely no one could deny that he knew his catechism.

In spite of this, however, it was hard to see any growth of intelligence in Mattspelle. He was not quick nor bright, but he was strong as a full-grown man, and did what he was told, as a soldier obeys orders. If he were sent to tar a boat, he tarred it both outside and in, for no one had told him where to stop; and if his master bade him shut the door tight, he would slam it so that the glass almost cracked. He was a conscientious fellow.

The bell rang at one o'clock. On Christmas Eve, everyone, old and young, master, mistress, and servants, had lunch together, and dipped bread in the gravy.

The kettle was in the kitchen, which had been decorated for the occasion. Chopped evergreen was strewed on the floor, and branches of it were all about the room. The shelves holding the burnished coppers were decked out with fancy paper; fresh white cloths were spread over the tables.

The kettle was there in which the Christmas ham had been cooked, and here everyone came up to dip his slices of bread and lift them out on to small plates. On the tables were ham and sausages and potatoes and Christmas ale. One could well satisfy himself with these, and the rest was kept for supper.

At present no one seemed to want anything else. The slices vanished as if they were candy, and the children would scarcely leave off eating them. They pushed and crowded each other, and played boats with their bread slices in the kettle, until the pieces fell apart.

But the happiest of all was Mattspelle. He stood behind the others, with a look of great content on his face. Not a word did he utter, for Mattspelle seldom opened his mouth except to eat, and he did not crowd to the front, for he was no forward fellow. But when the house-mother asked him if he wanted more bread, his round face shone still brighter, and when Marie the housemaid took his bread and dipped it for him, he even smiled.

The mistress was thankful when the lunch was over. She expected her sister and her brother-in-law, the postmaster, and their two children to supper, and there was yet much to be done. The cakes were not ready; the little ones must be brushed and have fresh collars; the presents must be sealed up; the Christmas table must be arranged. There were a thousand things to do.

Just as she was busiest in the kitchen, she remembered that there were some things to be brought from the store. She went in to her husband to ask if he could spare one of his men.

"Certainly!"

Mattspelle was sent for, and soon the sleigh was brought to the door. The mistress came out with a long list of articles needed, and baskets, jugs, and bags were put into the sleigh. And, first and last, Mattspelle was cautioned to be careful, and look to everything.

Oh yes, he would be very careful. That was all right. And he grasped the reins, ready to start; but at this moment out rushed eight-year-old Kerstin.

"Mamma, I want to go too!"

She was a regular tomboy. She liked to be in the stable and cow-yard with the cattle, and enjoyed nothing more than to ride on the hay-cart, the wood-cart, and in the sleigh, if nothing more tempting offered. She had nearly missed Mattspelle, for she and her brother were quarrelling over a present which was sealed up, and which she was determined to secure for herself. But just then she heard Svarten neigh, and it was to her like a battle-cry.

"Can't you stay at home on Christmas Eve?" said her mother, trying to push her back into the house. "It will be dark before he gets back, and it is so cold!"

Kerstin stamped her foot and shrieked:

"I will! I will! Papa says that we must be out every day, and I have stayed in all the morning"; and, peeping from under her mother's arm, she cried to Mattspelle: "Wait a bit, I'm coming."

She darted like an arrow into the house, and before the slow Mattspelle could obey his mistress's orders and drive on, the child was back, with her cloak flying open, and her fur cap perched on her head. She jumped up beside Mattspelle, jerked the reins from his hands, and chirruped "Svarten."

The mother called after her and was obliged to coax and beg her to wait a little till someone could bring wraps, so that she might not catch cold and fall ill.

Mrs. Stenstrom was really vexed, and scolded, while she carefully wrapped up Kerstin's little feet, hands, and body. She was "a naughty, wilful child, who always wanted her own way," and if it were not Christmas Eve, she would "tell papa, and put an end to the matter."

"Oh, papa would let me go," cried Kerstin, getting on the last mitten, and taking a fresh grasp of the reins.

She sat beside Mattspelle, her little nose in the air, her blue eyes scarcely showing under the fur. She nodded and smiled to her mother, the little white teeth gleaming, and mamma must nod and smile back, although she really was vexed with the spoiled child.

The sleigh flew off, and Mrs. Stenstrom went in. When the father was told of Kerstin's escapade, he only laughed. She was the most mischievous of the children, and it was just as

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well she was out of the way when they were all so busy, he said.

Time passed. Everyone was busy, sealing up presents and writing rhymes. Papa was called in to dress the tree, or else it would never be finished. Twilight came. The lights were lit and the supper-table spread. At five o'clock, it was pitch-dark. The guests were expected at any moment, and the hostess had gone to dress.

But where were Kerstin and Mattspelle? The mother had once or twice wondered that they had not yet returned, and the father had grumbled over the delay. Still, there was no cause for alarm, for one was always obliged to wait in the stores on such a night.

Pretty soon Emma the cook, crossing the yard, heard sleigh-bells and saw Svarten and the sleigh, with Mattspelle on the seat. Kerstin was not there; but then, she was such a wild youngster, always jumping out of the carriage without being helped! Probably she was out, shutting the gate.

Emma called to Mattspelle:

"Hello, Mattspelle! It looks as if you had brought back a smarter load than you took with you."

Mattspelle hardly saw her, although she carried a lantern. He drove on a little, and stopped before he had reached the kitchen door, got down, and began attending the horse.

Emma had a presentiment of some disaster, and went forward, throwing the light on his face. He looked strange, and turned away his eyes.

"Has anything happened?"

Mattspelle said nothing.

"Answer man. What have you done with her?"

Emma took hold of him and turned him round. He stood there before her, and dropped the whip in the snow.

"I—I—could not help it."

His voice sounded as if the tears were not far away, and he looked at Emma pleadingly, as if he hoped she might help him.

Meanwhile there was a stir within. The bells had been heard, and maids and children peered from the windows and doors, and hastened out when they saw that something unusual had happened.

Emma brushed past them, pointed at Mattspelle, and gasped out something unintelligible. Almost breathless, she hurried into the drawing-room, where the master was lighting the candles in the sconces.

As he looked at her, he trembled. He thought the house was on fire.

"What is it?"

"Mattspelle has come back, and without Kerstin."

The master rushed out, pale with fright. The hall was full of people, and they had got Mattspelle within the door. He stood in the midst of them, cap in hand, pale and frightened so that, in spite of the grease and cold water, his hair stood out in all directions. His eyes were fixed on the floor. Thus far no one had succeeded in getting a word out of him.

"What does this mean?" cried Mr. Stenstrom. "What have you done with her?"

"I couldn't help it," answered the man, but without lifting his eyes. "It wasn't my fault—she fell down—the hill."

"Did she fall off? But she isn't lying there now?"

He took the man by the shoulder and shook him.

"Answer, fellow!"

"Ye-e-s," said Mattspelle.

"And you did not lift her up?"

No answer.

"You went on again?"

Mattspelle glanced up a moment, then looked at his feet again.

"It was all over," he said.

"You don't know what you are saying, fool!" shrieked the unhappy father, and shook him again. Suddenly he released him, and cried out:

"Bring lanterns."

All was excitement. The mother, almost overcome by the news, rushed out into the snow after her husband, while one of the maids hastened after her with wraps. The house was deserted.

Mattspelle slowly lifted his eyes and gazed at the excited people. An expression of surprise was depicted on his large, heavy features. He pulled his hair, but not a word came from him.

"Where did it happen?" asked one of the party hurrying back. In the confusion no one had thought of this.

"It was close by the second gate," said Mattspelle, and pointed in that direction.

His questioner took him by the arm, and pushed him down the steps.

"I'll teach you to stand there and point! Aren't you able to go with us and show us the place?"

Mr. Stenstrom had got into the sleigh with his wife and driven off. The others hurried after.

The husband tried to calm his wife. Probably the child had struck on a stone and had fainted, and that idiot had lost his wits and driven off without her. Nothing more alarming could have happened.

Soon sleigh-bells were heard. They came nearer.

"It is the postmaster's sleigh," said someone.

It was indeed the postmaster, who sat on the box with the coachman, and in the sleigh were his wife and the children, almost hidden in furs. The sleigh stopped.

"What has happened?" was asked.

Mr. Stenstrom began to explain, and just then a little hand was thrust out of the mass of furs, waving a cap.

"Hello, papa, here I am."

It was Kerstin's voice. The father and mother could not believe their eyes. Yes, their darling stood before them. The mother must feel her with her trembling hands.

"How are you, darling? Did you hurt yourself? How did it happen? Where did you find her?"

"Find her!" No one understood, and Kerstin opened wide her large eyes. What was the matter with them? She was all right.

While Mattspelle waited in the shop for his purchases, she had gone into the postmaster's, and there it was decided that she should return with them, instead of with the man. That was all.

"But didn't you tell him when you went in?"

Of course she did; and he had been invited into the kitchen and treated to cake and wine.

"Where is that blockhead?" burst out the father, and turned so abruptly that he very nearly knocked over Mattspelle, who stood there as if wishing to attract his master's attention.

"Ah, there you are, you numskull! What's this yarn you have been telling us? Didn't you know that Kerstin was coming back with the postmaster?"

Mattspelle stared. "Ye-e-s," he finally said.

"Well, then, how could you lose her on the way?"

No answer. Mattspelle scratched his tow head and looked away.

"Perhaps it was something else you lost?"

"Ye-e-s."

"What was it then?"

This was beyond Mattspelle's comprehension. Didn't his master know for what they had been searching so late in the evening?

"Don't you hear me, boy?"

"It lies down there in the ditch," and in the snow a thick something was slowly trickling.

"What is it?" asked his mistress.

Mattspelle twisted his cap. Were they blind, too?

"Why, it's the syrup jug."

"The syrup jug!"

It was Mrs. Stenstrom's large jug which lay there, and for which they had searched with such sorrow and anxiety. For a moment no one spoke. Then all began to shout and laugh, so that they could scarcely stand, and the Christmas joy which appeared to have gone for ever, began anew out in the snow.

The only one who stood silent and astonished was Mattspelle. It seemed to him that people were very queer. To be sure, he had wondered a little at the fuss made over the jug, but then to have such mirth when they found it smashed into bits—that was, indeed, strange.

"Was that anything to laugh at?" thought Mattspelle.

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A CHRISTMAS CARD

IT is both painful and perplexing to be answered by a heavy sigh when one expects an exclamation of pleasure and admiration; so it was not wonderful that Mrs. Austin, under these exact conditions, looked anxiously into her husband's face.

She was holding up for his inspection a large wax doll, one of the treasures for Madge, the blue-eyed darling of four years, who was counting the days until Santa Claus should come. Every stitch of Miss Dollie's elaborate costume was the work of Mrs. Austin's busy fingers in hours when Madge was dreaming of full stockings and Christmas trees, and the last stitch set, the result was displayed for "papa's" approval.

Now papa was quite as devoted a parent to Madge and two-year-old Harold as mamma, and took deep interest in all nursery matters. It may be that the memory of two other curly heads and baby faces that had brightened the nursery for a few brief months and then been hidden beneath the grave deepened the love for the children who came later to comfort their aching hearts.

But it is certain that the little Austins were as much loved and petted as children could be, and did not dream more hopefully of Christmas treasures than their parents did lovingly of supplying them.

So it was with some alarm that Mrs. Austin put aside her last triumph in needle-work and threw her arms around her husband.

"What is it, Charlie?" she asked.

He drew her into a loving embrace before he answered sadly:

"I met my father again to-day. Margaret, it will kill me to have things go on as they are. He was wretchedly shabby, feeble, and broken, looking so old and so ill that I could not keep the tears out of my eyes. But he would not speak to me. I said all I could say in the street, but he stopped short and said, 'I do not know you, sir! You will cease to annoy me!' I could not make a scene in the street."

There was a choking sound in Charles Austin's voice as he ceased speaking, but, being a man, he kept back the sob that would have followed.

"At Christmas time, too," she said. "It is useless to send presents, Charlie; he has sent them back every year."

He drew her into a loving embrace.

. . . . . .

The story was an old one, a true-love marriage made in the face of disinheritance and paternal displeasure. Mrs. Austin had been a poor girl, employed in the factory of Simon Austin, then a man of great wealth and good social position; a man purse-proud, arrogant, and full of his own importance.

When his only child, his idolised, indulged son and heir, told him of his love for pretty Margaret Hay, a factory girl, living in the factory boarding-house and wearing calico dresses, the old man was a maniac in his fury.

He would not see that the girl was pleasing in manner, refined in taste, well educated, and sweet tempered, one to brighten any home, and make any good man thoroughly happy. He gave a fierce command that the matter should end there and then.

Charles Austin, utterly unaccustomed to be crossed in any fancy, refused an obedience never before exacted, and the conversation ended in a stormy quarrel and the young man's expulsion from home.

But, with good fortune that does not often follow disobedient sons, Charles was at once taken into the employ and favour of his mother's brother, an eccentric old bachelor, who gave the young couple a home in his own luxurious house.

It was a new life to the old gentleman, and he took the keenest interest in all the household affairs as Margaret managed them, loved and mourned the older children, and, dying when Madge was but a year old, left his entire large estate to his "beloved nephew, Charles Austin."

And while the sunshine of prosperity had no clouds for this wayward son, the father's fortunes had gone all awry. Some commercial panic was the first blow to Simon Austin, and an effort to repair the loss by speculation only added to disaster.

He missed the cool, clear head of the son who had of late years been his active partner, the judgment he had first trained and then trusted to guide his large business. He was angry, and his angry impulses led him into dire blunders, until he grew so involved that there was no escape, and he failed for more than his entire fortune.

At once Charles hastened to him, offering his entire wealth to save him, only to be met with a proud, fierce refusal to be under any obligation to a disobedient child or his beggar wife.

Over and over again, as poverty became more and more bitter to the man broken and aged, did his son implore him to allow him to help him, offer him a home, love, care, obedience even, only to be thrown back with angry scorn.

A proud man always, Simon Austin cherished his wrath as the last remnant of the old arrogance, and would not bend one inch. He received anonymous letters, telling him that sums of money were in the bank in his name, and wrote back refusing to claim them.

He mistrusted every offer of service, and returned to Charles every scrap of aid sent to him, often perplexing his son by sending what had not come from him, though he always refused to believe him.

And being old and broken in health, he sank lower and lower, unable to fill lucrative positions, and taking the work that gave him barely food and the poorest clothing.

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Very sadly the son and his wife talked of the impossibility of helping one who would not let any appeal touch him, until suddenly Margaret cried:

"Charles, I have an idea. Let me try to win your father over. I will send him a Christmas card."

"My dear, he would not open the envelope."

"Let me try; and see if your father does not dine with us to-morrow."

"Dine with us! Margaret, you must be crazy!"

"Not a bit of it. Just let me have my own way, dear."

"Do you ever fail to get that?" was the laughing query, for something in his wife's face gave fresh hope to Charles Austin's heart.

. . . . . .

It was a very mean room in a very poor house where the sun of a bright Christmas morning awakened Simon Austin. Everything in the shabby place told of the lack of woman's care and love.

Dust hung upon everything. There were no dainty trifles of needlework; the curtains were dingy and crooked, the carpet torn and dirty.

Very wearily and slowly the old man dressed himself, lit a fire in the grate, and rang for the poor breakfast his landlady provided. Dinner and tea he was supposed to buy outside; but very often this muddy coffee, stale bread, and tough chop or steak constituted the sole repast of the twenty-four hours.

It was Christmas Day, and no business took the old man out, so, after the untempting tray was removed, he took a newspaper and drew shiveringly to the fire.

But before he had read one column there came a knock at the door, and it opened wide and closed again behind a child—a little girl, in a quaint Mother Hubbard cloak and hat, with large blue eyes and clustering golden curls, and holding a large flat basket of fresh, beautiful flowers.

While the old man gazed at her in silent amazement, she said, in a sweet, childish voice:

"If you please, dear grandpapa, I am your Christmas card!"

"You—you are what?" he said, utterly bewildered.

"If you please, dear grandpapa, I am your Christmas card!"

"Who sent you here? What is your name?"

"Mamma brought me here. I am Madge Austin, dear grandpapa——" and, then, half-frightened at the strange face and the poor room, the child's eyes filled and her lips trembled.

"I want to go home!" she whispered.

"Don't cry," Mr. Austin said, taking her in his arms very tenderly. "Don't cry, dear; I will take you home."

"Oh, if you please, because my big doll is there, and all the toys Santa Claus brought, and brother Harry." Then with a look of inquiry, "What did Santa Claus bring you?"

"Nothing."

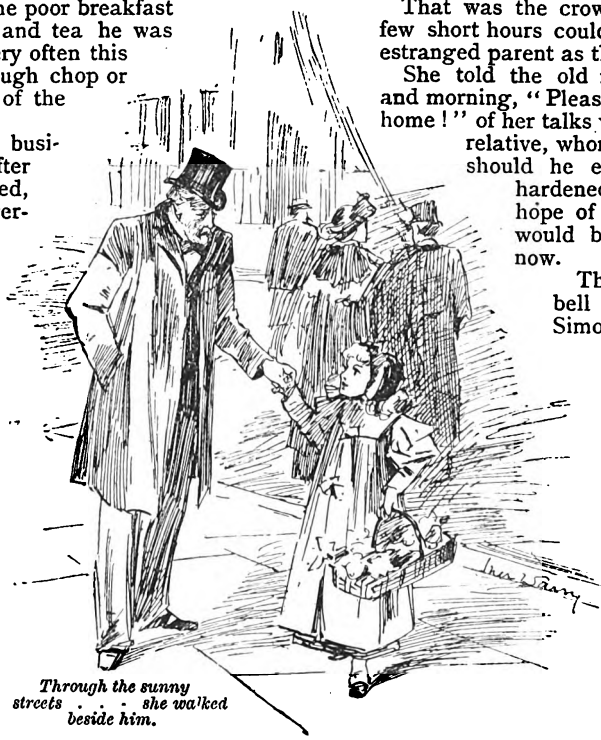
"Oh!" with a very deep-drawn sigh; "was it because you are up so many stairs? But he always comes to our house, and mamma said perhaps to-day he would bring us our grandpapa! We haven't got any now, you know, and mamma said that if he did come we would love him just the same as papa, and he would love us. And please, grandpapa, so we will."

And the child put her little arms round the head bent down before her, and lifted the face quivering and tear stained.

"Oh, don't cry! Oh, please don't cry; only naughty girls and boys cry. Oh," and again terror found voice in the plea, "I want to go home."

"Yes, yes, I will take you home. Bring your flowers, child. This is no place for flowers or—or Christmas cards."

Down the creaking stairs the old man led the child, tenderly, watching that the little feet did not slip or stumble. Through the sunny streets, unheeding the cold, she walked beside him, prattling of her home, and of the dear grandpapa that she had been taught to love.



Through the sunny streets . . . she walked beside him.

That was the crowning amazement. No child in a few short hours could have been taught to talk of the estranged parent as this child talked.

She told the old man of the prayer she said night and morning, "Please, dear Lord, send my grandfather home!" of her talks with her mother about the unknown relative, whom she was to reverence and love, should he ever come home, opening to the hardened, but, oh, such a lonely heart, a hope of rest and affection, that he felt it would be bitter as death to thrust aside now.

There was no need to ring the bell of the stately mansion to which Simon Austin led his grandchild. Eager eyes were watching for the coming of the pair. Eager hands were waiting to open the door. Tender arms and strong hands led Simon Austin into the parlour; Margaret's kisses fell warm upon his wrinkled cheeks; Charlie's hands removed the shabby overcoat; baby Harold clung to his knees, shouting:

"Dandpa's tum! Santa Claus bringed dandpa!"

No pride could stand against this loving, sincere welcome. So pride collapsed.

"You really want me, Charlie?" the old man faltered. "It is not mere charity?"

"Hush!" whispered Margaret. "Do not grieve him by such a word. He will never be happy till you come home, dear father."

And so Christmas once again gathered up the tangled threads of estrangement, and knit them into strong bands of home love.

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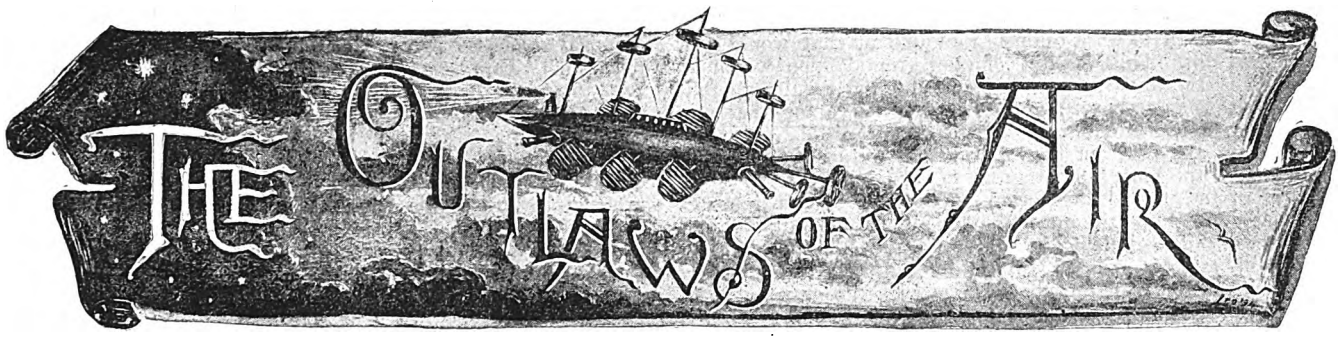

By George Griffith,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," &c.

SUMMARY.

Max Renault—leading spirit of Anarchist Autonomie Group No. 7, who has joined the Utopians (a Socialistic colony on an island in the South Pacific) in order to steal the air-ship they are building, which he succeeds in doing.

Franz Hartog—a German engineer, in league with Renault, who steals a very fast torpedo-boat destroyer from the Russian Government to levy blackmail on the Atlantic.

Sir Harry Milton—a wealthy young English nobleman, who by chance comes across the island of Utopia, in his yacht, the *Calypso*, and subsequently devotes the whole of his fortune to hunting down Renault and Hartog.

Herbert Wyndham—a lieutenant in the British Navy who is travelling with Sir Harry for the benefit of his health, and who determines to resign his commission and couple his energies with those of Sir Harry in destroying the Anarchists, on account of the fact that he has been stabbed by Renault when the latter attempts to carry off Violet in the air-ship.

Frederick Austen—the inventor of the air-ship, who shares its secret with Edward Adams, Dr. Edwards, and Ambrose Millar, three other Utopians.

Frank Markham—the young captain of the Utopian yacht, *Mermaid*.

Violet Milton—Sir Harry's sister, and Lieutenant Wyndham's sweetheart, is fearfully injured by throwing herself out of the air-ship on which Renault has tried to carry her off.

Lea Cassilis (alias Mme. Dail)—a member of Autonomie Group No. 7 with whom Renault is in love.

Dora Merton—a fair Utopian, who has made an impression on Sir Harry.

Lucy Summers—another fair Utopian.

Renault, after levying blackmail with Hartog on the high seas, returns to Utopia with the object of destroying the colony, but finds it deserted. After a time he goes to Europe in the air-ship *Vengeur*, and, together with Lea Cassilis, visits the Criterion Theatre in London, where he is recognised by Sir Harry and Lieutenant Wyndham, who effect his capture. He is tried, and condemned to death.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A Calm Before a Storm.

According to the merciful practice of the English criminal law, three Sundays are allowed to elapse between the passing of sentence of death and its execution, the execution as a rule taking place on the Tuesday following the third Sunday. Sentence had been passed on Max Renault on Monday, the 5th of April, and, therefore, as the newspapers speedily informed the general public and the thousands of Anarchists, scattered all over the Continent and America, who had gloated over his exploits with fiendish delight, and had already given him the first place in their evil hierarchy, the execution was fixed for Tuesday, the 27th.

This gave an interval of about five weeks from his arrest which, added to the two months which had passed since the arrival of the *Nautilus* in British waters, made a period of over three months during which every effort had been strained both by the Anarchists and the Utopians to push on the construction of their respective aerial fleets, which another month or so would now probably see equipped and afloat.

Sir Harry and his friends naturally had one great advantage in being able to have their ships laid down, built, and equipped out of hand without any fear of interference by the authorities, while the Anarchists were forced to have the sections of theirs made by various and widely-separated firms, and then had to take them away to be put together on the floating dockyard into which they had transformed the *Bremen*. On the other hand, this advantage was, if anything, more than neutralised by the fact that their enemies were already in possession of the only air-ship capable of taking the offensive at any moment, and that too in a style that would far eclipse her former depredations.

The immediate consequence of Max's visit to America and Europe had been the completion, under the specified time, of the armament which Hartog had designed for the *Vengeur*, and, while the whole world was wondering what had become of her, she was lying snugly hidden on an uninhabited islet in the Faroe group, taking on board her guns and ammunition from the *Pilgrim*. When she took the air again she carried four pneumatic shell-guns capable of throwing projectiles charged with five pounds weight of either anarchite, or fire-mixture, to a distance varying from two to five miles according to her elevation.

These were mounted two ahead and two astern, and on each broadside she carried two automatic guns of the Maxim pattern, but of very light construction and small calibre, from each of which could be projected, every minute they were in action, seven hundred conical nickle-coated bullets, which would kill at a range of from four to five thousand yards. In addition to these she carried five hundred specially prepared projectiles made of papier-mâché, and charged with fire-mixture for use in her vertical bomb-tubes.

As her net lifting power was nearly two tons over and above the weight of the hull, machinery, and guns, she was able to carry a quantity of ammunition sufficient to do an enormous amount of damage, considering the very advantageous conditions under which it would be discharged—conditions which would allow every projectile to be sent home to its mark with the most deliberate aim.

As soon as the *Pilgrim* had performed this part of her work, she set out for Liverpool, where the Anarchist agents had instructions to send the parts of the air-ships and their equipments as they were completed, and there, under the noses of the authorities, the harmless-looking cases were shipped as hardware and machinery for the port of Monte Video, and carried away as soon as a cargo was completed to the island of Trinidad, off the coast of Brazil, where she was met by the *Bremen* and the *Destroyer*.

Meanwhile, a series of conferences were being held between Sir Harry and his Utopian friends, and the Syndicate which had built the *Britannia* and now had six other aeroplanes under construction. Of this syndicate the ruling and moving spirit was Mr. Hiram Maxim, the inventor of the aeroplane and the automatic gun which, in its deadly fashion, had sung the praises of his inventive skill in so many parts of the world.

The issue of the conflict between the *Vengeur* and the *Britannia* had conclusively proved that the flying machine was no match for the air-ship proper. In fact, years before, Mr. Maxim had said that if ever an air-ship could be made that could raise itself vertically from the ground and keep itself suspended motionless in the air at any desired elevation within reason, it would be an immeasurably superior engine of warfare to his own aëroplane.

Now that there could no longer be any doubt that such an

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air-ship had been built, Mr. Maxim, with the impersonal unselfishness of the true scientist, promptly admitted the fact, and set himself to work to design an air-ship that would beat the *Vengeur*. This was the common ground upon which he and Sir Harry and his friends met, and the result was that they put their resources and their knowledge together and formed a corporation under the title of the Aerial Navigation Syndicate, the first act of which was to return the unspent balance of the Government grant to the Exchequer, so as to be rid of the official inspection and interference which had seriously hampered the movements of the old Syndicate, and set to work on an independent basis.

Adams and Mr. Austen still retained in their own exclusive keeping the secret of the composition of the motor-fuel to be used in the engines, and the last of the Articles of Association was to the effect that no attempt was to be made to trespass upon this forbidden ground. The Syndicate possessed a capital of three millions, and, as the event proved, no capital ever before subscribed for any object made such enormous profits as this did, though how they were to be made, remained a matter of pure conjecture until the world rubbed its eyes and wondered why it had never thought of such a scheme before.

The advantage of their alliance with Mr. Maxim very soon became apparent to Sir Harry and his friends. His unrivalled inventive skill, and the immense experience he had gained in the long course of experiments that he had made in connection with the construction of his aeroplane, at once bore fruit in improved designs for the new air-ships. Not only were they to be made larger and more powerful, but several improvements were to be made both in their internal construction and the materials used, which were expected to greatly increase their strength and carrying power, and would so enable them to carry a more powerful armament and a greater quantity of ammunition.

A fleet of twenty-four of these air-ships had been laid down in ten different manufactories scattered over the British Isles, and all the firms engaged in the work had been obliged to give a pledge, under heavy penalties, not to disclose any particulars connected with the work, or to allow the workmen engaged on one part to know what was being done in another department. Added to this, the firms that were building the hulls knew nothing about the machinery; and even the various parts of the engines, the propellers, and the lifting fans were made by different engineering firms under orders given in different names.

Mr. Hiram S. Maxim.

As a matter of fact, two or three of these firms were actually employed at the same time in making portions either of the air-ships or their machinery for both the Anarchists and the Syndicate; but, as the most elaborate precautions were taken on both sides to keep all reliable information out of the newspapers, and as the prices paid by both were so high, the various manufacturers found the keeping of the secrets far too profitable to run any risks of the momentous work on which they were engaged becoming known to anyone save themselves and their employers.

The object of this policy of secrecy was, in the first place, to obviate as far as possible the danger of discovery by Anarchist spies, which would in all probability lead to the destruction by the *Vengeur* of any dockyard or manufactory that was found to be making any part of the Syndicate's ships. Added to this, the Syndicate had ulterior motives in view, which carried its plans far beyond the extermination of the Anarchists as a fighting force.

The British Government had refused to avail itself of Mr. Austen's offer to place the designs of the *Nautilus* at its disposal unless the secret of the motor fuel were also given up to them. This was, of course, impossible, and so the *Nautilus* and her sister ship, the *Aries*, which was being constructed as rapidly as possible at Elswick, were to remain, for the time being at any rate, the only examples of that type of warship in existence.

An immense amount of popular indignation was naturally aroused by the publication of the news that the Government had virtually retired from the building of any aerial craft which could hope to engage the *Vengeur* on equal terms. Questions were asked in Parliament and answered in the usual terms of official reticence and ambiguity. The Syndicate kept its own council rigidly, and the interviewers who besieged its members were sent empty away one after the other until they gradually got tired and relieved their disappointment by spreading reports that the Syndicate had nothing to tell because it had nothing to do.

It was reported on wholly erroneous grounds, or rather upon no grounds at all, that all efforts to transform the aeroplanes into air-ships such as the *Vengeur* were believed to have ended in failure, and this sent public opinion round the other way, until it praised the Government and the War Office for refusing to spend the money that was so urgently needed for strengthening the Army and the Fleet upon experiments in an entirely new fighting arm which, for all anyone knew for certain, might never be brought to perfection. The members of the Syndicate, far from denying these reports, rather encouraged them, as their work depended in no way upon popular favour or support, and anything that tended to increase the mystery in which they were shrouding their plans was so much added defence against the very probable attacks of their enemies in the Anarchist camp.

As for the *Vengeur* and the *Destroyer*, as day after day and week after week went by, and nothing was heard of either of them, it began to be believed either that some unknown misfortune had overwhelmed them, or that the capture and now certain fate of their leader had so disorganised them that, like a body without a head, they had become incapable, for the time being, of definite action.

Even the Utopians were themselves deceived by the quietude of affairs since the arrest of Renault. They felt certain that he was not the man to disclose the secret of the motor-fuel to any of his followers, for to do so would be to surrender the one claim he had to supremacy among a band of men whose especial boast it was that they owned no law, but that of their own individual wills. From this they argued to the conclusion that the *Vengeur* had exhausted her supply of fuel and that, while the only man who could and would replenish it was lying waiting for death in Newgate, the air-ship, as useless as a steamer without coal, was hidden in some out-of-the-way place, impotent for any further mischief.

But while the public was diverting its attention from the doings of the Anarchists to the war with Russia, which the rapid breaking up of the ice in the Baltic would in a few days bring from the East to the West, and while the members of the Syndicate were permitting themselves to be lulled into a false sense of security, the enemy had been hard at work with equal secrecy and equal energy. Lea Cassilis, from her house in Paris, had been in constant communication with the Anarchist groups, both in England and all over the Continent, perfecting the preparations for the simultaneous striking of a

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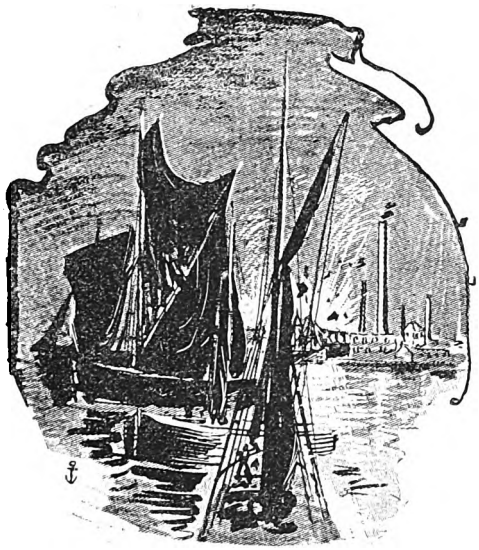


One happened in London on the banks of the Thames.

number of blows at the social organisation on the day fixed for Renault's execution.

Spies had also been ceaselessly at work, ferreting out as far as was possible the designs of Sir Harry and his friends with regard to the building of the new aerial fleet, for Lea had learnt from Max that Mr. Austen at least, and probably Adams as well, knew the all-important secret of the motive power, and would, therefore, be certain to build other air-ships to replace the stolen one.

Their comings and goings were watched, and their footsteps dogged day and night by Anarchist spies, and, in spite of all the precautions that they took, their lives were in danger, and might have been taken a dozen times over, had not Lea, still firmly convinced that some means would be found to rescue Max, and, believing that his vengeance would only be satisfied by killing them himself, had expressly forbidden their death, at any rate until it was known whether or not Max would be able to take his vengeance for himself.

So successful, however, were her spies in their efforts to find out what the Syndicate was really doing that, on the night of the Sunday before the Tuesday fixed for Max's execution, four explosions occurred almost simultaneously in four of the works where parts of their air-ships were being constructed. One happened in London on the banks of the Thames, another at Sheffield, another at Birmingham, and another on the Clyde.

How they were carried out was, of course, a mystery, and remained one; but so well were they planned and executed that essential parts of no fewer than eight of the twenty-four air-ships were utterly ruined, and the building of the complete fleet was thus delayed for quite three months longer. The next morning, the "Anarchist Terror," as the newspapers had come to call it, was more widespread than ever. The explosions were taken as a direct renewal of the warning that had been given by Max himself and in the red poster.

Popular excitement rose to fever heat in a few hours; the news from the seat of war was once more at a discount, and the Anarchists and their threats and possible doings once more occupied the first places in the columns of the newspapers and the excited imagination of the public. It was confidently reported, and almost universally believed, that the *Vengeur* had passed from town to town during the night and bombarded the works, which had been destroyed from the clouds; and then the man in the street began to ask his neighbour, with anxiety by no means unmingled with fear, what would happen to London itself if, after all, the Anarchists were able to carry out their threats against it?

CHAPTER XXXII.

AT THE LAST MOMENT.

As soon as day dawned over London, on Monday, the 26th of April, the policemen and that portion of the inhabitants who happened, whether by reason of business or pleasure, to be abroad, were astonished and not a little disquieted to find hundreds of red placards posted in all the conspicuous parts of the city and its surroundings, bearing the simply ominous inscription:—

BEWARE!

AND TAKE WARNING WHILE THERE IS YET TIME.

WE WILL HAVE

LIFE FOR LIFE AND BLOOD FOR BLOOD!

—The Anarchist Executive.

But not only was the placard posted on the walls of public and other conspicuous buildings. In the form of a leaflet it was scattered in thousands about the streets and even on the house-tops. In vain did the police attempt to collect these after they had torn the placards down. They were picked up by the early-comers into the streets and passed eagerly from hand to hand; then the evening papers, published soon after seven in the morning, got hold of them and reproduced them in their boldest and blackest type, so that by mid-day the scare was complete.

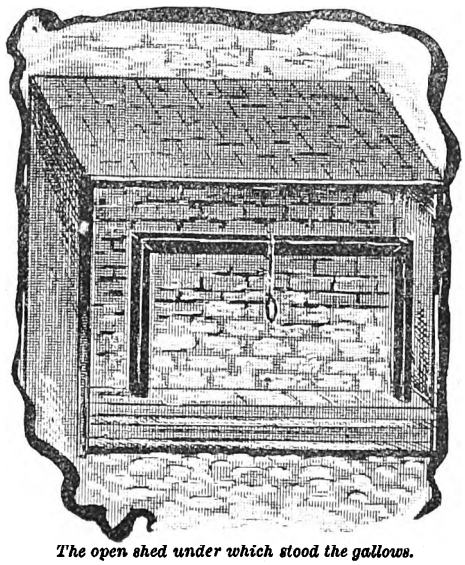
Then came the irrepressible monger of sensation, and he, having no facts to go upon, promptly elaborated from his inner consciousness letters from non-existent correspondents, describing how, in the watches of the night, they had seen—at any rate with the eye of imagination—a vague and ghostly form corresponding to the published descriptions of the air-ship, floating to and fro over London, and scattering a red rain of leaflets far and wide over the streets and house-tops.

That day, important news which had come to hand, telling of the break-up of the ice in the Baltic and the mobilisation of the Russian fleet, was crowded into obscure corners to make room for romantic descriptions of aerial exploits on the part of the *Vengeur*, which no human eye had ever seen her perform, and with equally imaginary narrations dealing with the manner in which the real inspirer of all this panic, and the veritable hero of the moment, was passing the last few hours that were left to him on earth.

What he ate and drank, the books he read, the number of hours he had slept each night, and the very words with which he was supposed to have refused the ministrations of the chaplain; his behaviour towards the warders, and even his demeanour when alone, were all set forth with a well-simulated accuracy which spoke volumes for the imaginative capacity of those who had corrected the dearth of reliable facts out of the plenitude of their own inventiveness.

To all this was added a touch of realism which, in the eyes of the multitude at any rate, endowed it with unimpeachable veracity. Line-sketches were given of the condemned cell, showing the arch-Anarchist seated at the wooden table with his face buried in his manacled hands, while two stern-faced warders kept watch and ward on either side of him.

Later editions followed this up with plans of Dead Man's Passage, the yard of Newgate, and the open shed under which stood the gallows ready to receive their victim. Then, when the sensation worked up by the newspapers had reached its height, rumours began to fly about from lip to lip to the effect that the air-ship, which was now a fearful reality in the popular mind, had been seen here and there and everywhere,



The open shed under which stood the gallows.

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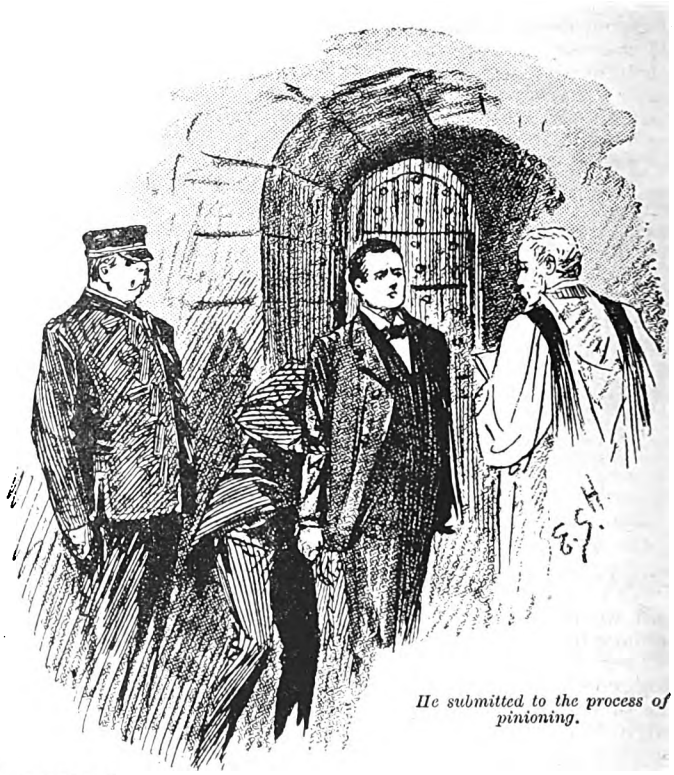
swooping down through the clouds and hovering over affrighted towns and villages, flying at full speed through the air on some unknown errand of slaughter and destruction, and even hovering over Osborne House with intent to bury the Queen and her household in its ruins.

Everybody appeared to feel confident that some extraordinary attempt at rescue would be made, and the wildest theories were advanced in anticipation of it. It was even suggested that for once the French method should be adopted, that the hour of execution should be altered, and that Renault should be taken unexpectedly from his cell and hanged out of hand without warning.

The Home Secretary was actually asked a question in Parliament as to whether, in view of the exceptional circumstances, he did not think it advisable that something of this sort should be done; but the questioner was met with a cold rebuff and informed that the Government declined to be intimidated by the vague threats that were being circulated, and that the law would take its course in the ordinary way, and at the appointed time—namely, eight o'clock on the following morning—an intimation with which the Anarchists were promptly made acquainted through the medium of the evening papers.

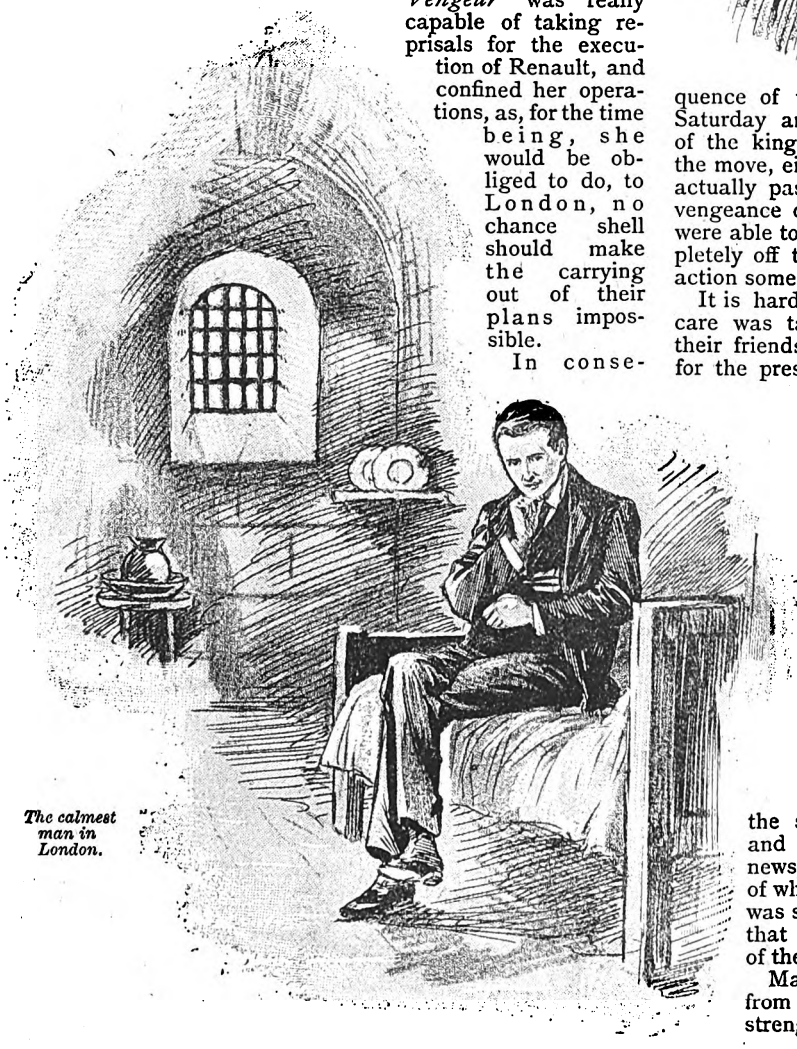
Meanwhile, Sir Harry, Mr. Austen, Adams, and Lieutenant Wyndham, and his two naval friends had come to the conclusion that, for the sake of the momentous projects which they, as active members of the Aerial Navigation Syndicate, had in view, it would be better for them to scatter as widely over the British Islands as they could, so that, in case the *Vengeur* was really capable of taking reprisals for the execution of Renault, and confined her operations, as, for the time being, she would be obliged to do, to London, no chance shell should make the carrying out of their plans impossible.



He submitted to the process of pinioning.

In consequence of this decision, they had all left London on the Saturday and Sunday by different trains for various parts of the kingdom with the intention of keeping constantly on the move, either on land or sea, until the hour of execution had actually passed, and it was known what form, if any, the vengeance of the Anarchists was to take. In this way, they were able to put the Anarchist spies, for the time being, completely off their track, and, it is probable, to this course of action some of them, at any rate, owed their lives.

It is hardly necessary, perhaps, to mention that very good care was taken to send Dora Merton, her mother, and all their friends into places where they would be safe, at least for the present, from the attacks of their enemies. Some had gone to remote villages in Wales and Scotland, some were scattered among English watering-places, and some had been sent to the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands; and, as all had, of course, renounced the picturesque Utopian costume on their arrival in England, they found no difficulty in losing themselves among the inhabitants of the places in which they took refuge.



The calmest man in London.

By nightfall on Monday, the whole of London was in a state of feverish and irrepressible anxiety and apprehension. The terror of the unknown hung over everyone, from the mansions of Mayfair to the slums of Whitechapel. No one talked of anything but the approaching doom of the arch-Anarchist and the vengeance that had been threatened by his still invisible allies. An epidemic of unreasoning fear had seized upon the whole people, from those who wandered about the streets arguing and gossiping with each other and buying up every new special edition that the newspaper offices kept pouring out full of repetitions of what had gone before, to the Cabinet Council that was sitting in Downing Street discussing the telegrams that were constantly arriving from the various points of the Empire threatened by Russian attack.

Many believed that London would be bombarded from the air during the night, and this belief was strengthened by a fire which broke out among some

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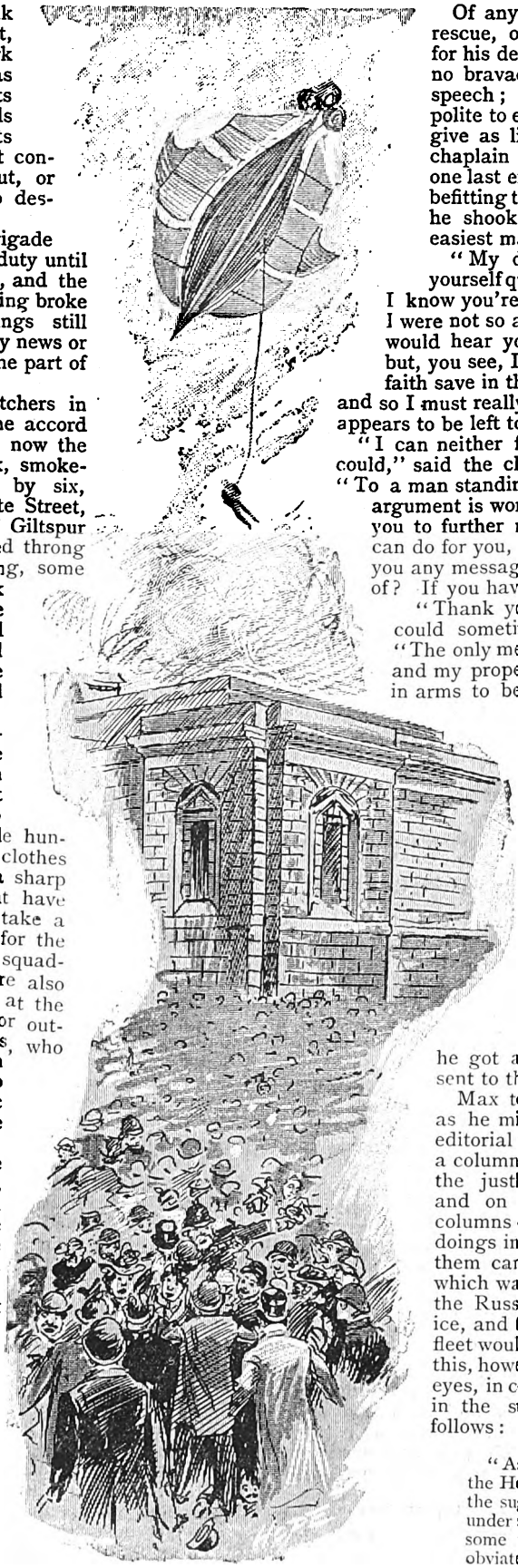
warehouses on the Rotherhithe bank of the river, but which had, in fact, nothing whatever to do with the work of any incendiary. Of course, it was taken for granted that the Anarchists had set them on fire, and thousands of people wandered about the streets all night, wondering where the next conflagration was going to break out, or when the fire bombs would begin to descend from the sky.

The whole strength of the Fire Brigade and of the police force was kept on duty until the morning, but nothing happened, and the grey dawn of a cloudy April morning broke over London, showing its buildings still uninjured, and without bringing any news or warning of aggressive action on the part of the Anarchists.

By five o'clock, the anxious watchers in the street began to move with one accord from all points towards what was now the common centre of interest—the dark, smoke-grimed prison of Newgate; and by six, Ludgate Hill, Old Bailey, Newgate Street, Holborn, and the southern end of Giltspur Street, were packed with an excited throng of anxious, palefaced people waiting, some to see the hauling up of the black flag, and others who could not see it, to hear the shout of relief and the cheer of triumph that would hail its appearance as the sign that the master spirit of the Anarchists had ceased to exist.

All round the prison and its approaches, strong cordons of police were drawn up to keep the crowd in the roadways, and to prevent it getting on to the pavement or too near to the doors of Newgate, while hundreds of other policemen in plain clothes mingled with the crowd, keeping a sharp look out for Anarchists who might have come armed with hand bombs to take a mad and indiscriminate vengeance for the death of their chief. Half-a-dozen squadrons of Lancers and Dragoons were also kept in readiness, but out of sight at the Horse Guards, in case any rioting or outrages on the part of the Anarchists, who were believed to be in strong force in London, should make it necessary to clear the streets, and all the public buildings were guarded by double sentries and extra policemen.

Amidst the general excitment, the man who was the cause of it all was, outwardly at least, the calmest man in London. Certainly, no one in the whole metropolis had slept more soundly than Max Renault had done when the warders woke him at half-past five. He dressed himself leisurely, and with his usual care in his own clothes, which, in accordance with the usual custom, had been returned to him after his sentence. At six, his breakfast was brought to him, and he ate as hearty a meal as though he had been going out hunting, instead of to the gallows, and when it was over he washed it down with half-a-pint of champagne, in which he drank success to Anarchy and destruction to Society.



Of any attempt that might be made for his rescue, or any revenge that might be taken for his death, he said not a word. There was no bravado in his manner or boasting in his speech; he was simply cool and collected, polite to everybody, and apparently anxious to give as little trouble as possible. When the chaplain entered the condemned cell to make one last effort to bring him into a frame of mind befitting the terrible position in which he stood, he shook hands with him, and said, in the easiest manner imaginable:

"My dear sir, I'm afraid you're giving yourself quite unnecessary trouble on my behalf. I know you're doing it from a sense of duty, and if I were not so averse to listening to wasted words, I would hear you with pleasure, if not with profit; but, you see, I have no creed but Anarchy, and no faith save in the ultimate triumph of its principles, and so I must really decline to waste the short time that appears to be left to me in unprofitable conversation."

"I can neither force you to listen, nor would I if I could," said the chaplain gravely and almost sternly. "To a man standing as you do on the brink of eternity, argument is worse than useless, and I will not tempt you to further mockery. Is there anything that I can do for you, I mean in the worldly sense? Have you any message to leave or any property to dispose of? If you have, you may command me."

"Thank you," replied Renault, smiling, as he could sometimes smile, with a rare sweetness, "The only message I have to give has been given, and my property belongs of right to my comrades in arms to be used in the work to which we are devoted. And now, if you wish to do me a real service, get me one of this morning's papers, and let me read quietly until the time comes."

The good chaplain was far too familiar with the behaviour of men in Renault's position not to be able to see that his callousness was genuine, and in no measure assumed. He saw, too, that to make any attempt to perform the last offices of the Church for him would only be to give him opportunity for scoffing which might, if he were provoked too far, degenerate into blasphemy; so he left the cell and went to the governor's room where he got a copy of the *Standard*, which he sent to the condemned cell by a warder.

Max took it and soon became absorbed, as he might well be, in its contents. The editorial page opened with a leading article, a column and a half long, on his career and the justly merited fate that awaited him, and on the next page there were three columns concerning the Anarchists and their doings in all parts of the world, and after them came the war news, the chief item of which was to the effect that Kronstadt and the Russian Baltic ports were now free from ice, and that the mobilisation of the Russian fleet would be complete in a day or two. All this, however, was of no importance, in Max's eyes, in comparison with one brief paragraph in the summary of news which ran as follows:

"As stated in our late edition last night, the Home Secretary has declined to entertain the suggestion that the convict Renault, now under sentence of death, should be executed at some unknown date and hour, in order to obviate any possible attempt at rescue. Such

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a rescue is rightly considered to be absolutely impossible, and the execution, which is fixed for eight o'clock this morning, will have taken place before these lines are in the hands of the majority of our readers."

Max continued apparently absorbed in the perusal of the paper until a quarter to eight, not even seeming to hear the muffled note of the bell of St. Sepulchre as it tolled his own death-knell. When the governor and the chaplain entered the cell with the executioner, he looked up, laid the paper down, and rose to his feet with a slight bow. The governor briefly informed him the purpose they had come for, and without a word he submitted to the operation of pinioning.

As soon as this was completed the door of the cell was thrown open and the usual procession was formed, the governor leading the way and the chaplain bringing up the rear, reading the burial service of the English Church. So they went from the cell down Dead Man's Passage, and out into the yard. On the threshold, Max paused for just an instant, giving a glance up into the sky, in which the clouds hung low, and then one look at the open shed under which the rope was already dangling from the black-painted beam.

So far he had not opened his lips; but when a fourth of the way between the passage and the scaffold had been traversed, he stopped suddenly, drew a deep breath, and then a long, piercing, screaming cry came from his lips, and rang out high above the murmur of the excited throng outside the prison walls. The next instant, the murmur of the crowd was changed into a roar of amazement, which grew shriller and shriller until it became one mighty, long-drawn yell of fear.

Before the cry Max had raised had died away, a huge grey shape dropped swiftly and vertically from the clouds and passed from the view of the crowd behind the walls of Newgate Yard. Then came the sound of a rapid fusillade of small-arms, and then the air-ship soared up again with the still, pinioned body of Max dangling in a lasso from one of the ports in the hull. Before the *Vengeur* had reached the clouds it had been hauled in. Then she stopped, just under the clouds, and the vast crowd, knowing intuitively what was to come, began to surge to and fro with wild yells and hoarse shouts of terror, for the rescue had been achieved after all, and the moment of revenge had come.

(To be continued.)

A NEW YEAR'S CALL

THEY both lived in "Victoria Mansions" on the top floor, where the rooms were small and comparatively cheap. They were always coming up in the lift together, and she had looked at him and wondered if he was ever in love; and he had looked at her and wondered whether any man came to see her. The day after Christmas they got into the lift together with three other people, but the others all got out on the lower—and more expensive—floors, and then she carefully looked at the blank walls sliding by them, and he looked at her till the lift stopped at the top floor, and he, with an awkwardness that was entirely uncharacteristic, knocked all her bundles out of her hands as he stepped back to let her out first.

"Oh, I beg your pardon, Miss Arnott," he said, as he stooped and scrambled for them, and, the light of successful strategy in his eyes, he added:

"I suppose I ought to apologise for knowing your name—but, you see, I do know it—the last one, that is."

"Thank you," said Miss Arnott, as she took the last lingeringly delivered bundle, and the lift door banged and the lift boy sank behind them.

"I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year," said he.

"You should say a Happy New Year and a Merry Christmas, for it's too late to wish anything for this year's Christmas," she said, dimpling and making talk out of nothing. Then she suddenly grew gravely courteous, and murmured "Thank you" again, and bowed and hurried down the passage.

"Well, it's a beginning, and it's nonsense not having some acquaintance with a nice girl like that when she's right under your elbow," he said to himself, as he turned his key in his door. After he had seated himself for an after-dinner cigar he moralised on the idiotcy of the conventions that put it out of his power to call on Miss Arnott, tell her he was a respectable person with an uncle who was vicar of the Church of the Holy Bulrushes, and that he'd like to know her—without ulterior motives.

"But that's the row," he said to himself; "this idea of matrimony so fills up everybody's mind that you can get no pleasant companionship with women because you are supposed, of course, to have intentions, or not to have them, and then you are a bold, bad man. I can't tell Miss Arnott that my intentions are perfectly honourable, but also absolutely non-matrimonial: and although she looks like an uncommonly clever girl, she'd probably never get so far past her education as to dream of such a novel position on the part of a man who knocks bundles out of her hands to get to speak to her. But, by Jove, if she only knew it, I've got such a simple human loneliness on me I'd go out of my way to talk to that old dowager on the first floor with the glass eye."

Miss Arnott was saying to herself, while she made herself a cup of tea: "I wonder what he'd have thought if I had said: 'Thank you, Mr. Noyes'; that would have been rather funny, but then he might have thought it was rather fast, too. I shall not notice him next time I see him. That's the only safe and proper thing."

She felt so pious in having made this resolution that she felt bound to show how sincere it was by carefully listening at her door the next morning till she heard his shut, and knew he was waiting at the lift; then she came out of her room just as the boy opened the lift door, and called out: "Oh, never mind, don't wait; I've forgotten something," and went back.

That was to show Mr. James Noyes (she knew his first name), that she was not seeking to go down with him.

"She doesn't want me to forget all about her, anyway," said that misguided young man in his own mind.

Before New Year's Day they were bowing ceremoniously when they met, and he was watching for a chance to knock more bundles out of her hands in the pursuit of a platonic friendship. She went to the Church of the Holy Bulrushes to watch the old year out—though she never had been there before. She knew more by that time about Mr. Noyes' antecedents and present position as a promising young architect of limited performance than he did himself, and what she thought on not seeing him at church, and so not receiving his humble suit to see her home, was that while he might be a pleasing person to know, she pitied the woman he might marry—he was evidently of a very light and fickle nature—and his legs were too thin. After that she quite dismissed him from her thoughts, and began speculating on putting a midnight New Year's service into her next story—for she wrote stories and had come to London to live for fame and to pick up her bread and butter

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incidentally. She was young for the lonely position she occupied, and pretty, but, despite the little wondering feminine vagaries of her mind, she was solely convinced that a life of celibacy was the one calculated to nourish her genius, and that to nourish her genius was her duty.

New Year's morning she got up thinking about all the social festivity she had heard of on that day. She was so belated that she did not know that New Year's calls were out of date. She felt a pathetic figure when she reflected that there was no one to call on her. She knew no one but two or three editors, who felt they had munificently fulfilled all social obligations to a promising contributor when they had asked her to something known as a literary reception, and had let her look at their lions and talk to vague young men connected with publishing houses. She had even always come home with a messenger boy—at her own expense—and, to her simple provincial mind, literary receptions had seemed to imperfectly represent the pleasures of the world.

To-day she felt a longing to be gay, just as gay as if she had no genius to nourish, to wear good clothes, and look pretty, and listen to silly compliments.

"No one will call; no one can call, of course. It would be the most presumptuous thing in the world for Mr. Noyes to think of such a thing, and I don't believe he's so far gone in rudeness as that," was one train of thought in her mind, and the next was to conclude that, as she was so lonely and it was so dreary to be lonely on New Year's Day, she'd play she was going to receive, and she'd dress herself nicely and get out a bottle of sherry and buy a cake, "just as if I were a little girl and could pretend anything I wanted to, and have it almost as good as true," she said to herself.

Mr. James Noyes shaved himself pensively as he reflected that his choice for a New Year's dinner lay between the house of the vicar of the Church of the Holy Bulrushes and a restaurant. "You can't always be going to a preacher's house for dinner if you never go to hear him preach," ran his thoughts, "and anyhow one's about as dismal as the other. Then that red-headed daughter of his will marry me before I know it, if I don't look sharp. It's that kind of thing that makes you reconciled to girls like Miss Arnott going in for a career and all that."

It was about noon when Miss Arnott got her preparations for the reception of imaginary visitors completed. The sherry was one of half a dozen bottles that an old bachelor uncle had sent her for Christmas. She had not opened it because to drink wine alone seemed to her sadder than to have the wine. like the company fashioned of thin air.

She had cake and a tea service laid out, and she had dressed herself in an old white muslin gown because it was becoming, though darned, and strung herself over with beads like a fancy shop window because they were becoming too, and she loved them, and she did not intend to allow any imaginary woman to come near her, for she knew she could not prevent even imaginary women from saying she looked silly—but imaginary men might be trusted to admire.

As she gave a touch to her curtains that they might admit her glimpse of the Park and at the same time shut out the sight of a neighbouring wall that advertised liver pills, there came a knock at her door; she opened it, fearing it was the washerwoman, and there stood Mr. Noyes, with his overcoat on, his hat in one hand, and a kitten in the other.

"I found your property straying in forbidden paths," said he, holding out the animal.

"Why—I—dear me, the idea. It was very kind of you to bring her home. Come to me this minute, you naughty Toodles," said the lady, with that remarkable feminine social tact one reads about, for she had never laid eyes on the cat till that moment.

Noyes appreciated it, for he had just bought the cat at a shop down the street.

"I see you are receiving," said he.

"Yes; won't you come in?" said she.

"I'm just starting on my rounds," said he, "and I'm glad to make so charming a beginning."

While they were attending to these lies, the kitten, put down on the floor, was dragging herself about, legs bent, in a most unhappy manner. Looking for conversational material, Miss Arnott exclaimed:

"Dear me! what is the matter with that cat? How oddly she behaves." She hated cats, and knew nothing about them.

"Why, cats always do that in a strange place," said the male diplomatist, and then he turned very red. The two stared at each other, and then laughter broke forth and the acquaintance was an accomplished fact.

"I'm not receiving," cried Ada, when she got her breath. "I'm not going to tell any more fibs to-day. This is all just a little play I got up because I was so lonely; I was 'making believe,' as the children do."

"Poor little thing," murmured Jim Noyes, so low that no one was obliged to pretend to hear him. Then he said: "And I'm not making calls. I've called on you, but then, you see, officially I don't know you."

"Officially you are only a figment of my imagination, but I always wanted real bread and meat for my dolls, so you must have some real sherry, and you'll have to help uncork it."

It was an hour before the young man suggested that New Year's calls must have an end.

"I'll have to have make-believe visitors the rest of the day," said Ada.

"And I'll have to make make-believe calls, and, what's worse, make-believe eat and drink, for I'm not going to have any dinner till after the theatres are out."

"Why—why not?"

"Oh, dining alone in a restaurant on a holiday is so dismal at the best, and I'm going to wait till they are at their brightest with supper parties of happier people."

"Then you'd better make another call here, and help yourself through the interval with some more cake."

"And will you play that I am a dozen different young men, each more brilliant and entertaining than the other?"

And so the afternoon of New Year's Day was entered upon. So far the game had been played by the man and the girl and Nature, but now Fate stepped in.

Ada lit a match to set light to the gas, and while she talked and held the match and forgot about it, the blazing end fell off and dropped upon the last summer's muslin dress, and light flames shot up round her. Noyes caught his overcoat from a chair, sprang and wrapped it round her, and the danger was over in a disgustingly brief time; still it had done its work, and the two strangers were left in a highly intimate attitude, the girl sobbing hysterically, and both with their emotions loosened by a genuine taste of peril.

"Darling!" said he, smoothing her hair, and the word seemed to have said itself without any collusion on the part of his brain.

"Oh!" said she, and hid her face on his shoulder, and he murmured some more words that surprised him, and kissed her hair, and her ear, and a bit of her cheek, in a dazed and helpless way.

When she lifted her face it was to say: "And we haven't been introduced yet; you'll have to get your uncle to do it I go to his church."

And with that remark Mr. Noyes felt—he didn't stop to think why—that his fate was sealed, and that it was rather nice after all. What he said was: "We'll get him to do it all," and though the remark was a little blind, the girl seemed to understand it.

"We turn over our new leaf with the New Year to some purpose," he said, as they sat in the twilight and neglected to light the gas.

"It will be turned over when we are introduced," said she. "I don't approve of free-and-easy ways about such matters; I never did."

And Noyes himself, though now more than half persuaded that he had done just what he meant to, is himself not so sure as he once was, that conventionality spies dangers where there are none, and he takes satisfaction in the entire propriety of Ada's views, and accepts her conduct as a special compliment to himself. She tells him how he fell in love with her before he ever spoke to her, and that they met at his uncle's. the vicar's.

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THE NOAH'S ARK CHAP.

E allus used to larf at that there curate chap—the bloke with the corpsy face, and the holler eyes, with the soft 'at and the long cloak, just like one o' them Johnnies they puts in Noah's Arks. In our alley, Marrerbone Alley, Rotherithe, we didn't used to care about 'im a comin' down an' tellin' us what was right and what wasn't, and a doin' the soapy business along o' the kids and the old women, and playing the goody-goody fake all about.

So each time we see 'im a comin', with 'is cloak and 'is 'at, and 'is shoes, and 'is white stockings, and 'is rumbereller, and 'is trac's, me and Blue Peter and Tom Stepney, and Pat Mulrooney, and others, we used to make game on 'im, and now and then a bit 'o dirt, or a heggshell, or somethink would ketch him, and we'd arsk 'im rare questions, and call 'im all kinds o' names, and make game on 'im generally.

D'ye think that stopped 'im from comin' down Marrerbone Alley? Not 'im. He come down just as usual, and don't seem to mind no more about the chaff and the heggshells than he did about the rain, or the snow, or the stinks, or the dirt. More'n that he gits 'old of Pat Mulrooney one day, an' he talks to him and tells him straight as 'ow he oughter be ashamed on 'isself for hilltreatin' a man as was doin' his dooty, an' when Tom Stepney comes up, meanin' fun, Noah's Ark turns round to him, and gives him as good as he got, speakin' quiet like and cool and never turnin' a 'air, although Tom and Pat is nasty chaps in a row, and—well, we let 'im alone after that, for he was a good plucked 'un, although he 'ad a soft 'at and a long cloak, and carried a rumbereller, and chucked the trac's around like a bill-poster.

It was a precious hard Christmas time for us in Marrerbone Alley—as 'ard as I can mind, and the Lavender Basin was froze over, and there wasn't no work and me and the others was a settin' idle and doin' nothink, and the women and kids was bad off for fire and grub and everythink. There was a kid died at Number Four—died o' cold, they said—but there was others as bad off, and no one couldn't pass down the halley without 'earin the cryin' for food or for fire. Them as 'ad bread was well off; them as 'ad meat, no, I mean 'im as 'ad meat, for there warn't only one, was a proper dook.

I've lived in that there halley ten year, but I never mind it's bein' so quiet. Somehow folk 'adn't the 'eart to fight or talk, and John Robinson, the slop, what in general just put 'is boots in the halley and go on, it was so quiet 'e came hall the way down it, thinkin' as 'ow there must be somethink wrong, and didn't seem to be at all 'isself at not bein' called a name or two, or gettin' a slop pail over 'im. This lasted a matter o' a fortnit, and things were beginnin' to look so black that me and Pat and Tom Stepney and some more on 'em went out on the singin' lay, with spades on our showelders, and all this bad time Noah's Ark never come nigh us.

"Jes' like them passons," says we; and we got a kind o' mad with 'im, not that 'is preachin' and trac' givin' could warms 'ands and feed hemptiness, but there was soup tickets an' things in 'is give, and he'd ha' come down the halley 'andy like. "I'll bet yer a pot o' black and tan," says I to Tom Stepney, "that there Noah's Ark will 'ave a fust-rate Christmas dinner nex' week, and be 'anged to hus chaps and our women and kids in the halley." "That's so," said Tom. "What dy'e say to lookin' on 'im up!"

But we was saved that trouble, for the werry next day who should come down the halley but Noah's Ark 'isself. But he warn't the same as he was. He was uncommon pale, and his heyes was bright and in mournin' like all round, and he'd a woollen fakement round his throat, but the same cloak, and soft 'at, and shoes with white stockings.

So I told him straight—I 'ad meant to tell him proper, but I 'adn't the 'eart to when I see them heyes o' his, and 'ow he ketched his breath; so I told him straight as 'ow things was bad, and never a soul'd ben down the halley since he came, and there wasn't no bread, let alone a two-eyed steak or a bit o' block ornament, and that there wasn't no coals, and that the women was ailin', and the kids dyin'.

Noah's Ark looks very queer, and fidgets with them big shoes of his, and turns his 'ed away, and blessed if I didn't see his lips a workin', and his eyes a gettin' moist. "I'm—I'm very, very sorry," he says. "I'll do all I can to help you. I'm afeard it ain't much, but I'll do my best. No bread, eh? No coals, eh?" and off he walks as if someone had struck him. That werry same evenin' there was bread and meat and coals in hevery 'ouse in the halley.

Next week were Christmas week. Me and Tom Stepney got a job at the Bricklayers' Harms Station, 'elping of the 'ands there to take the 'ampers and things from the railway trucks, and loadin' them on the railway vans. My eye! some on 'em was 'ampers, and no mistake, and I says to Tom Stepney, says I, "Tom, there's a halley we knows on where one o' these yere 'ampers wouldn't come amiss, eh, mate?"

All of a sudden I ketches 'old of one, a werry big un it were, and it had a ticket on it, and on the ticket whose name do I see but Noah's Ark's, and above it a crown with knobs on it, and the name printed of some castle or other?

"Noah's Ark's in luck," says I to Tom; "he'll have a Christmas dinner anyway."

Well, two days before Christmas, Noah's Ark comes down the halley. "Look 'ere," he says, "I've got a treat for the lot of you. Hevery man, woman, and child here is to be at the mission 'ouse at twelve o'clock sharp to-morrer. Don't bring anythink," he says, "but clean faces and 'ands, and good happytites."

Then he walked away, coughin' like mad, and hus all a wonderin' what the lay was.

We was there, you take your Alfry Davy, at twelve o'clock sharp on Christmas Eve. There was nigh on forty on us, men, women and kids, and there was Noah's Ark and his lady and miss, and 'alf-a-dozen other gentry, and there was two long tables with white cloths on 'em, and jugs and glasses, and then Noah's Ark 'ammers the table, and axes us all to stand, and he puts in a prayer, and then—well, I never 'ad sich a feed, nor 'adn't anyone else, let alone perhaps Mrs. Lockyer, what 'ed been in service.

"Tom," says I to Stepney, "blessed if Noah's Ark ain't give us that there 'amper with the nobby crown on the ticket."

Next day was Christmas Day, and we'd been talking about the blow out, a lot on us, and we says as 'ow some on us had oughter call on Noah's Ark and thank 'im and wish 'im merry Christmas, and tell 'im how we'd sorter misunderstood 'im, and ax 'is parding. So we goes, me and Tom Stepney and Pat Mulrooney. Noah's Ark lodged hover a saddler's shop, and when the saddler comes to the door and sees hus three chaps he looks huppish, and axes what we wants. So we tells 'im. "Can't see him," says he. "He's a eatin' of his Christmas dinner, what d'ye want for to hinterrupt 'im, same as you 'as me?"—which was true enough, for there was a bit o' pertater on his chin, and there was a plum puddin' a goin' into his room at the end of the passage.

But we goes up, and knocks at the door, and sure enough, there was Noah's Ark and his missis, and his four kids, a eatin' of their dinners.

It's gawspel truth as I'm tellin': Noah's Ark's Christmas dinner was polonies and bread and water. He'd give the halley 'is Christmas dinner!

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DELICATE CHILDREN.

Parents will not realize the fatal error of neglecting the first symptoms of delicacy in their children. Looking at the matter from a purely selfish point of view, it is a considerable saving to one's purse, for medical authorities all admit that one single dose of medicine given in time will be worth 999 after the mischief is done. Once allow the seeds of ill-health to sprout, and remember you will have a harvest to cope with.

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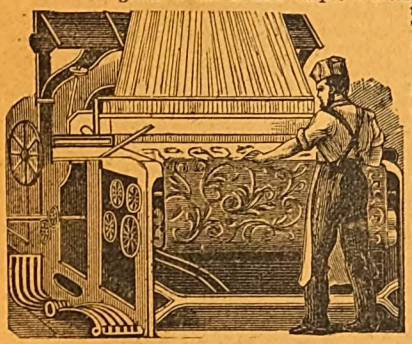

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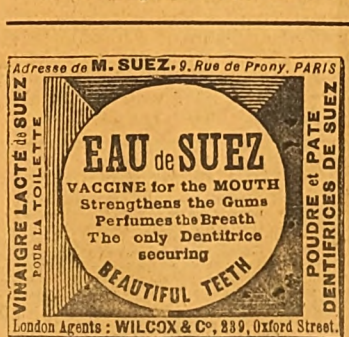

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 314.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING JANUARY 5, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

SHE was beautiful, and she was rich. Beyond that, nobody knew anything about her, and what was more, although the whole community was convulsed to its very foundations with curiosity and with excitement, nobody was able to find out anything about her than these two patent facts of her wealth and of her beauty.

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Where she came from, why she came, who were her belongings, what was her origin—all these things were unfathomable mysteries. Whether, indeed, she was wife, widow, or maid, was absolutely an unknown problem to the good people of Llancarthy.

She called herself Princess Petrusky; but then, as Mrs. Thomas Evans, the doctor's wife, shrewdly remarked, these foreign princes and princesses don't go for much. In fact, according to Mrs. Tom Evans and her cronies, the aristocratic name had a flavour of something that was almost disreputable about it when you come to thrust it violently in the faces of the commonplace inhabitants of the quietest of little Welsh villages.

She was splendidly, regally handsome; tall, with the figure of a goddess; golden hair that rippled crisply away from her brow; eyes that shone forth blue as the summer skies; a profile that was almost Grecian in its perfection. It was a face born to command and to rule—scarcely, perhaps, to be much loved.

Exactly opposite Hill Side, as the house which the Princess had hired, was called, there stood, lower down along the valley, an unpretentious but commodious house, belonging to a gentleman of the name of Hallett. This house, which was built of red brick, and was low and rambling, went by the name of the Beeches, and had belonged to the Halletts for some generations.

They were of good family, but were poor. Mr. Hallett, a wife, four daughters, and one son; they were a most affectionate and united family, and ever since the memory of man there was not a member of the family who had failed to marry well, to conduct himself or herself with decorum and respectability, and, in short, to lead a virtuous and godly life from their cradles to their graves.

At the time when this story begins, the Princess Petrusky had been about a month at Hill Side, and Lionel Hallett had just returned from completing his education at Oxford, where he had, of course, done remarkably well; and equally, of course, an uncle of his mother's had promised him a diplomatic appointment, into which he was expected to walk, without any further trouble, in about a month's time. That was the way with the Halletts; they all fell on their feet and turned out well and creditably, and never gave their relations cause to be anything but proud of them.

When Lionel came home the excitement about the foreign princess was at its height, and two days later a wonderful thing happened. Lionel had gone out by himself for a solitary ramble over the hills, and with him went Wolf, his collie dog, who rushed about hither and thither with joyful barkings of delight.

Presently the stillness of the summer afternoon was broken by harsh and discordant noises, as of dogs barking angrily at each other—Wolf's gruff voice bellowing forth defiance, and

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The princess herself reclined upon an ottoman in the centre of the room.

shriller yappings answering back in accents of irritated fury. Above the clamour and the din came the tones of a woman's voice, clear yet authoritative:

"Monton! Bebe!"

Lionel Hallett swung round with a curious flush upon his handsome face. A sort of instinct told him who it was.

At a little distance from him stood a lady—Princess Petrusky. She was simply clad in a close-fitting dark cloth dress, and wore a small crimson silk hat upon her bright locks. She appeared to be quite alone, and struggling vainly to induce her two poodles to relinquish the somewhat bellicose attack they had made upon Wolf, whom they evidently considered in the light of an intruder on their premises.

Wolf, on his part, albeit a good-natured creature upon the whole, was beginning to resent the pertinacity with which Monton and Bebe attacked him, one in the flank and one in the rear. His temper was evidently rising fast, and he was beginning to show his teeth to his tormentors in rather a dangerous manner. The Princess called off her dogs in vain. She seemed distressed by the situation of her pets, and fearful lest Wolf, in his superior strength, should turn round on them in downright earnest.

No sooner, however, did Lionel Hallett reach the spot than the canine battle assumed an altered appearance. He strode rapidly down the hill toward the belligerents and laid a forcible hand upon Wolf's collar.

"Come here, sir—lie down," he said to the collie, who obediently crouched beneath his hand, while with the other Lionel politely raised his hat.

"I am very much obliged to you, sir, for calling off your dog," said the Princess, in very good English; "there certainly would have been bloodshed in a few minutes! Ah, Monton and Bebe, how naughty you both are!"

She bestowed a little tap with her parasol to her two poodles, who slunk shamefacedly behind her, then she looked up at the young Welshman with a bright, winning smile.

"You are young Mr. Hallett, are you not?" she asked.

Lionel, with a look of surprise, assented.

"You wonder, I dare say, how I know that. I met you in the village two days ago—do you remember? Yours was a new face to me, so I inquired who you were."

"I feel much flattered that you should have taken the trouble to inquire about me," said Lionel, with a flush, but the Princess interrupted him laughingly:

"Oh, there is nothing in that; I like to know all about my neighbours."

"Your neighbours know very little about you, Princess."

"That is true," she replied with a smile. "Will you walk down the hill with me, Mr. Hallett? That is to say, if you think we can make our dogs keep the peace."

Lionel assented joyfully. He felt almost bewildered by the condescension and kindness of her manner towards him; how gracious she was, and how fascinating was her smile, and, above all, how beautiful she was! He felt almost too happy and elated to utter a word.

He was wondering what he should say to her, when the Princess turned to him again with that delicious smile of hers.

"You are in the diplomatic service?"

"I hope to be shortly. I have been promised an appointment," said Lionel, wondering where she got that piece of information.

"Ah! you're to be made a Queen's Messenger, and you'll be sent to St. Petersburg?" said the princess.

This time Lionel stopped short and stared at her.

"How in the world——"

The Princess laughed outright.

"I see, you think I am a magician! Well, it is wonderful how I know so much about you, is it not? Cease to look so surprised! Do not speculate about what I say to you—think only of why I take so much interest in you," she said with her rare smile.

It was like the gracious intimation which a sovereign gives to a favoured subject when she grants him permission to woo her—how else could Lionel interpret that smile, at once so confiding and so tender!

They were nearing the garden of the house where she lived. Emboldened by her words of encouragement, the young man stopped short.

"May I come and see you?" he asked eagerly.

"Assuredly you may. Come soon—to lunch to-morrow. Ah, no, not then; so many are with me then. Come later—at five o'clock. You will find me in, and alone."

"How good you are!" murmured Lionel. "Why are you so kind to me?"

"I suppose it is because I like you," she replied with a smile, holding out her hand.

It was with the action of a queen rather than of an equal that she did so, and Lionel, bewildered, dazzled, confused, scarce knowing whether he was awake or asleep, bent over the long white hand that she held out to him, and pressed it fervently to his lips.

When he looked at her there was a deep flush on her beautiful face—a flush that he could not quite make out. It was a flush of annoyance, almost of indignation—certainly not of bashfulness. She smiled again, however, upon him, and, murmuring "Good-bye," passed through the garden gate, and vanished from his sight.

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CHAPTER II.

THERE was a dim and mysterious radiance in the Princess's boudoir at Hill Side. Lace curtains, festooned across the windows, lined with soft amber-coloured muslin, kept out the too glaring light of day; tall palms and feathery ferns were grouped in rich luxuriance about the room; and in the tiny conservatory, where a fountain splashed coolly and freshly in the hot, breezeless afternoon, there were masses of thick, white blossoms, gardenias and stephanotis, which filled the atmosphere with delicious and subtle odours.

The room was furnished chiefly with low divans, and deep, slumberous looking armchairs. A few little tables, covered with feminine knicknacks, all of a costly and curious nature, were arranged among them; whilst tall mirrors from the ceiling to the floor reflected back again and again the lovely figure of the Princess herself, who reclined upon an ottoman almost in the centre of the room.

She half rose from her seat as Lionel Hallett, an evidently expected guest, was ushered in, and welcomed him only with a smile, and a mute gesture to seat himself by her side. Had the Princess Petrusky been preparing herself for the conquest of the Tsar of all the Russias himself, she could hardly have been more distractingly beautiful. Her dress was of creamy white silk, covered with rare lace, and fastened by knots of amber silk at her throat and waist.

"How glad I am that you remembered to come," she murmured.

"Do you think I could forget it, Princess Petrusky?"

"Ah! do not call me by that formal name. I have so few friends in the world—but they call me by my name. Will you not be one of them?"

She held out her lovely hand to him and he—small blame to him—took it and retained it, murmuring passionately:

"I would be more than your friend! By what name shall I call you, oh, my queen?"

"Foolish boy!" she said with a tender little smile, and gently pressing the hand that held her own. "My name is Olga Petrusky—call me Olga."

"You are not married?" he asked, with a sudden painful anxiety.

"Married!" she repeated, raising her eyebrows in surprise; "what can make you think so? Am I so old to look at, then?"

"Oh, no—no; only I feared you might; but of course you are not—that would be too horrible!" he cried

"Yes, would it not?" she murmured with a smile which, had he had the eyes to see it with, might possibly have struck him as peculiar.

But he had no eyes to see anything save her beauty. Every moment he was falling more deeply in love with her; his heart, and at the same time his vanity, was becoming more deeply impressed by her evident liking for him and the strangely marked encouragement she gave to his advances.

What could it be, Lionel asked himself, with a mingling of surprise and almost of delirious delight, that made this regal beauty stoop to such dangerous tenderness toward himself? Flattering—almost too flattering—as the idea was, there could be but one deduction to be drawn from her manner to him. The Princess Olga Petrusky had seen something in him which other women had failed to perceive, and had fallen desperately in love with him at first sight. For more than an hour he remained in that enchanted boudoir, their conversation becoming at last mere broken words, and, on his side, half-smothered sighs.

At length she gave the signal for him to go by rising from her chair.

"And the appointment—has not come yet?" she asked, as he reluctantly prepared to take his leave.

"Not yet; but I do not want it—— now!" he said meaningly.

"Ah! you will be glad enough when it comes. Let me be the prophet of your fortunes. It will come to-morrow morning—you will hear that you are to be a Queen's Messenger. By the way," she added, changing the subject, and looking full into the young man's flushed face, "is it that you are short, or that I am tall? see how nearly of a height we are?"

She pointed to one of the long mirrors; and, in fact, there was but a trifling difference between them.

"You are 'as high as my heart,'" quoted Lionel sentimentally.

"We are not unlike either," continued the Princess playfully, still looking into the glass. "See, your hair is as fair as mine, and curls, and your eyes are blue; your skin is almost as pink and white. We might be brother and sister."

"Heaven forbid!" ejaculated Lionel fervently. "Do not flatter me too much—you are beautiful as a goddess, while I am only a very ordinary mortal!"

"Still, we are not unlike," persisted the Princess; "and now you must go. Remember me at post time to-morrow, and come and see me again if I turn out to be a true prophetess."

Sure enough, the next morning, at breakfast, there lay a large official document by Lionel's plate. He was appointed a Queen's Messenger, and was ordered to be in readiness to start for St. Petersburg in a week's time; he was to be in town and call at the Foreign Office for his orders and for his despatches before he started.

There was general rejoicing in the Hallett family at this news.

"Lord A—— has been as good as his word. You really are a lucky fellow, Lionel!" said his father gleefully.

And then his mother and sisters kissed him and made much of him. And Lionel was alone depressed and unhappy. To go to St. Petersburg in a week meant to him that he must leave his beautiful Princess Olga. The thought filled him with utter despair.

As soon as he could shake himself free from the affectionate congratulations of his family, he took his hat and went out, bending his steps towards the house among the hills.

The Princess was at home. Again he found her alone in the magic boudoir, and this time she was attired in a simple white muslin dress, in which she looked as innocent as any English maiden.

"Did I not tell you the truth?" she cried gaily to him as he entered. "You have got your appointment?"

"Alas! yes," replied this ungrateful young man, with a groan.

"Come, come! Why are you sighing over it? Surely you are a lucky man!"

"Lucky, when

She pointed one of the long mirrors.

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"Good-bye, my dear boy."

I shall leave what I love in less than a week! To-day is already Tuesday, and Sunday night I shall have to go up to town, and leave you!"

"Is that so terrible a grief?" she asked softly.

And then she turned away and gathered a blossom from the white stephanotis that garlanded the shining walls of the little conservatory.

He made no answer. It seemed to him that in leaving her he was indeed leaving all that he loved on earth.

"But you will get over it, will you not?" she said presently, turning her bright face towards him once more, with an alluring softness in her lovely eyes.

And then Lionel Hallett lost his head and his self-control. He caught the hand that held the stephanotis flower to his heart, and covered it with kisses. He knelt at her feet—he poured forth incoherent vows of love and admiration, mingled with self-accusations concerning his own presumption and folly—he intreated her to forgive him, to permit him at least to bask in her presence, since he dared not to hope anything further from her—to allow him for this one short week to be her slave, her worshipper, and then to let him go a maimed and wounded thing for ever, banished by the hand of fate from her presence.

Then she began to question him—strangely and oddly, had he had the sense to perceive it, only his infatuation blinded him.

Did Lord A—— know him? No, he had never seen him. He was only a great friend of his father's. Was he to go to the Foreign Office himself? Would they give him a passport? Oh, yes; of course they would do that. How would they describe him—fair, curly hair, blue eyes, pink and white skin? And then she glanced again at the mirror in which their two images were reflected, and smiled.

"They won't make any mention of your moustache, Lionel—it is too small," she laughingly remarked.

Then she pinned the stephanotis blossom on his coat with her own fair hands, and sent him away half delirious with joy, telling him to come again to-morrow.

Day after day this poor deluded youth returned, like the moth to the candle, to the presence of his beautiful syren; day after day their interviews became more prolonged, more dangerously sweet. Only once would Olga Petrusky permit him to kiss her face.

He exhausted himself in kissing her hands, her rounded wrists, the flowers she gave him; but no sweeter caress was vouchsafed to him. Only, as the week wore away, Princess Olga seemed to grow sad as the time for his departure drew near. Often she sighed and was silent when he spoke, or let her eyes rest with melancholy regret upon his face, or her voice quivered when she spoke of what she would do when he was gone. What wonder, then, that Lionel began to believe in very truth that she loved him in return?

At last the Saturday—the last day of this enchanted week—came round. Olga and Lionel were walking in the garden among the bright beds of scarlet geraniums, and backwards and forwards across the smooth-shaven lawn.

All at once Lionel burst forth impetuously:

"To-morrow I shall have to leave you. All this happiness will be over—I shall have only the hollow, empty dream to look back upon. Every mile that I travel will carry me further from you—every moment will separate me more completely from the woman I love so devotedly."

Olga smiled.

"My dear boy, I think you are talking very foolishly," she said gently.

"What do you mean?" he asked quickly.

She stopped, laid her hand on his arm, and looked full into his eyes.

"Lionel," she said, "am I not rich and independent and wilful? Do you think there is anything on earth that I could not do if I wished? Could anybody stop me?"

"No, I suppose not."

"Well, then, foolish boy, why do you talk as if I were fixed and fastened, and rooted for ever in your dull Llancarthy? If I chose, could I not leave it, too?"

He caught her hands. He trembled and his heart beat tumultuously.

"What do you mean?" he asked again, breathlessly.

"That—I might come with you, Lionel," she answered softly.

"Olga, my queen, my goddess! Can you mean it? Will you marry me? Ah, do not deceive me—do not be so cruel as to play upon my feelings! Can you mean it?"

She looked at him and smiled again.

"Why not?" she asked, tapping his cheek with the flower she held.

And then for the space of five minutes she was forced to be silent, in order to listen to his rhapsodies over her goodness and her beauty, and the love, absolutely unparalleled in the history of the world, which he felt towards her.

When his eloquence had nearly spent itself for lack of breath, she spoke again, seriously and gravely:

"I will marry you under certain conditions, to which you must agree. Hush! Do not make any protestations; of course, you will agree to them. Now, listen to me. I do not wish you to give up your career in life for me. I should despise a husband who had no profession.

"You will go up to town on Sunday night, and I will go with you. You will deposit me at the hotel; and the first thing you will do on Monday morning will be to present yourself at the Foreign Office and get your despatches for St. Petersburg, and your passport. After that you will go to Doctors' Commons and get a marriage licence. We will be married quietly on Tuesday morning, and we will start for the Continent immediately afterwards. Will you do this?"

Needless to say that Lionel fell into the trap; he assented to every detail that she had proposed. He never thought of his parents, or what they would say to him, nor of the new career which was just opening out to him; nor did it even occur to him to make inquiries concerning this bride whom he had wooed and won so easily. He did not ask her a single question concerning her parentage, or her relations; he only looked at her beautiful face and felt that she was perfect and complete in her own wonderful self, and that he was the happiest man on earth.

CHAPTER III.

"GOOD-BYE, my dear boy, take care of yourself, and do us credit," said old Mr. Hallett, wringing his son's hand.

The whole family was assembled upon the platform to see the hopeful son depart on his journey; and amidst all the kisses and tears and hand-shakings, Lionel himself was distracted and absent-minded. He only paid a half attention to all these parting injunctions; his eyes were wandering restlessly all about the station in search of a tall figure which certainly was not there.

At last, just as the train came up, he caught sight of her, closely veiled and wrapped in a long cloak, followed by a maid

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bearing her wraps, and by a man bearing her dressing bag, and preceded by a porter laden with her luggage.

Lionel was slightly disconcerted by the sight of the man and maid; only for a moment, though, for he told himself instantly that a Princess could not be expected to make even a runaway marriage in the same fashion as would any ordinary mortal; still, he would, undoubtedly, rather have had his Olga to himself on this occasion.

As soon as he caught sight of her, he made a half step forward, as if to join her; but, by a scarcely perceptible movement of her hand, she waved him back, and got into a carriage in the front part of the train; and Lionel, in full view of his affectionate and respectable family, had the good sense to take the hint, and refrain from following her. He took his place in another carriage, and the train moved off.

At the first station, however, he changed carriages, and joined his Princess. But there, to his great disgust, was the maid in the farther corner! And a man may be in love as much as he likes, but to make love to the mistress under the very eyes of her maid is a thing which is not feasible even to the most devoted of lovers.

For the first time he experienced a distinct sense of annoyance with his divinity.

"You might have sent her to another carriage," he whispered, reproachfully.

"I thought it so much wiser, dear boy. Why should we create a scandal? I wish to keep my name pure and unsullied for your sake."

Of course, this was a delicate form of flattery, and Lionel was appeased. He looked unutterable things at her, and forgave her.

When they reached London, the Princess Olga expressed a desire to go to the Langham Hotel. Lionel, therefore, summoned a cab, and placed her and her servant and belongings in it.

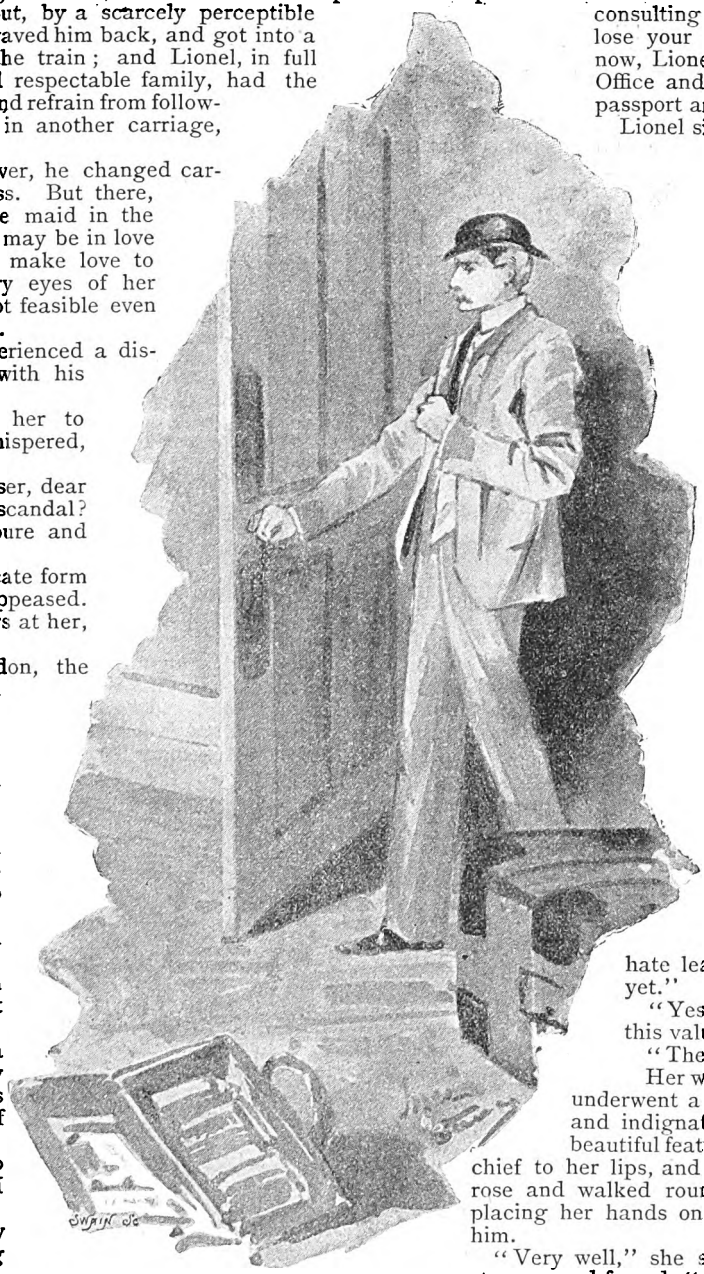
"You will come to the Langham Hotel, too, will you not?" she whispered, bending forward out of the cab window.

"Don't you think I had better go to another hotel?" observed Lionel, to whom this appeared an imprudent measure.

She looked at him with a world of reproach in her lovely eyes, and clasped her hands with a little tragic gesture of despair.

"Ah! do you desert me so soon? Think how lonely I shall be—how miserable!"

"Do you care so very much, then?" said the young man under his breath, looking at her with his soul in his eyes.



He went to his own room.

"Care! Oh, Lionel! There, I know you will be a dear, good boy, and do as I wish. Come, put your things in another cab, and follow me to the Langham."

In little more than an hour, they were comfortably housed in the Langham, and a substantial breakfast, laid out in the Princess's private sitting-room, was refreshing the runaway lovers after the fatigues and perils of the past night's journey.

How happy was Lionel Hallett at the breakfast! In after years, he often looked back to it with a strange pang of regret and pain. Olga was more charming and affectionate to him than she had ever been before. She waited upon him, pouring out his coffee, and helping him to toast. Frequently she rose from the table, and, coming round behind his chair, laid her hand playfully and lovingly on his shoulder, while she pressed him to eat what she brought him. It was past twelve o'clock before the delicious *tête-à-tête* was over.

"Now pleasure ends and duty begins," said the Princess, consulting her watch. "Sorry as I am to lose your society, I must send you away now, Lionel. You must go to the Foreign Office and see Lord A——, and get your passport and your despatches."

Lionel sighed heavily.

"I suppose I must," he said gloomily; "but, oh, how I hate going away! What shall you do, my Olga?"

"I will wait here for you," she said, smiling; "so that I can take charge of the despatch box when you come back. For you will have to go away again, you know, Lionel—to the city—on our business this time."

"To get our marriage licence? Ah! yes; I have not forgotten that! Why should I not get it first, and go to the Foreign Office later?"

"No, no; I cannot let you do that! You must go to the Foreign Office first, and then you must bring the papers here to me! You must not dream of going on to the city with such valuable things about you; fancy if you were to lose them! Your whole future career would be ruined! Promise me, Lionel, that you will bring them straight back here! Besides, I shall see you again sooner—I shall not be so long without you!"

"My angel!" he cried, rapturously. "Oh, how I hate leaving you—I really cannot go yet."

"Yes, you must go; do not waste this valuable time, dearest!"

"Then give me a kiss before I go!"

Her whole face, for one swift moment, underwent a change; an expression of rage and indignation flashed quickly across her beautiful features, but she raised her handkerchief to her lips, and he did not see it. Then she rose and walked round the table behind him, and, placing her hands on his shoulders, bent down over him.

"Very well," she said, and her voice was rather strange and forced, "if you will go at once I will kiss you."

Then she just touched his forehead with her lips. Fortunately for him there was no tell-tale mirror opposite to him, wherein he could have seen reflected the white, angry face of the woman who gave him what he deemed her first kiss of love.

After that, beside himself with happiness and delight, he left her, and took himself off to his interview with Lord A——.

Princess Petrusky waited for him with a patience that was truly admirable.

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She sat just where he had left her, at the round table in the middle of the room, facing the clock, upon which her eyes were fixed with an anxiety that was almost painful. The waiter came and cleared the breakfast things away from before her, but still Princess Olga sat there, motionless, staring at the clock.

Sometimes a shiver passed over her; once she trembled from head to foot and a few words escaped her pale lips.

"Suppose he should not return—suppose he should suspect—but no, it is impossible, I have deceived him too well. Patience and courage! he will be back soon!"

He came at last.

As he opened the door the colour rushed in a flood to her face. She sprang to her feet, and certainly no truly loving woman ever greeted a man's return with a greater joy shining in her face than did the Princess Olga as Lionel Hallett came into the room with his box of despatches in his hand.

She was full of delight at his return and of eager questionings.

What had Lord A—— said to him? What had he told him to do? Had he received all his instructions? And, above all, had he obtained the passport?

Yes, it was there safe enough.

"But you!" said Lionel, with a sudden thought. "How can you travel without one? I ought to have got one for you too."

Olga laughed.

"Oh, women don't need passports nowadays; besides, I am going to my own country, you know. I shall not even be asked for such a thing."

Lionel believed her, and said no more.

"Now, you dear boy, you must go to the city, and I will order a charming little dinner, which we will eat together. Then you shall take me to the theatre this evening."

As soon as the door was shut behind him, the Princess jumped up and rang the bell.

Her maid entered hurriedly.

"Is all in readiness, Catherine?"

"Yes, my lady."

"Then make haste, for we have not a moment to spare."

Two hours later, Lionel Hallett ran lightly up the hotel steps on his return from Doctors' Commons with his marriage licence in his pocket, and found the Princess's sitting-room empty.

"Where is the Princess Petrusky?" he asked the waiter.

The man looked at him in surprise.

"The lady has left, sir."

"Has gone out, I suppose you mean?" said Lionel, still unsuspicious.

"No, sir, she has left altogether, with her lady's maid and man servant. She sent for her bill directly you left, and her luggage was taken downstairs. Did you not know it, sir? Do you feel ill, sir?"

Lionel had staggered back against the wall, white and weak.

"It is impossible!" he gasped at length. "You must be dreaming! She cannot have gone! I will not believe it!"

But he had to believe it. Her rooms were empty—cleared of every single thing that had belonged to her. Not a trace of her was left.

In his despair, he went to his own room. That was all in disorder. His portmanteau was unlocked, his things were strewn about the floor; and, more singular still, one whole suit of clothes, and a long travelling ulster he had just purchased, together with a new "pot" hat, were altogether missing! On the table lay the despatch box—empty! By the box was a note addressed to him. He tore it open and read as follows:

"DEAR MR. HALLETT,—I have stolen a whole suit of your clothes! Will you ever forgive me? I think they will fit me charmingly! You know we are not unlike. I venture to think your passport also will be of some use to me. You will not, I am sure, grudge me the use of it when I tell you that my husband is in St. Petersburg, and that I, being a Pole, am for some trifling political offence an exile from Russia; but now, thanks to you, I am able to join him. Forgive me for having made you believe other things, and hope for what I could not give you.

"Your friend,

"OLGA PETRUSKY."

* * * * *

There was a scandal in high quarters, and Mr. Hallett senior had a great many startling revelations made to him concerning his hopeful son. But, thanks to Lord A——'s influence, matters were eventually hushed up; and within a year Lionel gratefully accepted a humble clerkship in one of the public offices. Very certainly, after the episode of the romantic and successful flight of the Princess Petrusky into Russia, no one ever again proposed to make Lionel Hallett a Queen's Messenger!

"O, I can't go to sleep with one in the room. And yet a clock once saved my life—after it had made me nearly lose it"

As he spoke, Lieut. Halford lifted a dainty little timepiece from its position in the centre of the mantel, and carried it off to the cupboard, where he deposited it very carefully on one of the shelves.

"Nonsense, Frank!" rejoined his friend, Grant Young. "You're the last man I would ever accuse of being fussy."

"Not having heard my clock story, you are, of course, ignorant of the fact that I was once tried for murder."

"Look here, Frank, don't trifle with a fellow's nerves on a night like this."

Then, seeing that his friend's face was deeply serious, Young added, "Go on, then."

"It was shortly before I joined the army and when I was out in America prospecting with a party from Denver, Arizona. We had struck a good thing near the little town with the most inappropriate name of Bluebell. It was a newly-settled place, and settled with some pretty poor material too. A vein of silver had been struck in the hill close by, and the town sprang up like a skyrocket. The vein proved a very short one, and Bluebell's soaring soon came down like a stick, and now I doubt if there are a dozen families left there.

"At the time of which I speak, however, Bluebell was a city of considerable pretensions—for its kind. It boasted a hotel with two rooms, a shaving saloon with a regular barber's chair, and a small tailoring establishment, as the sign had it, which we fellows of the Baby Mine found a great improvement on amateur darns and button fastenings.

"This tailor shop was kept by a German named Bilsing, one of the most repulsive-looking men I have ever seen.

One afternoon I had gone to his place to have a rent in my coat lining sewed up. While he was at work on it, I asked him how much it would be, and on his answering, took the money from my pocket and laid it on the table in front of him. When the job was finished I put on my coat and was about to hurry off when Bilsing called after me: 'Say, you go off mitout leaving me somedings. It cost denpence."

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"'I paid you once,' I retorted.

"'No, you did not,' he insisted, and then, rather than have a fuss with the man, I paid him over again, and took occasion at the same time to tell him plainly that I knew he was cheating me.

"Jack Darling and Nate Gray, two miners from Bluebell, happened to drop in while Bilsing and I were in the thick of it, for the impudent fellow answered back, and I considered myself lucky to get out of the place without having to resort to my muscles to defend myself. As I walked back to our claim I vowed never to go to the shop again; you can imagine, then, how annoyed I was when I discovered that I had lost a locket from my watch-chain.

"It contained the picture of my mother, which I prized most highly. I had noticed that the ring by which it had been attached to my chain was wearing perilously thin, and had determined to file it through, take the locket off, and put it away safely till I had an opportunity of having it fastened on by a jeweller. But I had delayed to do this, and now the thing was gone.

"Could I have lost it at Bilsing's shop? I asked myself. I remembered that I had been leaning against the worktable, the edge of which would come just about where the locket had been. I resolved to return at once and make a search, deeply as I disliked the idea of interviewing the man again.

"I turned and retraced my steps, walking slowly, with my eyes on the ground. But I saw no sign of my locket on the way. Just before I reached Bilsing's place I looked at my watch to see how much time I had before supper, and saw that it was twenty minutes to six.

"The irascible German was seated cross-legged on his table, busily at work, when I entered.

"'Vell, vat you vant now?' he grunted out when he saw me.

"'I think I dropped a locket on the floor here,' I answered, and began to search among the litter under the table. 'You didn't see it, did you?' I added, when a three minutes' hunt proved barren of results.

"'You dink I steal him, eh?' he snarled, dropping his work, and beginning to glare at me.

"'No; I didn't say so!' I returned. I might have added that I thought so, but he scarcely gave me time to do any thinking, for all at once he burst out with a torrent of brutal invective.

"He sprang down from the table, and I thought he was going to strike me. I squared off and made ready to defend myself, and at that instant the door opened and a man entered the shop. He was quite a young fellow and had a pair of trousers over his arm, which he flung down on the counter, raging something in German, and then got out as quickly as possible.

"Bilsing's attention was momentarily diverted from me by this episode, and I seized the opportunity to take myself off, satisfied that I could get nothing out of the man in his present mood.

"'Perhaps I did not lose the locket there, after all,' I reflected, and spent twice the usual amount of time it took me to reach our camp by making a thorough inspection of the path. But I did not find the locket. I said nothing to the fellows about my afternoon's experience, but quietly made up my mind to make another visit to the tailoring establishment later on, in the hope that I might find its owner in a more reasonable frame of mind.

"The next morning we had heard that Bilsing was dead, and before noon I was charged with having murdered him. He had been found in a heap on the floor of his shop by John Draper, who had stepped in to order a pair of trousers at twenty minutes past six. He had a bruise on the side of his head, and my locket was found by his side.

"An investigation was made by a committee of citizens—there was no law to speak of in Bluebell. Darling and Gray were very reluctantly obliged to testify that they had seen me quarrelling with him that very afternoon, and, to crown all, they had unearthed that fellow who had rushed in with a pair of trousers to be repaired, who turned out to be one Hermann Olgreich, and who swore that he had seen me standing up before Bilsing in a threatening attitude at a quarter-past six.

"'But I had left the shop a good half-hour before that,' I insisted, when I heard this. 'I remember that fellow coming in, and I am sure that it couldn't have been more than ten minutes to six at the very latest.'

"But even as I spoke I remembered with a shudder that I would find it difficult to prove my assertion, for on account of my search by the way for the locket, I had taken, as I have said, twice the usual length of time to get back to our camp, so that the testimony of my mates there as to the time of my arrival would avail me nothing. Jack Dingman, my chum, did all that mortal man could do, and the rest of the fellows in our claim scoured Bluebell in search of witnesses who might be able to prove that I was not in Bilsing's shop at a quarter-past six. But it was no use. The only thing gained by it was the discovery of a trampish fellow who said he had stepped in at the tailor's establishment about six o'clock to get a light for his pipe and found Bilsing alone, and apparently all right.

"'Now if you could only prove that that Olgreich fellow is wrong, and that you are right about the time of your being with Bilsing, we could get you clear in a jiffy,' Jack assured me.

"There was no gaol in the place, of course, so I was detained in a well-guarded room at the hotel. My friends were allowed to come in and see me at intervals, but, as you can imagine, these interviews were anything but cheerful ones.

"At last the day of the so-called formal trial came, and all my worst fears were realised as the case progressed. All the little flaws I had picked in the array of evidence against me, and charged the boys to bring up when the time came, were outweighed by the preponderating evidence on the other side. Suddenly Jack Dingman sprang to his feet, and I imagined he had thought of a new line of evidence. He said nothing, however, but hurried out of the room, carrying my last shred of hope with him.

"'He can't bear to stay and hear me convicted,' I told myself.

"But I was wrong. In five minutes Jack was back again, out of breath, but with a look in his eyes that set my heart throbbing.

"'Will you please call Hermann Olgreich back to the witness-box?' he said to the man who was acting the part of judge.

"Amid a good deal of wonderment about what might be coming, Jack turned to the German youth and asked:

"'How did you know that it was a quarter-past six when you saw the prisoner in Bilsing's shop? You have no watch, I believe.'

"'I looked at the clock,' was the reply.

"'What is Jack driving at?' I asked myself. 'Surely this has all been gone over before.'

"'Where were you standing when you looked at the clock?'

"'In the doorway. It was just as I was going in,' replied Olgreich.

"Jack brought his hands together with a smack. 'That settles it, I believe,' he exclaimed. 'But there is just one more question I should like to ask, How could you tell the time if you got no farther than the doorway, because the clock at Bilsing's is over it, on the inside?'

"'Why, sure enough,' answered the unsuspecting witness promptly. 'There is a looking-glass behind Bilsing's table, and I saw the clock reflected there.'

"'Which turned the hands round and made it seem to you a quarter-past six, when it was really a quarter-before six!' and Jack rushed towards me with hand outstretched.

"It was as if a bombshell had burst in that improvised courtroom. There was a complete revulsion of public sentiment in my favour, and it scarcely needed the testimony of the trampish individual who wanted a light for his pipe to clear me.

"Suspicion now being turned back upon itself, so to speak, a doctor was procured, and an autopsy held on the dead man, which established the fact that he had died of an apoplectic stroke.

"And now do you wonder, Grant, that I am a little sensitive to the ticking of a clock, even though, as I said, one did save my life?"

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THE OUTLAWS OF THE AIR.

By George Griffith,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," etc.

SUMMARY.

Max Renault—leading spirit of Anarchist Autonomie Group No. 7, who has joined the Utopians (a Socialistic colony on an island in the South Pacific) in order to steal the air-ship they are building, which he succeeds in doing.

Franz Hartog—a German engineer, in league with Renault, who steals a very fast torpedo-boat destroyer from the Russian Government to levy blackmail on the Atlantic.

Sir Harry Milton—a wealthy young English nobleman, who by chance comes across the island of Utopia, in his yacht, the *Calypso*, and subsequently devotes the whole of his fortune to hunting down Renault and Hartog.

Herbert Wyndham—a lieutenant in the British Navy who is travelling with Sir Harry for the benefit of his health, and who determines to resign his commission and couple his energies with those of Sir Harry in destroying the Anarchists, on account of the fact that he has been stabbed by Renault when the latter attempts to carry off Violet in the air-ship.

Frederick Austen—the inventor of the air-ship, who shares its secret with Edward Adams, Dr. Edwards, and Ambrose Millar, three other Utopians.

Frank Markham—the young captain of the Utopian yacht, *Mermaid*.

Violet Milton—Sir Harry's sister, and Lieutenant Wyndham's sweetheart, is fearfully injured by throwing herself out of the air-ship on which Renault has tried to carry her off.

Lea Cassilis (alias Mme. Dail)—a member of Autonomie Group No. 7 with whom Renault is in Love.

Dora Merton—a fair Utopian, who has made an impression on Sir Harry.

Lucy Summers—another fair Utopian.

Renault, after levying blackmail with Hartog on the high seas, returns to Utopia with the object of destroying the colony, but finds it deserted. After a time he goes to Europe in the air-ship *Vengeur*, and, together with Lea Cassilis, visits the Criterion Theatre in London, where he is recognised by Sir Harry and Lieutenant Wyndham, who effect his capture. He is tried, and condemned to death, but is rescued on his way to the scaffold by his confederates in the air-ship.

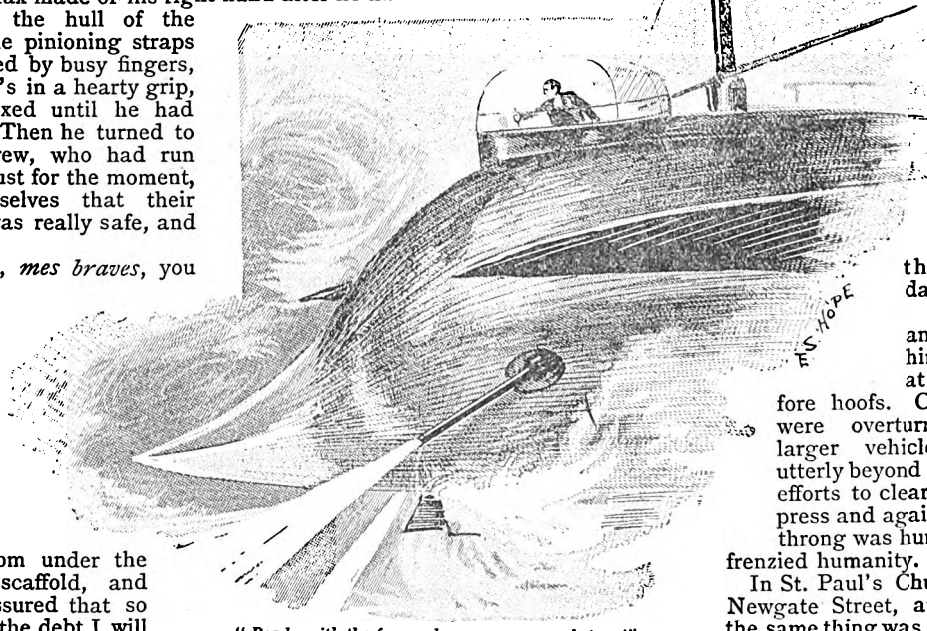
CHAPTER XXXIII.

Revenge!

"Bravo, Raoul, that was the neatest thing you ever did in your life, *mon brave*, and you'll live to be pretty old before you do anything smarter! *Tonnerre!* How that canaille yelled when they saw me go up instead of the black flag. I can be as good a friend as I can an enemy, and you shall never want a friend now as long as I'm alive."

The first use Max made of his right hand after he had been hauled up into the hull of the *Vengeur* and the pinioning straps had been removed by busy fingers, was to take Taxil's in a hearty grip, which never relaxed until he had done speaking. Then he turned to the air-ship's crew, who had run into the saloon just for the moment, to satisfy themselves that their rescued leader was really safe, and said heartily:

"And you too, *mes braves*, you have done splendidly! Henceforth you and I will not only be captain and crew of the *Vengeur*. We shall be comrades and friends. I owe you my life, for you have snatched me from under the shadow of the scaffold, and you can rest assured that so far as I can pay the debt I will pay it. We will have a feast together to-night to celebrate such a rescue as never was made on earth before, but just now we have some other amusement on hand, so be off to your posts and let us show the canaille down yonder that what we threaten we can do."



"Ready with the forward guns. . . . Let go!"

Max, like all born leaders of men, knew when to surround himself with reserve and when to unbend into cordiality. His simple speech went straight to the hearts of his men, who from that moment forward were his, body and soul, for now they looked upon him as their own in another sense than that of command.

By their skill and boldness, they had saved his life and snatched him from the shameful death of a felon; so he was theirs and they were his, and they left the saloon with cries of "*Vive l'Anarchie! Vive Monsieur Max!* Death to the bourgeois canaille!"—words of terrible import to the panic-stricken throngs below them.

Max, after swallowing a half bottle of champagne in a couple of gulps, asked Taxil for a cigar, and, when he had lit it, went to take his old place in the conning-tower, to direct the work of revenge, while Taxil went to see that the men were at their guns, and then betook himself to the engine-room to await orders.

The scene over which the *Vengeur* floated was even now terrible enough to have shaken the nerves of any but an Anarchist or a professional soldier. The vast throngs packed into the streets about Newgate were swaying too and fro in great masses, struggling to force their way out, and, after the manner of crowds possessed by panic, doing everything to frustrate their own object. Everyone wanted to get out of the streets at once, and the result was that hundreds were flung down and trampled under foot.

The crowd that surged out of the Old Bailey was forced back by the throng that was pressing down Ludgate Hill, while at the bottom of the hill under the railway arch a mass of vehicles, omnibuses, cabs, private carriages and tradesmen's carts, which had been waiting for the street to clear, so that they could drive through, formed a barrier against which the crowd blindly dashed itself.

Horses took fright and reared up on their hind legs, lashing out at the crowd with their fore hoofs. Cabs and light carts were overturned, jamming the larger vehicles, whose horses, utterly beyond control, made frantic efforts to clear themselves from the press and against all the maddened throng was hurling itself in a sea of frenzied humanity.

In St. Paul's Churchyard, Cheapside, Newgate Street, and Holborn, almost the same thing was happening. Streams of traffic, converging from half-a-dozen quarters of the Metropolis, all met at the junction of the great arteries, and the streets which were almost congested under ordinary circumstances, and with the most careful management, were now impassable. The police had made heroic efforts to restore something like order, and to get at least a

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portion of the crowd out of the narrow ways. But they were thrown aside and tossed about by the screaming, struggling throngs, until the universal panic attacked them too and they joined, almost involuntarily, in the general but hopeless struggle for release.

For fully ten minutes the *Vengeur* circled slowly round over the agonised thousands, as though her captain and crew were enjoying in anticipation the horrors that they were about to add to the frightful scene beneath them. Then Max stopped her a couple of hundred feet over the cross of St. Paul's, with her bow pointing westward, and called down one of the tubes:

"Ready with the forward guns—one on the end and one on the middle of the street. Let go!"

There was a sharp hissing sound as the pent-up air in the breech-chambers forced the projectiles out. Then two bright masses of flame blazed out, followed by the mingled roar of the explosions and the crash of glass as the neighbouring shop windows were blown in.

Two great ragged gaps were torn in the densely packed masses amidst which the shells fell as though the earth had burst open beneath their feet, and bodies of men and women were hurled up into the air, mingled with limbs and torn fragments of other bodies, and fell back upon the heads of those who thronged the pavements. Then, in the midst of such a cry of agony and terror as had never reached human ears before, Max took up another tube, and said:

"Ready with the port stern gun! Send a shell into that lot where the four streets meet!"

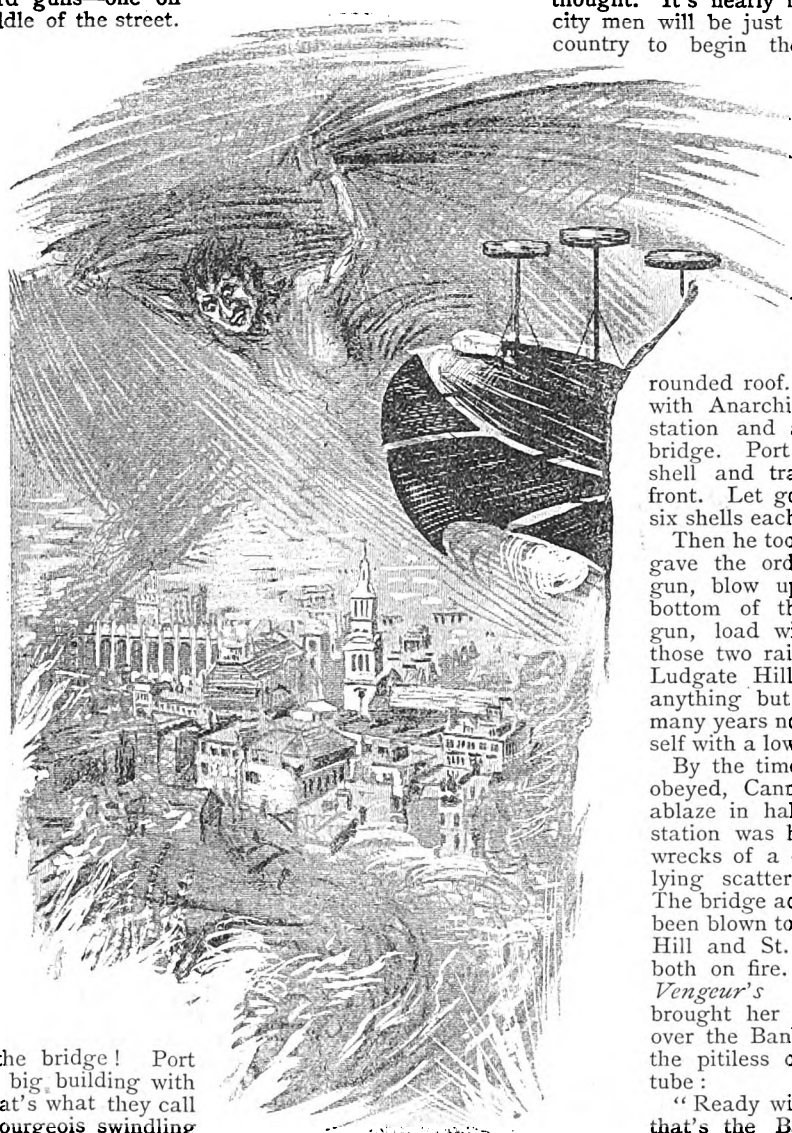
Again the hissing sound came and the shell burst in the midst of the throng that was packed into the junction of Cheapside and Newgate Street with the same hideous effects.

"Starboard bow gun—a couple of shells in the crowd by the church there. Port bow, another under the bridge! Port stern, send a shell at that big building with the pillars in front of it—that's what they call their Royal Exchange—a bourgeois swindling den!"

His orders were obeyed almost as soon as they were given, and, as each shell struck and burst, the scene of wholesale murder became more and more hideous, for the fearful effects of the projectiles seemed to strike the helpless throngs with paralysis, and all they could do was to sway to and fro and scream and moan with terror as though they intuitively knew that they were at the mercy of an enemy from whom there was no escape.

Some made wild rushes into the shops and houses, and as soon as he saw this Max ordered the guns to play upon them loaded with fire-shell, and a few minutes later unquenchable fires were blazing furiously in a score of houses and shops all round the area of slaughter and destruction. Then, like the incarnation of an evil spirit brooding above the scene of indescribable horror, the *Vengeur* passed slowly over the streets, dropping bombs charged with fire-mixture as she went, and when she had completed the circuit a ring of flame and smoke encircled the black frowning walls of the prison in which everyone had believed by this time Max Renault would have been hanging by the neck.

"I think that will do for this part of London," he said to himself, as the *Vengeur* once more floated over the Cross of St. Paul's, "and as we have a good many visits to pay to-day, we may as well be off. Ah, yes! that's a happy thought. It's nearly nine o'clock, and the city men will be just coming up from the country to begin their day's swindling. We'll smash up the railway stations first, and begin with Cannon Street. I've owed the South-Eastern a personal grudge for some time."



Like the incarnation of an evil spirit . . . the "Vengeur" passed slowly over the streets.

He took up the mouth-piece of a tube and called into it:

"Stern guns there, train on that railway station with the rounded roof. Starboard gun, load with Anarchite and fire into the station and at the trains on the bridge. Port gun, load with fire-shell and train on the hotel in front. Let go when you're ready—six shells each."

Then he took up another tube and gave the order: "Starboard bow gun, blow up that bridge at the bottom of the street. Port bow gun, load with fire-shell and set those two railway stations on fire. Ludgate Hill hasn't been fit for anything but burning for a good many years now," he added to himself with a low malicious laugh.

By the time his orders had been obeyed, Cannon Street Hotel was ablaze in half-a-dozen places, the station was half wrecked and the wrecks of a couple of trains were lying scattered over the bridge. The bridge across Ludgate Hill had been blown to pieces, and Ludgate Hill and St. Paul's stations were both on fire. He now turned the *Vengeur's* prow eastward and brought her to a standstill again over the Bank of England. Then the pitiless order went down the tube:

"Ready with the bomb tubes!—that's the Bank of England. I don't think they'll do much business to-day. Let go half-a-dozen pills for the Old Lady of Threadneedle Street to digest, if she can. Ah, that's a sort of run on the Bank they haven't had since the Old Lady started in business! Money will be a trifle tight to-day, I fancy, in the City."

He kept the *Vengeur* moving very slowly as the bombs were dropped, so that they might fall in different places. As they crashed down through the roof and burst, jets of flame and smoke rose through the holes they made, showing how terribly they had done their work, and in a few minutes the interior of the treasure-house of England was blazing like a furnace.

After this came the turn of the General Post Office and soon

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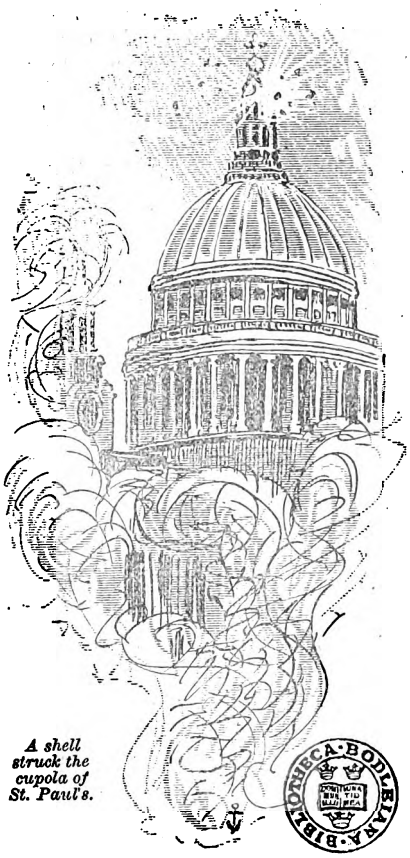

A shell struck the cupola of St. Paul's.

the bombs were crashing through the roofs of the great buildings in St. Martin's-le-Grand, setting floor after floor on fire as they burst and scattered their fearful contents through the rooms and passages. Then a shell struck the cupola of St Paul's and wrecked it at a blow. The great golden cross tottered for a moment and then crashed downwards, smashing a great hole in the dome, and shivering to fragments on the marble pavement of the cathedral.

Meanwhile, the indescribable horrors of the scene in the streets and the buildings about them were multiplying a hundredfold as shell after shell and bomb after bomb found its mark, and building after building burst into a blaze. At first the fire-engines from the surrounding districts came pouring in from all sides to do battle with the flames, but the moment that they got into action a shell exploded on them or under them, burst their boilers and reduced them to wrecks strewn with the mangled remains of the brave fellows who had come, heedless of danger, to do their duty.

By ten o'clock a dense pall of smoke overspread the whole surroundings of Newgate for half a mile on every side. The under surface of it was lighted up by the flames that rolled upwards from more than a hundred burning buildings and high above it floated the *Vengeur*, her captain and crew laughing in fiendish delight at the frightful ruin and destruction that they had achieved in so short a time.

All over London business was suspended and panic reigned supreme. The very heart and financial centre of the great city was already paralysed. The Bank of England was vomiting forth flames like a volcano, the Royal Exchange and the Stock Exchange were half ruined, and three of the most important city stations were wrecked and in flames.

The military authorities, taken wholly unawares, had, of course, made no preparations to cope with an attack which the War Office had pronounced beforehand to be impossible. But as soon as it became a dreadful reality, batteries of field pieces and machine-guns were hurriedly mounted on the roofs of Buckingham Palace, the National Gallery, the Tower, and three or four other buildings, that afforded standing room for the guns, and presently Max, seeing a shell burst in the air, a couple of hundred yards away from him, awoke to the fact that London was about to make an effort in its own defence.

"You're wasting your powder, Messieurs!" he laughed to himself as he gave the signal for the air-ship to rise a thousand feet. "That sort of thing is no good; but if you want a little artillery practice you can have it and welcome."

The *Vengeur* soared upwards and then took a short flight westward. Over the West End the clouds were much thinner and broken in places into patches between which he could see the long rows of mansions and the public buildings of Kensington.

"I don't see why we should confer all our favours on the City," he said to himself as he looked down and caught a glimpse of the Albert Memorial through the clouds. "I think we might just try the effect of a shell on that bit of gilded gingerbread down yonder. London won't be any the less artistic for its destruction, certainly.

"Starboard bow gun, there!" he called down the tube, "let me see if you can send a shell into that thing standing down there in the park. I believe a couple of hundred thousand pounds of good money was spent on it. Just show me how much of the gilding you can knock off at a shot."

The *Vengeur* was brought to a standstill, and the gun carefully trained on its glittering mark. The shell struck with a flash and a roar and a cloud of smoke, and when the smoke cleared away the canopy was seen to shiver for a moment and then come down with a run, collapsing into a heap of ruins, from the midst of which half the gilded figure protruded.

"Bravo!" cried Max. "A capital shot! Now let us see if you can knock His Royal Highness's gilded head off."

It was no sooner said than done, for the second shell buried itself in the midst of the heap of ruins, exploded, and shot half the gilded figure bodily into the air.

"So much for that little bit of vainglory," said Max. "Now I think we'll drop a bomb or two into the Albert Hall and then go for more important game."

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE END OF "DEATH TUESDAY."

A FEW minutes later, leaving the Albert Hall in flames behind her, the *Vengeur* winged her way towards the river at an elevation of three thousand feet. The land batteries, which had been firing at random up into the air over the City in the hope of crippling or blowing up the air-ship by a chance shot, were speedily silenced by the news of the destruction of the Albert Memorial and the Albert Hall in Kensington.

But meanwhile another battery had been got to work in Hyde Park near to the Magazine, and another one had been hurriedly mounted on the roof of the Knightsbridge Barracks. As soon as a glimpse was caught of the *Vengeur* floating above the clouds, every gun that could be brought to bear upon her was fired, but the elevation was nothing like great enough, and the shells whistled harmlessly beneath the air-ship and burst far away in front of her.

Max's knowledge of London was quite exact enough to tell him where they came from, and those at the batteries, to their disgust and disquiet, saw her swing slowly round and head back for the Park. Then the terrible mistake they had committed dawned upon them. The Anarchists had forgotten the powder magazine, and they had reminded them of it. Instantly there was a stampede, the guns were limbered up and hurried away across the Park, and every man got out of the magazine as fast as he could.

The air-ship, as everyone had expected, stationed herself exactly over the low, red brick building, and Max gave the order to try the direction with a fire-shell. It was let go, and struck the turf about twenty yards wide of the mark. A tall jet of brilliant flame burst up from the ground in the midst of a volume of smoke, and then fell to the earth, running in streams of fire over the turf. The second one struck the angle of the building, knocked the brickwork away, and enveloped the corner in flames. A third one struck the roof almost in the centre.

A long tongue of flame leapt upwards and then, with a roar and a shock that was heard and felt over half London, a couple of tons of powder and cartridges exploded, and from the midst of the quaking earth a vast volume of flame and smoke burst up as though it would rend the firmament itself.

Every window within a radius of a mile was shattered to fragments, and thousands of chimney-pots came clattering down over the roofs of the surrounding houses and smashed to fragments in the streets, killing and maiming hundreds of the panic-stricken wretches who were wandering aimlessly about wondering where the next blow would fall and whether they

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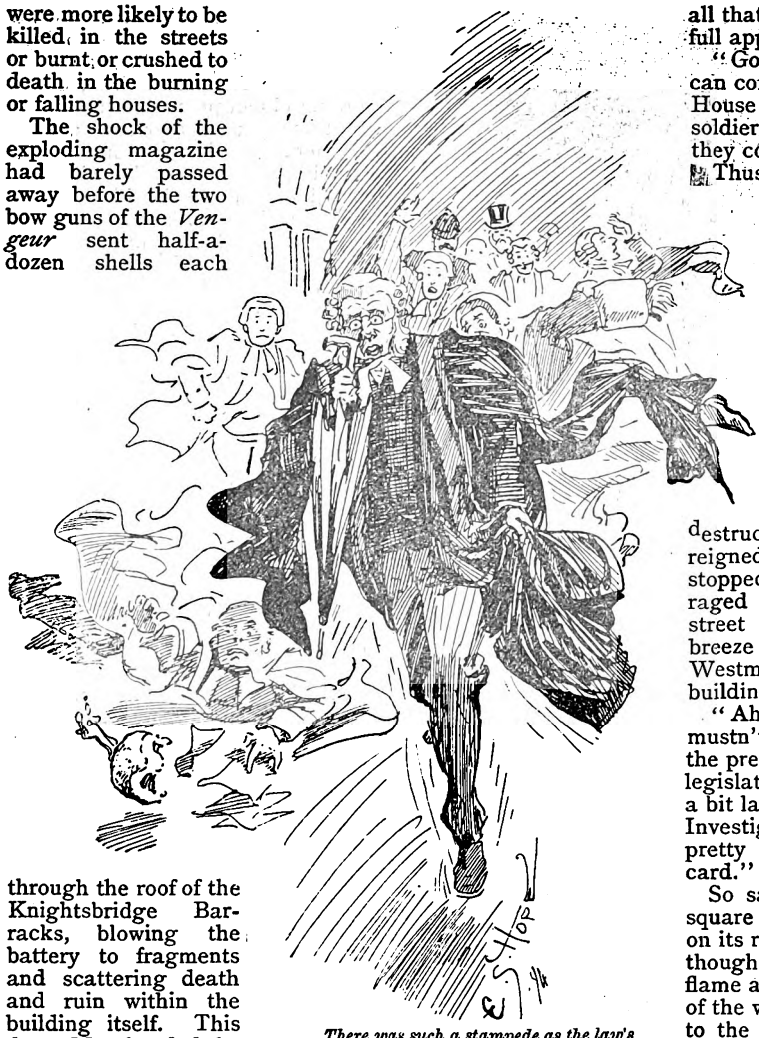
were more likely to be killed in the streets or burnt or crushed to death in the burning or falling houses.

The shock of the exploding magazine had barely passed away before the two bow guns of the *Vengeur* sent half-a-dozen shells each through the roof of the Knightsbridge Barracks, blowing the battery to fragments and scattering death and ruin within the building itself. This done, Max headed the air-ship a second time towards the river, which he crossed in the neighbourhood of Chelsea.



There was such a stampede as the law's delay had never known before.

As he looked down upon the little green garden in front of Cheyne Walk he said to himself with a sardonic smile :—

"Ah, my wise old sage of Chelsea, I wonder if it ever crossed your mind that such doings as these might one day be possible, and if so I wonder what string of vitriolic adjectives you would have ascribed to your humble admirer and sometime disciple, and yet I verily believe that in the inmost depths of your soul you would have found some excuse for the enemy of the Society whose cant and brutal stupidity you cursed so bitterly and so justly.

"I wonder what you would say now if you could see the terror and the panic of those swarming millions down yonder, with their miserable souls turning to water for fear of the man that they tried to hang like a dog in a corner. What's the good of all their wealth and their pride and their snobbery now? About as much good as it would be at the Day of Judgment; and yet, if they had only listened to you, and recognised the prophet when he was in their midst, it's just likely that there would have been no such thing as anarchy to-day, and therefore no *Vengeur* floating over burning London, and no Max Renault laughing at it.

"Well, well, I have that much respect for your memory that if ever I lay all London in ruins, as I may do some day, I'll take care that no shell falls in the spot that you made sacred in my eyes with your presence. I don't suppose you would take me for a disciple if you knew me, but I am one for all that, and after all, I don't suppose you ever understood the full application of your own doctrine.

"Good-bye, old sage! If your ghost is anywhere about it can come and watch me pay a visit to the National Palaver House that you once wanted cleared out with a regiment of soldiers. I'll clear it out a good deal more effectually than they could."

Thus soliloquising, Max steered the *Vengeur* at easy speed along the course of the Thames towards Westminster, still keeping his elevation of three thousand feet and sending an occasional shell from his guns at random over London to north and south, in sheer wantonness of destruction for the mere sake of keeping up the panic he had created. It was then nearly one o'clock, and according to the usual arrangements the Houses of Parliament would not be sitting for another hour or two, if, indeed, the members ventured within the precincts of Westminster at all.

By this time, the clouds had mostly drifted away to the eastward, and a warm April sun was shining down over the western half of the great city. In the City itself, the fires, kindled by the shells and bombs of the *Vengeur*, were still burning furiously, for the destruction of the fire-engines, and the panic which now reigned supreme among the terrified millions of London had stopped all organised effort to extinguish them, and so they raged on unchecked, spreading from house to house, and street to street, under the influence of the strong westerly breeze that was blowing. As the *Vengeur* passed over Westminster, Max caught sight of the square, red turreted building which he recognised as New Scotland Yard

"Ah," he said, looking down at it through his glasses. "I mustn't forget that. I'll let the national windmill alone for the present, for I may be able to catch some of the hereditary legislators and misrepresentatives of the Sovereign People in it a bit later on, but our friends of the police and the Criminal Investigation Department will probably be at home, and pretty busy too, so I'll just stop a minute and leave my card."

So saying, he stopped the air-ship high above the great square building, and then half-a-dozen fire-bombs descended on its roof in quick succession. They crashed through it as though it had been made of glass, and presently tongues of flame and wreaths of smoke began shooting and creeping out of the windows. As soon as he saw this, he ran half a mile to the southward and sent a dozen Anarchite shells through the windows to help on the conflagration that his fire-bombs had started.

"That'll do for you, my friends, I think. Scotland Yard was always a pretty warm corner, but I don't think it was ever quite as hot as it is now. There are a good many fellows in there who'll never hunt down any more poor devils of Anarchists and hand them over to the tender mercies of M. de Paris. Now where shall we pay the next call? Ah, of course, I have it. It would never do to forget that. We'll go and scare the rooks out of the legal dovecots.

"Those sleek-looking scoundrels, they're the cause of half the injustice and the oppression that has made Anarchy what it is, and me what I am. Here goes for the Temple and what the canting hypocrites are pleased to call the Royal Courts of Justice. I hope the Courts are sitting. I'll go and serve a

Sent bomb after bomb through the roofs of the House of Parliament.

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notice of ejectment on them and decline to stay execution, as they say in their pompous jargon."

With that he sent the *Vengeur* across the Embankment and the Strand, and placed her over the Law Courts. Then bomb after bomb crashed in quick succession through different parts of the gabled roof of the great building until it was on fire in a dozen places at once, and there was such a stampede and haste to get out as the law's delay had never known before. Judges in their wigs and ermine and scarlet; barristers, also bewigged, and with their long robes fluttering behind them, made one general rush for the doors, followed by plaintiffs and defendants, witnesses and jurymen, all breathless sharers in the universal panic.

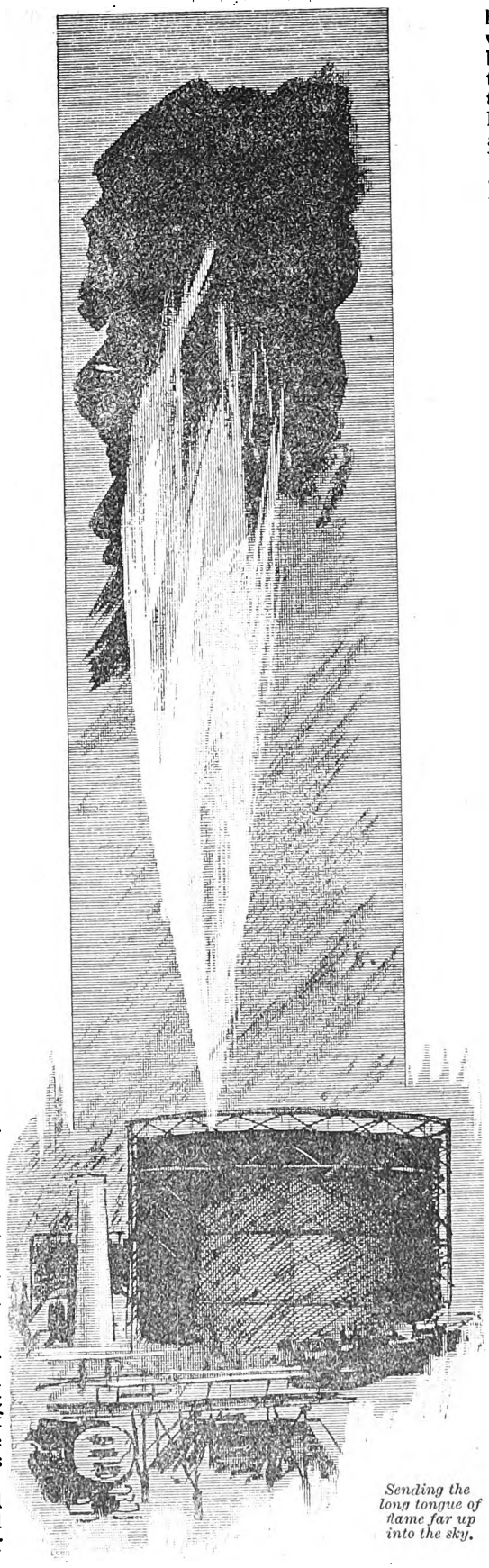
Max leant back in his seat in the conning-tower and uttered a shout of laughter, which was taken up throughout the ship as he and her crew saw the bewigged and berobed figures tumbling over each other in their hurry to escape from the burning building into the street.

The Strand, from St. Martin's Church to Temple Bar, was crowded in a few moments, and as soon as he saw this, he gave orders for a couple of the broadside Maxim guns to play upon it, and as the storm of bullets descended into the crowded space, the unhappy throngs were literally mown down in swathes, as corn falls before a reaping machine. Meanwhile a few shells were being sent from the bow guns into the different buildings of the Outer, Inner, and Middle Temple, and these of course had the immediate effect of sending barristers, lawyers, and clerks hurrying in crowds into the gardens, falling over each other down the staircases in their desperate haste to escape from the explosions which kept crashing through the building.

But no sooner had they reached the open air than the Maxims were turned on them and the hail of bullets struck them down by dozens. Then a few fire-bombs were dropped through the roofs: "Just to smoke the rest of the rats out," as Max put it to himself, and then a brief visit was paid to Lincoln's Inn with the same results reproduced on a smaller scale.

That afternoon and evening neither flag was hoisted nor light kindled on the clock tower of Westminster, for the universal panic had now spread to all ranks of society, and neither Lords nor Commons felt inclined to run the risk of a sitting in a building whose conspicuous position and character marked it out for almost certain destruction at the hands of the enemy of mankind who, for the time being, held London at his mercy.

Max waited in vain for the signal that Parliament was sitting, still keeping up the terrorism by circling



Sending the long tongue of flame far up into the sky.

hither and thither high over the vast wilderness of houses, and dropping a bomb or sending a shell here and there as the fancy took him, or any tempting object presented itself. He kept this up until about six o'clock, and then, as his ammunition was beginning to run rather low, he decided to put the finishing touches to his horrible work, and then get away and join Hartog again.

Going to work with almost diabolical deliberation, he first ran up and down over the river and destroyed the floating fire engines. Then, hovering over Westminster, he sent bomb after bomb through the roofs of the Houses of Parliament, the Government Offices, the Horse Guards, the Admiralty, and Whitehall. For a moment the thought of destroying Westminster Abbey as well crossed his mind, but a glance at the venerable pile brought back to his well-stored mind all its ancient and splendid traditions, and instead of giving the order he said to himself:

"No, I won't do that. It would do no good, and it would take a thousand years to repair the damage. I'll let the old church alone. Who knows but some day we may preach the new Gospel of Man in it. *Sacré diable*, how the abodes of red tape are burning! It seems to make splendid fuel. I wonder what there is in that fire-mixture of Hartog's? It burns as if it came from the lake of Tophet itself. Fine bonfires those for anarchy to light its pipe at! Ah, they're lighting the street-lamps out yonder to the north. It's time to go and pay the gasworks a visit. I think I've provided London with quite light enough for to-night. It's a waste to burn gas under the circumstances."

Then the *Vengeur* ran across to Vauxhall, and a few moments later the shells began bursting among the gas-holders, tearing great ragged holes in them, and as the gas came rushing out fire-bombs were dropped to ignite it, and huge tongues of roaring flame shot up into the air, until one after another the gasometers burst like huge shells. Then came the turn of the Old Kent Road works, and the southern half of London shook to its foundation as the enormous quantities of gas stored up in the holders took fire and then blew up, hurling fragments of iron plate, bricks and coal, and fragments of human bodies far and wide over the surrounding streets.

Every gas light in South London went out within a few minutes, and then the *Vengeur* headed away north-westward to the works of the Gas Light and Coke Company at Kensal Town. The great "Jumbo," the largest gas-holder in the world, was full, and the huge iron reservoir had been raised to the tops of the iron pillars with which it was surrounded.

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Max turned his attention to the smaller ones first, and sent a shell through the roof of each of them in rapid succession. Then he poised the air-ship exactly above the giant and dropped first a solid piece of iron weighing about ten pounds on to its roof and then sent a fire-bomb immediately after this. The piece of iron bored a clean hole, and as the gas came rushing up out of this the fire-bomb fell and ignited it.

The next instant a long stream of intensely brilliant flame almost like the ray of a search-light leapt up into the darkening sky hundreds of feet above the gas-holder. Then the volumes of gas escaping from the others caught fire in the air, with which, of course, they made a highly explosive mixture, and exploded with a concussion, the force of which was felt even by the *Vengeur*, floating nearly three thousand feet above. The great reservoir soon began to subside; its enormous weight driving the gas out with terrific force, sending the long tongue of flame far up into the sky, and casting a parting gleam on the hull and aeroplanes of the *Vengeur* as she soared away to the westward.

"Ah," said Max, as he looked back out of the conning-tower at the dark gulf of London, still lighted up by huge patches of flame covered by enormous canopies of rolling smoke, "the next time you try to hang an Anarchist, perhaps you will think twice about it. I hope that will teach you that the centre of power has shifted. The rule of nations is at an end, for I can paralyse those who rule them with a single stroke. What I have done to London to-day it would have taken a beseiging army weeks to do. The rule of the world has shifted from the earth to the air, and woe betide the earth as long as I rule the air! How mad Franz will be when he finds he has missed all this fun!"

So saying, he sent a signal for full speed to the engine-room, and in few minutes the conflagrations of London were only little points of light on the horizon.

(To be continued.)

Was It Wrong?

ONE fine summer evening I met on the boulevard one of my friends who had made his own way up in the world, and who, in his upward progress, had encountered so many different kinds of men that he had learned to take everything quietly, but who had retained for the enjoyment of his friends all his original freshness and goodness of heart.

We were chatting on our usual topics when a man of middle age, having his button-hole adorned with the ribbon of some foreign order, stopped in front of us, and, putting out his hand to my friend, who, not seeming to notice this, raised his hand quickly to his hat, said in a tone of voice that seemed to me somewhat ironical:

"What! what! Always happy? Yes, yes. Well, well, so much the better. Good-bye."

"Who is this gentleman?" said I, when we were some steps away.

"What, don't you know him? Then I'll tell you his history. In fact, he will furnish for us a practical illustration of the question we have been discussing. Is he a swindler or is he a genius? You shall decide the question for yourself.

"I made his acquaintance in 1878. He was then employed in a large commercial house. He was rather a remarkable orator in the clubs. Property, capital, bequests, had no more ferocious or more eloquent adversary than he. Every evening he turned all social questions inside out like a glove, amid the applause of the disappointed, the envious, and the sluggards who formed the mass of his audiences.

"In 1882 he thought it prudent to take a change of air, and took refuge in London to wait for events. As time went on his resources were exhausted, and he was obliged to take his watch to a pawnbroker. It was a gold watch, and he noticed that the man, after a quick, keen look at it, tried the knob with an acid, and immediately gave him the money that he asked for and his ticket. This method of testing the gold watch set him thinking. Having found the means of redeeming his watch. He took it to another office. There was the same quick look and the same mode of testing. He saw that this was the custom.

"Just at this time an old aunt, who had brought him up, died, and left him 15,000 francs. Then this ferocious enemy of all property and all bequests hastened to turn his inheritance into cash, and has known how to make it so fruitful that he has an income of 10,000 francs, a country villa, has bought that foreign order, the ribbon, which you saw at his button-hole, and lives comfortably with all sorts of small enjoyments."

"Did he make his fortune in trade?"

"No."

"In manufactures?"

"No. It was a plan of his own. Taking with him a sufficient sum of money, he went to Geneva, and, entering a watch factory, ordered two hundred watches of a certain pattern. The cases were to be of copper, heavily gilt, but the knobs of pure gold. Taking these with him to London, he pawned these two hundred watches in a few days to different pawnbrokers. All were tested at the knob. They cost him 40 francs each. The pawnbrokers advanced him 70 francs on each. So you see the affair paid very well."

"Certainly; but then he is a swindler."

"You think so?"

"And you also, I have no doubt."

"Well, perhaps. In the first place, his plan has never been found out, and he was able to realise a fortune from it; in fact, he could have carried it on up to the present moment without any inconvenience, but his tastes are simple, and he is naturally indolent, so that when he had enough he retired modestly, and thus left room for others."

"But the pawnbrokers must have suffered considerably."

"No. They did not lose one penny, for all these watches were withdrawn within the time allowed, and the money advanced on each of them was repaid."

"How long did he continue this business?"

"For five years."

"And he was never refused?"

"Never. To pawn one watch, ten watches, a hundred watches in London, is a very simple operation; but to pawn thousands of them for five years, to gain thirty francs on each one, and to cause them to be redeemed each one regularly by the payment of the sum advanced on each, that is the miracle—that is the stroke of genius."

"That must have been very difficult."

"Not at all. It was as simple as the egg of Columbus. This was his plan. When the weather was clear and the pavements dry, he walked quietly about through different streets and squares, dropping from time to time one of his pawn-tickets. When he had thus emptied his pockets, he went home with a clear conscience. The next day all these watches were redeemed by those who had picked up the pawn-tickets, and he could recommence his operations without any difficulty."

"Why, then, did you decline to shake hands with him?"

"Well, I have not yet quite made up my mind whether he was not a swindler after all."

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MRS. GREGORY'S DIAMONDS.

"GEORGE GREGORY, Solicitor," was on the brass plate on the door, and everyone always called my employer George Gregory, because there were seven brothers of the name, all in the law, in London. I was Frank Forrest, aged twenty-two, and I was articled clerk to Mr. George Gregory. He was the best friend I ever had, and the best husband and father I ever knew. At home he had a good, merry little wife, and a dozen children, some of them so exactly alike that strangers could never tell them apart. I would have worked very hard for Mr. Gregory, and have sacrificed my best gloves for the children, but I would have died outright for Mrs. Gregory.

George Gregory was well off, and his business was rapidly increasing, but Mrs. Gregory dressed plainly of her own choice, as she so often told me. It was not more than twice a year that she fastened in her ears, and at her throat, the diamond rings and pin which were all her little fortune when George Gregory married her. They were not very valuable and the setting was old-fashioned; but they were, after all, actually diamonds and solid gold, and very precious to the owner.

"I wore them on my wedding-day," she used to say, "and if ever I have a girl"—Mrs. Gregory's tribe were all boys—"she shall wear them on hers."

The rings were pendants—the shape of the setting, in outline, very like some drawings of Egyptian vases which I have seen. In each were five diamonds. The pin had but four; the central diamond had been lost and a pearl set in its stead.

Mrs. Gregory kept them in a purple leathern casket, shaped like a knapsack. She was fond of opening this to give the children a peep at her treasure. It gave her unqualified gratification; but somehow, believe me or not as you choose, they always made my blood run cold.

Still, I had no presentiments whatever, when, one bright August day, Mrs. George Gregory announced the fact that she was about to take the children into the country.

"They want fresh air," she said, "and I've found the nicest place. Only I hate so to leave George alone. You'll look after him a little, won't you, Frank?"

And I promised faithfully. That afternoon Mrs. Gregory started for Loughfield, stopping at the office to put her diamonds in the safe. Mr. Gregory went with his wife to the station, and returned looking a little blue, I thought. That night he slept on a lounge in the office and announced his intention of doing so, and of taking his meals at a restaurant, until his wife's return.

I copied his example as to meals, but I slept in my usual place; there was no accommodation for me at the office. And so we kept on for a week and a half, quietly and regularly, nothing happening in particular, except that Mr. Gregory negotiated for a certain piece of property which he had had in his eye for a long time, and which Mrs. Gregory thought the finest in the suburbs.

It was to be a surprise to her on her coming home. And one afternoon, all else being settled, Mr. Gregory went to the bank and drew thence the money which he was to pay to the present owner. Something stood on mortgage, I forget what; but the cash was £3,000. At ten next day it was to be paid over. I saw Mr. Gregory count it, and lock it up in his safe before he went to tea, and thought, I remember very well, that I should like to have so much money. I was spending it, in imagination, when the office door opened and a woman came in; a very pretty woman, all I could see of her face for her veil. She had yellow curls, and black eyes, and bright cheeks, and a very pretty chin, with a dimple in it. She was dressed in black, with a good deal of lace about her.

She came close to me and looked down into my eyes, and smiled, and said, "Will Mr. Gregory be in again to-night, do you think?"

I told her that he would be in soon, I supposed, and offered her a chair, which she took with another smile. Then she looked skyward through the window, and remarked that it wa raining.

"It will rain all night, I'm sure," she said. "How foolish of me to walk! I'm so delicate that a soaking would be my death. If you would only do me a favour—a great one to ask of a stranger; but—you will, I know."

"If it is possible," I remarked.

"If you would only go to No. 40, Avenue Place, and ask them to send Mrs. Contille's carriage," she said. "You can ride back in it, you know. It's impertinent of me to ask it but I'm an old friend of Mrs. Gregory, and you'll oblige me, I know."

I thought the lady rather cool, I confess, and I thought, too, of what Mr. Gregory would say. But the lady seemed to read my thoughts, and settled the question by saying, "I'll mind the office and explain to Mr. Gregory," and once more gave me a smile. That smile settled the affair.

I seized my hat and departed. The shower was almost over already, and I laughed to myself at the lady's fears of a wetting; but I made my way to Avenue Place at once. The way was easy enough to find, but I searched for the number in vain. I stood at the corner in perplexity, when a rough, unpleasant-looking fellow put a hand upon my shoulder and cried, "Hallo who are you lookin' for?"

"Mrs. Contille's house," I said. "No. 40, Avenue Place."

"Ain't no No. 40," he said. "You mistook—it's 30. I'm he coachman. What's the matter?"

"She wants you and her carriage," I said shortly, "at Mr. George Gregory's."

"Yes," said the man, "she's always wanting something. Ladies always are, sir. I'll have the carriage out in no time. You ride back in her."

I had not had my tea yet, and time was of importance. "I'll go with you," I said. He became more polite still.

"She's a lady that has as fine a stable as any lady I know," he said. "I can see by your eye that you are a judge of horses. You take a look at them. This way, sir, if you please."

This, as it appeared to me, was a high compliment. I nodded and followed the man. He led the way down an alley to a building of some sort and opened the door.

"After you, sir," he said.

I took a step forward; felt rude hands upon my shoulders; was flung forward some paces; heard a door locked, and was alone in a perfectly empty outbuilding. There, despite all my calls for aid, I remained until the dawn broke, when, by its light, I espied a loose board in the side of the building, pushed it away, and squeezed through it into some poor man's back-yard, where I made a dash straight through the passage, and so into the street.

Thence I sped, as fast as my feet would carry me, towards the office; but before I reached it I saw a sight which made my blood run cold. The street was full of people, half-dressed, and horror-stricken.

Policemen guarded the door. Something horrible had happened. I rushed forward. Those who knew me made way for me to pass; and I saw, stretched on his back, in a pool of blood in the middle of the office, Mr. George Gregory, as ghastly a spectacle as human eyes might ever rest on, cold and dead beyond a doubt; and, further on, the safe wide open, with its papers scattered on the floor. Then I fainted, or had a fit, and came into gaol.

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They set me free in a little while; perhaps no one ever really suspected me. The wretched widow, so broken down with woe that I hardly knew her, attested to my fidelity to her husband.

My story was told over and over again, and it seemed certain that the ruffian who locked me up in the stable was the murderer. But nothing was heard of him. He had made his escape in safety with £3,000, and the case containing Mrs. Gregory's diamonds.

I grew worn and ill with anxiety and trouble. And at last I could bear it no more, but bade them good-bye and left town. As I parted from Mrs. Gregory she put both her wan hands on my shoulders.

"I shan't live to see you again," she said, "but promise me that if ever you meet the man who killed my husband, you will do all you can to bring him to justice. Don't forget his face—don't forget his voice. Hang him, if you see him. Hang him, Frank Forrest, or I'll curse you!"

"I need no bidding to do that," I said. But she made me swear it on the Bible, and then kissed and blessed me as a mother might.

I went to America, and the gold fever fell upon me, and I worked for a fortune in the diggings for five good years. I had nothing to complain of as to luck; and, at last, with plenty of nuggets in my pockets, and health and heart enough for anything, I went up to San Francisco to enjoy myself.

Only one who had lived as I had for so many years can tell what pleasure it was to me to come into society again, to see the people at places of amusement, to talk with those to whom I became known. No man on earth is so ready to fall in love at first sight as one who has dwelt apart with his own sex for any length of time.

And I think that it would have been hard for anyone not to admire the Señora Maria. They said she was Spanish by birth, and her beautiful eyes were the eyes of sunny Spain. A man from "the diggings" is not apt to think too much of what will be said of him, or of what is said of other people. I never asked the Donna's antecedents.

I loved her, I wooed her, and I won her heart. Yes, I believed she loved me. I believe it now. She was a wild thing, reckless and passionate. No maiden nurtured in a peaceful home could have been what she was.

I also had grown wild and reckless. I think I loved her better for it.

We were to be married very soon. The world was now divided by that lover's rule—"Where she was and where she was not." We went to the theatre, where, in a blaze of light, her beauty drew all eyes towards her. I loaded her with presents; she gave me rich payment in that sweet promise that she should belong to me soon—should be mine at least for life. Once I said, "In Heaven also." Then she turned to me with a wild, strange gaze.

"Hush, Frank!" she said. "I don't want to think of death or of Heaven! I may not have absolution—I——Let this world suffice us!"

Our wedding-day was close at hand, when one day I called to see her. She was packing certain of her possessions in a little trunk. Warm as it was, a fire burnt on the hearth. Into it, as I entered, she was casting handfuls of flaxen hair, snipped from a curling wig which lay upon her lap. She gave a little scream as she saw me. Then she said, "Ah, I did not hear you, Frank! I am burning a relic of a masquerade ball, at which I made myself a blonde."

But she was so pale as she spoke that she frightened me.

"Are you ill?" I asked.

"The smell of burning hair has made me faint," she said.

"I will have no more of it," I cried. "Give the thing to a servant to make away with." And I rose to find her smelling salts. As I lifted it my eye lighted upon a little casket—a casket I had seen before, of tarnished purple velvet, shaped like a miniature knapsack. I seized it and tore it open. Within lay a pin and earrings, in outline like an old Egyptian vase, the central diamond of the pin replaced by a pearl; in three words—Mrs. Gregory's diamonds!

This is what I cried aloud. This is what she heard as she rushed towards me.

"Frank," she said; "Frank, what is it? Love, tell me!" And she shook like an aspen as she spoke.

I looked at the curled flaxen wig upon the ground. I looked at the beautiful dimple in the chin I had so often kissed, and I staggered back against the wall. I knew her now. I remembered her perfectly. She was the woman whom I had left in George Gregory's office on that awful day, six years before. She had come thither in disguise. For what?

"Señora Maria," I said, and my own voice sounded strange to me, "have you forgotten me? Do you remember the young man of whom you rid yourself in Mr. Gregory's office years ago, when you wore that wig, and——"

But she had thrown herself at my feet.

"Frank," she said, "Frank, my beloved! I never meant to kill him—only to open the safe. But he caught me at it. He seized upon me, and I used my knife. Frank, Frank, have mercy! I will go away. I—oh, Frank, remember that I love you!"

I remembered it too well. I was agonised. I was tortured.

But she had made confession, and I remembered my oath. I remembered the widow in her anguish. I remembered the children who were fatherless on that awful night. I remembered George Gregory lying in his blood upon the floor. It may be his avenging spirit gave me power to do what I did.

I opened the door. I passed down into the street.

There, by some strange chance, the first person I met was a detective from London, with whom I had a few days before talked over the mystery of George Gregory's murder.

I seized him by the arm.

"The woman who murdered George Gregory is in that room," I said. "I have every proof and her confession."

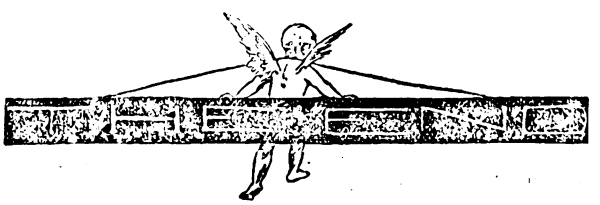
"Have you gone mad?" he asked. "That is Señora Maria's apartment!"

"Señora Maria is the murderess, and I shall be mad very soon," I replied; and there followed for me merciful darkness and oblivion as I sank senseless upon the ground.

She died. I cannot tell you more. They proved her guilt. Nay, she never strove to hide it.

She had been one of a gang of robbers. She had never been a good woman, or in any way a worthy one—vile from her childhood; so they proved her. But once I loved her. I have never forgotten that, or that she loved me. It haunts me as I wander through the gold land, careless of its gold, seeking only to shun the very sight of woman. It will haunt me through my life, until I lie down in some far solitude to die.

I shall never forget that I gave the only woman I ever loved to death, though she was that wretched creature—the lost, degraded murderess, Señora Maria!



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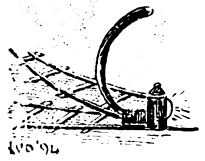
THE CROSSING,

A Story with two Morals



GLOOMY and dismal from dawn, the slight drizzle of the rain and the oppressive sultriness of the air seem to carry with them a pervading melancholy. Towards evening the wind begins to rise, the rain to descend more rapidly, until as I stand in my engine—I am taking out the express to-night—it looks as if it would increase to a heavy storm.

My thoughts have been anything but cheerful throughout the day, but now, seeming to grow with the violence of the storm, they begin to take on such forbidding shapes, that I start each time the wind surges against us.

I have been going over in memory the last few months of my life, the part which should have been the brightest and happiest.

I seem to see an old barn filled with merry-makers at a dance—but all fades to the dimmest memory, compared with the thought of one face. Shall I ever be able to forget her, I wonder? And yet it is not altogether her beauty, it is her winning manner that none can resist.

I became one of her lovers, the favoured one, and was at last accepted. How happy were those days, the sweet days of spring! The brilliant freshness of the foliage; the singing of the birds; the universal joy of nature chimed in so well with mine.

Then amidst the sunshine and the brightness came the person who was to throw such a shadow on my life. An artist spending the summer in the village, not working for fame but for amusement. A man of outwardly pleasing appearance, but one who lived entirely for himself. I don't know when or where he first met her. She never told me, always evading the question. He, it was easy to see, was attracted by her beauty.

I began to notice a change in her, almost imperceptible at first; but as time went on it increased until my presence seemed almost distasteful. She did not offer to break her engagement to me, and I was too selfish to release her of my own accord. Yet it was not altogether selfishness, for it was the only way to keep her from him. If she were to have been the gainer I could have borne it, but it was evident he meant her no good. What was a country girl to him? A passing amusement, nothing more.

I gaze back along the lighted platform. How misty are the faces of the hurrying throng! There is a father bidding his son good-bye, and, nearer me, a girl is bidding good-bye to her lover.

Would they part so easily if they knew how nearly mad I am? And yet what right have I to feel, when I am expected to be a part of the machine, to carry them to their destinations in safety?

I look ahead and try to calm myself. Before me is the obscurity of night, lit by the signal lanterns that look like the eyes of fiends.

A desire comes to me to see once more her father's cottage; it is only two stations beyond. To see the light in her window, to know that she is safe for at least one night. To-morrow I will unmask him. But even as I plan, the wind sobs against the cab, seeming to say, "Too late! too late!"

How long they are getting on the train! Will the starting signal ever come?

At last I see it. I open the throttle, and we start into the night. One thought has taken possession of me; I am speeding towards her, perhaps to save her, to gain her gratitude if not her love.

I increase the speed; under me the engine works like a thing of life, its feelings in sympathy with mine.

It hurls its fiery breath in the darkness with less and less intermission, while behind me I hear the heavy rumble of the train.

It soothes me to be thus speeding towards her on the wings of the wind, with all this life and power; surely I must be her protection.

As we enter the woods, and I lean out, the storm beats against me with increased fury, angry at our disregard for it; the trees fly by in dim, ghostly outlines, standing so spectral in the night that it is a relief to be out once more between the fields and meadows.

The first station is passed. Soon the line takes a long curve, and as we dash out upon it, going faster than we should, I gaze back for a moment at the train bending round it so gracefully. As I see the carriages containing so much life, my conscience smites me and I slacken the speed.

We pass farm after farm, the lights in their windows looking so cosy through the storm, that again I think what might have been; again the desire to see her home overmasters me. We are nearing it now; a long down grade, a crossing, and we shall be there. The wind, increasing in fury, beats against us, striving to beat us back and crying in a low whistling wail as it rushes past in the vain attempt. By the vivid flashes of lightning, I see the tall trees of the forest bend as if in torture beneath its fury, but we speed on under the jagged masses of cloud in the lowering darkness.

Almost unconsciously I open the throttle a little more. The engine hurls itself down the grade; it throbs and trembles under its mighty pulsations, straining every fibre like a thing of life to do its best, while behind me I hear the heavy rumble of the carriages.

There comes a flash of lightning so vivid that for a moment it is as day. What is that black object to the right so near the line ahead?

In a moment I have shut off steam, and with my hand on the vacuum brakes am trying to reduce our speed. The flare of the furnace falls upon the different objects passing with fearful rapidity; now a tree, a stump, then a boulder, at last it falls upon a whistling notice. The thunder, dying away, mutters hoarsely.

I turn the whistle cock and the shrill sound leaps into the night.

Suddenly I feel a great dread; ahead is the crossing; a moment more and the light falls upon it.

In a cart, directly across the line, the horse so frightened that it cannot move, she sits, and by her side sits the man who has come between us.

Clinging to him with mortal fear, her face set in its terror, she watches the approach of the iron monster of vengeance driven by the man she had so wronged.

I reverse the engine and put the brakes full on. The train fairly groans under the shock. I hear the grinding and pounding of the carriage wheels, but it is too late. The engine touches the cart and I hear a rending sound.

. . . . .

Never again shall I run a train; never again shall I look upon the rails; but even here, in this quiet place, I shall feel the rocking motion of an engine beneath my feet and live over again, as I have just now done, the night of her death.

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A POSITIVE REMEDY FOR CORPULENCE

Any remedy that can be suggested as a cure or alleviation for stoutness will be heartily welcomed. We have recently received a well-written book, the author of which seems to know what he is talking about. It is entitled "Corpulency and the Cure," 256 pages, and is a cheap issue (only 4d.) published by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. Our space will not do justice to this book; send for it yourself. It appears that Mr. Russell has submitted all kinds of proofs to the English Press. The editor of the *Tablet*, the Catholic organ, writes:—"Mr. Russell does not give us the slightest loophole for a doubt as to the value of his cure, for, in the most straightforward and matter-of-fact manner, he submitted some hundreds of original and unsolicited testimonial letters for our perusal, and offered us plenty more, if required. To assist him to make this remedy known, we think we cannot do better than publish quotations from some of the letters submitted. The first one, a marchioness, writes from Madrid:—'My son, Count ——, has reduced his weight in twenty-two days 16 kilos—*i.e.*, 34 lbs.' Another writes:—'So far (six weeks from commencement of following your system) I have lost fully two stone in weight.' The next (a lady) writes:—'I am just half the size.' A fourth:—'I find it is successful in my case. I have lost 8 lbs. in weight since I commenced (two weeks).' Another writes:—'A reduction of 18 lbs. in a month is a great success.' A lady from Bournemouth writes:—'I feel much better, have less difficulty in breathing, and can walk about.' Again a lady says:—'It reduced me considerably, not only in the body, but all over.' The author is very positive. He says:—'Step on a weighing machine on Monday morning and again on Tuesday, and I guarantee you have lost 2 lbs. in weight without the slightest harm, and vast improvement in health through ridding the system of unhealthy accumulations.'"—*Cork Herald.*

Should Stout Persons STARVE THEMSELVES?

We are afraid that semi-starvation as a cure for corpulency prevails very much to a dangerous degree. Mr. Archer, the late well-known prominent jockey, was in the habit of going without food for a long stretch in order that he could ride a certain horse at its weight, and there is not much doubt that the debility resulting from this habit of abstemiousness was certainly not conducive to combating the dire attack of fever, which was, perhaps, indirectly responsible for the untimely end, in the zenith of his fame, of this unfortunate but accomplished horseman. Even Mary Jane in the kitchen will eat sparingly of the food allowed her, while she will seek to reduce her fat by copious draughts from the vinegar cruet, and succeed only in injuring the coats of her stomach—the forerunner of dyspeptic troubles which will be difficult to overcome.

The Continental medicos seem to advocate this great reduction of ordinary foods, but one of these savants suggests that the stout person should eat considerably of fatty meats, in order that the appetite is appeased, and consequently less food required, so that practically this is indirectly advocating semi-starvation. On the other hand, Mr. Russell, the British specialist, takes a different course. He says, "Eat as much as you like," and as it is an acknowledged fact that under his treatment persons lose from 2 lb. to 12 lb. per week, it beyond doubt stands out pre-eminent against those so-called starvation cures "made in Germany." Some claim that Mr. Russell has to insist upon his patients drinking hot water every morning, but on the contrary he avers that it is dangerous to do so, and has, of course, never advised it. No; the success of Mr. Russell's treatment is incomparably beyond other specialists, for he resorts to no stringent dietary, and simply prescribes a harmless vegetable tonic combination which is the outcome of years of study and botanical research. We advise all those interested in this question to get his book, the price of which is only 4d. It is entitled, "Corpulency and the Cure," 256 pp., and is published by him at Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. It can be had direct, or through any bookseller.—Extract from *The Million.*

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DOMES, BUBBLES, AND EGGSHELLS.

SEEN from a distance on a fine day the dome of St. Paul's looks as light as a soap bubble; and if it could talk, it would tell you it feels as light, for the mighty strength of the great church carries it as a man carries a baby on his shoulder. Yet it weighs—how much, do you fancy?

A woman stood in the doorway awaiting the return of her husband. He had left home with a heavy load of anxiety on his mind. Presently she saw him coming. Matters had been satisfactorily adjusted; she knew it by his face. Walking quickly up to her, he said—not loudly, but gently, with pauses between his words: "*Wife,-if-you-should-heap-a-bushel-of-eggs-in-that-door-I-feel-I-could-run-over-them-and-not-break-one.*"

This is in the line of universal experience. Weight—so far as it concerns the human body at least—is not determined by the scales, but by sensation.

We beg to introduce Mr. John Stafford, who says, "*I felt as if a heavy load had been lifted off me.*"

"For over twenty years," he adds, "I had suffered from obstinate indigestion and constipation. For more than a week at a time I would never have my bowels moved."

The reader is an intelligent person, doubtless. Consider Mr. Stafford's statement, then, for a moment; let us put the fact in plain English. His intestines were full of festering rottenness; they were like a stagnant morass, breeding disease and death. The poisons engendered by so vile an accumulation are absorbed by the tissues, pass into the blood, and infest every organ and part of the system. If not relieved, the victim will die—poisoned by the products of his own machinery. It is as horrible as the Black Hole of Calcutta, and common as weeds in a neglected garden.

We are, therefore, prepared to hear him say, "I always had a bad taste in the mouth, my tongue and teeth being covered with a sticky, slimy matter. I was constantly belching up foul gas or fluid that tasted sour as vinegar. After eating I had great pain and tightness in the chest, back, and between the shoulders, with a choking feeling in the throat. As time went on I grew weaker and weaker, through loss of appetite and lack of nourishment, until I could hardly follow my work. I tried all sorts of medicines I could hear tell of, but none of them did me any good.

"In June (1893) I was so run down and feeble I feared I should have to give up altogether. I was under a doctor for several weeks, but his medicines did me no good; I kept getting worse and worse. At last, in July of the same year, my mates at the Marsh Iron Works, where I was employed, told me about Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup, and urged me to give it a trial. I got a bottle, and after I had taken it a few days *I felt a great improvement.* My bowels acted naturally, as they had not previously done for twenty years, my food agreed with me, and *I felt as if a heavy load had been lifted off me.* Continuing to take the Syrup, I gained strength rapidly, and have been in the best of health ever since. You will believe me when I say that I now recommend this remedy to everybody who suffers from the same complaint. You are welcome to publish my statement. Yours truly, (Signed) John Stafford, 15, Spa Terrace, Marsh Lane, Preston, October 11th, 1893."

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The *scales* will tell him he weighs more than he has in twenty years; his *feelings* tell him that he could stand on an egg and not break it.

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ONCE BOUGHT, ALWAYS BOUGHT.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 315.] FOR WEEK ENDING JANUARY 12, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

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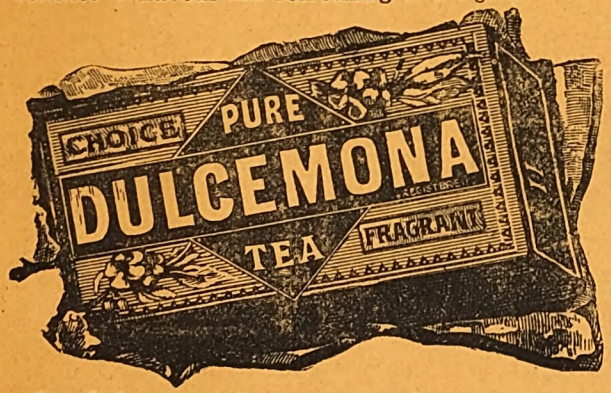

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 315.] FOR THE WEEK ENDING JANUARY 12, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

OKADA,

the fickle one.

A story of the Chino-Japanese war.

IN the evening, when the bright sunlight had faded into gloaming, I, Okada Shikoku, went abroad out of my father's dwelling place under the shade of the blossoming cherry trees on the Ten San road, which leads from Fukuokal to Nagasaki, and sauntered toward the villa of my chosen one, the fair Liu, whose voice was the voice of the cooing dove, whose form swayed as she moved like the tall sycamore that waves in the breeze from the south.

Only once had I seen her, as she stood in the garden of her parent's villa, with its hills and rocks, its pond and moss-covered stones and bowering trees. But I loved. I loved with the fierce burning love of youth, and thus, after the toil of the day was at an end, and the cool evening winds fanned my hot brow, I went out along the road to watch for a glimpse of her form again before I laid my neck on its pillow.

As I approached the hedge fence, all glowing in the sunlight with its pink clustered blossoms, I heard a voice sighing on the wind, as of one who yearns for a love that it knows not, and I recognised it as the voice of my loved one, my Liu. I craned my neck and looked over the hedge into the landscape garden on the other side, and there I saw her sitting by a spraying fountain, while the cool waters flowed over her pearly feet.

A crimson flush tinged my face as I drank in the charms of her person. My heart rapped against my breast, and my knees trembled lest she should observe my rudeness and hate me for it. But she did not look up from the rippling waters; she sang the sighing song till the gathering gloom roused her from her reverie, and she prepared to go into the house.

As I took the road again, still more deeply in love than ever, I was accosted by a young man who, by his similarity to my Liu, I rightly guessed to be her brother, whose name was Yaita.

"Health to you, Okada Shikoku; I greet you!" he said smiling pleasantly. "I know you by repute as a great wrestler. I am about to give up my pastime of two-handed sword fencing, and wish to become an adept at wrestling. You will give me lessons, will you not? My father has given his consent."

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Such an unexpected stroke of good fortune staggered me, who only a minute before was reviling the lot that had given me no opportunity of improving my acquaintance with the lovely Liu. I bowed slightly in reply to his compliments, and answered as calmly as I was able:

"Okada Shikoku will have the greatest pleasure in instructing the young man in the noble art of wrestling."

"It is dark now," he answered, moving off; "if you will visit me at my father's villa to-morrow, we will arrange matters to our mutual convenience."

We parted, each going his way. I was in a delirium of delight, not knowing where I went, nor caring, for was it not manifest the gods had ordained that Liu should love me in return? Was it not manifest that this desire to secure me as a tutor in wrestling was created in the young man's mind that I might have an opportunity of confessing my devotion to his lovely sister?

The next morning I made my way to the villa of Yaita's father, the wealthy farmer, who was well pleased with my appearance and manners, and agreed to take me into his household and feed and clothe me in return for educating his son in the art of wrestling. Wherein I was overjoyed, and expressed my gratitude for his generosity, although I should never have accepted so lowly an occupation had it not been for the love I bore my Liu, the divine one.

The opportunities I enjoyed for talking with Liu were manifold, and her chaperon, who was as ugly as the falcon and as cunning as the snake, found ways of leaving us together for some time when I gave her little presents, and flattered her. It was not long before I learned from Liu's own lips that the love I bore her was reciprocated; but, alas! our social positions debarred us from wedlock, for to such a union her father would never consent, even were he ever so pleased with me in my capacity as wrestler; for was I not a peasant's son, and she the daughter of a rich and powerful landowner?

I was in despair; yet I did not show it. I knew that it would cause her pain if she believed I was wretched and miserable.

Yaita, the young man, developed into a skilful athlete under my tuition, and was well pleased with me, for we were like brothers, though he was many years my junior, being but seventeen. We were in the habit of going out to many of the contests that were given by the townspeople, and in them all my young pupil overthrew his assailants and was pronounced the winner, except when I took part.

One warm day, there was a great cry in the road that stretches in front of my master's villa, and a runner carrying despatches came up shouting that we were at war with China, and that every man capable of bearing arms should journey at once to Nagasaki, where they would be enrolled in the Imperial forces for transport to Corea.

I myself did not like the idea, for it signified parting with my loved one; nor did my young pupil, Yaita, either, enjoy the news, for he, too, was in love with a damsel of high degree. But we were Japanese, and the country called us to arms.

I made hurried preparations for my departure, receiving from my master sufficient coin to keep me in comfort when I reached Nagasaki until I took up arms and joined one of the army corps that were to be convoyed to Seoul for the purpose of marching on Ping Yang.

In a secluded nook by the fountain where I had first let my raptured gaze fall on her, did I bid farewell to my lovely Liu. She lay in my arms, breathing soft words of everlasting and undying affection, until the ruddy glow of the setting sun fell from the rich cherry blossoms that hung in fragrance about our heads, and left the world in darkness.

At sunrise next morning, I joined a party of townsmen going southwards, having agreed to meet my young pupil at that time and place. But he did not arrive, and we started without him, hearing from one of the servants that he would follow in a few hours and catch us up, but that he was at that moment bidding adieu to his lady love.

There were many parties on the same mission as ourselves, whose destination was the barracks, at Nagasaki, and at each halt by the wayside I eagerly scanned the faces of those who followed, hoping to see my young friend, only to meet with disappointment, until we found ourselves within sight of the city, when he came after us, pale and worn-out with forced marching, but resolute, and ready to fight for the gods and the Emperor.

He handed me a short note on which Liu had charged me with the care of her brother.

"Be kind to him and love him as you would me," said the little missive, and the very words breathed of her devotion to me, so that I hugged it to my breast and cried aloud that I would love and cherish her till I came back covered with glory and honour, unless the Chinese warriors found a resting place for their swords in my bosom. Whereat Yaita grew pale; for he, too, loved.

The love I bore her was reciprocated.

At the barracks, teeming with soldiers and recruits from the countryside, we received our uniforms and equipments, and carried them back to the place where we were stopping, and donned them. Yaita looked grand in his dress, and I was proud to be his comrade.

After a week of hard drilling, of marching and countermarching with hundreds of others in the barrack yard, we embarked on one of the transports in the harbour and turned our backs upon our native land and our faces towards Corea, where our noble brothers had gone before and secured a footing.

The voyage was uneventful. We drilled on board nearly all day long, and fired our rifles at the gulls and at targets lashed to the bowsprit, and talked boldly of the fighting we would each do, filling ourselves with a mad desire to drive our bayonets into the breasts of the Black Flags.

As for Yaita, he seemed to have no stomach for fighting, and I found him at night, when the rest of the men slept below, resting with his elbows on the bulwarks, watching the horizon with dreamy tear-dimmed eyes, and I knew that his heart, like mine, was bursting with grief, and that the agony of parted

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love was gnawing like a worm at his heart strings. I found solace in reading and re-reading my missive. Yaita had no such love-token, or, if he had, he never showed it to me.

But when I was near him, and spoke kindly to him, taking his soft hand in mine, his eyes kindled afresh, and he agreed with me, that to

Yaita was at my side in a moment.

mourn for a love from whom he would be parted for only a few months, was folly.

I will not relate in detail how we landed and were marched to the front, nor the hardships of those long forced marches. I come now, however, to speak of the crisis in this my story. And even before I have put my brush to paper, I feel my cheeks burning with a shame of which I am too fearfully cognisant, and my hand trembles so that I am tempted to throw down my writing tool and let what I shall say remain unwritten.

While we were yet many miles from the Chinese fortifications at Ping Yang, the company in which both I and Yaita served was ordered out to skirmish forward and dislodge an outpost of the enemy. It was the first glimpse we had had of the Black Flags, and, as we broke off from the main body and advanced cautiously, rifles at the ready, a strange feeling of anxiety for my comrade filled my soul, for I remembered sweet Liu's epistle, and felt myself responsible for the life of her brother.

As we crept forward under cover of the low bushes, disturbing the little birds that flew crying upwards, thereby disclosing our presence, we saw that the enemy were slowly retreating, and feared that we were getting drawn into an ambush. Our young lieutenant was looking anxiously about him, and the men did not gain much encouragement from the expression on his face.

Suddenly, a badly-fired volley burst upon us from the right, and three men dropped in the dust. We returned the fire, aiming low, and a hot fusillade was kept up—we slowly advancing, and driving the enemy before us.

A hundred yards away, almost in front of me, I caught sight of a Chinaman, whose rifle was levelled straight at me. In a second I dropped on my knee, and fired; but he was quicker, and I rolled over with a bullet in my shoulder, crying aloud with pain. Yaita was by my side in a moment. He tore open my tunic, and examined the wound. It was not mortal, but severe.

A sickening sensation crept over me, and, as I closed my eyes, I saw, or fancied I saw, Yaita deliberately thrust his bayonet into his arm, and fall by my side.

They took us back, five of us, to Seoul, and we lay in the hospital there—Yaita by my side, his arm bandaged up. Around us, on mattings, lay a score of men from other regiments than our own, whose flesh was torn by Chinese bullets and Chinese steel. Two of our surgeons bandaged us up in turn, while four women tended to the wants that were whispered now and again.

One of them came to me. Her large soft eyes were filled with compassion as she gazed upon my pain-racked face, and in them I saw a tinge of admiration at so fine a fellow; for, having been a wrestler against whom few could stand, I was of fine physique, such as women admire. A thrill of delight passed through my body as she bent down and put her face so near to mine to ask if I was in need of food or drink.

I could have raised my arms and placed them round her neck and kissed her. I forgot the girl Liu who lived in the villa on the broad Ten San road that leads from Fukuokal to Nagasaki, and, even had I thought of her, the great beauty and intoxicating presence of the woman who was kneeling by my side would have killed the thought before it had time to mature.

"Great warrior," she spoke, in a rich, low tone, "thou has suffered much, but thou wilt suffer more."

There was a strange expression in her almond eyes, as she smiled and rose and visited the other men, whom I hated with all my strength, for did I not look upon them as rivals in my love?

And then, as I turned my head, I saw Yaita watching me with a sad face, and I remembered that he was the brother of the girl Liu whom I had thought I loved, and, knowing that he could read my feelings, I was sorry for him, for I liked him much. But we did not speak, and I closed my eyes and the pain of my wound was annulled by the exquisite emotions that pervaded my soul.

I was vain and pleased enough to believe that the lovely woman who nursed us gave me more of her time than she accorded to the others, and the sweetest of her smiles; and, in the evening, when the balmy breezes floated down from the hills and fanned my love-burning cheeks, she would sit awhile with me and talk of her home in Mukimaki, which she had left heart-whole and self-denying to nurse the wounded for her beloved Japan.

Then I told her much concerning my reputation as a wrestler, and gave her to believe that I was great in the land, and that I had a good name, and her large eyes sparkled and her lips trembled with the love that I saw was being conceived within her soul.

"I am Liu."

Of Liu I gave little thought. Had she been of noble mind she would have come across the sea and taken her place in the hospitals. Of her brother I thought much, for I knew

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that he loved nis sister devotedly, and that he would protest against my actions when they became more pronounced. But I had already determined my plans, and was waiting for him to speak.

Poor boy! He too, was in love, and the sight of my blissful happiness stirred up thoughts within him that the gods had mercifully caused to lie dormant for long.

One day the fair woman, whose name I learnt was Miyo, came and sat by my side and talked of many things in a low, sweet voice, every note of which sent the blood tingling through my veins. We spoke of many things, and then my love burst forth, and in the dim twilight, unseen by the shadowing forms that lay stretched about us, I seized her hand and covered it with kisses.

I felt her tremble, but she did not withdraw her hand. I drew her head down on my breast, and whispered of my love.

Then there came a low cry close at hand, and, turning, I saw Yaita, who had knelt up on the floor, fall forward and strike his head against the wall. Miyo rose quickly and administered restoratives, while I alone knew the reason of his weakness, for he had seen us, and his misery was great, for he yearned in his heart after the lady-love who lived for him alone in fair Japan.

Presently Miyo turned to me:

"Dear one, he wishes to speak to thee!" she said.

My wound had almost healed, and I was able to move with ease. I crawled over to my poor friend.

His face was very white, whiter even than when he had first come there, and I had never seen it so sunken, for the self-inflicted wound, though petty, seemed to have been sapping his young life.

"Okada," he whispered. "Forgive me! I am Liu. I die that you may be happy."

Then the poor emaciated form fell back and grew cold.

With the knowledge of this life of self-denial, of the pure unwavering love of my Liu, came the bitter hatred of the woman who had trodden and defiled the sacred ground between us. How many weary hours of terrible heart-burning had my darling suffered! She had watched my faithlessness with unmurmuring eyes, and I covered my face in shame and wept aloud.

My wound is healed now. I go to the front. I have not spoken another word to Miyo. I hate her. I am fickle in my love, but I shall not be so for long. Chinese lead or steel shall find me out, and by its agency I shall go to the gods who ordain all things, to meet my love, my Liu.

A BOX ON THE EAR

I.

HIS head protected by a broad-brimmed straw hat, his feet clothed in elegant shoes of natural leather, Lieutenant Blanc-Minot sat upon the Kursaal terrace of a fashionable Spa, gazing dreamily at his glass of absinthe, into which he was dropping every now and then water from an iced carafon.

"Do you see that wretch?" whispered Jacques, at the same time giving me a dig with his elbow. "That fellow robbed me of at least a million. Through him my marriage with the only daughter of a millionaire was knocked on the head."

While Blanc-Minot, with a smile of satisfaction raised the glass of absinthe to his mouth, smacking his lips when the liquor was over, as if to show how little remorse he felt for my friend's baffled expectation, the melancholy Jacques drew me into a corner and continued:

"Where did I first see Fraulein Elodie Van der Veysse, Dutch on her father's side, a Parisian through her mother and her own inclinations? I don't know. I fancy it must have been at Countess Monchat's ball, where I danced a waltz with her.

"There is no question, at all events, that the young lady, who was of romantic inclinations, fell head over ears in love with me without the slightest effort on my part to fan the flame. She was very beautiful, and, in her wealth of golden hair, looked as if she had stepped from the frame of a picture by Rubens. She belonged to a family so immensely rich as to stifle in the bud any hope of her hand.

"Her father was at that time in Amsterdam, engaged in 'rounding off' his affairs, as if thirty-five millions had not been 'round' enough. However, I was by no means sorry that I could not be presented to him, for, from all accounts, he was an excessively vain person, horribly sensitive, and with very nasty habits.

"I learned further that he was very quarrelsome, and subject to attacks of violent temper—altogether one of those people with whom I could not easily have pulled. I kept repeating all those little items to myself, by way of comfort, under the conviction that I could not become his son-in-law.

"But Fraulein Elodie had so faithfully preserved her recollection of me that one day my mother said to me, with a beaming countenance:

"'I have just received a letter from Countess Monchat, dear Jacques. As I gather from it, the young lady with whom you waltzed at the Countess' ball has declared to her parents that she will give her hand at the altar to no other man than yourself. Her parents are furious about it, but that is neither here nor there. She is the only daughter of this millionaire. What a future for you, my dear Jacques! I expect more information from the Countess on the matter.'

"And my mother embraced me tenderly as if I had just returned home after many years' absence. All this happened at Carcassonne, where I was spending my holiday, in my mother's house."

II.

"Without requiring a more substantial guarantee of the certainty of this distinguished marriage, I resolved, to some extent, for safety's sake, to bury my bachelor existence. Funeral solemnities of this description, as you know, are usually of a very lively character, but I wished that mine should be extravagantly gay. Blanc-Minot, who was at that time with his regiment in garrison at Carcassonne, confirmed my resolution, and our days and nights were spent in devising entertainments that plunged the whole town into wild uproar.

"After we had exhausted all the joy of existence we began to play. I frankly confess that I played to win, for I was very hard up, and was anxious in this way to defray the expenses of future entertainments. But I lost—lost from the very first.

"That infernal rascal Blanc-Minot had incredible luck, and cleared me out with marvellous celerity. One evening I had already lost to Blanc-Minot my ready cash, my gold watch, and even the magnificent braces which my dear mother had embroidered with her own hands, yet I betrayed an indomitable desire to continue playing. Certainly at that moment I was mad—I had lost my head—the demon of play had got possession of me.

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"'Look here,' I cried, to Blanc-Minot, 'let's play for a box on the ear.'

"Blanc-Minot recoiled in dismay, and looked at me inquiringly.

"'The loser,' I continued, 'will bestow a box on the ear upon the first person he fancies, provided he does not know him; if the smitten stranger be not satisfied, so much the worse.

"'In that case, and should the gentleman resent the blow, then the one who gave it has lost a second time. But if the stranger pockets the insult, his insulter has won.'

"'Done, I accept,' exclaimed Blanc-Minot.

"It is quite needless to say that I lost. There was no course open for me now except to find a stranger whom I might buffet without risk of encountering reprisals. A delightful undertaking, wasn't it? But I might add, by way of justification, that we were both rather jolly. While I was considering how I might best secure my object, a bright idea suddenly dawned upon me.

"'When does the Paris express pass?' I asked of Blanc-Minot in an excited tone.

"'In a quarter of an hour.'

"'Quick, then, let us make for the station as fast as our legs will carry us.'

"Blanc-Minot followed me without the remotest suspicion of my intention."

III.

"The heavy train rolled groaning into the station. There was a stoppage of five minutes at Carcassonne. Since I was on intimate terms with the station-master, we were allowed to walk the platform unchallenged. A stout gentleman with a red, bloated, unpleasant face, after concluding a violent altercation with a porter, had got into a compartment, and was now leaning the upper portion of his body over the window, panting for breath. I did not lose sight of him.

"The bell rang, the engine whistled, and, to the clanking of chains and grating of wheels, the train slowly got into motion. Favoured by the uncertain light I slipped unnoticed on to the carriage step, hit the stout gentleman a sharp blow upon his bloated visage, and leaped back again upon the platform. He burst into a howl of rage, doubled his fist, and yelled after me, while the train bore him swiftly onwards:

"'I will know you again, you scoundrel.'

"'You have won,' said Blanc-Minot, in a tone of indifference. 'Without doubt he will pocket your blow.'

"We left the station unobserved by anyone.

"When I got home it had just struck eight. My mother was already in the breakfast-room. I was not much inclined to encounter her, as I had spent all the previous day and night out of the house, without having so much as mentioned where I might be found. In spite of this, my mother received me in the friendliest way possible, and uttered not a word of reproach.

"'Good news for you, my child,' was her greeting.

"'Ah! a letter from the Countess?'

"'Far better, my son. M. Van der Veysse, Elodie's father, has waited upon me personally, and asked your hand for her. This seems to be the custom in Holland. He arrived last night, and resumed his journey to Paris this morning. To excuse your absence, I told him you had gone to one of our farms. Indeed, I was very glad you were not present, for I am quite sure your thoughtlessness would have brought you into mischief, if it did not spoil the whole thing.'

"And my mother embraced me passionately as if she had not seen me for seven years.

"In the bottom of my heart I was as happy as she. For, as I have already told you, Fraulein Elodie was very beautiful, and possessed attractions which, conjoined with a million of *dot*, were absolutely inestimable."

IV.

'My mother had invited Cousin Enselm, at that time a commissioner of police, to dine with us next day, in order to inform him of my impending happiness. But no sooner had she mentioned the name of M. Van der Veysse than my cousin interrupted her:

"'Van der Veysse? Van der Veysse? Did the gentleman leave yesterday morning by the 7.5 express?'

"'Exactly!' exclaimed my mother, while a vague unrest took possession of me.

"'He has just lodged a complaint with us. It appears that just when his train was moving off some blackguard hit him a a box on the ear. But he swears he will return and recognise his villainous assailant at the first glance.'

"My complexion during my cousin's statement assumed the colour of apple-green

"Without bestowing any particular attention upon my piteous aspect, my cousin continued:

"'We will soon discover the scoundrel. Such insolence and rudeness is perfectly unheard of. To strike a respectable man—at a moment, too, when he was helpless to defend himself. Jacques, your step-father is the party here aggrieved, and you owe it to yourself, to him, to all of us, to assist in searching for this rogue, and to run your sword through him.'

"'Ah! mon Dieu,' exclaimed my mother, 'that will not prevent justice taking its course, and it will and shall offer you an opportunity of giving to your bride a proof of your affection in a chivalrous and thoroughly French fashion.'

"My face was now the colour of scarlet. I reeled from my chair, and hurriedly left the room, not so hurriedly, however, but that I caught my mother's remark:

"'Poor boy, he is quite beside himself with rage!'

. . . . . .

"Two days later I left Carcassonne. I explained to my mother that, after mature reflection, I had become convinced that my happiness was only to be found in celibacy.

"As I afterwards learned, the affair of the luckless Van der Veysse had taken a very lamentable course for a cause so just. My cousin had met his impetuous complaints and accusations with the fact that they could not punish his aggressor so long as they did not know him.

"Finally the authorities, through my cousin, pronounced the following interlocutor: 'There can be no doubt that the box on the ear was meant for someone else. We advise you in future not to meddle with other people's business, and also to molest us no further. This is evidently a case of mistaken identity, and so *basta!*'"

Jacques had concluded his harrowing tale, and the disturber of his happiness, Blanc-Minot, carried the glass of absinthe to his lips with a kindly smile. The sun broke upon the crystal, which sparkled like a gem.

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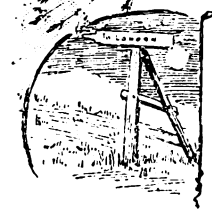
A TRAMP IN THREE STAGES



STAGE THE FIRST.

RT tired, Lisette?"

"Just a little bit. Couldn't we take a rest now? Then you will see how well I shall walk."

"Presently, Lisette. But give me Gaston for a little. You have carried him long enough. He will tire you out."

"Long enough," laughed Lisette. "Listen to him—this dear, stupid husband of mine! It is not five minutes since I took him, the precious little bundle that he is."

"Now, I knew you were jealous. Don't, you see that my hands are free. The pack on my back! Pouf. That is nothing; give me Gaston."

"Very well, tyrant," said the little wife, sighing wearily as she handed her sleeping infant to him. Her arms ached, even in that short time, with him. Would she never be any stronger?

"Now, courage, my dear Lisette. Do you see that building on the roadside yonder?"

"The white house in the meadow with the poplars? Yes, Pierre."

"Well, that is where we shall stop. I know the place. The people who live there are good people; they will be kind to us. Many a rosy-cheeked apple I got from old Madame Sulpice when I used to go with father in the cart. Poor father! what would he have said if he had known I was to lose the little farm where his forefathers lived so long?"

"But it wasn't your fault, Pierre," said little Lisette eagerly. "You could not help it. And so many misfortunes falling all at once on your poor head, my husband; first my illness, and then the cow dying, and that wicked Notaire seizing the furniture for the rent. I am sure if M. le Comte had been at home he would not have dared, Pierre. If only we could have written to him. Oh, Pierre, how I detest that little M. Duval!"

"And how he loved you, Lisette! How could you prefer a poor simpleton like Pierre to M. le Notaire, with his eye-glass and his riding-horse, and his nice little income? Wasn't that how he put it, *chérie?*"

"Don't speak of him, Pierre, and you know why I preferred you, you old tease."

"No, indeed; I profess I can't understand it. Say, Lisette, how was it?"

"Because I loved you, Pierre. I knew your heart was brave, although everything was so difficult. And I was not afraid to trust myself to you. I think a true heart like yours, Pierre, worth all the millions in the Bank of France. I say to myself, here is something you will never lose—something which will never fail you, whatever happens. And I think that is a splendid prize for a poor weak girl like me. Promise me once more, Pierre, there's a good boy, that you will always be true to me and to Gaston here, whatever happens."

"Whatever happens!" repeated Pierre reverently, as if he were in the little church at Dinan at early mass, with the morning light streaming in through the halo over the Christ-child and the soft notes of the organ stealing through it.

To Pierre, the one was as much of a sacrament as the other.

Then they plodded on in silence together for a little while longer, till they came to the cosy farmhouse. There they were welcomed with kindly hospitality by Pierre's old friends, and there was much talking and joking and questioning in the great farm kitchen over their plans. Pierre, with his little all, was going to try afresh his fortune in Paris—that far-off land of bliss to the poor provincial.

"So the world has not been using you well, Monsieur Pierrot," said Madame Sulpice, bustling about her guests and dividing her attentions between Lisette and the baby.

Pierre's face was lost in a jug of cider, but Lisette spoke for him:

"Oh, so badly, madame, you cannot guess. First I was ill, then the plague came, and we had no money and they were cruel—at least one man was, and he took everything away from us."

"And all because the foolish child gave him up for a stupid old Pierre, who is the best and dearest of husbands, though he is wicked sometimes."

"And so you are going to Paris to make your fortunes?"

"Yes, if I can make a home for Lisette and Gaston, it is all I ask of the great city. We are not ambitious, are we, Lisette?"

"The poor children," said madame, furtively wiping away a tear as she watched them shortly afterwards trudging along the white dusty road towards Paris, "they little know what awaits them there. God help them."

But Pierre and Lisette had, as yet, no dismal forebodings.

"Shall we see Paris soon, Pierre?" asked Lisette, as dusk was falling, and the tall poplars grew shadowy and mysterious overhead.

"Wait," said Pierre. They went a little further. Their footsteps fell softly in the white March dust. The breeze swayed the poplars gently to and fro, the leaves whispered softly. Suddenly, at a bend of the road, Pierre stopped and caught hold of his wife.

"Lisette, dost see that yellow glow over there!"

"Yes, Pierre. Is that Paris?" in a tone of awe.

"It is Paris, *ma chérie*. We shall soon be there now. Come."

And Lisette looked at the distant city, lighting up with a lurid glare the dark shades of the evening, with a feeling of dread.

STAGE THE SECOND.

"Art tired, Gaston?"

"No, *mon père*."

"And your coat keeps you nice and dry, doesn't it?"

"Yes, father. But you—you will be soaked before we get to the theatre. Why didn't you buy a coat, too, father?"

"The little droll! As if your father needed a coat to keep him dry with a splendid big umbrella. Hark, how the raindrops patter on it. Isn't it pleasant to think that none are coming through, except one on the point of my nose now and then."

"But the rain is beating in our faces, and you can't keep that off you. Father, did you get me a coat and yourself an umbrella because you weren't able to get a coat for yourself too?"

"Hold your tongue, you little chatterbox. Can't father mind his own business, eh? Do you know your part to-night, little one?"

"Oh, yes," said the boy, forgetting in a moment his father's condition in the excitement of the prospect of his *début* that evening in the little theatre at Porte Maillot, where they were engaged. They were trudging along the Champs Elysées, too poor to afford even a cheap drive in the 'bus, in the teeth of a cold driving wind and rain.

Poor little Lisette was lying in the cemetery at Montmartre

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with a wreath of immortelles on her grave. Pierre and Gaston were alone now. The father fought for his child against poverty and misfortune with unabated vigour. Gaston's pretty face and slim figure had taken the fancy of the public who frequented the theatre of Porte Maillot, and he was always chosen to fill any small parts where no speaking was required. To-night, however, he had a few lines to say, and he was very proud of the fact. His father was still morose.

"If Lisette could only see," he thought sadly. A small knot of people had gathered at the theatre door when Gaston and his father got there. They were greeted with a smile here and a nod there.

Pierre's heart swelled with triumph as they made their way through to the wicket.

How proud Lisette would have been if she had lived to see that day!

"Just see how they love you," he said, kissing the little upturned face, all aglow with excitement and the battle with wind and rain. "You will be a great actor one of these days, and there will be no one handsomer or more beloved in the Allee des Acacias; and at night all Paris will go to hear you, and there will be a great stillness in the theatre when you are on the stage, and we shall hold our breaths till you are finished, and then—won't there be a triumph—an ovation!"

"But, papa, you are coming on, aren't you?"

"No, my boy, not to-night. Unless you want me very much," he added anxiously.

The boy's face clouded a little with disappointment, then cleared. He flung his arms round his father's neck, and clung to him for a minute.

"You are afraid you will cry, papa. And you are all shaking and shivering, as if with cold. And it is all because you love me so. No; you will wait for me here by the fire! And as soon as I have done I shall come back to you, and tell you what they did. Warm yourself well, father. Good-bye."

"Adieu, my little angel!" murmured his father.

Then, into the silence of the little dressing-room, there came the noise of applause, loud and prolonged. Gaston was on.

Oh, if Lisette had only been there!

Then Pierre thought of his dead wife, of all she had gone through so bravely with him from first to last; how, when his heart sickened, hoping against hope from day to day, and still the heart of the gay city seemed as hard as its very stones, she always kept up and made it easier for him in every way she could. Although she must have known, too, that she would not have long to stay with them. Dear little Lisette!

Then he thought of his old home in Dinan, and the farm-yard with its cocks and hens, and his mother clanking across the court with her wooden sabots, and the lowing from the stables. And through it all the never-ceasing murmur of the great ocean outside.

And as he thought he fell asleep, weary with excitement and overpowered by the heat of the fire. When he awoke it was with a sense of suffocation. The room was quite dark and full of smoke. Gasping for breath, he listened and heard what made his heart stand still for a moment—shouts of men, screams of women and children, all fighting with the fury of beasts to get out of the burning building—fighting, alas! with one another. Not a moment was to be lost. Gaston must be saved, whoever perished, and at any cost. Making his way out of the room as best he could, he dashed down the stairs half choked by the volumes of smoke and flame which met him, but holding on his way with firm determination. At the foot he passed a fireman.

"Stop! You can't get past there. Hold! The madman; where has he gone?"

Pierre heeded him not, but made his way through the burning debris, escaping by a miracle almost unhurt to the green room, which he found deserted. The actors had had sufficient warning, it appeared, to enable them to quit the place in time. But had Gaston gone with them? The distracted father ran hither and thither, calling on him, hoping he was in safety, and yet dreading that he was still in the building. Would he not have come to him? At last he caught sight of him, standing above him on the landing of the room which he had left.

Pierre did not hesitate. He did not hear the child's agonised cry, "Father, father!" The roar of the flames was too loud for that. He did not even see the little hands stretched out to him in mute appeal. He only was conscious that Gaston was there, and that Gaston must be saved.

"Lisette, help me," he muttered; then with clenched teeth he dashed up the blazing staircase.

The fireman, who was still at his post, looked after him in amazement.

"Sac-r-r-é!" he said, "that man must be mad!"

His chief appeared and took in at a glance what was happening.

"Keep plying the platform where the boy is standing, you booby," he shouted. "He may save him yet."

It was difficult to make them out for the smoke, but the fireman did as he was bid and turned his hose on the spot where Gaston was standing. Fiercely the flames hissed as the stream of water rose over them. Clouds of steam were now mingled with the smoke. But the crashing of falling beams, and the crackling of the blazing timber continued unabated.

There was a moment of suspense—a terrific crash, a shower of sparks, and Gaston, wrapped in his father's clothes from head to foot, rolled at their feet. Pierre, half-dressed, lay a little way off. They were both immediately carried out and restoratives applied. Gaston was insensible, but soon recovered, and was otherwise unhurt. But his father was too terribly burned ever to recover.

STAGE THE THIRD.

And so our tramp has reached the third and last stage of his weary journey. "Art tired, Lisette?" he whispers softly to Gaston, whom he cannot see. And when Gaston can only answer with his sobs, he whispers again—"Courage, dear one, we have only a little way to go now—just a little."

. . . . . .

And, indeed, it was not far.

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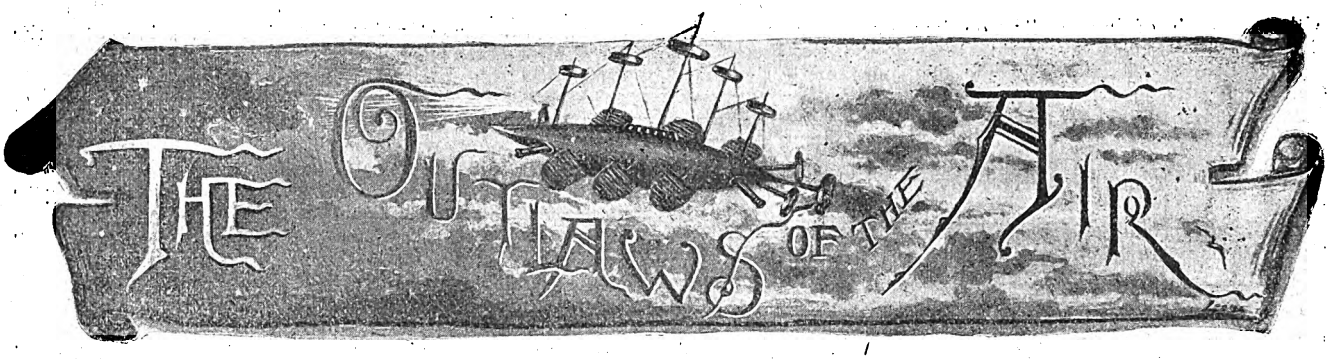


By George Griffith,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," &c.

SUMMARY.

MAX RENAULT—leading spirit of Anarchist Autonomie Group No. 7, who has joined the Utopians (a Socialistic colony on an island in the South Pacific) in order to steal the air-ship they are building, which he succeeds in doing.
FRANZ HARTOG—a German engineer, in league with Renault, who steals a very fast torpedo-boat destroyer from the Russian Government to levy blackmail on the Atlantic.
SIR HARRY MILTON—a wealthy young English nobleman, who by chance comes across the island of Utopia in his yacht, the *Calypso*, and subsequently devotes the whole of his fortune to hunting down Renault and Hartog.
HERBERT WYNDHAM—a lieutenant in the British Navy who is travelling with Sir Harry for the benefit of his health, and who determines to resign his commission and couple his energies with those of Sir Harry in destroying the Anarchists, on account of the fact that he has been stabbed by Renault when the latter attempts to carry off Violet in the air-ship.
FREDERICK AUSTEN—the inventor of the air-ship, who shares its secret with Edward Adams, Dr. Edwards, and Ambrose Millar, three other Utopians.
FRANK MARKHAM—the young captain of the Utopian yacht, *Mermaid*.
VIOLET MILTON—Sir Harry's sister, and Lieutenant Wyndham's sweetheart, is fearfully injured by throwing herself out of the air-ship on which Renault has tried to carry her off.
LEA CASSILIS (alias Mme. DAIL)—a member of Autonomie Group No. 7, with whom Renault is in love.
DORA MERTON—a fair Utopian, who has made an impression on Sir Harry.
LUCY SUMMERS—another fair Utopian.

Renault, after levying blackmail with Hartog on the high seas, returns to Utopia with the object of destroying the colony, but finds it deserted. After a time he goes to Europe in the air-ship *Vengeur*, and, together with Lea Cassilis, visits the Criterion Theatre in London, where he is recognised by Sir Harry and Lieutenant Wyndham, who effect his capture. He is tried, and condemned to death, but is rescued while on the way to the scaffold by his confederates in the air-ship. London is then bombarded by the *Vengeur*.

CHAPTER XXXV.

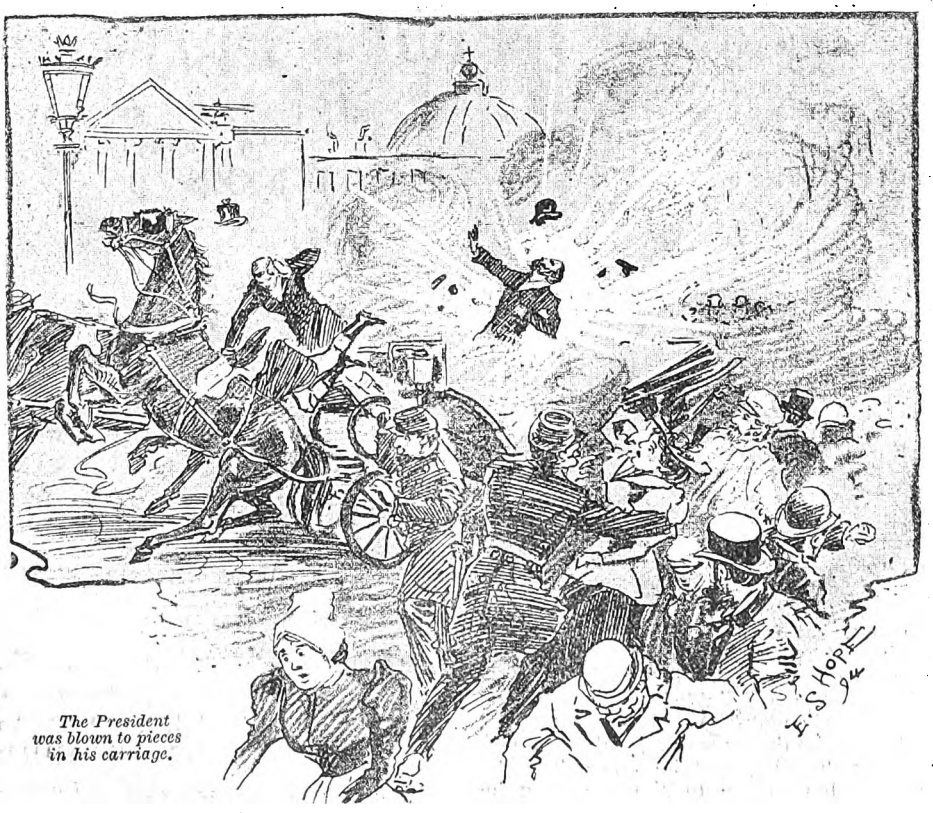
A Reign of Terror.

THE excitement produced by the terrible events of Death Tuesday, as the fatal day of the Anarchists' revenge had been promptly and permanently named, was completely indescribable. Not only England but the Continent—indeed, it might almost be said the whole civilised world—was convulsed by it.

Nothing like this had ever happened in the history of the world before. The ocean terrorism maintained by the *Destroyer* on the Atlantic was as nothing to it. From under the very shadow of the scaffold, in the centre of the most populous city in the world, a notorious criminal had been snatched from the grasp of Justice by means so unheard of and marvellous, that only the awful reality of what had followed made it impossible to doubt the fact that it had occurred.

This man, arraigned at the bar of English justice to answer for the most terrible of crimes, had calmly admitted them, and then, snapping his fingers at the majesty of the law, he had threatened to take a tremendous vengeance even for the indignity of having sentence of death passed upon him—and he had kept his monstrous threat to the letter.

There could be no doubt about that. The blackened and smoking ruins of the most important buildings in London, of the very seat of Government itself, the darkened and wreck-strewn streets, the thousands of human bodies, torn and mangled almost beyond recognition, and the mutilated remains of men, women, and children who had perished in the burning houses or been crushed to death by the panic-stricken throngs in the streets—all these were evidence, too fearfully unmistakeable, of the fact that the enemy of Society had, for the time being at least, armed himself with a power superior to anything that the forces of law and order could bring against him.



The President was blown to pieces in his carriage.

In what had been to him merely the pastime of a spring day, this one man with half-a-dozen followers had done what it would have taken

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the leagued armies and fleets of the Continent weeks of the most appalling strife and bloodshed to do. He had bombarded London, and the amount of damage he had done had been limited only by his inclination or the failure of his ammunition. What had happened to London might happen to Paris the next day, to Berlin the next, to St. Petersburg the next, and so on. It was only a question of time and ammunition. From the monarch in his palace to the peasant in his cottage, no one was safe, and no one had the remotest idea where the next blow would fall.

To say that a reign of terror, a condition of almost universal panic, had been established at one stroke by the Anarchists, would be simply to state the bare facts of the case. Men were afraid to meet anywhere in large numbers lest, as in London, destruction swift and inevitable should be hurled upon them from the sky.

The Parliaments of the world met in scanty numbers, and in fear and trembling. They passed their resolutions hurriedly, and separated as soon as possible, for politics had suddenly become invested with an actual personal danger, and, as politicians and heroes are seldom made of the same stuff, legislators mostly preferred the safer obscurity of their own homes to the perilous prominence of their official positions.

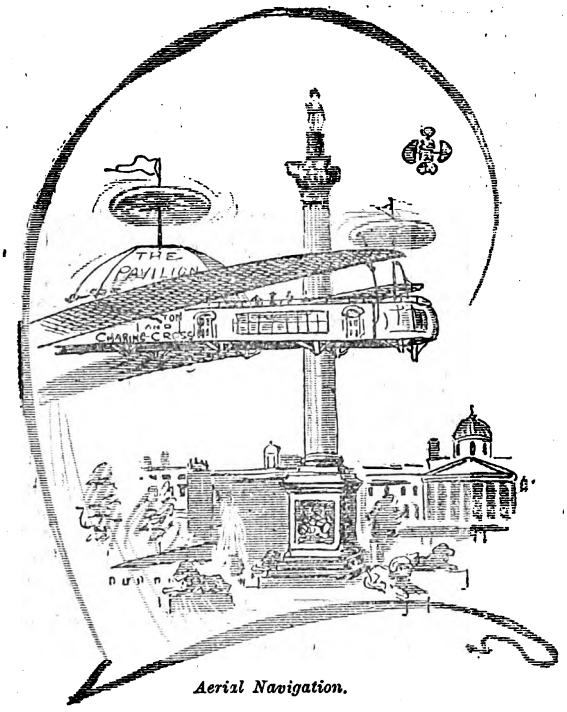
Suppose the British Houses of Parliament had been sitting when the *Vengeur* made her attack on the Palace of Westminster, how many members of either House would have escaped death or mutilation? What was there to prevent a similar assault being made at any moment on any other of the Parliament houses of the world, from the Chamber of Deputies in Paris to the House of Representatives in Washington? There was nothing, and so it came to pass that the Parliamentary Governments of the world were half paralysed by the terrorism of Anarchy in its most frightful form.

But, although this was primarily due to the assault of the air-ship on London, it was not wholly caused by it. While Renault had been at work in the air, Lea had been no less active on land. Through her agency all the Anarchist groups in the world had been prepared beforehand for the startling events of Death Tuesday, and they had unanimously resolved to celebrate the rescue of the man they now looked up to as their leader and chief, in spite of their rigidly individualistic principles, in a fashion worthy of themselves and their horrible creed.

The result had been that there was hardly a great centre of population in the civilised world that had not been the scene of some explosion, assassination, or other outrage, and, worse than all, as the events of the immediate future showed, President Casimir-Périer, the one man whose wisdom and strength of character had prevented the French Republic from throwing in its lot with Russia, was blown to pieces in his carriage on the evening of Death Tuesday by an infernal machine, which had been placed under the seat by one of his own servants, an Anarchist, who had literally bribed his way into the position with money furnished by Lea.

Within a week, the war party in France was in the ascendant, and before another week had passed, France had joined hands with Russia, and declared war on Britain, as the harbourer of Anarchists, and the enemy of the peace of Europe. By this time, too, the Baltic was clear of ice, and the Russian northern fleet was only waiting for the co-operation of the French channel squadron to force the British blockade of the Sound, and carry the war to the shores of Britain.

Such was the general position of affairs on the 12th of May, when a meeting of the directors of the Aerial Navigation Syndicate took place at the offices of the Maxim-Nordenfeldt Company in Victoria Street, Westminster. Mr. Maxim himself was in the chair, and the others present were Mr. Austen, Sir Harry, Edward Adams, Lieutenant Wyndham, Captain Maxwell, and Lieutenant Pelham, both of whom had put the greater part of their private fortunes into the Syndicate. Captain Maxwell had been cashiered, as has already been said, by the Admiralty for losing the *Devon;* but as soon as the really terrible powers of the *Vengeur* had become known, and it was seen that the cruiser had been practically helpless



Aerial Navigation.

under her assault, the Admiralty, being badly in want of such officers as he was, had offered to set aside the verdict of the court-martial and reinstate him; but, after careful consideration and consultation with his friend Wyndham, through whom he had made the acquaintance of Sir Harry and the rest, he had declined the offer, so as to be able to have a free hand in the work that was before him.

Pelham had resigned his commission just before the outbreak of the war, in order to take command of the *Britannia*, and was only waiting for the completion of the *Aries* to hoist the flag of the Syndicate on board her and take her to sea as a privateer, while Wyndham had received permission from the Admiralty to retain command of the *Nautilus* on condition that he acted in concert with the Channel Squadron. The proceedings had opened with a terse comprehensive view of the position of the Syndicate by the Chairman, and, in concluding this, he said:—

"Now, gentlemen, from what I have said and you already know, I think you will agree with me that it won't be very long now before the old order of things is completely done away with and all the fighting of the future, if there is to be any, will have to be done either by semi-submarine craft of the type of the *Nautilus* and the *Aries*, or else by means of air-ships.

"That scoundrel Renault has proved that against a properly managed air-ship, carrying guns and a fair amount of ammunition, there is practically no defence. Now, he and ourselves are the only people in the world who possess these ships. We don't know how many he's got by this time, because he hasn't given any sign of his existence since his attack on London. But, however many or few he has, we know how he'll use them.

"We have two, the *Volante* and the *War-Hawk*, ready to take the air to-morrow. I fancy they're swifter and more powerful as fighting machines than his, and I don't know that any of us will have any reason to wish any alteration in the original plan, that they should be devoted to hunting this scoundrel down, and, if possible, destroying him. It is also agreed, I think, that the *Volante* shall be commanded by Mr. Adams, and the *War-Hawk* by Mr. Austen, and that each of these gentlemen will choose their own officers and crew."

A general nod of assent went round the table as Mr. Maxim paused for a moment, and then he went on:

"With regard to the rest of the fleet, I am happy to say we

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have so far repaired the damage caused by those rascals with their bombs that we shall have twenty more ships ready for work in a fortnight from now, and this will bring us face to face with a question, if possible more important than Anarchist hunting, and that is our attitude with regard to the war.

"As you no doubt know, we have received some very tempting offers for the use of our ships not only from the British Government, but from France and Russia as well. But I think you'll agree with me that the services in warfare of such an engine of destruction as our air-ships will undoubtedly be, are not to be measured by a few thousand pounds a month that a government would pay for the hire of them."

"Most assuredly!" said Mr. Austen, as the chairman paused as if awaiting a reply. "I think, at any rate, speaking for myself and my immediate friends, that the very worst policy would be to place the air-ships at the disposal of any government. To do so would be to give them the means of tyrannising over other Powers and subjecting them to an almost irresistible temptation to embark upon a career of indiscriminate conquest, which might end in enslaving the liberties of the world.

"For my own part, I don't believe that any government, whether despotic or democratic, is sufficiently civilised to be intrusted with such a power as that. The world is not ready or aerial navigation yet, and I have never ceased to regret, since Renault stole the air-ship from Utopia, that I did not keep my son's secret and let it die with me."

"You'd have been something more than mortal if you had done that, Mr. Austen," said Mr. Maxim drily. "Besides, you know, if your air-ships hadn't been built my aeroplanes would have been nearly as dangerous to the peace of the world; and as it was then just a matter of business with me, I should have sold them or hired them out to anyone who'd have paid for them, and left them to fight it out amongst themselves, just as they do with the Maxim gun."

"But as a matter of business," chimed in Sir Harry, "and humanity as well, I certainly think that our original plan will be by far the best so far as the war is concerned. What do you think, Mr. Adams?"

"Oh, undoubtedly," replied Adams. "Once we have driven the Anarchists from the air and given that blackguard, Renault, his deserts, I hope we shall carry it out as quickly as possible; but I am certainly of opinion that we ought to use every effort to hunt Renault and his accomplices down first. We really have nothing to do with the quarrel with France and Russia, and it is of very little moment to us which is in the right or the wrong.

"Of course, these gentlemen," he continued with a glance and a smile towards the naval officers, "will do their duty by their country as far as the *Aries* and the *Nautilus* are concerned. They are perfectly free to do as they please, but our business is rather with Society at large than with two or three nations; and, therefore, my voice will certainly be for hunting the Anarchists down first with every ship that we can get afloat, and then carrying out the original plan on the basis of which this Syndicate was formed."

"And that is my view, too," said Sir Harry, as Adams ceased speaking. "On both public and private grounds I think we are bound to put a stop to the terrorism which this Renault, unfortunately, has it in his power to exercise. I think that if England, France, and Russia are foolish enough to go to war about matters which they could settle in a few hours with a little common sense and fair-play, we may as well leave them to fight it out for the present.

"But even if the whole of Europe were at war, it would be of less importance than exterminating Renault and his accomplices, because it stands to reason that if we give them time to build a large fleet of air-ships, they will simply take advantage of the war to increase its horrors a hundredfold and spread their terrorism round the whole world, and, in that case, civilisation will simply come to an end, and the Anarchists will soon gain command of the world—and a very nice prospect that would be."

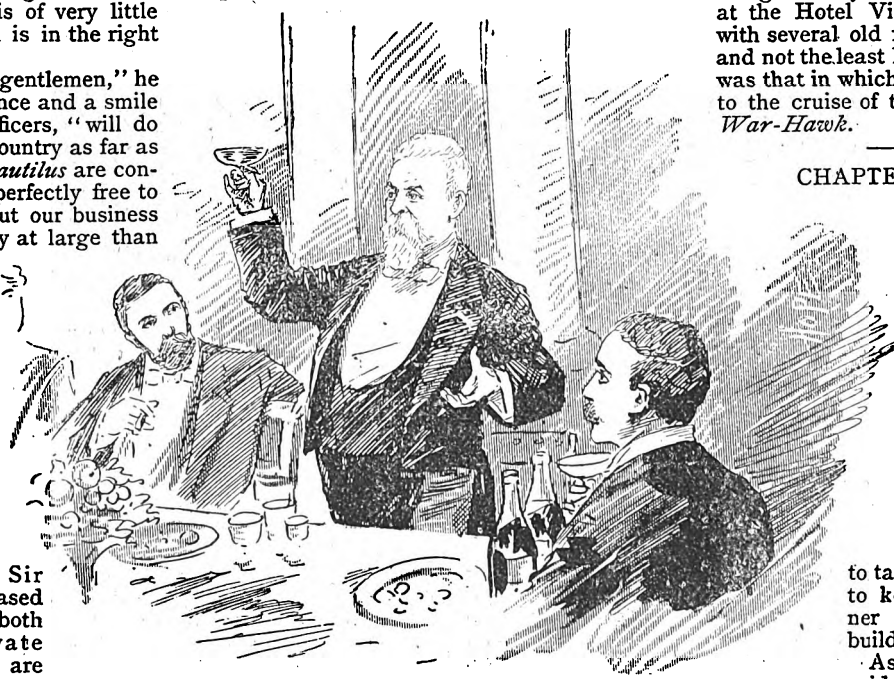
"Very well, then," said the chairman. "We will consider that as settled, and so this will be the last meeting of the Syndicate for the present. We have done our talking and our thinking, and now we shall go to work. You gentlemen will go on active service, and I shall remain here to superintend building operations and business in general. I hope our next meeting will be to arrange terms of peace, and put international matters on a little more satisfactory basis than they are now. I think that is everything, isn't it?"

"No," said Mr. Austen, taking a sealed envelope from his breast pocket. "There is one thing more. Mr. Adams and I start to-morrow upon what may be a very perilous undertaking. All warfare is uncertain, and this warfare will probably be the most uncertain of all; and, therefore, Mr. Maxim, we have decided to leave with you the formula for the preparation of the motor-fuel, so that you may have it prepared in proper quantities, and, of course, with due regard for secrecy, for the supply of the fleet.

"All we shall ask in return will be your word of honour that you will learn the formula by heart, and at once destroy this paper, that you will never disclose it to anyone, and that you will supply none of the fuel on any conditions to anyone outside the Syndicate."

"You have my word on all those points, I can assure you," replied the chairman, as he took the priceless envelope. "If ever I let it out you are at liberty to blow me to smithereens with one of my own guns."

After this, a few more minor details of business were arranged, and the meeting broke up. That evening the members of the Aerial Navigation Syndicate dined together at the Hotel Victoria, in company with several old friends from Utopia, and not the least hearty of their toasts was that in which they drank success to the cruise of the *Volante* and the *War-Hawk*.



Drank success to the cruise of the "Volante" and the "War-Hawk."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE "WAR-HAWK'S" FIRST FLIGHT.

THE most elaborate precautions had been taken by the Syndicate to prevent the Anarchists and their spies from doing anything to hinder the building of the *Volante* and the *War-Hawk*, the first two vessels of their fleet that were to take the air, and also to keep secret the manner and place of their building.

As has already been said, the various parts

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of the ships and their engines and armament had been made by different firms and these, when completed, were despatched by rail to two different points. The Syndicate had acquired, privately of course, and in names unknown to the world, Lundy Island, off the coast of Devon, and one of the Farne Islands, off the coast of Northumberland, for the purpose of putting the vessels together and equipping them under circumstances which made it possible to keep all strangers and possible traitors away from the spot.

Thus everything that was necessary for the building and equipment of the *Volante* had been conveyed by rail to Bristol, and there shipped on board the *Irene* and taken to Lundy Island, while the materials of the *War-Hawk* had been sent by rail to North Shields and conveyed thence by another steamer to the Farne Island. No one was allowed on either of the steamers save those who had been members of the colony of Utopia, and were personally known to the directors; while on the islands the strictest possible watch was kept in order to make sure that no strangers or suspicious persons landed upon them.

All the building operations had been carried out on both vessels simultaneously, and the day after the last meeting of the Syndicate, Edward Adams and Mr. Austen, with their chosen lieutenants, went, the one west and the other north, to see everything in order, and, as it were, put their respective ships into commission. Adams took with him Tom Harris and Ralf Smith—late of the *Mermaid*—as lieutenant and engineer, and Dr. Edwards as surgeon. His crew he would find waiting for him on board the *Irene*, or else on the island.

The *War-Hawk*, with whose fortunes the reader will be more particularly concerned, was in a certain sense Sir Harry Milton's own ship, although, at his particular request, Mr. Austen had consented to take command of her. He had spent nearly a hundred thousand pounds out of his own pocket on her and had spared no expense to make her the most perfect and the most powerful aerial cruiser in existence, and therefore the most certain instrument of his vengeance on the man who had wronged him so wantonly and so deeply.

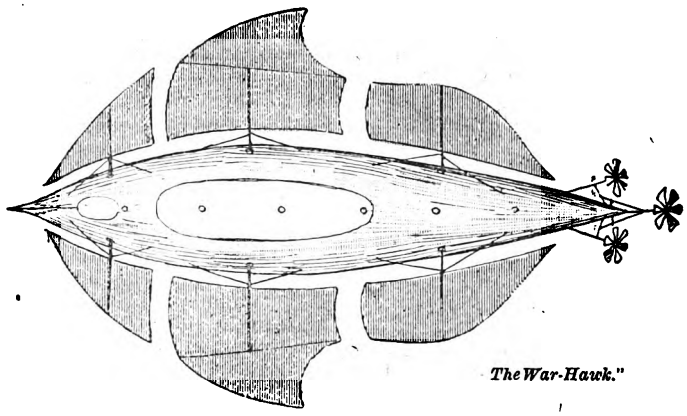
From point to point the elongated cylinder which formed the *War-Hawk's* hull measured two hundred and twenty feet with an amidships diameter of thirty-five feet. Her triple engines were capable of exerting nine thousand horse-power, six thousand of which could be concentrated on her six lifting fans, which, under these conditions, were capable of lifting a dead weight of four tons in addition to the hull and engines.

The engines and gearing were so constructed that while either three or six thousand horse-power could be applied to the lifting fans, leaving three thousand for the driving propellors, the whole nine thousand could be concentrated on the latter, and then the aeroplanes, driven forward at a speed of more than three miles a minute, would more than support the whole weight of the vessel and her cargo.

For armament she carried two pneumatic shell-guns forward and two aft, which had been specially designed for the vessels of the Syndicate by Mr. Maxim and Mr. Austen, and which would throw a shell carrying twenty pounds weight of high explosives to a distance of seven miles when fired from an elevation of two thousand feet. On each broadside were four machine-guns of the Maxim type, effective at a range of three miles, and with a firing capacity of seven hundred and fifty shots a minute. She was also fitted with six vertical bomb-tubes, each furnished with a releasing apparatus which automatically despatched the projectile the moment that the tube was exactly vertical to the object aimed at.

Sir Harry had had two objects in view in making the *War-Hawk*, as he hoped he had made her, the most formidable engine of destruction in existence. First and foremost, of course, was his settled purpose of hunting Max Renault from the world, and taking due vengeance on him for the crimes that he had committed, but hardly second to this came the fact that he had determined to confide the safety of all that was dearest to him on earth to the speed and strength of the splendid craft upon which he had lavished money without stint.

Violet, who had of course been brought away from France as soon as it was known that there was any danger of war being declared, was now quite convalescent, although the great nerve specialist under whose care she had been in Paris, had been unable to hold out any hope that, without the intervention of a miracle, she would ever be able to walk again. As Dr. Roberts had feared, the injury to her spine had proved to be the most serious of all.



The War-Hawk."

Her vigorous constitution had triumphed over all her other injuries, severe as they had been. Her general health, and even her spirits were fast coming back to her, but her lower limbs were almost useless, and so she was a prisoner to the invalid chair in which it was only too probable she was condemned to pass the remainder of her waking life.

As soon as she had learnt that her brother was building the *War-Hawk* and intended to take the air himself in pursuit of Renault, she had begged and pleaded so hard to be taken with him, that at last, acting on Dr. Roberts's advice, he had yielded.

"Don't you see my dear fellow," the late surgeon of the *Calypso* had said to him when he expressed his surprise at his advice, "that, after all, this air-ship of yours will probably be the safest place that she can be in? You'll always be on the look out for the enemy. You will know where he is, or at any rate where he is not, and if you meet him you'll only attack him under favourable circumstances; but if you leave your sister on land you will never know when some of these blackguardly Anarchist spies might find her out and kill her just out of pure spite, or when Renault himself might find out where she was, and blow up the building she was living in out of revenge for his former failure.

"Added to that, in these nervous complaints the all-important thing is to guard against mental worry. If you leave her at home and go careering through the air yourself she will be in a constant state of anxiety about you—sleepless nights and all that sort of thing—and instead of getting stronger and better she'll simply get weaker and worse out of sheer anxiety for you. Take my advice and take her with you, and take me, too, to look after her. You know I can make myself useful in other ways than as a sawbones."

After this there was nothing for it but to let Violet have her way and make one of the company of the *War-Hawk*. But this decision speedily opened another question, which was settled in a way that gave Sir Harry not a little secret satisfaction.

It was quite impossible that, in her helpless condition, Violet could go on board the *War-Hawk* without one of her own sex as attendant and companion, and for this office Dora Merton volunteered in such decisive terms that she speedily overcame what little opposition she met with. Thus it came to pass that when the air-ship lay on the island on the evening of the 14th of May, ready to take her first flight into the air, her company consisted of Mr. Austen and Sir Harry as joint commanders, Frank Markham as chief engineer, and a crew of eight Utopians who had been specially trained to the work, Dr. Roberts as ship's surgeon and general utility man, as he described himself, Violet Milton and Dora Merton—whom Violet had ever increasingly strong reasons for

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regarding as a sister in fact as well as in fancy as every day of their intercourse went by.

The central portion of the *War-Hawk's* hull had been flattened so as to form a promenade deck about seventy-five feet long by twenty broad, and on this Sir Harry, Mr. Austen, the doctor, and Dora were standing round Violet's chair, waiting for the sinking disc of the sun to disappear over the hills of Northumbria and so give the signal for the voyage to begin.

It was an exciting moment for all of them, for it was virtually the beginning of a new existence. Henceforward, they were to be no longer citizens of the earth only. They were about to conquer a new realm and become citizens of the air as well. Mr. Austen, Markham, and about half of the crew had made ascents from Utopia in the stolen *Vengeur*, but to all the others the experience was absolutely novel.

"Just imagine!" said Dora, pointing up to a few white fleecy clouds that dotted the darkening blue of the sky. "In a few minutes we shall be sailing up yonder among those clouds with all the land and sea spread out below us like some great huge map. Isn't it almost too wonderful to believe?"

"Hardly among the clouds, Miss Dora," said the doctor, shaking his head. "As scientific adviser to the expedition it is my duty to tell you that those clouds are between six and seven miles from the earth, and that they are floating in an atmosphere that you would find it decidedly unpleasant, if not impossible, to breathe, even if it were possible for the *War-Hawk* to fly up there."

"Oh," said Dora with a pretty little pout. "That's disappointment number one. For weeks past I have been living in the hope of seeing what was on the other side of the clouds, and now you tell me we can't get there. You scientific people have a most unpleasant way of taking the romance out of everything."

"Oh, it isn't quite so bad as that," chimed in Mr. Austen. "You'll see the other side of plenty of clouds before you've been very long on board the *War-Hawk*. For instance, you see that dark bank away to the westward. I don't suppose that's much more than two thousand feet from the earth, if that, and if you wrap yourself up very warmly later on, we'll take a leap over it for your special benefit before we go south to join Adams at Lundy. But now we must be getting afloat, so keep all your eyes open and you'll see what you've never seen in your lives before."

So saying, he went to the rail which surrounded the deck, and, leaning over, said to those who were standing about the ship on the land:

"Is everything clear?"

"Yes," came the reply; "all clear."

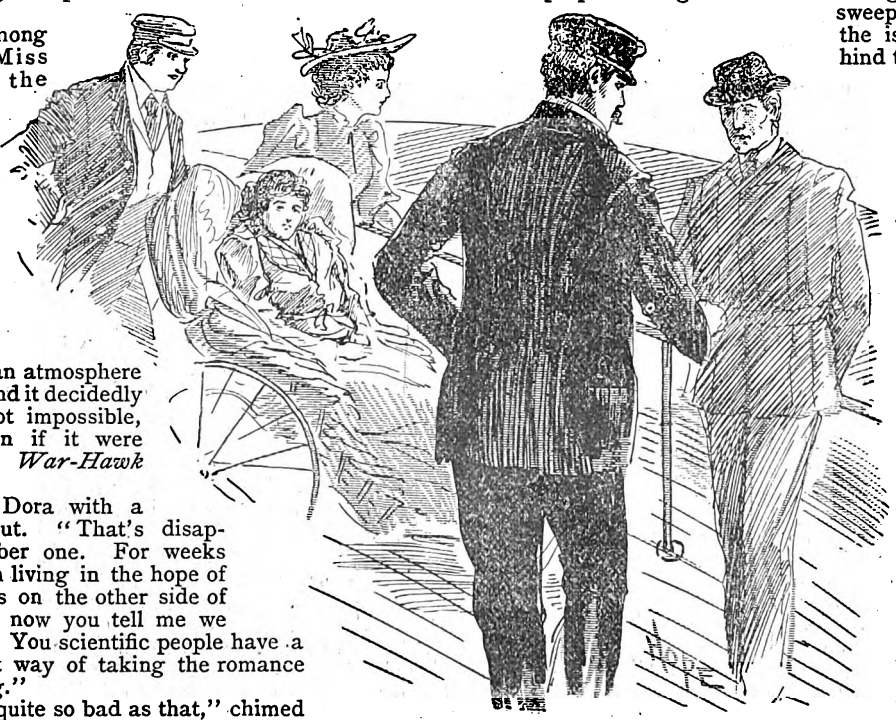
"Very well, then," said Mr. Austen, going to the top of the companion-way which led down to the engine-room. "Are you ready with the lifting fans, Markham? You can go ahead when you like. I'm going to take the wheel in the conning-tower now."

"All ready," came the reply, in Markham's voice, from the engine-room; and then came the click of a lever, the blades of the lifting fans sprang out horizontally from the masts, and began to spin round with ever-increasing speed, and a sound that gradually rose from a soft whirr to a shrill whistle.

"It doesn't look as though those wheels just turning round in the air like that could lift this great ship and everything on board from the earth, does it?" said Violet, leaning back in her chair and looking up at the revolving fans.

"The air is a solid, if you only hit it hard enough," said the doctor, quoting from an American authority on aeronautics. "Wait till those fans hit it hard enough, and we shall rise like a fish in the water, or more properly, perhaps, a bird on the wing."

The whistle of the fans, revolving with ever-increasing rapidity as Markham brought more and more of the engine-power to bear upon them, now rose almost to a scream. A hurricane of wind seemed to beat down upon the steep, sloping awning over the deck for a moment, and then they felt the deck lift and sway beneath their feet. They looked over the side, and saw that the land was sinking away from beneath them, then a bell sounded in the engine-room, and the propellers began to revolve. A gentle breeze seemed to sweep along the deck, and the island slipped away behind them.



Waiting the signal for the aerial voyage to begin.

"Look, we are off at last!" cried Dora, clapping her hands in sheer delight. "There's the sea below us now and the islands—look at them, they are like so many little dots on the water already. What a speed we must be going at, and fancy we are flying, actually flying! Isn't it glorious—no more obstacles for us now, either on sea or land, no hills to climb, no rough seas to go pitching over or plunging under. We can fly over everything."

"There's no doubt about that," said Sir Harry, "and I suppose this is actually the first time on record that an angel has flown without wings."

"Bravo, Harry!" laughed Violet, looking up at Dora's now rosy face. "That's very nice."

While this conversation had been going on, the *War-Hawk* had swung round and was running at about forty miles an hour to the south-westward. Before Violet could make any retort to Dora's last piece of banter, Sir Harry, who had been sweeping the clear seaward horizon with his field-glasses, leant forward suddenly as though something had caught his attention. He looked hard through the glasses for a moment and then, taking them from his eyes, said:

"Violet, you must go below at once. Come along, I'll carry you. Miss Dora, will you get one of the boys to bring the chair down."

And before they had time to ask any questions, he had picked his sister up in his arms and was carrying her below to her cabin, followed by Dora. He laid her upon her couch, kissed her, and ran upon deck again without a word. Then, calling the crew up and telling them to prepare the ship for action, he went into the conning-tower and said to Mr. Austen:

"There are three air-ships coming up yonder from the southward. We have only just left the island in the nick of time."

(To be continued.)

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THE SCHOOL TEACHER'S STORY.

I HAVE kept a school for forty-four years. Now I have delivered up the keys, I have packed away on the top shelf of my cupboard a row of primers, geographies, spelling-books, and arithmetics, and I have stopped work for the rest of my life.

Through all these forty-four years I have squeezed resolutely all the sweets out of existence, and stored them up to make a kind of tasteless but life-sustaining honey for old age. I have never spent one penny, unless on the barest necessaries. I have added, term by term, to the sum in my bank-book until I have been able to build this house, and have a sufficient sum at interest to live upon. I need little—very little—to eat, and I wear my clothes carefully and long.

I was never extravagant in clothes except once. That was twenty-five years ago, when I was thirty-five, and expected to be married in the spring. I had a green silk dress then—a bright green; but I had it dyed black, and, after all, got considerable wear out of it, although it was flimsy. Coloured silk is apt to be. I had a blue woollen gown, too—a colour I should never have bought if I had not expected to be married—and that faded. I also had a black velvet cloak—something that was very costly—and I should not have bought it under any circumstances, but I was foolish. However, that has made my winter bonnets ever since; it was a good piece, and not cut up much.

Looking backward forty-four years, I cannot remember any other extravagance than this outlay of clothes when I expected to be married at thirty-five. I never have bought any sweets except a few cough drops when I had a cold. I have never bought a ribbon even, or a brooch.

My mother died when I was fourteen, my father when I was sixteen. Then I began to teach. My father left me nothing. Mother was an invalid nearly all her life, and he could not lay by a farthing. However, there was enough to pay his funeral expenses, and I was thankful for that. I sometimes wonder what my father would say if he could see me now, and know how I am situated. I wonder if he would think I had done pretty well.

I don't know how it can make any difference to him now. He is past all such earthly vanities, even if he knows about them; but I do sometimes feel glad I have done so well, on his account. Everybody has to have some interest besides their own, even if it is somebody's who's dead.

I have built this house, with six rooms in it, and a woodshed. I have a little land too. I keep hens, and I am going to have a vegetable garden behind the house, and a flower garden in front. I have good carpets all over the house, except the kitchen. I have stuffed parlour furniture, and a marble-topped table, and a marble shelf with worked plush on it. I shouldn't be ashamed to ask anybody to go over my house. And I keep it nice too; you could not find a speck of dust anywhere. Of course, I have nobody to put it out of order, and that makes a difference.

It has always been my habit to look at all the advantages there are in life, and I have found there is a pleasant side to almost everything. I can keep my house a great deal nicer than I could if I were not all alone in the world. I sometimes wonder what I should do, if I had a man coming in with muddy boots, or children kicking the paint off my new doors.

To tell the truth I have never cared much about children, though I have been teaching them forty-four years. I never dared to say so before, but it is true.

Once in a while I saw a child that I thought a great deal of; but, taking them altogether, I have often wondered how their own mothers could stand them. I would have worked my fingers to the bone for the few I did take a fancy to. I fairly grudged them to their folks, but the others!—and I had to hide it too; it would never have done for the children to think I was partial. They had all the meanness of grown-up people, without knowing enough to hide it. Grabbing each other's apples and taking each other's sweets, and the big ones plaguing the little ones; throwing paper balls, and drawing on the walls, and everything else. I know, for one, that there's something in the doctrine of original sin. I expect most women who have kept a school forty-four years do.

I have never been sure, either, that they learned anything so as to remember it, and do them any good. I have always been afraid that, however hard I tried to do my duty by them, it was never quite done, and that I was teaching myself more than anybody else, just as I always seemed to hit my hands harder than a scholar's when I had to spank one.

I could travel all over the world, on the map, and never lose my way, but I wonder if my scholars could. I can spell through the spelling book without missing a word, but I know that not one of my scholars can do it. I can do every sum in the arithmetic, measure the depths of all the wells, calculate the speed of all the dogs and foxes, and say the multiplication tables by heart, but I am quite sure that no boy or girl ever left my school who could. It seems to me sometimes that I have gone to school to my scholars, instead of my scholars going to school to me, and that I have never been of any benefit to any one of them.

Still, I have sometimes thought that I was, once, and in a strange way, to the strangest scholar I ever had. Before thinking even of this scholar, and this story, I have to review my face, and my whole character in my mental vision, as before a glass, to establish, as it were, my own reliability to myself. Is it likely that anybody, who looks like that, should tell herself that she saw what she did not see, or heard what she did not hear? Is it likely that anybody who is like that should?

It was just twenty-five years ago to-day that I went to Marshbrook to teach in what was commonly called the Dame School. It was in the middle of spring. I had given up my old school, because I expected to be married that May. But when I found out he'd changed his mind towards me, I felt as if I ought to go to work again. I'd laid out a good deal of money on my clothes, and I knew I'd have to make it up some way, as long as I was always going to have nobody but myself to depend on as I always had.

Marie Rogers had taken my old school. She came when I gave it up, and it wasn't more than three weeks before he began to pay attention to her. She was good-looking, always smiling, although it seemed to me it was a silly smile. I was always sober and stiff-looking, and I couldn't smile naturally even if I felt like it. Her hair curled too. I tried to curl mine, but it wouldn't look like hers. I wouldn't believe it at first when people came and told me he was going with her, and they thought I ought to know; but after a while I saw enough myself to satisfy me.

I wrote him a letter and told him I'd found out he had changed his mind, and he had my best wishes for his welfare and prosperity, and then I began to look out for another school. He didn't marry Marie Rogers until after the Easter term was

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over. She wanted the money for her wedding clothes. I don't know that I should have gone to work again until the autumn, if the teacher at the Dame School at Marshbrook had not left suddenly. One of the managers came for me the next day and asked me to take her place. I asked him why the other teacher had left, and he said she wasn't very well. He was an old man and a doctor. I looked him straight in the face when he spoke, and I knew there was something behind all he said, and he knew I did.

"I'll give you five shillings a week more than we usually offer, as you come to oblige," said he.

"Very well," answered I. I knew what it all meant. I had heard about the Dame School at Marshbrook ever since I could remember. They could never keep a teacher there through the Easter term. There was no trouble autumn and winter, but the teacher would leave in the spring term. They always tried to hush it up, and nobody ever knew exactly what they left for. I rather fancy they bound the teachers over not to tell, or perhaps paid them a little extra. At all events, nobody ever knew exactly what it was, but it got whispered round there was something wrong about the Dame School at Marshbrook.

Only a stranger or somebody aged and pretty courageous could be found to go there and teach in the spring. The chances were that old Doctor Emmons couldn't get another soul besides me for love or money, and if I wouldn't go, the school would have to be shut up. But I cared nothing for the stories. I never was one of the kind that listen and screech, and I had enough real things to think about and worry over. Then I had a kind of feeling then—I suppose it was wicked—that it didn't matter much what happened—after what had happened.

So I just packed up my trunk, while Doctor Emmons waited, and then he put it in behind in his dogcart, and carried me over to Marshbrook. It was about six miles away.

Marshbrook was named after the brook there that runs through marshy land, and gets soaked up in it some seasons of the year. That spring it was quite high, and the land all round it was all golden with cowslips. The doctor didn't say a word about the school, until he set me down at the house where I was going to board. Then he said I looked as if I had no nonsense about me, and he had an idea I should get along well and like the school. Then he said, almost as if he hated to, that I might just as well make up my mind not to stay much after school at night time, and not to keep the scholars. The school was in rather a lonesome place, and then, too, it was rather damp there, near the brook, after the dew fell, and he did not think it was very healthy.

I said, "Very well." I began school next morning, and managed well enough. The school was quite a large one, with about forty in it, and none of them very old. They behaved well, however, and I taught them as well as I knew how.

I did not stay late for the first two weeks, not because I was afraid of anything, for I wasn't, but there was no occasion to. I didn't mind what Doctor Emmons had said at all, as far as I was concerned, but I thought it would be wiser not to keep the children.

I went to church the next Sunday after my move to Marshbrook. I suppose some folks thought I would get somebody to drive me home, as it was only six miles, but I felt as if I would rather see some new faces.

I had a pleasant home, just Mr. Simonds and his wife, and she was as neat as wax and a good cook. She was reserved, and did not talk much, and, as I didn't feel much like talking, I liked her. She used to have supper early, about as soon as I got home from school, and then I used to go upstairs to my room, and sit by myself. Mrs. Simonds was not of a sociable disposition, but after I came folks looked in more. I could hear them talking downstairs; I expect they wanted to find out how I was getting along at the Dame School.

Once Mrs. Simonds said if she was in my place she would not stay after school. I said I hadn't any occasion to stay, and I hadn't. I didn't really have any occasion the night I did stay, but I felt rather downcast, and I didn't want any supper, and I just sat there on the platform behind my desk after the children marched out of the room.

I don't know how long I sat there—quite a long time, I suppose, for it began to grow dusk. The frogs croaked as if they were in the room, and a damp wind blew through the window.

Suddenly, as I sat there, I had a queer feeling, as if there was somebody in the room, and I looked up. I saw down in the middle of the room a little white arm raised in the dusk. It was the way the children did when they wanted to ask anything, and I thought for a second that one had stayed or come back, unbeknown to me, and was raising an arm. Of course that was queer, but it was the only reason I could think of, and it flashed through my head.

"What is it?" said I, and then I heard a little girl's voice pipe up, "Please, teacher, find my doll for me, and hear my next lesson in the primer."

"What?" said I, for it seemed to me I could not have heard rightly. And then the voice said it over again, and that little white arm crooked out of the gloom.

I got up and went down the aisles between the desks, and when I came close enough I saw a little girl, in a queer, straight, white dress, like a night dress, sitting there. Her little face was so white in the gloom that it made me creep, and her features were set, even her mouth did not move when she spoke. It was open a little, and the words just seemed to flow out between her lips.

"Please, teacher, find my doll for me, and hear me say my next lesson in the primer," she said again.

I put my hand on her shoulder, and then I jumped back and snatched it away, for I never felt anything so cold as her little shoulder was. It seemed as if the cold struck to my heart from it, and I had to catch my breath.

"What is your name?"

"Mary Williams, aged six years, three months, and five days," says she.

Then my blood ran cold, but I tried to reason with myself again. She was some child whom I hadn't seen who had run in there, and maybe was not quite right in her mind.

"Well," says I, "you had better run home now. If you want to come to school, you can come at nine o'clock tomorrow morning, if your mother is willing. Then I will hear your lesson, and maybe you will find your doll, but you mustn't bring it to school; I can't have any dolls brought to school."

With that she rose up, dropped a queer little curtsey, that made a puff of icy-cold wind in my face, and was out of the room very fast, as if she slid or floated, without taking any steps at all.

I put on my bonnet, and locked up the school and went home then. Looking back I can't say that I felt scared or nervous. I know I did not walk a bit faster when I went past the old churchyard. There was an old graveyard there near the school, and the children used to play there during recreation.

When I reached the house, Mrs. Simonds asked why I had been delayed, and if I didn't want any supper, but she did not appear surprised or curious. She never seemed surprised or curious at anything.

I went upstairs to my room, and sat down and thought it over. It seemed to me there must be some natural explanation forthcoming. As I thought it over, I remembered that there had been a strange faint choking smell about the child, and immediately I put my own skirt up to my face, and I smelled it again. I hung my dress out of window in the air, when I took it off.

The next morning when the scholars filed in to school, I tried to think that strange little girl might be amongst them, but she was not, and she did not come in the afternoon.

That night I stayed after school again. I had made up my mind I would. I waited, and after a while that little white arm showed out of the desk, but I had not seen the child come into the room.

I asked again what she wanted and she said, just as she had before, "Please, teacher, find my doll for me, and hear me say the next lesson in the primer."

I got up and went to her just as I did before, and three she was just the same, and the faint smell came in my face.

"When did you lose your doll?" says I.

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But she wouldn't answer.

"Please, teacher, find my doll for me, and hear me say my next lesson in the primer," says she, with a kind of a wail. I never heard anything so pitiful as it was. It seemed to me somehow as if all the wants I had ever known myself sounded in that child's voice, and as if she was begging for something I had lost myself.

But I spoke firmly. It was always my way with children. I found it worked best. "Now you run home," says I, "and you come to-morrow, and I'll give you your doll, and hear your lesson in the primer."

And then she rose up and curtsied, just as she had before, and was gone.

I did not try to follow her.

That evening I went round to old Dr. Emmons' and asked Mrs. Emmons if I could see the doctor for a few minutes.

She suspected what had happened, for she looked at me closely, and said she hoped I wasn't getting nervous, and overwrought with school teaching. I said "No." I just wanted to see the doctor about a new scholar; and she left me in the sitting-room and called him in.

I asked him, point blank, if anything had ever happened there at Marshbrook, and he wouldn't tell me at first.

"I suppose you want to give the school up. I thought you were old enough to behave yourself," says he. He was pretty short sometimes, but he meant well.

"I've done the best I could by the school," says I.

"Why couldn't you come home when school was done, as you were told to, instead of staying there in that lonesome place, and getting hysterical?" says he. "I don't know that I can get another teacher this term. The school will have to be shut up. It's a pity all the lady teachers in creation could not be ducked a few times, to get the nonsense out of them. I'll get a man for the place next time. I've had enough of women."

"I don't want to give up the school," says I.

"What are you talking about then?" says he.

"I want to know if anything has ever happened here in Marshbrook," says I. "I don't want to give up the school if anything *has* happened."

He finally told me how a little girl had been murdered, some fifty or sixty years ago, on her way to school, on the Brook Road. They found her lying dead beside a clump of furze, with a great bruise on the back of her neck, as if she'd been hit by a stone, and her doll and her primer were laying in the road, where she'd dropped them when she ran from whoever killed her. They never found him.

"Was her name Mary Williams?" says I.

"How did you know it?"

"She told me," says I.

The old doctor turned as white as a sheet.

"You haven't got any nonsense about you," says he.

When he found out I wasn't frightened, and didn't want to give up the school, he wanted to know what I'd seen, and asked a good many questions. I told him as short as I could, and then I went home.

The next morning before school, I got some linen rags from Mrs. Simonds, and a piece of bright blue flannelette, and I made a pretty little rag-doll. I'd never made one before, but I couldn't see why my work wasn't as good as anybody's. I ravelled out a little of an old blue stocking I had for its hair, and I coloured its cheeks and mouth with paint, and its eyes with blue ink. I found, too, an old primer, that Mrs. Simonds said her mother had studied, for I thought that might have been like the one the child was carrying to school when she was killed.

That night I stayed after school again, and waited until I saw the little white arm raised out of the desk. She did not wait for me to speak that time. She said in a shrill voice, "Please, teacher, find my doll for me, and hear me say my next lesson in the primer."

"Put your arm down and be quiet," says I, "and I will hear your lesson." I put the rag-doll in my pocket, and took the old primer, I had found, and went to her.

"Find the place and go on with your lesson," says I, and I gave her the book. She turned over the leaves, as if she were quite accustomed to it, and I saw at once that I had the right book. It was a queer little primer, that had been written by an old clergyman in Marshbrook, and used in the school there for some time. She found the place soon, and began to read, speaking up quite loudly. You could have heard her out of doors; the windows were open. The piece was called, "The Character of a Good Child." She read it very well. I only made her spell out a few of the words.

"You know your lesson very well," says I. Then I took the doll out of my pocket, and gave it to her. She snatched at it with her little white gleaming hands and they touched mine, and I felt the cold strike to my heart again.

She hugged the doll tight, and kissed it with her stiff parted lips. Then she held it at an arm's length and looked at it.

"Please, teacher, find my doll for me," says she, with a great wail, and I saw she knew it wasn't her own old doll.

"Hush," says I, "I can't find a doll that's been lost fifty years. This doll is just as good. Now, you'd better take it, and run home."

But she just gave that pitiful cry again, "Please, teacher, find my doll for me."

"You are not behaving nicely at all," says I. "That doll is just as good. Now, you'd better take it, and run home."

But she gave that pitiful cry again, "Please, teacher, find my doll for me."

"You are not behaving nicely at all," says I. "That doll is just as good." Then, I don't know what possessed me to say it, but I said, "She hasn't got any mother, either."

How tightly she hugged the doll, and kissed it again and again, and did not say another word against it!

"Now you'd better run home," says I.

She rose up and curtsied, and I was all ready to spring. I followed her. Ididn't know if I could keep her in sight, but I did, and she went into the graveyard. I saw a gleam of white in there a minute; then it was gone.

That evening I went to Doctor Emmons, and told him what had happened. "Now," says I, "I want to know where that child was buried."

Then I asked him to take a lantern, and go to the graveyard with me, and look in that tomb. I scarcely thought I could make him at first. He said the Williams family had all died out and gone away. There wasn't one of them left. He didn't exactly know who had the key of the tomb, and he kept looking at me closely. I suppose he was afraid I was getting off my balance. He kept looking at me and then he felt my pulse, and counted it by his watch.

"You don't want to give the school up?" inquired he.

"No, I don't," says I.

He went out after a while, and presently he came back with a lighted lantern and a key. I don't know where he got it. Then we went down the road to the graveyard. It was a dark night, and it was raining a little. He went along in front with the lantern, and I followed behind. He did not speak a word the whole way.

When we came to the old graveyard he opened the gate and we went in. His lantern lit up all the old headstones, and trees, and scraggy bushes, as we went across to the Williams tomb. It was not very far from the gate. A lot of little bushes were growing out of the humped-up roof, and I read "Williams" in the stonework over the iron door. The doctor fitted the key in the lock, while I held the lantern. I felt as I used to when I was a child, in the dark, but I held the lantern as steadily as if my hand had been an iron hook.

It was hard to turn the key in the rusty padlock, and the door worked quite a long time, but finally it snapped back, and he pulled off the padlock, and slipped the hasp. But even then he could not open the door until he had cleared away some stones and pulled up some little plants that had grown over the threshold by the roots.

After he had done this, he opened the door, and a puff of the same strange odour which I had noticed about the child, came in my face. He took the lantern and stepped down and into the tomb, and I after him. All of a sudden he stopped short, and caught hold of my arm. There, on the floor of the tomb, in the lantern light, right before us, lay the doll and the primer.

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A BURGLAR'S STORY.

SUPPOSE Christmas has its bright side for some people, though I don't think much of it myself. All this precious nonsense about Santa Claus depresses me. The fact is, I did the Santa Clause trick only last week, and I didn't like it. Since then it hurts my feelings if anyone mentions Christmas in my presence. Though I am of a sensitive disposition, I have achieved prominence in my calling. I am prepared to affirm with becoming modesty that I was a first-class journeyman burglar when I met with a painful adventure on Christmas Eve of 1894.

I had been taking life easily for some time, merely doing a quiet job of housebreaking now and then to keep my hand in. So it happened that the day before Christmas I found my pockets nearly empty. Though I dislike to devote myself to professional duties on Christmas Eve, there appeared to be no help for it.

On the night of which I have been speaking, I removed a pane of glass from the kitchen window of a mansion in a fashionable square. Then I scrambled through the opening without taking the trouble to send up my card. There in the darkness I adjusted my mask and lighted my lantern. Then I started to make a tour of the premises. I was not long in finding a quantity of things which I desired to possess.

I immediately began gathering them up, preparatory to carting them away. While I was standing on tiptoe in order to reach the top shelf of the china cupboard, something remarkable happened. Somebody behind me spoke. It was a man. He said, "George, here's Santa Claus." I turned about, and reached for my revolver. The next moment the ugly muzzle of a gun was poked in my face.

"Merry Christmas, Santa Claus," said the young man who held the gun at my head, "delighted to see you. May I be so bold as to ask what you are doing in that cupboard?"

"It was an—an accident," I stammered, "you see I—I made a mistake——"

"Well, don't feel annoyed about it," said the man with the gun. "It's all right, Santa Claus; make yourself at home."

"Invite your friend to step this way, Bob," said another young man, who had been leaning negligently on a big poker near by. As he spoke he turned towards a door leading to an adjoining room.

"With pleasure, George. My dear Santa Claus, will you be so good as to come with us?" The muzzle of Bob's gun silently repeated the polite invitation, and I had no hesitation in accepting it. On reaching the next room, the young man with the poker turned to me and said, with a sweeping gesture in the direction of a big Christmas tree which towered at his side, "Behold, Santa Claus, what you were doubtless looking for when we intruded upon you. Let me suggest that any little tokens of affection which you choose to leave for the occupants of this house might very well be tied on the branches of this tree as we very carelessly neglected to hang up our stockings. We shall be happy to render you any little assistance that we can."

"Gents," said I, "if you'll let me explain——"

"Now," exclaimed Bob, "I insist, my dear Santa Claus, that no explanation is necessary. This being Christmas Eve, nothing is more natural than that you should give us a call. I assure you that you are welcome; your appearance is not precisely what I should have expected, but that is a mere trifle. Now, shall we proceed to business?"

"Anything that suits you, gents," I muttered. The two were such cool hands that I was ready to drop with amazement. "George," said the chap with the gun, "be good enough to assist our distinguished friend to arrange his presents on the Christmas tree."

"With pleasure, Bob. Santa Claus, if you will keep your hands above your head in that graceful position a little longer, I will attend to all the minor details of the ceremony." With that he dived into my pocket and fished out my revolver.

"What a pretty toy!" exclaimed George, as he turned it about in his hands. "That will have a charming effect when hung properly." He mounted a step-ladder, and tied my revolver on the topmost bough of the tree. After that he strung up my dark lantern. Then, in turn, he pulled off my mask, robbed me of my jemmy, a bottle of chloroform, a bunch of skeleton keys, and several little instruments peculiar to my line of business. He also pulled my boots out of my pocket, where I had placed them before entering the house for safe keeping until I should be ready to depart. All these articles he gravely tied on the branches of the Christmas tree.

When George had swung my boots across a bough, and had trotted down the step-ladder for the last time, he struck an attitude and said, "I am charmed, my dear Santa Claus, to have the privilege of returning thanks for these beautiful presents. Your taste is excellent. I trust you will give us permission to distribute them as we choose among the other members of our family. Ah, thanks; I see you consent. And now, Santa Claus, I and my emotional friend at your side have a confession to make. For some years past we have been sceptical regarding your existence."

I made no attempt to reply to this rubbish. After a painful pause I said, "Gents, with your permission, I'll be going."

"So soon!" remarked Bob, getting a better grip of his gun. "This is hard," and he pretended to weep.

I started for the door. "The chimney's over yonder, Santa Claus," said Bob, wagging his head in the direction of the fireplace. It took me a full minute to catch his meaning.

"I—I think I'll go by the door," I stammered. I hoped he was only joking.

"What! Don't you always come and go by way of the chimney?"

"Not always."

"Can it be possible that the story books are mistaken on this important point? It is cruel to rob us of our childhood's fancies. I think," and Bob held the muzzle of his gun close to my ear, "I think, Santa Claus, we'll cling to the old custom. Oblige us by gliding up the chimney in your own airy fashion."

I hesitated. Another glance at the muzzle of the gun decided me. I said:

"All right, gents; I'll not make much trouble about a little thing like that."

I drew off my coat. George caught it up, and tossed it into the branches of the Christmas tree. I stuck my head into the chimney. It was a tight fit when it came to my shoulders, and I started to draw back. I instantly felt the muzzle of Bob's gun prodding me. I set my teeth together and squirmed my way into the horrible black tunnel.

It was a full hour before I dragged myself out of the top of the chimney, and stood on the frosty roof in my stockinged feet. I was as black as a cinder, and was nearly tired to death. When I had pulled myself together, after a fashion, I slid down the rain-spout and limped home.

Luckily I met no policeman. If I had, the chances were about even that either I should have frightened him to death or that he would have taken me in charge for an escaped gorilla. This experience weighed upon my mind so heavily that I reformed and gave up burglary.

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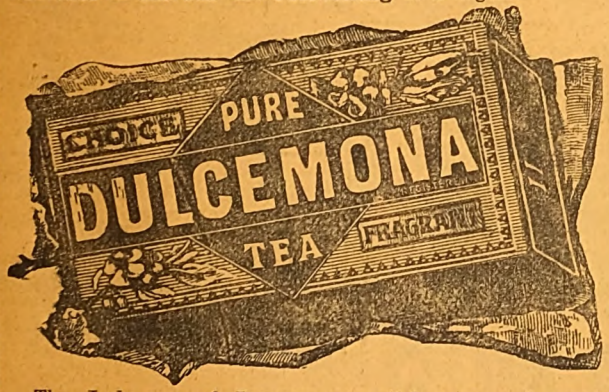

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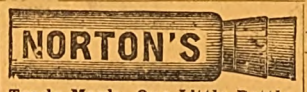

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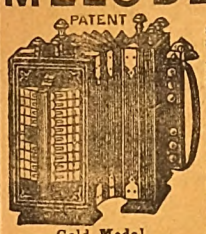

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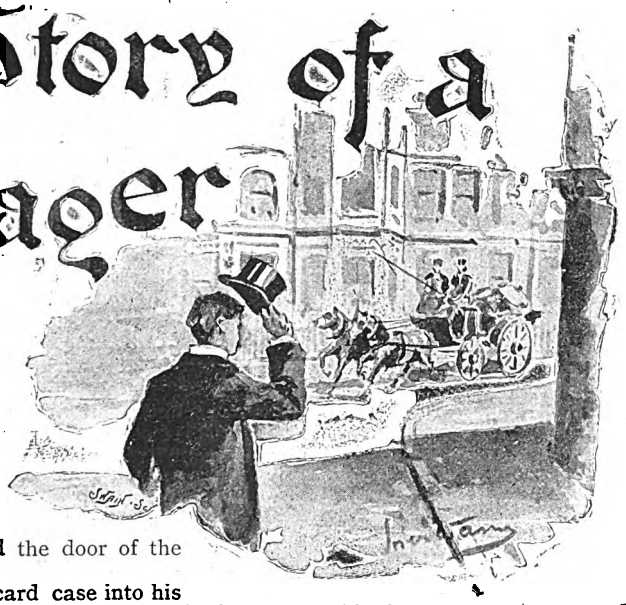
SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 316.] FOR THE WEEK ENDING JANUARY 19, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

The Story of a Wager



I.

"Is Mrs. Featherstonhaugh at home?"

"No, sir."

Mr. Adonais fumbled in his card case.

"Is she quite well again?"

The man opened his eyes.

"No, sir; but the day was so fine, she thought a drive might do her good."

A card exchanged hands, and the door of the dainty residence closed softly.

Oliver Adonais put back his card case into his pocket, much relieved, and walked with a long, swinging step down the parched thoroughfare.

The sun was shining on Adonais. It played on his sleek black hat, glared searchingly at the seams of his coat, lit up his reddish brown hair and moustache, and would have done the same for his eyes had it been possible But Adonais was walking with his head in the air, and his brows knit, and his keen, splendid hazel eyes cast to the ground—for he was thinking.

"I'm glad they were out," he was saying to himself, "very glad. I don't like them. The men one meets there are fools or fast, and the women—loud. I spent that evening with them, and I had to call to-day, of course. But there's an end of it. As for Mrs. Featherstonhaugh herself, I don't believe in her illness—simply don't believe in it; she's just as well as I am. Pretty woman enough, but unprincipled and cruel. I don't like her."

Adonais turned sharp round a corner, and flicked a bit of straw viciously off the pavement with the end of his walking stick.

"Hilloa! there is the Featherstonhaugh carriage, if I'm not mistaken—yes." Here he performed the manual labour of taking off his hat. "Thought a drive might do her good," and he smiled an amused smile to himself; "hope it has. That must be the sister she spoke about with her—very beautiful, but hard as a statue, I should say. Wonder who that fellow on the seat opposite was. I'm sure I know his face, and he looked as if he knew me."

Meanwhile the open barouche, with its C springs and high-stepping horses, swept round the corner of the street. The younger of the ladies stifled a yawn.

"Who was that?" she asked lazily.

"Mr. Adonais," promptly replied Mrs. Featherstonhaugh.

She opened her languid eyes slightly.

"Who?"

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The dark-complexioned man sitting opposite answered her this time:

"Oliver Adonais."

"Adonais! What a strange name!"

He leaned back in his seat.

"A good name; and they are the oldest family in——"

She moved impatiently.

"Oh, if you please—enough! If one sets you off once on the subject of pedigree, there's absolutely no stopping you."

He laughed.

"The pedigree of Oliver Adonais might be physiologically interesting; he has no heart."

Gabrielle Ryan smiled a little sarcastically.

"No heart! But neither have a good many other people. Neither have I, for instance."

The bold blue eyes opposite studied her calmly for a moment.

"Possibly not; sometimes I think I have none myself. But pardon me, Gabrielle; I wasn't thinking of such as you or I; few people would suspect us as having hearts; we don't look like it. The strange and wonderful thing is to know that a genial, amiable, happy-go-lucky individual like Adonais—and Oliver Adonais is all that—the strange and wonderful thing is that verily indeed he—has—no—heart."

Miss Ryan coloured slightly.

"In the first place, your politeness excels itself to-day," she returned. "And, secondly, how can you answer for Mr. Adonais's want of heart? How should you know anything about it?"

His eyes flashed mischievously.

"I will tell you. Ten years ago Oliver Adonais had just joined the bar; to-day he is perhaps the most rising barrister in England. Then he was wealthy and—an Adonais; to-day he is still an Adonais, of course, and—wealthier. Now, during these ten years—and this is the most important part—during these ten years the mothers and daughters of this London world have thought, planned, toiled and schemed to find out the heart of Adonais. And with what result? Total defeat; ergo, Adonais has no heart."

Mrs. Featherstonhaugh interposed now impatiently.

"Mr. Vaughan," she exclaimed, "listen to this. I was out at dinner the other evening, and in the drawing-room afterwards Mr. Adonais formed the topic of conversation. His abilities and prospects were eulogised by everybody, and one old, white-haired gentleman added—what do you think?"

"Well, what?"

"This: 'He has better than all that,' he said; 'he has the truest heart in the world.'"

Roland Vaughan arched his eyebrows incredulously.

"Where does he keep it then?"

"Not on his sleeve evidently, as some do," said Miss Ryan,

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"to have it played with, and tossed lightly aside at will, at the fancy of every passing breeze."

"Thank you, Miss Gabrielle," he returned, bending his head slightly. "I recognise myself to a nicety. However, if Mrs. Featherstonhaugh will excuse me, I must keep to my opinion: Adonais has no heart."

Mrs. Featherstonhaugh shook her head with the irritability of a woman who cannot brook contradiction.

"He has a heart, of course," she remarked in a short tone.

Mr. Vaughan raised his hand quickly to his dark moustache, as though to conceal a smile of amusement.

"Well, Mrs. Featherstonhaugh, suppose we ask your sister to find it out? We might settle the dispute in that way. Gabrielle, does your pride need humiliation? Defeat means humiliation to you, does it not? I can promise you defeat."

"Mr. Vaughan, you are positively rude! And if," continued Gabrielle, her proud lips curling scornfully, "if I succeeded, whose, pray, would be the humiliation then?"

"Why, mine and his," laughed Mr. Vaughan.

"Yours alone," she retorted, beginning to take the matter seriously.

"Ah, well, perhaps so. But I do not fear; you will stand no chance with Oliver Adonais."

Now fairly roused, Gabrielle raised herself with sudden energy.

"It is a challenge," she cried. "Before long I will have him at my feet."

Mr. Vaughan glanced at her with a mocking smile.

"Pardon me," he said, "I am far from underrating your powers, but you never will. Or if you do, I promise to own myself most grievously mistaken in my knowledge of men and human nature."

"And what else?"

"What else? I will present you with a pair of gloves."

"Very well; it is a bet. I shall accept them, but on condition that you own yourself mistaken, and more than that—humiliated."

He laughed again.

"To the dust, Miss Gabrielle," and a gleam of open admiration came into his bold eyes, as they rested on the pale, scornful, most lovely face opposite to him.

Mrs. Featherstonhaugh, who had listened to the conversation in surprise, flushed angrily.

"Mr. Vaughan," she said, "as Gabrielle's future husband, how can you for a moment encourage anything so unprincipled and cruel?"

He leaned forward and arranged the thin rug carefully over her.

"My dear lady," he laughed, "pray don't excite yourself; you forget that thereby hangs the whole kernel of dispute. I hold that Adonais has no heart; if this is so, where is the cruelty? There can be nothing wrong in the experiment."

"And Gabrielle has really your sanction to do this?"

"Gabrielle and I understand each other perfectly. Do we not, Gabrielle?"

"Why, Claire, it is only a little amusement," said the young lady with a smile.

Mrs. Featherstonhaugh stifled a sigh.

"Only a little amusement! And what about the cost?"

Roland Vaughan crossed his arms, and looked at her.

"The cost of Gabrielle's humiliation?"

He leans back on the dusty cushions.

Gabrielle drew herself up.

"At the cost of yours, you mean," she returned; "and a pair of gloves."

"Ah, no," he said, for something in the word, as applied to himself, displeased him. "We can leave humiliation out of the question, then. No; all for a pair of gloves, Gabrielle." And he held his own suddenly in the air as the carriage drew up at the doorway.

She hesitated and laughed.

"Very well; all for a pair of gloves."

II.

"QUEER thing altogether; queer of Vaughan to call on me. We were college friends, it's true; but—after so many years!"

Mr. Adonais, as he speaks, is in evening dress, with the street lamps flickering in on him through the rain-bespattered windows, and the wheels of his hansom rattling a noisy accompaniment. His well-cut face wears an expression half-puzzled, half-vexed, and he leans back on the dusty cushions and gives himself up to his musings.

"And I had made up my mind to have nothing more to do with the Featherstonhaughs. They may be very nice, of course; but the thing is, I don't like them, nor the people one meets there. Roland Vaughan is certainly not a fool like most of their male acquaintances, but he is hardly the man a steady-going fellow can have much in common with, now at least. At college it was different. I suppose he is related to the Featherstonhaughs."

Here Adonais seemed to fall into deep and rather sad thoughts.

The hansom stopped at the well-known door, and he went up the wet steps and into the brilliant drawing-room. The footman opened it and announced him. A rustle of satin, and Mrs. Featherstonhaugh's pale face—a little paler than usual—was turned towards him, and a limp hand was held out.

"How do you do, Mr. Adonais?" she asked in a feeble voice.

"How do you do?" rang out the genial voice of Adonais. "Are you—ah—better?"

"I am always weak," and she moved slightly to make room for the outstretched hand of her husband; and then turning abruptly towards a figure on an adjoining couch, "Mr. Adonais, this is my sister Gabrielle."

An involuntary flash of surprise and admiration came into his eyes, but he dropped them quickly, and bowed to the beautiful girl before him.

"How are you, Mr. Adonais? Terrible weather, isn't it?" And in this commonplace way Gabrielle Ryan opened hostilities on the heart of Oliver Adonais.

He looked down at her comically.

"I think we've had about one fine day this season."

She raised her long, dark lashes.

"Yes, one," she answered. "I know we've had one; the first day I saw you was a fine day. We were driving, and I asked your name, and I thought it such a strange name—Adonais."

She said the word slowly, pronouncing each syllable by itself, and if Adonais did not notice that it was like the changing tones of a bell, he might have done so. But Adonais was a man of the world; he recognised at once, just as he had done many and many a time before, and just with the same inward amusement, the opening attack of an enemy. He did not know, of course, that his great heart lay in one side of the balance, and a little pair of gloves in the other; but this he did know, that Miss Gabrielle Ryan, belle and beauty, condescended to flirt with him.

"I have rather an objection to the name," he laughed; "it is too ambitious. It is the most ambitious name I know, and you see it is apt to make its bearer ridiculous."

"How d'ye do, Adonais?"

Roland Vaughan had come slowly into the room, with that half-lounge, familiar to everyone who knew him, and—a curious look in his face—was standing beside them.

Adonais turned.

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"Well, Vaughan, how are you? Do you know I fell into a reverie upon olden days on my way up here."

"Not a very pleasant one for you, I should say, eh?" laughed Mr. Vaughan; but there was something of a sneer in his laugh.

Adonais drew himself up slightly.

"It was not wholly pleasant. Miss Ryan, I fear we used to be scapegoats."

Vaughan leaned back on the mantelpiece.

"I expect we were," he cried. "I have seen very little of you lately, Adonais. The fact is," he added suddenly, "I went on in the same old path and you struck out another. I think that's just about the way of it."

Adonais smiled kindly on him.

"Ah, well, the paths may meet again some day—who knows? May they not, Miss Ryan?"

She lifted her eyes, and looked from one to the other of them.

"Yes, the two may run together for awhile."

There was a meaning in her tone; Vaughan laughed shortly and turned suddenly away. Adonais bent gracefully towards her.

"The general election approaches, and hints are dangerous. Now, Miss Ryan, do you mean that I've designs on Vaughan's borough—Oh, dinner!" and he stopped abruptly as the door was thrown open. "I believe I take you in."

When they were seated, Gabrielle Ryan turned to him.

"Speaking of Mr. Vaughan's borough—has he any chance of getting in again, do you think?"

Adonais evaded the question.

"The general election is at hand and—Vaughan's eyes are upon us."

She smiled slightly.

"But seriously, Mr. Adonais, has he any chance at all?"

He bent his head over his plate.

"Seriously, Miss Ryan, I cannot say. One hears such conflicting reports about things, that it is not safe to believe any of them."

The diamonds round her beautiful neck flashed in the lamplight.

"That is true," she answered thoughtfully. "One does hear conflicting reports about things and about people. It is so distracting."

Adonais looked down at her.

"People exaggerate about things and about other people," he said; "some the good, some the evil. It is that which causes the confliction."

Gabrielle turned and raised her steady, long-lashed eyes to his.

"I do not know. What can you think of this? It is a case in point. At the same place, at the same hour, I heard first, Mr. Adonais, that you had no heart, and again that yours was the truest heart in the world."

Adonais, man of the world though he was, was taken by surprise. The colour deepened on his forehead; for once in his life he racked his brains in vain to find a suitable answer. After a minute he laughed.

"Well, Miss Ryan," he said, slowly, "that is, as you say, an example of what I was telling you; some have exaggerated the good, and some the bad." Then, with a short quiet clearance of the throat, which acted as a full stop to that part of the conversation, "May I pass you the salt?" he added, rather coldly.

"I heard . . . . that yours was the truest heart in the world."

For, to tell the truth, beside being surprised, he was just a little disappointed and shocked that a pretty, well-bred woman should have done anything so singular and startling as to repeat these personalities to him.

This stately, dark-eyed beauty was no ingenuous school girl, he knew; but she was an American, and American women, let them be charming as they may—American women do, and ever will do, odd things sometimes. If that were all, he could afford to be genial over it; but if she had deliberate designs of attracting him to her, why, he objected to any such bold hostilities.

At any rate it was rather amusing, and with a half smile he turned his eyes drolly upon her. A strange look came into them as he noted the downcast lip and the colour coming and going on her round cheek; for never had Gabrielle looked or felt more crestfallen. She had failed ignominiously, and she knew it. He bent kindly towards her.

"And so there was a dispute about my heart?" he said.

She hesitated. The man seemed to read her through and through.

"Yes."

"And may I ask how it was decided?"

"Mr. Adonais, it was not decided."

"Ah! and was the matter really allowed to rest on such frightful uncertainty? What folly!"

She laughed feebly.

"The decision was deferred, Mr. Adonais."

He shot a keen look at her again.

"Ah, meantime the mystery would have to be solved."

"Oh, yes, of course," she stammered, playing with her bracelet uncomfortably.

He laughed, now really amused.

"And who was to solve it, I wonder?" he asked, turning his face to her.

"Perhaps you."

This time it was Gabrielle who flushed to the eyes; all self-possession utterly forsook her. What could she do? Where should she look? How should she answer? Her thoughts were whirling in mad confusion. To be convicted; she, proud Gabrielle, to be convicted, in indirect language, it is true, but still convicted, of having designs upon a heart. And that by the man whose heart she had undertaken to capture. And this in the presence of a London dinner party. Roland Vaughan had prophesied humiliation, surely this was something worse.

She turned suddenly towards him, the most abject intreaty plainly written upon every feature of her face.

"Mr. Adonais," she said, "Mr. Adonais, please let us talk of something else."

He bowed politely.

"Certainly. I think we began this evening with the weather; can you suggest another subject, or may I? Do you know I have to make a speech at a flower show to-morrow, this said weather permitting, and I had just made up my mind to ask if you would tell me the names of a few of these flowers on the table, that I may not appear so totally ignorant as I am, when you startled me. Perhaps you will help me now?"

Gabrielle slowly turned her face once again to him.

"Oh, yes!" and her voice struggled for calmness. "That beside you is a pelargonium."

"And opposite?"

"Hydrangea."

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"Ah! By the way, what sort of flowers have you in Florida? That might come in very usefully."

"In Florida?" she repeated mechanically, and for one instant there was a beautiful look in her eyes which neither Adonais nor his heart nor the flowers brought there. "Yes, Florida is a lovely place. Oh, and the flowers! There are many flowers. I remember one, long-shaped and blue as a Florida sky. It grew by thousands about the banks of the river at the foot of our garden, and in the summer evenings my sisters and I used to stray up and down and sit among its blossoms to revel in the sweetness of its perfume."

So the dinner passed on. Many voices talked and laughed; attendants' footsteps hurried softly to and fro; the glasses and the plates chinked, and the flowers drooped just a little in the heat and light, and Gabrielle spoke and Adonais listened. When Mrs. Featherstonhaugh rose, Adonais would have fain gone on listening, for Gabrielle had spoken as she seldom did—from her heart. She was away among the orange groves and the citrons, the sweet memories of the past. She had forgotten all about Adonais' heart, and the pair of gloves; almost about Adonais himself.

He smiled more and more over his wine and walnuts at the thought of what she had revealed to him about that heart of his. So this was what the world said of him. Well, was it true, any part of it? Had he no heart? Had he the truest heart in the world? Roland Vaughan asked his opinion on some political question, and he gave it, and cracked another walnut, and went on with what he was thinking about. Had he the truest heart in the world?

A little child asked for a penny.

Of course, Adonais did not ask himself such a question seriously; but he found it pleasant to wonder in a half joking, half dreamy way, and to go over his own surprise again in his mind—his surprise when Gabrielle said the words, and looked so fixedly and steadily out of her grave dark eyes into the depths of his.

The guests were gone. Adonais trod the wet pavement, for the rain had ceased, and it pleased him to walk and indulge his thoughts. And Gabrielle on her way up to her bed-room was stopped on the staircase; stopped twice.

Once a woman with a cold white face just touched the girl's brow with her lips.

"Good night, Gabrielle. Have you—have you no mercy, child?"

She opened her eyes.

"Mercy, Claire?"

"Yes, mercy on Mr. Adonais. Wait a minute; I am so weak and tired. If you have no mercy for his sake, have a little for mine."

Gabrielle hesitated for a moment and then hastily passed on.

"Claire, how can you be so ridiculous?"

A little further on she was stopped again. A hand was laid upon her shoulder.

"Well, Gabrielle, are you tired? I saw you were doing your best for the pair of gloves, but you did not make much of it. It will end as I said it would."

Then he kissed her and said good night, for she was to be his wife; and she passed on again, shaking her head half in scorn, half laughingly.

III.

THE carriages roll along, the people hurry to and fro on the pavement, the church clocks chime in the distant steeples, and the afternoon sun glares down on all the toil and turmoil, and plays with the reddish-brown hair and moustache of Mr. Adonais. He is in Oxford Street—walking with long swinging steps, and thinking as usual.

What were his thoughts like, and where was the heart of Adonais? The heart was gone. He had unconsciously given it up to a girl with grave, dark eyes, and a beautiful face: a girl with whom he had latterly spent a great deal of his time. It was gone for ever.

"She loves you," he was saying to himself. "Adonais, she loves you; Gabrielle loves you. The roll of the carriage wheels echoes it, the footsteps of the people repeat it to you, and the clocks and the bells chime it out to you. Oliver Adonais, Gabrielle loves you. Each house you pass takes life and says it to you—always the same; and every street you turn into breaks out anew, but always with the same—Gabrielle loves you. They must know—you must know; they cannot be wrong—you cannot be wrong. She does love you, Adonais; you cannot both be wrong—she does love you."

A little child asked him for a penny, and he gave her half-a-crown. A broken-down friend stopped him timidly for the loan of a pound, and he promised him ten. Well, it was all for the sake of Gabrielle. A painter's boy brushed roughly past him, and stained his coat sleeve a brilliant red, but Adonais walked on with a smile, thinking that here was something for Gabrielle to laugh at.

Meanwhile a carriage stood at a doorway. Inside sat a girl with a beautiful face and grave dark eyes that saw—yet without seeing—what was passing around her. She was there herself, but her thoughts were not there. They were with Mr. Adonais. Gabrielle Ryan in dreamland; dreaming of Adonais. And her dreams ran thus:

"I love him. This is your punishment, Gabrielle Ryan—you love him. This is the end of your boasting intrigue. And he has given you his heart; the truest heart in the world. He loves you. It is your heart now, and what must you do with it? Not crush it? This is the end of it all; you have promised yourself to Roland Vaughan, and you must keep to your promise. Oh, misery! is there no hope—even yet is there not any hope? None; you must keep to your plighted word.

"You know Roland Vaughan; you know what he has done for your father and mother and sisters, all for your sake—with a sneer on his lips—still all for your sake. And, besides, listen; you dare not give him up; you dare not, Gabrielle Ryan. Oh, misery, misery! and I love you, Oliver, as man was never loved."

Ever hurrying nearer, at last he is close. She sees him, and bends suddenly and eagerly forward.

"Mr. Adonais!"

"Gabri—Miss Gabrielle, how are you?"

"I am quite well."

Then comes a pause, and they look at each other; the words take long to rise sometimes when hearts are full. Gabrielle seizes on the first thing which strikes her.

"Mr. Adonais! Look at your coat!"

"Yes; somebody has been painting it for me."

"But how? What a pity!"

"Oh, no, I rather liked it; it brought things to my mind."

She looked at him wonderingly.

"What things?"

He smiled.

"Well, I can't tell you exactly. Perhaps the pale-blue flowers that grew by thousands about the river at the foot of your garden; the flowers amongst which you and your sisters used to sit in the summer evenings to revel in the sweetness of their perfume."

She laughed and coloured slightly.

"Now, that is absurd, Mr. Adonais," and glancing hastily round. "My sister is in one of these shops. Where are you going? Can we drive you anywhere?"

The sunshine laughed in his eyes.

"Thank you, but I don't know where I am going exactly.'

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Mrs. Featherstonhaugh was coming out; Gabrielle turned to her.

"Claire, here is Mr. Adonais. He was hurrying along rapidly, although he doesn't know where he is going, he says."

All of a sudden, because her heart was beating wildly, and she was struggling for calmness, struggling to quell the misery which was ever there, and to still the flash of joy now illuminating it—suddenly, because these things oppressed her and would have an outlet, Gabrielle Ryan burst into a rippling peal of laughter. And he, knowing not what had caused it, laughed too. Mrs. Featherstonhaugh stood, pale and cold as an icicle, between them.

"The fact is," remarked Adonais, "the fact is, I was going to call upon you, Mrs. Featherstonhaugh."

What could she do?

"Will you drive home with us now, then?"

"I should like to," and he smiled at Gabrielle. "Are you better?" he inquired as he helped her in.

"I am always weak," she answered; and she leaned back in the carriage and looked coldly and haughtily at him.

Mrs. Featherstonhaugh did not like him, Adonais fancied, but Gabrielle did. The keen hazel eyes of Oliver Adonais blazed and burned with love and admiration, as they rested on the beautiful face opposite him.

Adonais sat down to tea with them in the sombre drawing-room, rich colouring round him, glittering Dresden and Sevres china brightening the gloom up here and there. The end was coming near. Gabrielle knew it and trembled; talking the while of the weather, and the last race, and the newest book, and the pictures of the year, and drinking tea out of the dainty tea cups, just as usual, until at last there was a pause in the conversation, and Adonais deliberately faced Mrs. Featherstonhaugh.

"Your sister promised last night to show me that collection of coins in the library," he said, and turning himself slightly, "and you forgot to do so, Miss Gabrielle. May I ask to see them now?"

Mrs. Featherstonhaugh's face paled, but Gabrielle rose, calm and self-possessed. The end had come at last. Well, it was better that it had—she would bear it.

Side by side through the broad hall, the stained glass of the windows throwing beams of coloured light upon them, they passed into the library. Mr. Adonais shut the door and turned to her.

"Gabrielle!" he said.

The sharp snap of a glass door beyond, opening quickly, was heard. A moment's hesitation, and Roland Vaughan, darkness on his face, came forward from the conservatory and stood beside them.

"How d'ye do, Adonais? Sorry to interrupt you, I'm sure, but I thought it was a good opportunity to ask you for your congratulations. You never have given me them, you know."

Bowing low to the girl's still figure.

Mr. Adonais stared at him.

"My congratulations!"

"Yes. You know, don't you, that Gabrielle is to marry me? Gabrielle has told you of that, of course."

Adonais leaned back against the bookcase behind him.

"What do you mean?" he said abruptly, and his face had grown so white, white to the lips, that even the cruel eyes looking at him softened in mercy.

"Why, Adonais, I mean that Gabrielle is engaged to me; has been engaged to me for ages. We shall shortly be married. And you did not know it!"

The walls of the library, and Vaughan, and Gabrielle—Gabrielle with her marble face and motionless figure—swam round Oliver Adonais. He sat down suddenly, and, raising his hand with a quick motion covered his eyes.

"Are you joking, Vaughan?" he quietly questioned.

"Joking! not I. Gabrielle," and he turned to her almost fiercely, "say whether I am joking or not; speak the truth."

"It is the truth, Mr. Adonais," she answered without moving or looking towards him; and her voice was quite hard in its forced calmness.

Adonais rose. There was a dazed look in his eyes; his brows were knit together as those of a man in bodily agony, but he held up his head, and his voice was calm, harder than Gabrielle's had been.

"Yes, I congratulate you, Vaughan, of course. It was strange that I never heard of this before, wasn't it?"

Then, without another word, bowing low to the girl's still figure, Mr Adonais passed out of the room, out at the doorway—for ever, and so on down the sun-parched thoroughfare.

* * * * *

A gentleman paced the deck with long, swinging strides.

"Who is he, I wonder?" whispered one passenger to another, as he paused for a moment beside the head of the cabin stairs.

"Hush! don't you know? A sad thing, very, and strange. No one understands it. Of course something must have happened, or he never would spoil his life in this way. A rising man he was, sir, the man of the future, but he threw it all up to go a voyage to the Antipodes; and here he is, you see. I thought everybody knew him—Adonais, Q.C."

So a life was spoiled, and a heart was lost, and a heart was won, and the truest heart in the world was broken.

And all for a pair of gloves!

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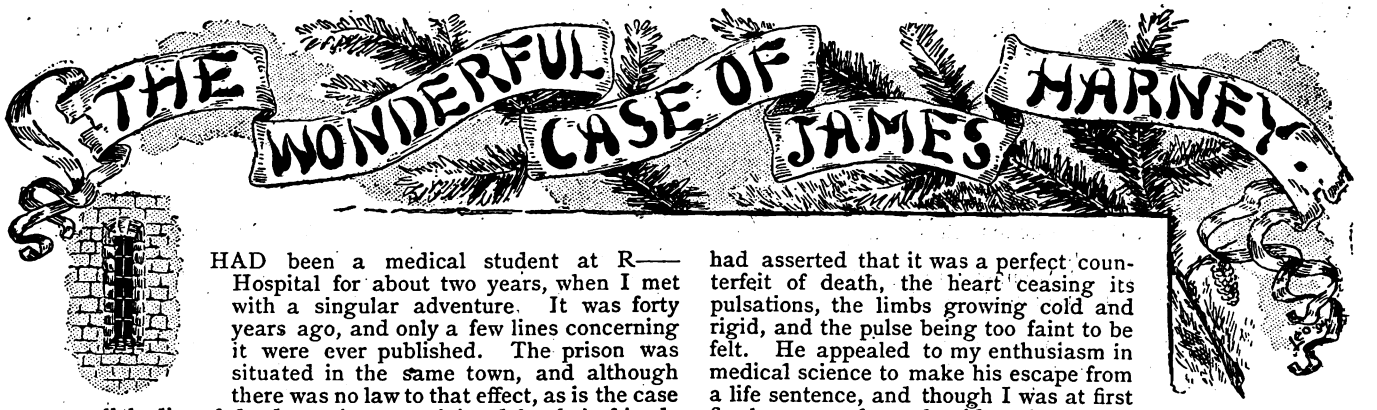

I HAD been a medical student at R—— Hospital for about two years, when I met with a singular adventure. It was forty years ago, and only a few lines concerning it were ever published. The prison was situated in the same town, and although there was no law to that effect, as is the case now, all bodies of dead convicts not claimed by their friends were turned over to our college for subjects. It sometimes happened, however, that we did not want them, as we drew from other sources, and the classes were much fewer in number than now. At the time I speak of we had three or four subjects, and would not want any more for weeks.

One day—it was in June—I received a note requesting me to call on a convict at the prison named James Harney. He was a man only twenty-eight years of age, and had escaped the gallows by a scratch to be sentenced to solitary confinement for life. Judges still sentence men to solitary confinement, but it is well-known that the sentence is not carried out. After a brief period in a dark cell the convict is set to work with the other prisoners, and treated just the same.

At the time, however, solitary confinement was a dungeon darker than midnight, with leave to walk in a corridor lighted by lamps for half an hour every third day. Harney was a stout, robust fellow, with a constitution like iron, and had been in prison over two years when he sent for me.

Some influential friends of his had interceded for him, and Harney had himself saved a keeper from being killed by an insane convict, and in consequence the terms of his sentence had been modified.

He was permitted to have the run of a corridor, an ordinary cell was allotted to him, and a part of the time he carried the meals to the men still in the dungeons. There was no possible chance for him to escape, and as he had apparently resigned himself to his fate, no one suspected him of such an intention.

He had got a note to me on the excuse that he had some important matters to reveal regarding a robbery perpetrated on my father, then dead. I went to the prison supposing that was the convict's sole object. I was permitted to talk with an iron grating between us, and a keeper sitting a few feet away to see that I did not pass in any article.

Harney's boldness filled me with astonishment. He began by stating that he had heard I was an enthusiastic student of anatomy, and that I had written two or three articles for a medical magazine on the subject of suspended animation and trances.

This was a fact; but as they had been written and published after Harney's imprisonment, and as he was supposed to be dead to the world, I could not understand how he had become acquainted with the fact.

He put his proposition entirely on the ground of medical science, and it was no more nor less than that he should die and his body should be handed over to the hospital. He stipulated that his body should not go into the vat where the subjects are kept for twenty-four hours after being received, and that I should personally watch over it for that length of time.

It was only after a second visit that I was enabled to fully comprehend his plans. He had discovered that he could feign death at will and return to life at any hour not over a day and a night distant. He said that he had tried it successfully up to ten hours on several occasions, and felt sure that he could make the time twice or three times as long.

A fellow-prisoner who had observed him while in this state had asserted that it was a perfect counterfeit of death, the heart ceasing its pulsations, the limbs growing cold and rigid, and the pulse being too faint to be felt. He appealed to my enthusiasm in medical science to make his escape from a life sentence, and though I was at first firmly opposed to the idea, he brought forward so many arguments, and put them to me so keenly, that I was won over.

"Medical science must have dead bodies to secure benefits for the living," he argued. "I am a practical demonstration of a medical theory you hold. You believe that human life can be temporarily suspended, and you have been ridiculed for your assertions. Here is the opportunity to prove your theory. I will die. All the doctors will pronounce me dead. You shall restore me to life. The case will make you famous."

"But your object is to escape from prison," I protested.

"Granted. I killed an old man, who had only two or three years to live at the most. I have been shut up two years for it. It was my first and only crime, and I have bitterly repented it. Let me go into the world and I shall be a good man under another name. The law will suppose me dead and be satisfied."

In the end he overcame my fears and scruples, and I agreed to his plans, but we were baffled at the very outset by the fact that vacation was coming on, while the medical college had more subjects than it needed.

This was June, and it would be near October before Harney's plan could be carried out. We could safely depend on certain matters in this case exactly as in all others. The prison doctor was an old quack, who had secured his place through politics. It was well-known among the medical fraternity that he was stupid and ignorant, and that the patients who took his doses were as likely to die as to mend.

When a convict died, the case was nearly always reported as typhoid fever. The old fellow appeared to reason that this was a virulent disease, which he could not be expected to cure, and consumption, lung fever, and nearly everything else went down in his report as "typhoid fever—bad case." It was his rule to get the body out of the way as soon as possible. If a convict died early in the morning, he was buried in the afternoon, or his body sent to the hospital in the evening. If he died at about dusk, his body was disposed of before midnight.

"Convicts are useless creatures after the breath leaves them," he said to me on one occasion, "and keeping a corpse round here discourages the living."

When I informed Harney that it would be three months before our plans could be attempted, he grew desperate. He felt certain in his own mind that we should achieve success, and the idea of delay made him reckless.

The prison graveyard was then a part of the town cemetery or at least separated only by a wall. A dead convict was lifted into a pine coffin, the lid screwed down, and two men with a cart drove into the graveyard and dumped the box into a three-foot pit, and filled the hole up. There was no ceremony and no feeling. I knew all these facts, for I had seen several burials, but how Harney could know them was a puzzle to me until I learned that he got them while in gaol awaiting sentence.

He now proposed that he should die and be buried, and that I should dig him up and carry him off, and wait for life to come. This called for far more nerve than the other plan, and

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I would not give an answer until I had found a fellow enthusiast who entered into the plot with great alacrity. We rented a room, arranged for a horse and cart, provided ourselves with an electric battery, various restoratives, wine and food, and on the afternoon of the 21st day of June I promised Harney that we would be ready on the following night.

He was greatly elated, and assured me that if there was any hitch in the programme it would not be his fault. When I left him I went to the doctor's office in the prison, and, after a few general remarks, observed:

"Well, doctor, is there much illness?"

"No, not much."

"We shan't want any more bodies before October."

"No, I suppose not. Well, it isn't much of a job to bury them."

"I was just talking with Harney—No. 310. He's looking bad; won't live a month."

"Harney! Oh, yes. I was noticing him the other day. He has got all the points of typhoid, and may drop off any day."

"Well, give him a decent burial, doctor. Good day."

I had scored a point for my man. The doctor was prepared for his death, and would make the usual record. This is what happened at the prison soon after I left. The doctor was informed that Harney was ill, and he went in to see him and found him feverish and flighty, with his pulse high.

"Sorry for you, Harney," said the old quack, after making a brief examination, "but I'm afraid you are going to be a very ill man."

"Yes, I think so, doctor."

"You've got all the symptoms of typhoid; and if the disease gets a good hold on you, it will be a hard job to pull pull you through."

"Doctor, it's no use," whispered Harney. "If anybody can save me, you can; but I feel that I have only a short time to live. I've had trouble with my heart for a long time, and I feel as if I was gradually going to pieces."

"Well, we'll send you some powders, and perhaps you'll brace up; but, to be honest with you, I think your hours are numbered."

The next morning Harney was much worse, and the doctor gave up all hopes, and sent the chaplain to console the dying man. Harney was very penitent, and when the good man left him it was with the firm conviction that the dying convict had truly repented of all his sins. At three o'clock in the afternoon the gaoler reported to the doctor:

"No. 310 is dead in his cell, sir."

"Oh, is he? Well, those that can't live must die. We will all have to go the same way. Have the body put in a coffin, and it had better be buried as soon as night comes."

"Isn't it to go to the hospital?"

"No. They don't want any more just now."

A plain wood coffin was taken into the corridor, and the body of 310, which was already growing rigid, was placed in it, and the burden was then carried to a shed in the yard, which was used as a mortuary. A convict named Saunders screwed down the coffin lid, but before he had finished his work he dropped his tools and ran to the doctor, and exclaimed:

"I believe Harney is in a trance, or something of the sort, for as true as I live I saw his chest heave and his eyelids flutter as I put the cover on."

"Bosh!" shouted the doctor.

"But I did, sir."

"Look here, Saunders, I shall report to the warden that you had better be returned to the blacksmith shop. When a convict has the audacity to stand up and tell the prison doctor that he doesn't know his business, one or the other should go."

"But I meant no disrespect, sir."

"Perhaps not; but when I pronounce a man dead of typhoid fever—aye, when I have already made my report to that effect—he is either dead or I'm a fool."

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I'll overlook it this time. Have him buried as soon as it is dark. I don't like the idea of keeping dead bodies round here."

Soon after dark the cart drove out of the prison yard with its burden of death, and the burial party consisted of the sexton employed for the purpose and a trusty convict. They had the grave to dig, and they had not yet completed it when we arrived on the ground and carefully crept into a position within earshot. They were in a hurry to have the job off their hands, and they had not gone down over two feet when the sexton said to the convict:

"That's deep enough for him or any other dead man. Nobody's to know whether he's two or seven feet down."

They made only ten minutes' work of filling up the grave, and they had scarcely reached the cart when the two of us were throwing out the dirt. When we came to the coffin we lifted it out, removed the lid, took out the body, and then the coffin was returned to the grave, and the dirt shovelled back. In three quarters of an hour from Harney's first burial we had him in our room, and had escaped any chance for suspicion of body-snatching.

During our last interview in prison he had exacted of me the promise that I would make no efforts at resuscitation until twenty-four hours had passed. He intended to die for that period of time, and he firmly believed his will could control events. After twenty-four hours had passed I was at liberty to use any means I thought best.

We undressed the body, wrapped it in woollen blankets, and laid it on a bed. On a stand beside the bed we placed water, wine, and food, and then left the room and turned the key in the door. This was at eleven o'clock at night, and Harney had been dead eight hours. The twenty-four hours would not expire until three o'clock in the afternoon of the next day.

We did not go near the room until half an hour before the expected time, and the moment we looked on the dead man's face we realised that reaction had set in. The pallor was disappearing, colour was returning to the lips, and there was a moisture which felt warm to the touch.

We drew up our chairs without a word, and paid the keenest attention to what was to outrival any experience in any doctor's career. At a quarter to three there was a fluttering of the eyelids, and I put my hand to his heart and could detect a faint pulsation. The colour continued to come to his face, signs of life were multiplied each moment, and at five minutes to three Harney opened his eyes and looked full at us. We saw at once that he was conscious and in full possession of all his senses, and I bent over him and whispered:

"We have kept our promise. You died in prison, were buried by the officials, and we dug you up and brought you here. It is just twenty-four hours. Remain quiet until your strength returns."

I fed him with wine and food, and five minutes later he dropped off into a natural and healthy sleep, which lasted four hours. When he awoke he was ready to sit up and talk, and, after eating and drinking very heartily, he was able to walk across the room. When asked for his experience, he replied:

"The only way I can describe it is to say that I lay down on my back on the floor, held my breath, closed my eyes, and gradually became unconscious. It was perhaps ten minutes before I lost my senses. It was like falling asleep, only it seemed as if I was melting away to nothing. I kept repeating to myself: 'You must awake at three o'clock to-morrow,' and that was the very last thing I can remember. My coming back to life was like awakening from sleep, but I feel weak and tremble as if I had just got up from a fit of sickness."

Well, Harney was out of prison, and I had such facts and points on the subject of suspended animation as would make the public believe me a liar and a fraud if I wrote the solemn truth.

Was he ever suspected? No, but the convict Saunders, whose time soon expired, told how Harney had been buried alive, and the story created so much feeling that the grave was opened. They found the body gone, but the theory was that it had been stolen for the medical college. I was the doctor called to attend Harney in his last illness, which, strangely enough, was typhoid fever, and not half an hour before he died he whispered to me with a smile on his face:

"It will be for good this time, doctor."

And so it was.

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THE OUTLAWS OF THE AIR.

By GEORGE GRIFFITH,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," &c.

SUMMARY.

MAX RENAULT—leading spirit of Anarchist Autonomie Group No. 7, who has joined the Utopians (a Socialistic colony on an island in the South Pacific) in order to steal the air-ship they are building, which he succeeds in doing.

FRANZ HARTOG—a German engineer, in league with Renault, who steals a very fast torpedo-boat destroyer from the Russian Government to levy blackmail on the Atlantic.

SIR HARRY MILTON—a wealthy young English nobleman, who by chance comes across the island of Utopia, in his yacht, the *Calypso*, and subsequently devotes the whole of his fortune to hunting down Renault and Hartog.

HERBERT WYNDHAM—a lieutenant in the British Navy who is travelling with Sir Harry for the benefit of his health, and who determines to resign his commission and couple his energies with those of Sir Harry in destroying the Anarchists, on account of the fact that he has been stabbed by Renault when the latter attempts to carry off Violet in the air-ship.

FREDERICK AUSTEN—the inventor of the air-ship, who shares its secret with Edward Adams, Dr. Edwards, and Ambrose Millar, three other Utopians.

FRANK MARKHAM—the young captain of the Utopian yacht, *Mermaid*.

VIOLET MILTON—Sir Harry's sister, and Lieutenant Wyndham's sweetheart, is fearfully injured by throwing herself out of the air-ship on which Renault has tried to carry her off.

LEA CASSILIS (alias MME. DAIL)—a member of Autonomie Group No. 7 with whom Renault is in love.

DORA MERTON—a fair Utopian, who has made an impression on Sir Harry.

LUCY SUMMERS—another fair Utopian.

Renault, after levying blackmail with Hartog on the high seas, returns to Utopia with the object of destroying the colony, but finds it deserted. After a time he goes to Europe in the air-ship *Vengeur*, and, together with Lea Cassilis, visits the Criterion Theatre in London, where he is recognised by Sir Harry and Lieutenant Wyndham, who effect his capture. He is tried, and condemned to death, but is rescued while on the way to the scaffold by his confederates in the air-ship. London is then bombarded by the *Vengeur*. The Utopians in England have built an air-ship, and just as Sir Harry and his friends have started on a voyage, three other air-ships appear on the scene.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A FLYING FIGHT.

MR. AUSTEN followed the direction of Sir Harry's finger with his field-glasses, after locking the steering-wheel for the moment.

"I'm afraid there is no doubt about it," he said, putting the glass down and releasing the wheel again. "As you say, there are three of them, and they are coming up very fast. Of course, they can't be anything but a portion of the Anarchist fleet."

"That's quite certain," said Sir Harry. "Simply because they can't be ours. Evidently their spies have managed to find out where we were building the *War-Hawk*, and those three ships have been sent to smash her up before she could get into the air. If they'd been half an hour sooner they'd have blown us and the *War-Hawk* into little pieces—and with Violet and Dora on board too! Phew! It gives one the shivers to think of it. However, thank God, we are all right now. The question is, what shall we do—fight, or run away?"

"Run away, by all means," replied Mr. Austen, with a grim sort of smile and a meaning twinkle in his eye. "I don't know whether it has ever struck you, but the fact is, that in aerial warfare to run away will not only be to fight, but to fight under the most favourable circumstances. The first and in fact the only axiom in aerial tactics will be: Get your enemy behind you and below you. Then smash him up."

"I see, I see. Of course it will be!" exclaimed Sir Harry. "An air-ship flying at a hundred miles an hour can't use her bow guns with any effect, while her stern guns will be even more effective than if she was stationary. What a fool I was not to think of that before! Well then, we shall have a trial of heels first, and then a little gun practice at long range, I suppose?"

"Just so," said Mr. Austen. "Always supposing that those fellows are foolish enough to follow us. Now, as I have had more practice than you have, I'll stop here and manage the ship, and you go aft and fight the two stern guns. You can tell me through the speaking-tube what you want in the way of speed or elevation."

"Yes, that's the plan," said Sir Harry turning to leave the conning-tower. "They've got the awning down and everything snug by this time, so we're ready for full-speed whenever you like."

"Very good," said Mr. Austen sending a signal to the engine-room as he spoke. "We'll go up to four thousand feet first. As soon as your range-finder tells you that they are within five miles you can open fire. Don't be afraid of the ammunition. Our gunners want practice, and we can get plenty more at Lundy. If we can get those fellows to follow us we'll work round there and join forces with the *Volante*."

"All right," said Sir Harry. "I won't spare the shells, I can tell you. I only hope that blackguard Renault is on board one of them, and that I get a shell squarely into her."

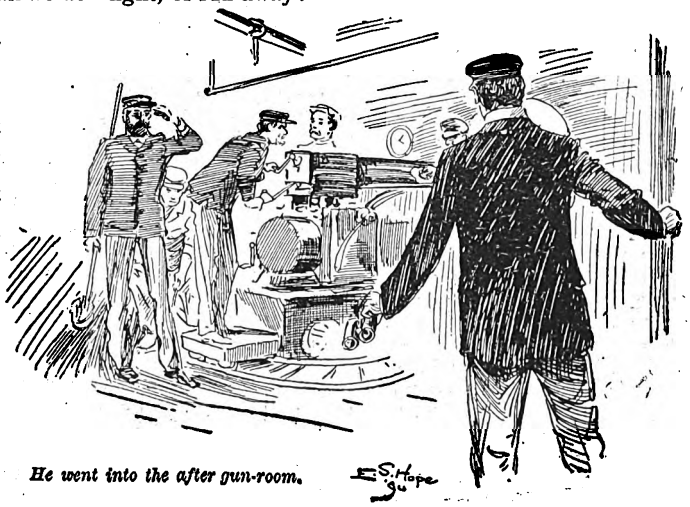
So saying, he closed the door of the conning-tower and descended into the hull of the ship, which was now rising rapidly into the upper strata of the air. He paid a visit first to his sister's cabin and briefly explained the position of affairs to her and Dora, assuring them that there was no danger—as there really was not as long as they could keep the enemy behind them—and then he went into the after gun-room where he found the crews standing by the two long guns, which had already been loaded.

The three Anarchist vessels were now about six miles astern, and nearly two thousand feet below the *War-Hawk*. Of course, at that distance they were mere specks floating in the ocean of atmosphere, and to hit them with a point-blank aim was quite out of the question. Still, as the *War-Hawk* was only moving at a speed of about sixty miles an hour, while they were travelling nearly a hundred, the distance rapidly decreased, and every moment they became more and more distinct.

"What are you loaded with, Martin?" said Sir Harry to the captain of the starboard gun.

"Twenty pound mélinite in both guns," was the reply.

"I'm afraid that won't do for these fellows," said Sir Harry. "But still, you can try the range with them. I think they've sighted us, for they are evidently rising. Take the two outside ones and try your luck."



He went into the after gun-room.

The two gun captains took a careful sight through the range-finders mounted on the breeches of the guns, and then came a long and a sharp whistling hiss as the air pent up in the breech-chambers under the pressure of a hundred atmospheres rushed out, driving the projectiles before it. Sir Harry, with his glasses, had no difficulty in following the two shells, flying as they did in a line with the flight of the *War-Hawk*, until they vanished into the distance.

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No result visible to the naked eye followed, but as he took his glasses down from his eyes he said:

"Bravo! Capital shots both of them. You got the direction excellently, and I don't think they can have been fifty yards out, either of them. Now we'll try a couple of gelatine time-shells."

These were shells containing blasting-gelatine and a tube filled with liquid oxygen. As the guns were being loaded again Sir Harry said:

"What do your range-finders say now?"

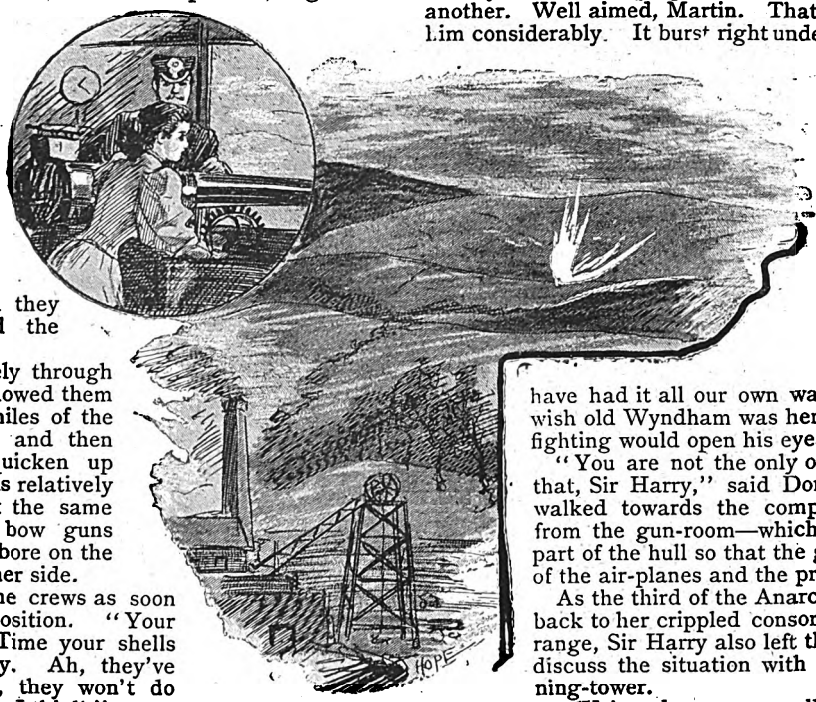
"Coming down to nine thousand yards and fifteen hundred feet elevation."

"Then set the shells for six seconds, and let go as soon as you are ready."

Almost as soon as the words were out of his mouth the compressed air hissed through the barrels again, and Sir Harry began counting.

"One—two—three—four—five—six. Ah! there they go. Elevation perfect, but about a hundred yards astern of them. Still, it has shaken them up considerably. Ah! I thought so, they're scattering."

The moment after the two transient specks of light had appeared in the distance against the now darkening background of the sky, telling of the bursting of the two shells, the two outer Anarchist vessels swerved sharply to right and left, and, still mounting upwards and travelling at the utmost speed of which they were capable, swung round in two wide curves as though they were striving to head the *War-Hawk* off.



Saw a brilliant spout of flame burst up out of the dark, heather-clad hills.

Watching them closely through his glasses, Sir Harry allowed them to come within three miles of the *War-Hawk's* quarters, and then asked Mr. Austen to quicken up until the *War-Hawk* was relatively stationary to them. At the same time he had the two bow guns swung round until they bore on the Anarchist vessels on either side.

"Now," he said to the crews as soon as the guns were in position. "Your range is three miles. Time your shells for that and blaze away. Ah, they've opened fire too. Well, they won't do much harm at this speed, I think."

His last exclamation was called forth by the bursting of a couple of shells about a mile on either side of the *War-Hawk*, and some three hundred feet below her. What Mr. Austen had said was borne out to the letter. The four vessels were now moving at a speed of a hundred and twenty miles an hour through the air, and therefore the wind was rushing past them with a force half as great again as that of a hurricane. Consequently, as the Anarchist gunners very soon found, it was impossible to take any effective aim with guns into the muzzles of which the air was being forced at this enormous pressure.

But with the *War-Hawk's* artillery the conditions were reversed. Her guns being trained aft at a very acute angle, the wind swept harmlessly past their muzzles, and her projectiles, hurled forward with an initial velocity of three thousand feet a second, sped undisturbed on their way. Her gunners now settled down steadily to their work, and every shell burst nearer than the one before it to one or other of the Anarchist vessels. At length one from the starboard forward gun burst fairly under the air-planes of the nearest of them.

"Bravo!" cried Sir Harry, who had watched the explosion through his glasses. "That's crippled him at last."

And so it had done; for like a bird with a broken wing, the stricken ship stopped, turned over, and vanished in the distance as the others sped onwards. By this time they were travelling over the Cheviot Hills in a south-westerly direction. Those on board the *War-Hawk*, looking back into the gloom behind and beneath them, saw a brilliant spout of flame burst up out of the midst of the dark heather-clad hills far away in the distance astern.

"What was that, Sir Harry?" asked Dora, with a tremor of awe in her voice. She had come from Violet's cabin with a message, and was standing by his side watching the effects of the shot through the open slide through which the barrel of the gun projected.

"That was an Anarchist air-ship loaded with explosives falling on to the earth from a height of about three thousand feet," replied Sir Harry gravely. "That is what it means to be crippled in an aerial engagement. Horrible, isn't it?"

"Horrible!" cried Dora with a shudder. "There is no word that would describe it. It seems too awful even to think about. Is that what would happen to us if they hit us?"

"Most probably," he said, still more gravely. "And that is why we are keeping them behind us. Ha! there goes another. Well aimed, Martin. That appears to have shaken him considerably. It burst right under his stern, didn't it?"

"Yes, and crippled his propellers, I think," said the captain of the starboard after-gun, flushing with pleasure at the result of his shot. "She is dropping out of sight fast, and there's the other one turning round to go and help her I suppose."

"So she is," cried Sir Harry. "Now, Miss Dora, you go back to Violet and tell her we have had it all our own way so far. Don't I only wish old Wyndham was here. I think this sort of fighting would open his eyes considerably."

"You are not the only one on board who wishes that, Sir Harry," said Dora with a laugh as she walked towards the companion-way that led up from the gun-room—which was placed in the lowest part of the hull so that the guns could be fired clear of the air-planes and the propellers.

As the third of the Anarchist air-ships had gone back to her crippled consort, who was now beyond range, Sir Harry also left the gun-room and went to discuss the situation with Mr. Austen in the conning-tower.

"We've done very well," said the engineer; "very well indeed, considering this is the first bit of gunnery practice our gunners have had. I hope that one we sent down didn't fall on a town or a village. We can't be very far from some of the towns on the North Tyne. Good heavens! Why, an explosion like that would be enough to lay a whole town in ruins. I'm afraid this aerial warfare is going to be something much more horrible than the old-fashioned sort, and goodness knows that's bad enough."

"I'm afraid so," replied Sir Harry; "but I don't think that fellow fell anywhere but on the moors, and he wouldn't do much harm there except to himself. I'd give something to know that that blackguard Renault had been on board of her. But what do you think we had better do now? Shall we go back and see what those fellows are up to? There is a good moon getting up now, and we shall have plenty of light to see what they are doing."

"Yes," replied Mr. Austen, "I think we may as well. I'll tell Markham to go up another thousand feet, and then we'll try if we can get over them. Just see that there are no lights showing anywhere about the ship when you go back to the gun-room, will you? We mustn't let them see us coming if we can help it. Tell me when you want to use the guns again.

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We'll go back at sixty miles, and then you'll be able to pick them up easily."

As Sir Harry left the conning-tower the blades of the lifting-fans sprang out from the masts and began to revolve faster and faster as the speed of the air-ship decreased. At the same time Mr. Austen inclined the planes, and the *War-Hawk*, swinging around, mounted on an upward curve in an easterly direction.

As she did so a scene of strange and almost indescribable beauty opened out under the wondering eyes of Dora and Violet as they sat at the window of their cabin, quite oblivious for the time being of any danger, and wholly absorbed in amazed admiration of the marvels of their first aerial voyage. They were far above the clouds now, and the great bank of cumulus to the westward which had looked so dark from the earth was now a fairyland of snow and opal, stretching away into the infinite distance in endless ranges of hills of the most fantastic outline, bathed in the mingled silver of the moonlight and the crimson afterglow of the sun that had set behind them.

To the eastward there were only a few isolated masses of cloud floating like islands of snow in the ocean of air, and below these, thousands of feet beneath them, lay the dark outline of the land and the shimmer of the moonlight on the water beyond it. As the *War-Hawk* swept round, two little grey patches close together appeared far below and in front of them. One was the crippled air-ship and the other her consort lying about fifty yards away from her.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

AN ESCAPE AND A CAPTURE.

"WHAT are we to do with those fellows?" said Sir Harry to Mr. Austen as the *War-Hawk* slowed up and hung suspended in the air some fifteen hundred feet above the two Anarchist air-ships. "It doesn't seem quite the thing to blow them to pieces in cold blood, and yet——"

"My dear sir," replied Mr. Austen almost sharply, "please remember whom we're fighting. These people are not honourable adversaries; they are only vermin, and as vermin we must destroy them. There, look at that! Do you think any human being with a soul to call his own would do a thing like that—leave his consort helpless under his enemies' guns! Wilson, Vincent, get your guns to bear on that scoundrel and see if you can't wing him before he gets out of range."

The latter part of Mr. Austen's speech went down the speaking-tube communicating with the forward part of the gun-room, and almost instantly the bang of the two mingled reports sounded through the ship, and the two shells went screaming after the uninjured air-ship, which had literally sprung away from the side of her helpless consort the instant that the *War-Hawk* had been discovered hovering over them.

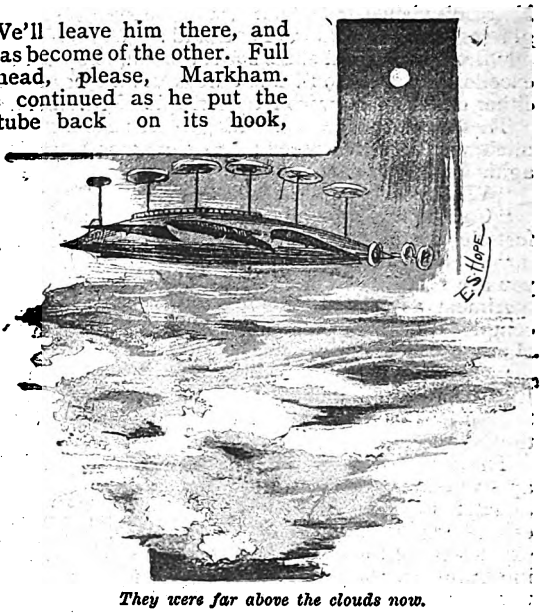
Unfortunately the order had been given a moment too late, and the shells passed astern of the rapidly moving vessel and struck the earth far below, expending their energy harmlessly on the heather. Before the guns could be re-charged the Anarchist craft, with her planes inclined downwards, had passed like a flash underneath a light bank of clouds and vanished.

"That's my fault," said Sir Harry bluntly. "I don't think I understand this kind of warfare yet. Kill or be killed seem the only alternatives. That fellow may do untold mischief before we can catch him again."

"Exactly," said Mr. Austen drily. "But it was my mistake, as well as yours. We ought to have fired on them both the moment we came to rest. However, we won't let that one escape."

"Not if I can help it," added Sir Harry. "I'd like to take the beggar prisoner and hang the crew in due form; but while we were doing that I suppose that other fellow would come back and blow us to pieces."

"Stop a minute—I don't see why we shouldn't if we only take proper precautions," interrupted Mr. Austen. "I think that other fellow has had quite enough of fighting for the present, and this one is absolutely helpless; if he hadn't been held have followed the other. As far as I can see he's only able to use his lifting fans to stop himself falling on to the earth. We'll leave him there, and see what has become of the other. Full speed ahead, please, Markham. Now," he continued as he put the speaking-tube back on its hook, "we'll try what the *War-Hawk* can do in the way of speed."



They were far above the clouds now.

As he spoke, the blades of the lifting fans fell down beside the masts and were caught in the clips which held them in position. The wind began to whistle, and then to sing, and then to scream past the masts and stays as the air-ship gathered way, and, with the whole 9,000 horse-power of her engines concentrated on the propellers, went rushing through the cloven atmosphere at a speed of three miles a minute, or a hundred and eighty miles an hour. Keeping her air-planes slightly inclined, Mr. Austen sent her on an upward path to the eastward, the direction which the Anarchist craft had taken.

"We won't give him any chance to get above us," he said to Sir Harry, "and if we can get over him and in front of him we may get a chance of another shot at him. Yes, there he is. Look! You can just see his outline in the moonlight against the background of that moor down yonder."

Sir Harry looked downwards and saw what looked like a grey shadow in the bright moonlight hanging between them and the land. He brought his glasses up to his eyes for a moment and then said:

"Yes, and what's more, we have the heels of him. We are overhauling him hand over fist."

"So we are," said Mr. Austen, "thanks to the lavishness of your expenditure on the *War-Hawk*. I think I can congratulate you on having the fastest air-ship afloat, and of course that means the most formidable one. I should say he was making about thirty miles an hour less than we are, and of course if he means to run for it he is doing his best."

"Well," laughed Sir Harry, "I'm thankful my money has been of some good at any rate, for I am exasperatingly conscious of the fact that I haven't distinguished myself very much since we got afloat."

"All in good time, my dear sir," said Mr. Austen good-humouredly. "Remember this is your first aerial voyage, to say nothing of your first battle in the air, and, added to that, you must remember that I've studied aerial navigation and tactics in theory for more years than you have thought about them for months. I don't suppose it will be very long before you'll be able to take the *War-Hawk* into action without my assistance, and make her the terror to her enemies that she ought to be."

"Well, however that may be, I am lucky in having some one who can teach me," laughed Sir Harry in reply. "And I've certainly learnt the most valuable lesson of all to-night, for I know now that I know nothing at all about it. So, for the present at least, you will please consider yourself in supreme command. You take entire charge of the ship, and tell me what to do and I'll do it."

"Very well, that's practical, to say the very least of it," said Mr. Austen, looking at him approvingly out of his keen grey eyes. "And now, if you'll just take a look round and

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see the guns are all ready and the men in their places, and then come back here, I'll give you your first lesson in aerial navigation. Meanwhile, we shall have overtaken that fellow I think, and then perhaps we shall see some fun."

Sir Harry, feeling a little out of sorts with himself, but still satisfied that he had taken the most sensible course in reducing himself for the time being to the condition of a pupil, made his round of inspection, and by the time he got back to the conning-tower he found, as Mr. Austen had said, that they had already overtaken the fugitive, which was now floating, a grey speck, nearly two thousand feet below them.

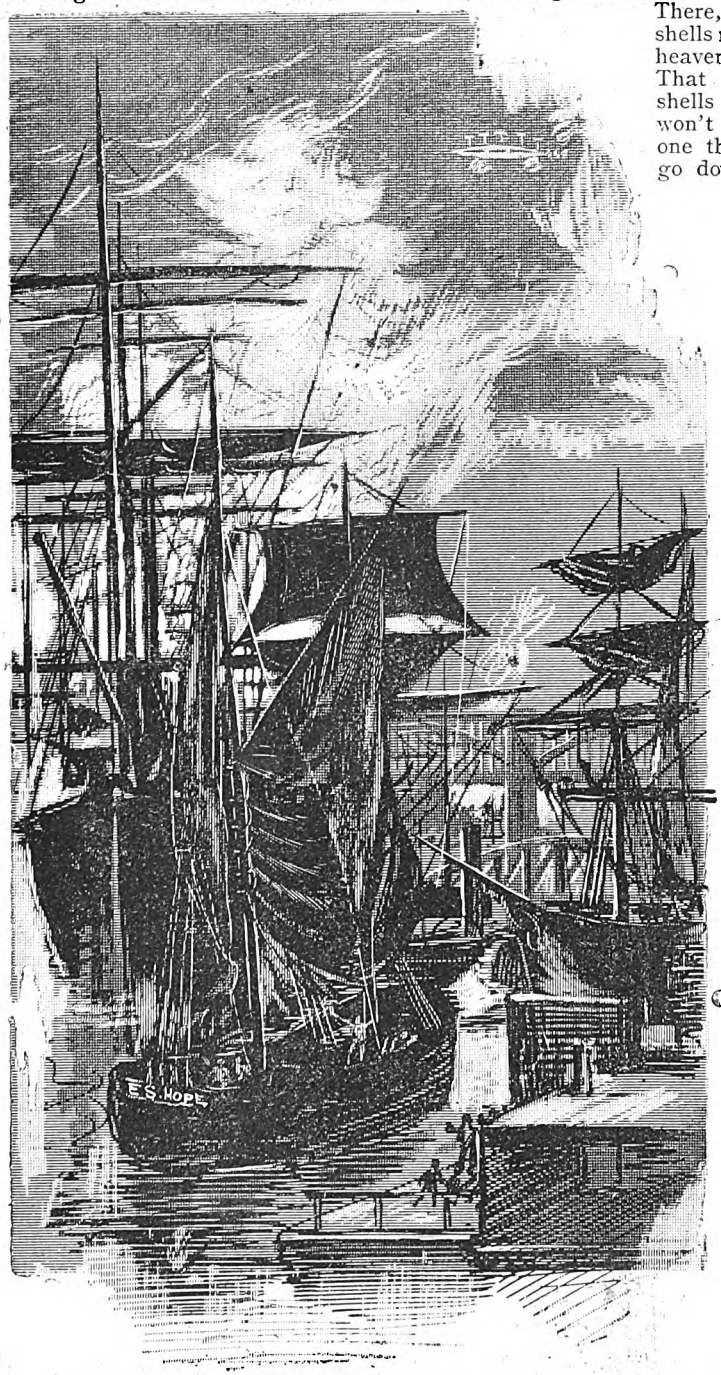
"We'll get a little further ahead," said Mr. Austen, "and then we can open fire on him with the stern guns. But I don't want to do that yet, because we must be passing over the borders of Northumberland and Durham now, and that's crowded with towns, so if we did happen to send him to the earth we might kill hundreds of people below in doing it. We'll wait till we get out to sea, and then it won't matter.

"Eh? What? Hang the fellow, he knows his business a great deal better than those others did! Do you see that crowd of lights down there. Well, that's Newcastle and Gateshead, and those yonder to the eastward are the towns along the Tyne to South Shields and Tynemouth. There he goes—he's dropping down towards them. He knows we daren't fire at him because, if we miss him, our shells will strike in the town, and if we hit him he'll just drop like a huge bomb-shell into Newcastle and lay half the town in ruins. Confound him, what are we to do?"

"And look!" almost shouted Sir Harry, grasping him by the arm and pointing downwards to where myriads of lights indicated the position of Newcastle and Gateshead. "He's bombarding the towns himself out of pure spite and revenge for our having destroyed his two consorts!"

It was only too true. Although the Anarchist air-ship apparently lay at the mercy of the *War-Hawk*, in reality she commanded the situation. True, she offered a comparatively easy mark to her guns, but then if a shell struck her anywhere but in the magazine she would be crippled and drop like a stone with all her cargo of explosives upon the town, while every shot that missed her—and in the deceptive half-light of the moon the aim was anything but a certain one—would strike some part of the town below and do just as much damage as her own shells.

"What the deuce are we to do?" exclaimed Mr. Austen angrily, as he saw the Anarchist's shells bursting, apparently in half a dozen parts of the town at once. "Who on earth would have thought of the brute trying a move like that! There, see, he is dropping fire-shells now into the shipping. Great heavens, look how it's blazing! That must be awful stuff those shells are loaded with. Oh, this won't do at all! There is only one thing to be done. We must go down and get about a couple of miles away from him and then fire horizontally at him over the town."



"Dropping fire-shells into the shipping."

"And expose ourselves to his shells while we are doing it," interjected Sir Harry. "I'm afraid that would hardly be prudent, would it?"

"No, no; you're right, that won't do," said Mr. Austen. "If we lose our elevation we give away our advantage, and we can't get him within range of our guns without bringing ourselves within range of his, and the worst of it is that the first shell that hits settles the matter. Confound the clouds! Look at them coming up there from the sea, and a sea-mist, too, by all that's unfortunate! Was there ever such a miserable climate as this? Ah, there he goes—I thought so. That's what the blackguard's been waiting for. We've lost him!"

Before the last word had left his lips the Anarchist air-ship had executed a daring but perfectly successful manœuvre. A dense bank of cloud had drifted rapidly in from the sea, followed by the rolling masses of a veritable sea-mist which swept up like a vast cloud of white smoke, mingling with the darker smoke of the fires and the explosions and the thousands of chimneys of the two towns.

Through this he dropped suddenly like a stone towards the earth, and, once enveloped in it, he set his propellers to work at their utmost speed and went skimming away out to sea at fully a hundred and fifty miles an hour only a few hundred feet above the house-tops, leaving a dozen fires blazing furiously behind them in the town and on the river.

"Outwitted after all! And just as we had him at our mercy if it hadn't been for the town," exclaimed Mr. Austen. "And yet, what could we have done?"

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"Nothing," said Sir Harry. "There was no help for it. We couldn't have fired on him while he was between us and all those thousands of helpless people down yonder. I suppose it's no use chasing him any further?"

"Oh, no, not the slightest," said Mr. Austen angrily. "He's given us the slip completely this time. A needle in a hay-stack is nothing to an air-ship flying a hundred and fifty miles through a fog. Confound the weather!—and he was no fool either who was in command of that ship."

"Suppose it was Renault himself," said Sir Harry. "By heavens, if I thought that I'd have blown her up if it had wrecked half Newcastle! Why the deuce didn't that strike me before."

"Well, we can't do anything now," said Mr. Austen. "Whether it was Renault or not he has outwitted us this time, and there is an end of it. Still, the *War-Hawk* hasn't done very badly for her first two or three hours in the air. We've destroyed one of the enemy and crippled another—and that reminds me, we may as well go back and see what has happened to that other one."

"And if we can only collar the crew we may find out whether Renault was in command of the expedition," said Sir Harry. "I shall never forgive myself if I hear that he was on board that brute that escaped."

Mr. Austen had carefully noted the course steered by compass in pursuit of the third air-ship as well as the time occupied, consequently he was able to run the *War-Hawk* back from Newcastle almost to the very spot where the disabled Anarchist had been left. Then, from a height of four thousand feet, her two search-lights were brought into play ahead and astern, and before long one of them fell on the object of their search, still hanging almost motionless in mid-air, supported by her rapidly revolving fans.

Her three propellers had been so shattered and twisted, and her stern had been so much damaged by the explosion of the shell that it was impossible for her to move a yard horizontally by her own power, and hence she was drifting to the westward at a rate of about twelve miles an hour before the breeze that had brought the unlucky mist, under cover of which her consort had escaped.

The *War-Hawk* with her two search-lights had, of course, been sighted by the Anarchists before she sighted them. It is hardly necessary to say that she was as absolutely at her mercy as a balloon would have been—more so, in fact; for an uninjured balloon would probably have, by this time, outsoared the *War-Hawk* and sought safety in the upper regions of the air. As it was, all the available force of her partially injured engines just sufficed to keep her afloat, and that was all.

"Jah, ve surrender!"

The *War-Hawk's* head-light flashed straight down upon her, and, half-blinded by the rays, her crew looked up and saw the two forward guns with their muzzles depressed and converging upon them. Then they looked down at the dark earth lying below them, as it were, at the bottom of a gulf more than three thousand feet deep. A shot that crippled their lifting fans would send them headlong to death and destruction. A shell bursting in the hull of their ship would explode their magazine and scatter them and their craft in fragments through the air. It was no wonder that, under the circumstances, the courage which was equal to the destruction of defenceless towns or the blowing up of ocean liners swiftly degenerated into panic. There was one chance left, and that was surrender, and they took it. A white flag fluttered from a flag-staff astern.

"Ah!" said Mr. Austen as soon as he made it out. "They seem to think discretion is the better part of valour."

"Which means," said Sir Harry, "that they prefer hanging to being blown to bits. Of course, we can't give them any other terms."

"Certainly not," said Mr. Austen. "Still, I would much rather hand them over to the proper authorities if we can do so safely, than kill them ourselves in cold blood. And, besides, the moral effect would be very much greater. We'll go down and see what they have to say. I don't think they'll try any treachery with these two guns trained on them. It wouldn't pay."

Then he sent a message to the engine-room, and the *War-Hawk* sank slowly down, still keeping her guns trained on the Anarchists, until only a hundred yards separated the two vessels.

"Will you do the shouting, please? Your lungs are a good deal better than mine."

"Oh, yes, with pleasure," replied Sir Harry. "Though it's the first time I've been on speaking terms with these gentry."

So saying, he threw open a slide in the forward part of the conning-tower, and sang out as though he had been hailing a ship from the deck of his yacht:

"Air-ship, ahoy! Who are you, and does that white flag mean surrender?"

A little thick-set man, standing on the hull and holding on to the after-mast with one hand, made an expressive gesture with the other, and replied in a high, shrill voice and a strong German accent:

"Dis is de air-ship *Vengeur*, and ve are vat you call Anarchists. Jah, ve surrender! By tam, dere is noding else to do!"

(To be continued.)

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AT CLIPPER GAP.

A STORY OF THE AMERICAN WAR.

"THOSE hounds must be driven out," said the general, lowering his field-glasses and turning a pair of cold grey eyes upon a staff officer who was standing near.

"If we could get a battery into Clipper Gap," responded the officer addressed, "the question might be soon settled, and at close range. The configuration of the land and the bore of our guns combine, it seems to me, to make any other solution impossible."

"Clipper Gap," echoed the general, rising visibly in his saddle, and then settling back with a sarcastic smile. "Clipper Gap, did you say, Colonel White? You are talking at random. Surely your suggestion is not feasible. You ought to know that a battery could not live to unlimber there, but even if it got into action—why, good Heavens, man, you must be dreaming!"

"Colonel White looked hurt, and instead of meeting the sharp glance of his commander he allowed his eyes to wander down to the left and in the direction of an old plantation dwelling, where a masked mortar battery had an hour before opened on the Federal lines with terrible effect.

"I only mentioned the matter, general," replied the staff officer, after a few moments of silence. "I shall be glad to execute any orders that you may have in the consummation of a better plan."

"But, my good man," returned the general, "a gunner could not live five minutes at the Gap. It would be downright murder to order a battery in there. Colonel White, would you lead a battery into Clipper Gap?"

"What a question!" replied the other. "What a question for a soldier! To be sure, I would lead a battery into the Gap, or anywhere else, if ordered to do so. By the way, general, this would be a great opportunity for your brave Captain Langhorne."

General Colby laughed heartily.

"Can't you forgive me, White, for saying Langhorne is the bravest man in the Third corps? You grow sarcastic every time you refer to the conversation of last evening. Langhorne is brave, brave as a lion. I know him under fire. Southerner, is he not? Colonel Williams told me that he had two brothers in the rebel army. Did you know him before the war?"

"Yes," answered the other, looking in the direction of the house. "I knew him very well. We were in the same class at the University of Virginia. Rivals first for honours in the schools, and later for the hand of the fairest woman in America.

"Langhorne got the girl, who, by the way, was of northern birth. Perhaps that accounts for his fighting sympathies. His people are all on the other side. He lives in this part somewhere, I believe. As to his bravery, I never considered him brave at all. You will say at once, general, that this is a prejudice arising from our early relations. Not so, I am not inclined to depreciate Langhorne's war record, which we all admit is splendid. I say simply that he is not a man of great physical courage."

During the brief recital the general's face wore a smile of innocent raillery, but as White concluded a stern expression stole over his countenance. He thrust his field-glass into a silver-bound case, and almost fiercely beat the long legs of his cavalry boots with a pair of heavy gauntlets, which he had taken off a few moments before. He was a man of imperious disposition and violent temper, with little liking for opposition from any source. White was a distant relative and trusted adviser, but it was evident he had gone too far. When the first flush of his wrath had been beaten out upon his boot, he was enabled to speak, with some degree of moderation, the thoughts that had sent a wicked expression to his face.

"Colonel White," he began deliberately, "you impugn the courage of one of the bravest men in the service—a man whom I have learned to love and respect. I tell you he is as brave as a lion. His courage is always tempered with the coolest judgment, the very highest form of courage. Do you remember the day at——"

Here the general broke off abruptly, and drawing out the field-glass, fixed his sight on the house that stood on a long stretch of level ground below, whence rose, at frequent intervals, white puffs of smoke, telling of the cannonade still furiously waged from the mortars of the rebel battery. In a moment he broke off his inspection, and turning to Colonel White, said:

"Perhaps your suggestion of the gap as a point of action is not bad. I really do not see any way out of it, and just to prove that I am right I shall order Captain Langhorne in there. Some one has to go, and I am convinced that Langhorne has the right kind of stuff in him. He can wipe away the arrogant conceit of military prowess in three or four hundred rebel hearts, and at the same time wipe away the arrogant conceit of snap judgment in the heart of a brother officer," and General Colby again smiled good-naturedly upon his staff-officer.

Whether this opinion came from an honest conviction of military necessity or from the motive of vindicating an insolent judgment that was wont to consider itself infallible, we are not to judge. Men have been slaughtered before and will be again without apparent motive of any kind. Calling his orderly, and pointing to a group of mounted officers that rested on a little knoll three hundred or four hundred yards away, he said, "Tell Captain Langhorne to come here at once." The orderly saluted and withdrew.

General Colby looked at his watch, nervously slapping the neck of his black mare with the bridle rein. "We shall now see," he muttered half aloud, "who is qualified to weigh the qualities of a soldier."

Colonel White, who turned deadly pale, did not move a muscle or make reply.

Presently there was a clatter of hoofs in the rear, and Captain Langhorne reined up a big chestnut colt before his commander and saluted. His light brown hair framed a face of delicate refinement, which was lighted up by blue eyes that might have belonged to a woman. He wore his soiled forage cap a little on one side, and his tunic was open for a space of three buttons at the top, exposing a white shirt front.

General Colby looked first at Colonel White, then frigidly returned the salute of the young captain.

"Captain Langhorne," he began, and his voice trembled slightly, "it is necessary that those devils at yonder house should be dislodged. Take your battery to the gorge directly in their front, known as Clipper Gap. It is narrow, and you will be able to use only one gun at a time. In getting your position follow the ravine where we were this morning as far as possible. It will afford some cover."

The captain looked straight at his commander. The commander looked straight at his captain, Colonel White looked straight into his soul. Captain Langhorne broke the silence:

"Pardon me, general, did you say Clipper Gap? Did I understand the order to open fire on the house opposite the gorge?"

"Captain Langhorne, is not my order clear?"

"Yes, sir, quite clear, but I wanted to ask if—if—it is absolutely necessary—if—er—er——"

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"Yes," thundered the general, "the order is imperative. Are you a coward? Have you——" But in the midst of this furious tirade Captain Langhorne again respectfully saluted, and then galloped away to execute the order of his chief.

Soon the notes of a bugle floated over from the rear and right, and the two officers turned to see Langhorne's battery sweep at full gallop across a gentle depression directly in the rear and then disappear behind the high hills that skirted the ravine.

Once more they come into sight as they leave the ravine; and, debouching in the open, plunge full in the face of the enemy's guns, into the mouth of the gorge, unlimber, and go into action.

Then from the house, now less than 1,000 yards away, twelve hitherto silent pieces opened their brazen mouths, carrying death and desolation into the ranks of the Federal battery. In twenty minutes the horses had all been killed or disabled.

Then the guns were run up by hand, discharged, and by the same method returned for loading. The slaughter was fearful, and in this vortex of fire and blood and death all order was soon forgotten. There were only two things to do—load and fire. And they did that well, many dying in the doing, but all believing, no doubt, that it was very glorious to die for one's flag and country.

The fire of Langhorne's men was rapid and accurate, as attested by frequent changes in position of some of the rebels' guns, and by the silence of others. About sunset the fire of the opposing forces ceased altogether, and ten minutes later six men—all that were left of the Federal battery—dragged their weary and wounded limbs into the heavy undergrowth that covered the slopes of the gorge on either side. Some went to rest with the hopes of recovery and others to die. It was victory dearly bought.

Two hours later, having dined comfortably at his headquarters, after sending a detachment over to the gap with the purpose of looking for the dead and wounded, General Colby, with Colonel White and another member of his staff, rode down to the house which had borne the brunt of the Federal fire, and from which the rebels had hastily retreated simultaneously with the discharge of the last gun.

There was ruin everywhere about the house, which was apparently deserted. Only the shell of what a few hours before had been a fine old residence of colonial architecture now remained to tell of the cruel ravages of war. All about were evidences of easy living, marking the dismantled habitation as the home of a wealthy planter. After a walk about the place for nearly half an hour some one mentioned the cellar, and the general, who was not half a bad commander in exploring wrecked southern houses, nodded assent.

The orderly made a torch, and, lighting it, led the way down to the cellar, which the visitors were much surprised to find already lighted. An oil lamp burned brightly from the top of a barrel, and in a far corner of the room, upon a heap of *débris*, a tallow candle threw its unsteady rays upon the dead and mangled bodies of two female figures that lay upon the floor. Close to them a man was seated upon a low camp stool. His face was black, save where a stream of blood, trickling down from an ugly gash over the temple, had washed the darker stains away. As the officers approached, General Colby asked: "Who are you, and what the dickins are you doing here?"

"I have a perfect right to be here, sir," answered the blood-stained man. "I own the property about here. This is my house."

"And these bodies?" questioned the commander.

"My mother and my wife, general. I am Captain Langhorne."

A LOCOMOTIVE HERO

WELL, gentlemen, if you wish it, I'll tell you the story. When I was a youth of nineteen and lived with my parents in America, I had a boyish ambition to become an engine-driver, although I had been educated for loftier pursuits.

During my college vacation, I constantly lounged about the station, making friends with the officials, and especially with a driver named Silas Markley. I became much attached to this man, although he was forty years of age and by no means a sociable fellow.

He was my ideal of a brave, skilful, thorough-bred driver, and I looked up to him as something of a hero. He was not a married man, but lived alone with his old mother. I was a frequent visitor at their house, and I think they both took quite a fancy to me in their quiet, undemonstrative way.

When Markley's fireman left him, I induced him to let me take his place during the remainder of my vacation. He hesitated for some time before he consented to humour my boyish whim; but he finally yielded, and I was in great glee.

The fact was that, in my idleness and the overworked state of my brain, I craved for the excitement as a confirmed drunkard does for liquor, and, besides, I had such longing dreams of the fiery ride through the hills, mounted literally on the iron horse. So I became an expert fireman, and liked it exceedingly; for the excitement more than compensated for the rough work I was required to do.

But there came a time when I got my fill of excitement. Mrs. Markley one day formed a plan which seemed to give her a good deal of happiness. It was her son's birthday, and she wanted to go down to Philadelphia in the train without letting him know anything about it, and there purchase a present for him. She took me into her confidence, and asked me to assist her. I arranged the preliminaries, and got her into the train without being noticed by Markley, who, of course, was busy with his engine.

The old lady was in high glee over the bit of innocent deception she was practising on her son. She enjoined me again not to tell Silas, and then I left her and took my place.

It was a midsummer day, and the weather was delightful.

The train was one which stopped at the principal stations on the route. On this occasion, as there were two specials on the line it was run by telegraph—that is, the driver has simply to obey the instructions which he receives at each station, so that he is put as a machine in the hands of one controller, who directs all trains from a central point and thus has the whole line under his eye. If the driver does not obey to the least tittle his orders, it is destruction to the whole.

Well, we started without mishap, and up to time, and easily reached the first station in the time allotted to us. As we stopped there, a boy ran alongside with the telegram, which he handed to the driver. The next moment I heard a smothered exclamation from Markley.

"Go back," he said to the boy; "tell Williams to have the message repeated; there's a mistake."

The boy dashed off; in a few minutes he came flying back.

"Had it repeated," he panted. "Williams is storming at you; says there's no mistake, and you'd best get on."

He thrust the second message up as he spoke.

Markley read it and stood hesitating for half a minute.

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There was dismay and utter perplexity in the expression of his face as he looked at the telegram and the long train behind him. His lips moved as if he were calculating chances, and his eyes suddenly quailed as if he saw death at the end of the calculation. I was watching him with considerable curiosity. I ventured to ask him what was the matter, and what he was going to do.

"I'm going to obey," he said curtly.

The engine gave a long shriek of horror that made me start as if it were Markley's own voice. The next instant we slipped out of the station and dashed through low lying farms at a speed which seemed dangerous to me.

"Put in more coal," said Markley.

I shovelled in more, but took time.

"We are going very fast, Markley."

He did not answer. His eyes were fixed on the steam-gauge, his lips close shut.

"More coal," he said.

I threw it in. The fields and houses began to fly past half seen. We were nearing Dufreme, the next station. Markley's eye went from the gauge to the face of the time-piece and back. He moved like an automaton. There was little more meaning in his face.

"More!" he said, without turning his eye.

I took up the shovel—hesitated.

"Markley, do you know you are going at the rate of sixty miles an hour?"

"Coal!"

I was alarmed at the stern, cold rigidity of the man. His pallor was becoming frightful. I threw in the coal. At least we must stop at Dufreme. That was the next halt. The little town was approaching. As the first house came into view the engine sent its shrieks of warning; it grew louder—still louder.

We dashed over the points, up to the station, where a group of passengers waited, and passed it without the halt of an instant, catching a glimpse of the appalled faces and the waiting crowd. Then we were in the fields again. The speed now became literally breathless, the furnace glared red hot. The heat, the velocity, the terrible nervous strain of the man beside me seemed to weight the air. I found myself drawing long, stertorous breaths like one drowning.

I heaped in the coal at intervals as he bade me. I did it because I was oppressed by an odd sense of duty which I never had in my ordinary brain work. Since then I have understood how it is that dull, ignorant men, without a spark of enthusiasm, show such heroism as soldiers, firemen, and captains of wrecked vessels.

It is this overpowering sense of routine duty. It's a finer thing than sheer bravery, in my idea. However, I began to think that Markley was mad—labouring under some frenzy from drink, though I had never seen him touch liquor.

He did not move hand or foot, except in the mechanical control of his engine, his eyes going from the gauge to the time-piece with a steadiness that was more terrible and threatening than any gleam of insanity would have been. Once he glared back at the long train sweeping after the engine with a headlong speed that rocked it from side to side.

One could imagine he saw a hundred men and women in the carriages, talking, reading, smoking, unconscious that their lives were all in the hold of one man whom I now strongly suspected to be mad. I knew by his look that he remembered that their lives were in his hand. He glanced at the clock.

"Twenty miles," he muttered. "Throw on more coal, Jack; the fire is going out."

I did it. Yes, I did it. There was something in the face of that man I could not resist. Then I climbed forward and shook him roughly by the shoulder.

"Markley," I shouted, "you are running this train into the jaws of death."

"I know it," he replied quietly.

"Your mother is on board."

"Heavens!"

He staggered to his feet But even then he did not remove his eyes from the gauge.

"Make up the fire," he commanded, and pushed in the throttle valve.

"I will not."

"Make up the fire, Jack," very quietly.

"I will not. You may kill yourself and your mother, but you shall not murder me."

He looked at me. His kindly grey eyes glared like those of a wild beast, but he controlled himself in a moment.

"I could throw you off this engine, and make short work of you," he said. "But look here, do you see the station yonder?"

I saw a faint streak against the sky, about five miles ahead.

"I was told to reach that station by six o'clock," he continued. "The express train meeting us is due now. I ought to have laid by for it at Dufreme. I was told to come on. The track is a single one. Unless I can make the siding at the station in three minutes, we shall meet it in yonder hollow."

"Somebody's blunder?" I said.

"Yes, I think so."

I said nothing. I threw on coal. If I had had petroleum, I should have thrown it on; but I never was calmer in my life. When death actually stares a man in the face, it often frightens him into the most perfect composure. Markley pushed the valve still further. The engine began to give a strange panting sound. Far off to the south I could see the dense black smoke of a train. I looked at Markley inquiringly. He nodded. It was the express. I stooped to the fire.

"No more," he said.

I looked across the clear summer sky at the grey smoke of the peaceful little village, and beyond that at a black line coming closer, closer, across the sky. Then I turned to the watch. In one minute more—well, I confess I sat down and buried my face in my hands. I don't think I tried to pray. I had a confused thought of mangled, dying men and women—mothers and their babies.

There was a terrible shriek from the engine against which I leaned, another in my face. A hot, hissing tempest swept past me. I looked up. We were on the siding, and the express had gone by. It grazed our end carriage in passing. In a sort of delirious joy, I sprang up and shouted to Markley. He did not speak. He sat there immovable and cold as a stone. I went to the train and brought his mother to him, and, when he opened his eyes and took the old lady's hand in his, I turned hastily away.

Yes, gentlemen, I have been in many a railway accident, but I have always considered that the closest shave I ever had.

What was the blunder?

I don't know. Markley made light of it ever afterwards, and kept it a secret; but no man on the line stood so high in the confidence of the company after that as he. By his coolness and nerve he had saved a hundred lives.

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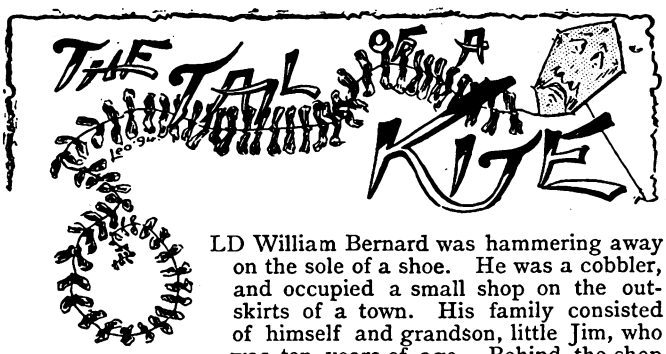

OLD William Bernard was hammering away on the sole of a shoe. He was a cobbler, and occupied a small shop on the outskirts of a town. His family consisted of himself and grandson, little Jim, who was ten years of age. Behind the shop was a room which served as a parlour, bedroom and kitchen. The cooking was done by Bernard himself, who possessed some knowledge of the culinary art.

Old William's reputation was not of the best; though he had never been detected in a really dishonest act, he was known to be tricky. But he had a genial manner, was always ready to talk, and his shop became a rendezvous for male gossips who liked to talk about the affairs of the day. On this particular morning two of the fraternity sauntered in.

"Good morning, William," said Peter Gibson. "How's business?"

"Bad," answered Bernard, shaking his head. "I can't compete with store prices, and it's a hard matter to keep body and soul together."

"Body and sole, eh?" said Peter, chuckling at his own attempt to be witty. "You must see that the sole keeps the body while it lasts."

Bernard laughed as he gave the shoe a resounding blow with his hammer. He always laughed at other men's jokes, however poor they might be; this was one of the secrets of his popularity. Presently Silas Parker remarked:

"Odd about the robbery, isn't it?"

"What robbery?"

"Haven't you read of it in the paper?" Silas asked in surprise.

"I have no time to read papers."

"Well, it happened last night up at the Hall. Mrs. Benton's pearl necklace was stolen. They say it was very valuable, and so long that it could be wound several times about her neck. The detectives are working up the case."

"Have they any clue to the thief?" Bernard asked, carelessly.

"Well, a slight one. They found a bit of cloth—— What is the matter?" he broke off in alarm, as a cry escaped Bernard.

"Oh, I pounded my finger a little, that's all"

"You must have hurt it badly, you are quite pale."

"No, no!" Bernard answered quickly. "It is nothing. Go on with your story. You were saying that they found a bit of cloth."

"Yes; a small zig-zag piece, evidently torn from a coat. It was hanging on a nail."

"Well," said Bernard, deliberately, "I hope the robber will escape."

"Why," exclaimed Silas, in amazement. "For my part I hope he will be brought to justice."

"Justice!" said Bernard, testily. "Is there such a thing?" But Bernard was so evidently out of humour that Peter and Silas left him alone.

That night he took a bundle from his cupboard and went stealthily into his small garden. Digging a hole in the yielding ground he deposited the bundle in it, then filled it up, packing the earth tightly down so that it was impossible to discover it had been recently disturbed. Little Jim lay sleeping in the inner room, but, some noise awakening him, he crept from his bed and peeped into the shop just as his grandfather returned.

"I thought I heard a noise," said the child.

"So did I, and I went to see what caused it. It was nothing. Go to bed again and I will make you a kite—a marvellous kite, which you may fly to-morrow."

"Oh, will you, grandfather? Jolly! Now I'll go at once!" cried the delighted boy.

A smile curved Bernard's lips as he gathered together the materials for the kite. It took several hours to complete it, but when finished it was indeed a thing of beauty. It was four feet in height, and there were many coloured papers used in its construction. A fringe adorned the outer edge. But the tail was the most wonderful of all. A long string formed the foundation, and upon it were fastened pieces of cloth of graduating lengths, the longest being at the top and tapering down to a mere shred at the end. Each was twisted in the centre, the ends being allowed to fly, but so closely were they put on the string that scarcely any part of it was visible.

Little Jim rose early the next morning. His impatience was so great that he could scarcely contain himself until his grandfather should give him the kite; but he dare not express his wish, as Bernard seemed excited and nervous—an unusual thing with him. The boy wondered why he stood at the door so long, gazing anxiously about, returning to his work only to repeat the performance a few minutes later. At last he turned to the expectant child:

"Come," he said, "you shall fly the kite."

"Oh, is it not beautiful!" Jim cried, clasping his hands in admiration when the wonderful thing was held up for his inspection.

He was wild to touch it, but Bernard would not permit him to do so, and bade him hold the cord while he held the kite aloft himself. Soon it floated upward, the tail resembling a flock of birds as it straightened in the breeze.

"You are William Bernard, I believe," said someone.

As Bernard moved quickly he came face to face with two men.

"That is my name," he answered. "What is your business with me?"

One of the detectives, for such they were, eyed him sharply as he said:

"We are looking for a necklace which was stolen from Mrs. Benton."

"And do you suppose I have it?" demanded Bernard, with a great show of anger. "How dare you accuse me of stealing? But go—search the house—and if you find it——."

He finished with a harsh laugh. The men went to work.

Meanwhile Bernard was apparently absorbed in the kite, and laughed loudly as it rose higher and higher, the long tail curving and twitching like a snake. Presently it began to descend, and a shade of excitement was visible in his face, while little Jim cried out in dismay:

"Oh, grandfather, it is coming down, and will get caught in those trees."

"We will prevent that," said Bernard, with a furtive glance toward the house; and he loosened the cord.

But the kite steadily descended. It hovered over a tree for a few seconds then fell, the tail becoming entangled in the branches. Bernard gave the cord a sharp pull, and the kite dropped at his feet. Little Jim ran and picked it up.

"The tail is broken, grandfather," he exclaimed. "Oh, why did you hide these pretty beads? See——"

He spoke no further, for Bernard with an oath sprang forward and snatched the kite from his hand. At the same time one of the detectives, who had approached unnoticed, tore it from him.

"Ah! We are not mistaken, after all," he said, holding up the tail for his companion's inspection. Beneath each of the twisted rags was a small cluster of pearls.

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Should Stout Persons STARVE THEMSELVES?

We are afraid that semi-starvation as a cure for corpulency prevails very much to a dangerous degree. Mr. Archer, the late well-known prominent jockey, was in the habit of going without food for a long stretch in order that he could ride a certain horse at its weight, and there is not much doubt that the debility resulting from this habit of abstemiousness was certainly not conducive to combating the dire attack of fever, which was, perhaps, indirectly responsible for the untimely end, in the zenith of his fame, of this unfortunate but accomplished horseman. Even Mary Jane in the kitchen will eat sparingly of the food allowed her, while she will seek to reduce her fat by copious draughts from the vinegar cruet, and succeed only in injuring the coats of her stomach—the forerunner of dyspeptic trouble which will be difficult to overcome.

The Continental medicos seem to advocate this great reduction of ordinary foods, but one of these savants suggests that the stout person should eat considerably of fatty meats, in order that the appetite is appeased, and consequently less food required, so that practically this is indirectly advocating semi-starvation. On the other hand, Mr. Russell, the British specialist, takes a different course. He says, "Eat as much as you like," and as it is an acknowledged fact that under his treatment persons lose from 2 lb. to 12 lb. per week, it beyond doubt stands out pre-eminent against those so-called starvation cures "made in Germany." Some claim that Mr. Russell has to insist upon his patients drinking hot water every morning, but on the contrary he avers that it is dangerous to do so, and has, of course, never advised it. No; the success of Mr. Russell's treatment is incomparably beyond other specialists, for he resorts to no stringent dietary, and simply prescribes a harmless vegetable tonic combination which is the outcome of years of study and botanical research. We advise all those interested in this question to get his book, the price of which is only 4d. It is entitled, "Corpulency and the Cure," 256 pp., and is published by him at Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. It can be had direct, or through any bookseller.—*The Million.*

A

POSITIVE REMEDY

FOR

CORPULENCE

Any remedy that can be suggested as a cure or alleviation for stoutness will be heartily welcomed. We have recently received a well-written book, the author of which seems to know what he is talking about. It is entitled "Corpulency and the Cure," 256 pages, and is a cheap issue (only 4d.) published by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. Our space will not do justice to this book; send for it yourself. It appears that Mr. Russell has submitted all kinds of proofs to the English Press. The editor of the *Tablet*, the Catholic organ, writes:—"Mr. Russell does not give us the slightest loophole for a doubt as to the value of his cure, for, in the most straightforward and matter-of-fact manner, he submitted some hundreds of original and unsolicited testimonial letters for our perusal, and offered us plenty more, if required. To assist him to make this remedy known, we think we cannot do better than publish quotations from some of the letters submitted. The first one, a marchioness, writes from Madrid:—'My son, Count ——, has reduced his weight in twenty-two days 16 kilos—*i.e.*, 34 lbs.' Another writes:—'So far (six weeks from commencement of following your system) I have lost fully two stone in weight.' The next (a lady) writes:—'I am just half the size.' A fourth:—'I find it is successful in my case. I have lost 8 lbs. in weight since I commenced (two weeks).' Another writes:—'A reduction of 18 lbs. in a month is a great success.' A lady from Bournemouth writes:—'I feel much better, have less difficulty in breathing, and can walk about.' Again a lady says:—'It reduced me considerably, not only in the body, but all over.' The author is very positive. He says:—'Step on a weighing machine on Monday morning and again on Tuesday, and I guarantee you have lost 2 lbs. in weight without the slightest harm, and vast improvement in health through ridding the system of unhealthy accumulations.'"—*Cork Herald*

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 317.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING JANUARY 26, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

The Incident of Rataplan

THE proverbially inconvenient third was Rataplan, the cat. He was worshipped by Mrs. Jack Vane, and—with a considerable discount—also by her husband. Perhaps it is more exact to say that Mr. Vane adored his wife, and for her sake tolerated the pampered and unlovely cat, named Rataplan, because of his long, loud, rather stertorous purr, like the roll of a drum.

They were at breakfast. Mrs. Vane was delicious in a gown of pale blue surah silk, rippling with laces. Mr. Vane was in partial eclipse behind a newspaper. Rataplan sat erect and decorous in his high chair, with his paw upon the table. He was a Persian cat, fantastically striped in shades of yellow, very corpulent, with distended cheeks. His round eyes had the colour of pale sherry. His countenance was babylike, with intermittent gleams of viciousness. He had eaten his saucer of cake and cream, and was not interested in the leading article which Mr. Vane read aloud.

"The Japanese are advancing——"

Just then Rataplan made a leap upon the table, seized a fowl from the dish before his master, and carried it, utilising Mr. Vane's knees on his way to the floor. A broiled bird does not, however, traverse a surface of cloth without leaving traces behind.

"Confound the cat!" Mr. Vane flapped with his napkin at Rataplan, who retreated under the sideboard with his booty.

"Oh, poor Rataplan, we didn't notice that he wanted something!"

"I tell you, Linda, that he ought not to be permitted to come to table. That cat is a nuisance; I wish he was in Siberia!"

She pressed a handkerchief to her eyes, rather ostentatiously. "You—you—promised that you would be fond of Rataplan!"

"I didn't vow to love, honour, and cherish that absurd cat. Only yourself, my dear Linda. But I have endeavoured to like him. Up to date I have managed to endure him—the scratching, biting, greedy animal. But I draw the line at his table manners of this morning!"

Rataplan, under the sideboard, was growling, as he crunched the bones of the fowl.

"If you will excuse me, Linda, I will leave you now, and get into some other clothes." He glanced at his watch. "I'm a little behind time already. That cat must go."

Mr. Vane went to his dressing-room. Linda remained a moment in resentful surprise, motionless. Then she went to fling herself dramatically on her knees in front of the sideboard. "My poor Rataplan, what a brute Jack is!"

She would have clasped the cat in her arms, to console him, misunderstood, maligned. But he had thoroughly anointed himself in devouring the bird; and she—even in that poignant moment—was restrained by the fear of ruining her silken dream of a gown. "Poor Rataplan!" she repeated.

Then she rose to her feet, and hastened to her "own dear little den," where she indulged in flattering misery as a martyred wife, a modern *édition de luxe* of Patient Griselda.

Reclothed and in his right mind—that is to say without rancour against the cat, who after all, had not meant to harm the trousers, only to help himself to more breakfast—Mr. Vane hurried to his office. The misadventure had lost him a quarter of an hour. In his haste, he omitted to look for his wife, to make their usual affectionate good-bye.

. . . . . .

An hour later, a stylish brougham with a pair of disdainful-stepping horses, driven by an elderly coachman, who resembled the benevolent uncle in a French comedy—drove into Broad Street and stopped at the office of Mr. Samuel W. Sands, banker and broker. From the carriage issued a young woman, dressed all in black, with here and there discreet glimmers of jet—the very costume of modish tragedy. The skirt, demi-train, sweeping sharply, like the wing of a swallow, defined her form, very slender and lithe. Having entered the door, with an agitated step she went straight past the admiring *personnel* of the banking house to the private office, where Mr. Sands held certain councils that affected the financial barometer of the nation. At the moment he was there alone. His fine grey head was bent over the morning's correspondence.

The young woman entered without knocking, and threw herself on the neck of the banker.

"Papa, dear, I've left Jack, and you must take me home to keep house for you?"

"Heaven forbid!" (The pious ejaculation may have concerned his daughter's proposed separation from her husband, or her assumption of the cares of the paternal household.) "What new caprice is this, Linda?"

For, during the intermediate years between Linda's graduation at boarding-school and her marriage day—those years were

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few—Mr. Sands had often found her unaccountable. "If her mother could have lived," he would sigh, within himself.

"It is not all caprice," asserted Linda, with dignity. "My self-respect requires me to leave him, and to ask you to obtain for me a formal separation from him. He is just simply too hateful!"

"Let us judge. What has he done? Has he been flirting?"

"Oh, no. He is so absurdly devoted in public that he doesn't even leave me time to—talk with my old friends."

"Did he strike you, then?"

"What an idea! He couldn't. Jack is a perfect gentleman, always—at least—that is—except this morning."

"He threatened you, perhaps?"

"No—not precisely. That is, not me, but Rataplan, dear little Rataplan."

"The cat?"

"Don't call him just a cat, papa. To me Rataplan is a person like anybody else."

"Then, as I gather, Vane has been guilty of unparliamentary language to Monsieur Rataplan, whose eniment personality I am happy to recognise."

"You can laugh, of course, papa. But for me, it is all very serious. I've left Jack—do you hear? I've left Jack!" Her voice ran up into a little shriek.

"How long since?"

"About half an hour ago. After he went down to the office."

"Then he does not know it."

"Not yet."

"Listen to your old father, who counsels you never to let him know it! You are young; and imagine time to be endless, secure from misfortune. Disputes appear to you piquant little thorns upon a rose that otherwise might be too sweet. Linda, it was twenty years ago that your mother and I had a quarrel. It was about a trifle; it lasted only an hour. But that was an hour lost from the few years that we were together. I never could find that hour again."

"But this is quite different, papa. It is not a quarrel. It is only that I have discovered Jack as he really is—ill-tempered and cruel."

"What did he do?" repeated the father. In truth he was not anxious to hear, for he was sure that the grievance was of the slightest. But he needed a moment's time to replace a sad memory in a remote pigeon-hole of his mind, behind a great heap of financial cares.

"He said, 'Confound that cat!' I didn't mind that so much—of course it was dreadfully profane—but I hope that I can make allowance for his frightful state of excitement. But he also said, 'That cat must go.' And he meant it. To call darling Rataplan 'That cat!' It was worse than swearing."

"Aggravated treason, indeed! He ought to be fined for contempt of cat! Now let us hear both sides. What had M. Rataplan done to suggest—mind, I do not say to merit—such treatment?"

"Nothing at all. He had helped himself to a fowl from the able at breakfast. Dear, sweet little fellow! He sat there in n.s high chair, so good! And we—it was our fault—paid no attention to him. Jack was reading about the war in Corea. Poor Rataplan had eaten his cake and lapped the very last drop of cream. His saucer was perfectly empty. Then the darling leaped on the table—you know how gracefully he springs—and caught the bird in his dear little mouth, and—wasn't it sweet of him, when Jack was going to be so horrid about him?—he jumped down on Jack's knee, and then to the floor. And Jack was furious with Rataplan, only because the broiled bird left some marks on his trousers!"

"He ought to have blamed the fowl. But I admit that my condolences are for the trousers. Jack always wears admirable clothes."

"Papa, you do not try to understand me. You never did. It isn't altogether for Rataplan's sake—but, you see, I cannot possibly live with a man of Jack's violent temper. Why, it isn't safe. Some day he might say, 'Confound Linda! That woman must go.' Take me home with you, papa dear. I'll manage your house beautifully. We will dismiss Mrs. Lamb—you don't want that antiquated housekeeper when you can have me. I will do the marketing myself—I know what you like. And I won't be much expense to you for gowns and bonnets and jewels. Dear papa, let me go home with you."

"Of course there is always a place for you in my house, Linda," said Mr. Sands, temporising.

"And for Rataplan?"

"Well, yes, I think we might manage to make room for him—at any rate, there would be the cellar and the area."

"Papa!"

"We will discuss that later. At present I advise you to go to your house as if nothing had happened. You will merely have been shopping. In case you have not your purse with you, here are twenty pounds. You can, with that sum, buy enough gloves and handkerchiefs to justify your excursion in the eyes of your maid. Now go, make your little purchases, and be tranquil. Above all, do not chatter to your maid. I will come to take you ——"

They were at breakfast.

"And Rataplan?"

"And Rataplan, at five-thirty. Vane does not come home before six. We shall be in time. Meanwhile, amuse yourself in some way. For instance, you might write Jack a letter of farewell. Make it as tragic as you please—and then, if you are a sensible girl, you'll burn it. Dead letters tell no tales. Ashes are impressive and compromise nobody, even if they are left lying about loose. Or better still, pack up your belongings for removal. That will occupy you all day, and be safer than scribbling. That's all, is it? Well, good-bye, my dear." Mr. Sands received his daughter's kiss, and then turned again to his correspondence.

Linda went away. She wondered at herself—the heroine of a domestic drama—for the interest with which she began to plan her little expenditures. Still, there is not a little fun to be extracted from even twenty pounds, if one limits herself strictly to trifles. Among other things, she would buy a new collar for Rataplan.

When Mrs. Vane arrived at her house, Céline—a real pearl of a Frenchwoman—who had heard everything from the footman, displayed a manner exaggeratedly usual, as she carried the armful of little parcels upstairs.

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Meanwhile, ten minutes after Linda left her father's office, there was a tap at his door. "Come in!"

Enter Jack Vane.

"It fairly rains relatives this morning," thought Mr. Sands within himself.

"I ran in for a minute, sir, to talk with you——"

"Of course. Don't be disturbed, Jack. It will all come out right, I hope."

"Right, sir! More than right, I should say! Why, sugar preferred is just jumping up from point to point, and my only question is how soon to sell?"

"Oh, sugar preferred!"

"There's nothing else thought about, to-day, sir."

Here was a cheerful and oblivious culprit! Absolutely, he had not an idea beyond sugar quotations! Mr. Sands looked duly serious.

"I supposed that you had come to talk about your quarrel with Linda. I do not conceal from you that she has been here already."

"But I have no quarrel with Linda. What does this mean?"

"Does the name of Rataplan enlighten you?"

"That ridiculous cat to which she offers so much incense. Yes, I admit that when she calls him her precious angel, and kisses his puffy cheeks and his treacherous claws—he scratched her pretty upper lip yesterday, by way of appreciation—I am considerably disgusted with the pampered fraud. Certainly, I'm jealous of her devotion to the cat—and yet, I too, have my innings, I may say. By-the-way, did she tell you that the beast spoiled my trousers this morning by dragging a broiled bird over my knees."

"She said something of the sort. But she coloured the fact with the iris tints of affection—for the cat. I must warn you, indeed, that Linda came to insist on a separation from you, and an immediate return to my house."

"Good gracious, sir! I had no idea that she had taken serious offence. Of course she did not like to hear me blame Rataplan. But my language about the spoiled trousers was very moderate—compared with the tailor's charge for them!"

"I advised her to return to your house, not talk about the difficulty, but await my coming for her at five-thirty. Luckily, it occurred to me to give her a few pounds for ribbons and things. Probably she is in some shop now, feeling much better."

"But I am distressed beyond measure. What can I do?"

"Isn't there perhaps some delicate attention that you can pay ——"

"To her! I should say! A new bracelet ——"

"No, no. Not to her. To that hideous, ill-tempered, chuckle-headed, yellow Egyptian idol of a rival of yours."

Vane meditated for a moment.

"Rataplan, I am told, is always served with sponge-cake and cream at five o'clock. I shall have the honour to hand it to Monsieur."

"An inspiration! Only be punctual, for, as I said, I shall come to free my daughter from domestic tyranny at five-thirty sharp."

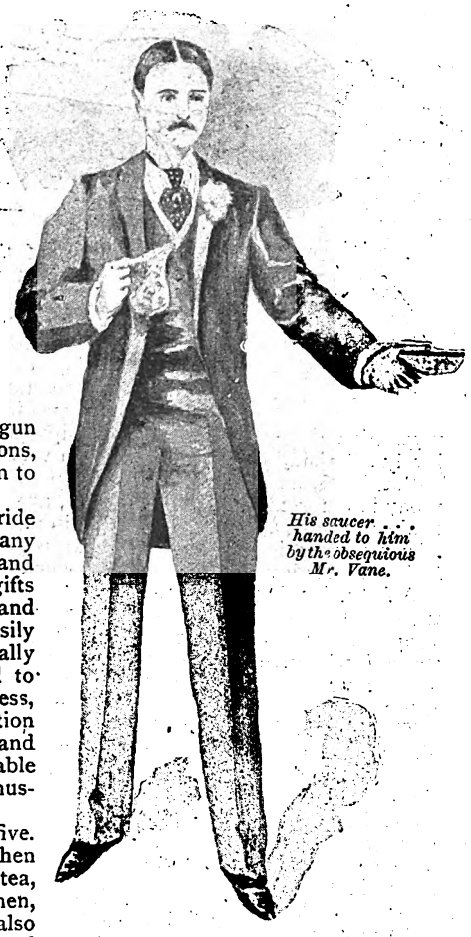
They shook hands.

"Don't sell under 112¼, Jack. Good luck to you, all along the line, my son."

In that little den of hers.

In that little den of hers, all pale green hangings embroidered with falling pink roses, furnished in rococo gold-and-white—Linda Vane began to feel the reaction of the dream of the morning. She had told Céline that she would receive no visits; she wished to be undisturbed, for she was tired with the early shopping. Left alone, she had begun to collect her possessions, in order to take them to her father's house.

But her fantastic pride forbade her to carry any gifts of that cruel husband of hers—and his gifts were quite too many and too beautiful to be easily left behind. Gradually the situation appeared to her in its seriousness, first as the renunciation of the costly signs, and then of the inestimable substance of her husband's affection.



His saucer handed to him by the obsequious Mr. Vane.

The clock struck five. That was the hour when she usually made tea, amid half a dozen women, her intimates. It was also the time for Rataplan to have his cream and cake. It appeared to Linda quite frightful, her apathy about five o'clock tea.

The door of the other room creaked very slightly. How tiresome of Céline, when she had been told that her mistress wished not to be disturbed. Rataplan awoke, aroused, stretched himself, uttered an epicurean mi'aoe. For he beheld his saucer, full of his favourite dainty, handed to him by the obsequious Mr. Vane, who knelt before the sofa.

Linda, with a flying swirl of the long gown—assumed as the appropriate decoration of her proud and tragic mood of the morning—ran towards her husband, and suddenly bending, encircled his neck with her arms. The cream was spilled on the carpet. Rataplan, not to be a loser, jumped down and began to lap at it greedily.

"Oh, Jack! You don't hate us!"

"I love you, and I offer an amnesty to Rataplan."

He seated her upon the sofa and placed himself beside her.

Just then Rataplan, having finished the cream, sprang up, reposing his sphinx-like form on Jack's knees, while his fore-paws lay on Linda's gown.

"You can't go away from me, my dear girl. 'Blest be the tie that binds'—even if it is Rataplan!"

The door opened. Mr. Sands entered the room.

His countenance had assumed an expression of *père noble*, which he hoped would suit his daughter's idea of the requirements of the situation.

Jack arose quickly to his feet. Rataplan deprived of support, clutched with his hooked claws in Linda's skirt.

"Now this is good of you, sir! You have invited yourself to dine with us this evening, I hope." Jack's pleasure was unmistakable.

Also Linda ran towards her father. "Dear papa, I am so glad to see you—Oh! look at my gown. All torn by those horrid paws! What a nuisance Rataplan is! Really Jack, that cat must go."

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THE TREASURE OF THE TEMPLE

WHERE the waters of the Gulf of Mexico mingle with those of the Caribbean Sea, only a few miles from the headland of Yucatan, lies the island of Cozumel. It is a narrow, long strip of land, with white coral cliffs rising out of the transparent sea. Lofty cocoanut palms wave their feathery fronds over it, a luxurious tropical vegetation covers it, and as the ships pass by they see this lovely isle rising out of the waters, a very pearl.

But, lovely as Cozumel is, to-day man can find but little to repay him for making it his abode, and only a few scattered fishing villages show it to be inhabited. But, desolate as the island is now, it once boasted a large population in the days before Cortez invaded Mexico the lovely.

A few ruins, long decayed, show the hand of the builder of those days, and many are the tales that are current among the simple fishermen about these ruins and their days. One of these I will give you, as an old Santa Cruz Indian, whose guest I was during the few days I spent on Cozumel, related it to me.

The Spaniard had invaded Yucatan, and his settlements along the coast had flourished. Many were the merchant ships that anchored in the Bay of Campeche, carrying thence costly timber and valuable drugs and spices. But while they carried these things away, they brought many undesirable things, and worst among those were the adventurers and outcasts, who here sought to amass fortunes by whatsoever way was most convenient.

These were the days when rich and prosperous Yucatan was the scene of constant bloodshed, when the peaceful Indians were compelled to retreat further and further into the primeval forest, into which even the reckless and greedy Spaniards dare not follow them.

But while the Spaniard dared not the smallpox did, and many a district, once teeming with human life, became vast silent, impenetrable tombs. While these events were taking place on the western side, the eastern front of the Peninsula was comparatively little visited by the invaders, largely due to the fact that it possessed no harbours.

One day in September, 1672, there shot round the little headland of Yucatan a small canoe, in which were seated two men, who, the first glance showed, were Spaniards. The little boat rapidly rowed along, and evinced a skilful hand at the oars; gracefully it rode the waves, until, just as the sun was setting, a rapid stroke of the oar caused it to turn sharply, and another stroke sent it flying high and dry on the beach.

Both of the boat's occupants quickly sprang out and pulled the boat far up on the white sand of which the shore was composed. One of them was a tall, broad-shouldered young man, whose bronzed open face betokened resolution, tempered by good-natured honesty. The other was a dark, swarthy, evil-looking individual, whose size contrasted as much with that of the other as his treacherous, plotting countenance did with the manly frankness of his companion.

As soon as the boat was made fast, the smaller, with a hasty glance at the bushes which fringed the shore a short distance from where they were standing, turned to his companion.

"Where is that lazy Indian?" he exclaimed. "Here we are, just to time, and not a sign of him. I tell you, Rodrigo," here a fearfully malevolent look came into his eyes, "if he shows us that treasure, why,"—here he made a motion as if stabbing someone—"if not, I'll tear his heart out."

"You'll have to postpone your killing this time, Diego, as I see no need of it. While he's with me, I will give you two to deal with instead of one, so you had better take warning."

The one addressed as Diego cast the speaker a sidelong glance full of venom; then turning, muttered, "We'll see," and once more speaking to the bushes said, "Where's the Indian?" At that moment a small wiry figure stepped into the open space.

"Here, señor. Coatzli never fails to be in time," and in confirmation he pointed seaward, where the moon's pale disk was just showing a narrow rim above the horizon.

"Diego," laughingly added the one called Rodrigo, "he's right; there's Bella Luna just pushed her head out."

The two Spaniards pushed the boat off. While they were thus employed Coatzli prostrated himself and remained for a moment in the attitude of prayer; then, jumping up, he took his seat in the boat, and silently the three rowed across the fast receding waves towards the long dark line—Cozumel.

The Indian, who was seated in the stern of the boat, directed every stroke as they glided noiselessly along the shore, until they had gone nearly half the length of the island.

"Do you see those three palms?" he at last spoke up. "There is our destination."

A moment later the boat was moored to a huge cocoa-nut palm, whose white trunk leaned far across the waters, and the trio had landed.

In advance, with quick active strides, walked the Indian.

Not a word escaped from any of the three. They were traversing an old road, fringed on both sides by dense bush, lined at regular intervals with gigantic palms. Before them, half hidden among the fronds of innumerable palms, loomed up a massive pile.

"The trocalli (temple)," said the Indian, pointing at it.

While he was speaking, the narrow road, along which they had come so far, suddenly widened out and opened on a grove of palms, extending right and left, as far as the eye could reach. Before them was a truncated pyramid, up which, on all four sides, ran a broad stairway, occupying fully a third of each face.

At one time, this stairway must have been grand. Now it was in ruins. Whole blocks had fallen out and many were mutilated. Few had escaped the hand of time.

Up this stair opening before them ascended Coatzli, followed by the Spaniards. When he had nearly reached the summit, Coatzli halted. When the others had reached the place beside him, he stretched out his hand:

"Once this was the temple where my fathers worshipped. Yonder grove was planted by one of my ancestors. The road we have come was the work of another. From the waters of the east to those of the west they ruled—a peaceful, happy people. But one day the sun hid her face, and the sacrifices offered did not propitiate her. Anxiously the people waited fasting from the dawn to the setting of the sun. Still no sun.

"Then it was that Tepetlatl, the aged priest, cried out warningly: 'The day is at hand, the day so long told before, when the mighty shall fall and the strong shall be weakened! Lo! a fish shall come out of the sea, yet not a fish, and it shall seek to devour, for Tonatiuh, the mighty sun, is angry with his people.

"'They shall cry in vain, but he heareth them not. The destroyer shall be upon them, and he shall sorely press them down. They shall be oppressed night and day, but Tonatiuh shall not hear their cry; for a mightier shall be here and a stronger shall rule, and his people shall see his face no more.'

"Thus spoke Tepetlatl the Seer, and great was the sorrow of his people. Six times the moon rolled on, but no sign came, and the people began to hope. The seventh moon had gone

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when there came from the east a big black monster. It had a body like a fish, yet it was no fish; it had wings like a bird, yet no bird ever was like unto it. As it drew nearer it paused, and a small fish came out of its mouth and our god trembled and fell. And as he fell the little fish climbed the beach, all of his legs drawn in, and it had many men in it, and they were white. And then we saw that the little fish was a boat, many times larger than the canoes of our people.

"And thus it came that the white man took this land, and that this temple no longer holds our god; and time has dealt hard with the sacred hill. But when the white man came he found no treasure, for Tepetlatl the Seer had hidden it far down beneath the temple. It is mine, and soon it will be yours, for Coatzli, the last Cacique of Cozumel, needs it not. When he is gone there will be no Coatzlitos to carry the secret on down the generations to come, for Coatzli will be the last of his race."

Here he paused a moment, while his frame shook with suppressed emotion. A vague undefinable feeling of mingled awe and dread had taken possession of his hearers. As they listened to his wild pathetic tale, to the prophetic, sad, yet firm tone in which he recited it, they could not shake off a momentary fear that took possession of them. And while the palm fronds rustled in the night breeze, and seemed to whisper to each other tales that no man had yet heard, Coatzli continued: "The hour has come, and Tonatiuh calls. Let us go!"

He climbed the few remaining stairs to the top, and silently pointed to the east. They saw stretched out beyond the silvery mirror of the Caribbean Sea, that beautifully treacherous water. They were standing on a small platform long overgrown by weeds and creepers.

While they were still gazing at the panorama stretched out before them, Coatzli had scraped away the vegetation around one of the blocks composing the platform, disclosing a handle of stone seemingly chiselled right out of the solid rock. Kneeling a moment, with his hands stretched out to the moon, he seized the ring, gave it one wrench, and lifted a slab which covered a small opening. Looking into the aperture, they beheld a stone stair descending into the darkness.

Bidding the others to follow him closely, Coatzli descended. Before he had gone far, he paused for a moment. Drawing forth flint and steel, he struck fire and ignited a torch, which he held in his hand. By the light thus produced, the others saw a small shelf hewn out of the stone composing the roof, and stored away upon it a number of torches. Bidding each to light one, and take a few spare ones, he continued to descend.

Step after step they descended, on a stair seemingly without bend or waver—down, down. They had gone thus far when the stair suddenly took a sharp turn to the right, and continued, at a considerably lesser angle. A dull booming sound now became audible, increasing in volume each step they descended.

Rodrigo, who followed immediately after the Indian, felt a drop of water upon his hand. On inquiry he learnt that the sound was from the sea, which was rolling in breakers overhead. He could not suppress a shudder; the stairway beginning almost in the centre of the island, had continued under the sea.

But rapidly their guide pushed on, and soon the sound became fainter and fainter. But now another sound struck their ear. A faint, gurgling, swishing noise, as of a brook rushing over pebbles and tumbling over rocks.

Suddenly Coatzli spoke: "We are near the foot of the stair. From now watch closely every move I make, and instantly do the same. Obey every command that I give as a false step henceforward may be disastrous."

While he yet spoke they had emerged upon a platform, and now the sound was clearly audible. Enjoining perfect silence, Coatzli slowly advanced. A few steps and he paused on a narrow ledge. Before him rolled a mighty river, hissing and plunging with incredible velocity! "Rio muerto (the river of the dead)," said Coatzli, pointing to the waters before him. "When the white men oppressed Tepetlatl and his people, he and 200 of the nobles sought and found their death in its waters. Look yonder! there they found a resting place!" And the horror-struck Spaniards, following with their eyes where he pointed, saw the mighty underground river plunge headlong into an abyss, not twenty yards from where they were standing!

Turning sharply in the opposite direction Coatzli led the way along a ledge so narrow that two could scarcely walk abreast. Walking along thus, with the river plunging on at their side, they proceeded for some time in silence. Again Coatzli stopped. There, before them, a straight wall rose up, stopping further progress in that direction.

At their right was the rock wall, which they had followed so far; at their left the river. But already Coatzli has solved the riddle. Pointing to a plank which extended from the bank where they were standing into the darkness beyond, he briefly said: "We must cross this."

Before the Spaniards had grasped the full meaning of his word, he was already half way across! Nothing remained but to follow. Crossing on the narrow plank, scarcely wide enough to admit of both feet being planted on it side by side, swaying under the weight of the three men, the river plunging madly beneath, and the almost palpable darkness before, made only more dense by the lurid light cast by the torches, was indeed a task that tested the nerves.

When they had safely passed over they found themselves in a vaulted passage, whose sides were curiously honeycombed.

"The burying place of the Caciques," said Coatzli; "those openings are the tombs of my ancestors."

While he spoke a curious, horrifying, undefinable sound as of thousands of cords dragging through the dust, became audible. Louder and louder it grew; it seemed to come from all sides, and now there mingled with it a blood-curdling sound, a loud angry rattling.

The tombs were alive with rattlesnakes!

And as snake after snake glided into the path, Coatzli spoke: "Welcome, ye spirits of my ancestors; ye come to behold the last of your royal race, now soon no more."

And then he did a strange thing. While his companions stood petrified with horror, he stepped into the midst of the serpents, and drawing forth a small silver flute began to play! Sad, mournful were the notes—a wild, strange dirge; and while he played a strange commotion came over the snakes, and slowly they began untwisting the strange heap, and, coiling themselves with their heads and necks extended in the air, they swayed to and fro in unison with the music.

Quicker and quicker came the notes, sharp and piercing rang the wild melody through the hall, and quicker and quicker swayed the heads to and fro, to and fro. Long it had lost the character of a dirge, it became a march, then a battle song; now it seemed to portray the fierce conflict, man to man, hand to hand. Faster and faster came the music, fiercer and fiercer sounded the strain; and faster and faster swayed the heads, fiercer and fiercer came the rattle.

Suddenly, the player paused, and every head rigidly protruded from the coils. A moment, and every snake slowly uncoiled itself and by their motions accompaning the music, which had again commenced so sad, so mournful, they retreated to their dens. When the last had disappeared, Coatzli ceased, ending with what sounded like the piercing, heartrending cry of agony.

During the whole time both Spaniards stood unable to move, fear and horror held them motionless in their grasp, and when, at the conclusion of the strange, horrible, and awful performance Coatzli, turning to them, said, "Let us proceed," it was fully a minute ere they had regained sufficient control over themselves to comply.

Passing along over the ground so shortly before occupied by a horde of rattlesnakes, not without a shudder and a fearful glance at the openings at either side, they soon gained a turn, where the passage widened sufficiently to permit them to walk together. They had gone but a few steps when the passage ended before a rudely hewn wall of solid rock. Fixing his torch into a crevice of the rock Coatzli said:

"This is the place."

"How can we get into the treasure chamber?" inquired Rodrigo.

"Wait and see," was the answer.

While yet they were talking, the Indian prostrated himself in

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the attitude of prayer. Before he had concluded a portion of the wall disappeared.

And to their astonished gaze was presented a small circular niche or room, hewn out of the solid rock, and filled with silver and gold cups, plates, idols, and vases, all of solid silver and gold. On one side were several jars of stone, which proved to be filled with bars and nuggets of gold.

Rodrigo stood before the entrance, amazed and dazzled, half afraid to enter, but Diego rushed into the chamber, scarcely able to contain himself with joy. Then, when he had satisfied himself that these things were indeed silver and gold, he drew his stiletto and, before the astonished Rodrigo could interfere, or even comprehend his fiendish intention, plunged it to the hilt in Coatzli's back.

The Indian staggered against the portal. Rodrigo, who attempted to rush to his rescue, was motioned back by the Indian, who, supporting himself against the entrance, turned upon his assailant a look of such withering scorn as made the wretch before him tremble. Then, dragging himself across the portal, he seized in one hand a heavy gold idol, representing the sun, and flinging it out into the hallway beyond, with the other threw the silver flute to Rodrigo.

While he was thus employed, while the blood was streaming down his back, both Spaniards, the one within the other without, were, as if spellbound, unable to move. Then Coatzli, facing Diego, spoke: "The last Cacique is indeed dying—soon he will be with his fathers. When they ask who slew me the murderer will be there, too." And before either could comprehend his intention, Coatzli staggered along the wall, fell, and the huge block forming the entrance reappeared as mysteriously as it had departed, and Diego was buried alive!

Rodrigo, as soon as he could collect his confused thoughts, comprehending at last what it meant, rushed forward just as the ponderous block slid back, but a commanding gesture from Coatzli waved him back.

"Go, you cannot save him. He dug his own grave and ——"

His words became inaudible.

Rodrigo, casting one glance at the gold before him, fled horror-stricken. How he got out he could never tell, but when he returned to San Christoval his health was broken, and he died a few years later.

Long since the pyramid has been demolished, but the treasure, the Indians say, no man can find, as two spirits—Diego and Coatzli—watch over it, and contend with any mortal who dares to seek it.

THE RIVALS.

THE sun was setting. In the shadow of Mount Ophir, almost under its rugged summit, we made camp. We had steamed some forty miles up the river Muar that day, shooting crocodiles from one of the Sultan's river launches, and at twilight my companion, Inchi Mohammed, the Tuan Hakim or Chief Justice of Muar, proposed that we stop for the night, and have a grand pig-hunt in the morning.

The messenger that was sent by a tortuous jungle path to the nearest Malay campong or village, with orders for the punghulo, or chief, to send a hundred beaters on the morrow, returned, accompanied by an escort of Malays, who begged that their Excellencies, the Tuan Hakim and the Tuan Consul, would honour the punghulo by being present at the marriage feast of his daughter, which was to occur that night.

Only too glad of a little diversion, and of a chance to get a peep into the mysteries of a Malayan wedding ceremony, I accepted with profuse thanks, and we followed our guides along an old elephant track that led through a jungle impenetrable to the eye.

The glare of the torches lit up the dense, black network of rubber vines and rattans, and exposed clusters of great elk-horn ferns and hanging orchids. The interlacing trees on either side formed a perfect arch, and gave our course the appearance of a tunnel. We stumbled from pitfall to pitfall, made by the countless footsteps of elephants, and our ejaculations of annoyance set colonies of monkeys to chattering in the black obscurity of the branches.

Long before the lights of the fires reached us from the campong, our ears were saluted with the deep, sonorous boom of the great wooden gongs, and the shriller reverberations of smaller ones of crocodile hide, telling us that the festivities were in progress.

The old punghulo met us at the edge of the clearing with many deep salaams and a stream of complimentary Malay. He was dressed, as were all his followers, in a neat silken *sarong*, in honour of the occasion, red sandals, and a light silken *baju*, or jacket. He alone was distinguished by a rimless cap, in the front of which were the arms of Johore set in brilliants.

Our appearance created a sensation. A party of half-naked youngsters, who were engaged in cock-fighting, before a great fire, crowded close up to us, and exchanged a respectful "*Tabek*, Tuan Hakim" with the Chief Justice. The older men, who had been sagely discussing the doings of their little world, and the present rebellion of the redoubtable Panglima Muda in the neighbouring State of Pahang, essayed to shake our hands. Even the women, who were engaged in filing the bride elect's teeth, and painting the palms of her hands and the nails of her fingers and toes red, with henna, could not resist the opportunity of coming out and saluting the head of their Courts.

Among the last to come forward was the prospective bridegroom, a small, over-dressed young man, with a hard, cruel face. His features lacked the open, kindly expression which is the chief beauty of his race. I did not like his half-servile, half-arrogant air, and mentioned my dislike to my companion.

The Chief Justice shrugged his shoulders.

"Allah is allwise!"

The old punghulo seemed unusually proud of his son-in-law that was to be, and told us over and over again that he was a sergeant in His Highness's Artillery at Bander Maharani, and that he had paid him for his daughter's hand ten slabs of tin, a hundred piculs of rice, and a kris with a gold-covered sheath.

We followed the happy old man up the rickety ladder that led into his bungalow. Its open bamboo floor was covered with beautifully woven mats of wiry lallang grass, and its palm-thatched sides were hung with gaily coloured draperies of native manufacture.

At one end, seated on a low platform, surrounded by her women, was the bride, dressed in a silken sarong, which was held in place at the waist by a zone of silver. Her kabaya, of the finest material, was fastened down the front with golden brooches. Her lace head-scarf was thrown about her shoulders, leaving uncovered her luxuriant black hair, which was twisted up on her head, and stuck full of gold pins, and a spray of sweet smelling chumpaka flower.

She was comely, almost handsome, in spite of her swollen gums, blackened teeth, and syrah-stained lips. Her round, plump, sweet little face shone out from its barbaric surroundings with a piquant individuality that attracted us at once.

She smiled graciously when her father told her of the

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honour we were doing her, but I thought I detected a gesture of disgust when the bridegroom came forward, and, for the first time, claimed the privilege of tasting the betel nut that she was chewing. She handed it to him with an averted face, not deigning to notice his look of rapture as he placed it in his mouth.

Her women crowded about her, and whispered their wish that her lord might take his seat beside her while we were there to witness.

She inclined her head in assent, while an angry spot of red came into either brown cheek.

As he stepped up on the daïs, amid the cry of "*Suka! suka!*" ("We wish it! we wish it!"), a full-grown Malayan tiger, with a low, cat-like snarl, pushed out from behind her chair. I stood looking at the intruder with flashing eyes. His lithe, yellow body was drawn back as though to spring.

Instinctively I put my hand on the butt of my revolver in anticipation of an attack.

The cries of "*Suka!*" commenced again.

"*Lepas*, Murad," said the girl sternly, and the savage beast crouched softly at her feet and closed his treacherous eyes.

No one seemed to notice this strange pet, save the bridegroom. In spite of all his swagger and assumed indifference, his small black eyes shifted continually from the form on the floor to the face of the woman. The man was a coward at heart, and the curling of the bride's lips spoke her thoughts plainer than language.

After the Syrah-box had been passed, and we had each taken a lemon-leaf, smeared it with lime, placed in it some broken fragments of the betel nut, and put the mixture into our mouths, we went outside to partake of the "honourable feast" of the bride's father, of goat and buffalo meat, of rice curry with forty sambuls, of vile smelling durians and luscious papayas, leaving the husband and wife with the women.

The white sand beneath our feet, the silver boles of the tall cocoanuts, the dark green and yellow fronds above, all caught the reflection of the fires, and formed a plaza of almost ethereal beauty.

The queer palm-thatched houses, built up six feet from the ground, filled with the flickering cocoanut oil lamps and gaily dressed women, seemed fitly set in the tropical surroundings.

I turned to my companion and said:

"The bride is not happy."

He looked up at the shimmering lacework of leaves, shrugged his shoulders once more, and answered:

"Who knows!"

I did not pursue the inquiry, but turned to watch a party of youths, naked from the waist up, who were tossing the *raga*, or wicker ball, from one end to another, striving to keep it from falling to the ground, by dexterous movements of their hands, feet, shoulders, and all parts of their body.

A long, piercing, blood-curdling snarl, followed by a cry of pain. I had heard it once, when a man-eating tiger had struck down a Chinese coolie within a rod of me.

The punghulo sprang to his feet, and grasped his kris from the folds of his sarong,—the kris his son-in-law had given him an hour before. With the agility of a cat he sped across the little space and up the ladder of his home.

We followed. A crowd of frightened women filled the narrow opening, all trying to escape. The old man dashed them aside, and headlong on the sand below.

A fearful scene presented itself to our view. On the floor, with his face to the roof, lay the bridegroom, his breast crushed, one arm broken. On him crouched the tiger, his eyes shining like coals, his lips drawn back, and his tail lashing his sides in quick, whiplike movements. The top of his head and his jaws were dripping with blood.

Seated on the daïs in her chair as we had left her, was the bride, with one arm extended across the back of the man's chair. From her left hand was flowing a stream of blood. In her other hand she held a small native dagger. She had fainted.

The significance of the scene flashed over me.

The look of disdain and aversion that she had cast upon her husband, the shrinking from his touch, all suggested to me a solution to the tragedy.

The girl had intentionally cut her hand so that her blood would fall directly on the tiger's nose. In an instant all the savage instincts of the beast had returned. He had tasted blood, and, true to his mistress's reasoning, had sprung on the first person that met his eye. That person was the man she loathed.

Half crazed with grief and fear, the old punghulo rushed forward, armed only with his naked kris. Before he could accomplish his mad feat, the Chief Justice caught him by the shoulder and threw him back into the crowd, at the same moment emptying two chambers of his revolver at the ferocious brute. The tiger sprang into the air with a yell of pain, and fastened his claws into the frail roofing of the house. It gave way, and he fell into the midst of the terrified throng.

Before he could strike down a single person the old chief was on him, and had stabbed him again and again.

It was all done before I could fire.

The girl opened her eyes, shuddered, and fainted again. Her women gathered about her, and carried her, with loud groans and cries, to their apartments.

After it was all over, and the dead bridegroom had been washed, shrouded in a cotton cloth, and laid out for burial, we started back to our camp.

I turned to the Chief Justice as we at last struggled out of the murky blackness of the jungle, and said, with an affected carelessness:

"Rather odd how that pet tiger came to spring on the husband of his mistress. A case of jealousy, do you suppose?"

He scanned my face intently for a moment in the flare of the torches, then raised his expressive shoulders, and muttered:

"Allah alone is wise."

NOTICE.

In the issue of PEARSON'S WEEKLY,

PUBLISHED ON

SATURDAY, JANUARY 26th,

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By George Griffith,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," &c.

SUMMARY.

Max Renault—leading spirit of Anarchist Autonomie Group No. 7, who has joined the Utopians (a Socialistic colony on an island in the South Pacific) in order to steal the air-ship they are building, which he succeeds in doing.

Franz Hartog—a German engineer, in league with Renault, who steals a very fast torpedo-boat destroyer from the Russian Government to levy blackmail on the Atlantic.

Sir Harry Milton—a wealthy young English nobleman, who by chance comes across the island of Utopia in his yacht, the *Calypso*, and subsequently devotes the whole of his fortune to hunting down Renault and Hartog.

Herbert Wyndham—a lieutenant in the British Navy who is travelling with Sir Harry for the benefit of his health, and who determines to resign his commission and couple his energies with those of Sir Harry in destroying the Anarchists, on account of the fact that he has been stabbed by Renault when the latter attempts to carry off Violet in the air-ship.

Frederick Austen—the inventor of the air-ship, who shares its secret with Edward Adams, Dr. Edwards, and Ambrose Millar, three other Utopians.

Frank Markham—the young captain of the Utopian yacht, *Mermaid*.

Violet Milton—Sir Harry's sister, and Lieutenant Wyndham's sweetheart, is fearfully injured by throwing herself out of the air-ship on which Renault has tried to carry her off.

Lea Cassilis (alias Mme. Dail)—a member of Autonomie Group No. 7, with whom Renault is in love.

Dora Merton—a fair Utopian, who has made an impression on Sir Harry.

Lucy Summers—another fair Utopian.

Renault, after levying blackmail with Hartog on the high seas, returns to Utopia with the object of destroying the colony, but finds it deserted. After a time he goes to Europe in the air-ship *Vengeur*, and together with Lea Cassilis visits the Criterion Theatre, in London, where he is recognised by Sir Harry, and Lieutenant Wyndham, who effect his capture. He is tried and condemned to death, but is rescued while on the way to the scaffold by his confederates in the air-ship. London is then bombarded by the *Vengeur*. The Utopians in England have built an air-ship, and just as Sir Harry and his friends have started, three other air-ships appear on the scene. An aerial battle ensues in which, of the three Anarchist ships, one is destroyed, another escapes, and the third is captured.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

Prisoners of War.

"The irony of fate!" exclaimed Mr. Austen, as the reply floated up out of the depths. "To think that our first prize of war should be the poor old *Volante*, as we meant to call her—the ship that we all spent so much thought and labour over in Utopia, and which I so fondly fancied was going to enable us to compel all the nations of the world to keep the peace—and here we meet her in our first battle!"

"Yes, queer enough certainly," laughed Sir Harry somewhat bitterly. "That's just how the Fates seem to delight in making fools of us." Then he turned to the open slide and sang out again in reply to the Anarchists' hail: "I suppose you know that surrender means being taken to Newcastle and handed over to the police."

"Dat is vat I suppose it does mean," came the answer. "It's not likely you are going to be kind enough to gif us a free passage to some safe blace, and set us at liberty. Ve know dat you can blow us into blazes and little bits if you like, and so ve vould rader go and see de police."

If Sir Harry had been a good deal closer than he was, he would have heard Franz Hartog—whom the reader will already have recognised in the commander of the crippled air-ship—mutter to himself in conclusion: "Dere is some chance to get avay from de police, but by de beard of Gambrinus dere is none to get avay from dose guns!"

"All right," replied Sir Harry. "How many men have you got on board?"

"Dere are eight besides mineself."

He clambered slowly up the ladder.

"Send them all up on deck, and look sharp about it," said Sir Harry. "Now, Mr. Austen," he continued, "it won't do to give those chaps any chance of treachery, and if you'll leave this business to me I think I have a plan that will make it impossible."

"With pleasure," said Mr. Austen. "You do just as you think best, and I'll keep an eye on them from here in case they do attempt any tricks."

"Thanks; then will you bring the *War-Hawk* right over her, and lower her to about thirty feet above her?"

So saying, he left the conning-tower, called the crew together, leaving a man stationed at each of the forward guns, and briefly explained what he was going to do. Two long rope ladders were then dropped through two slides in the lower part of the gun-room of the *War-Hawk*, which sank slowly down until their ends touched the deck of the *Vengeur*, so that they hung clear between her after lifting fan and the one in front of it. The two forward guns were now useless, so Sir Harry called the men from them, and told them to load two of the vertical bomb-tubes. Then he went to one of the slides and called down to the *Vengeur*, whose crew were now standing by the masts on the narrow deck.

"Are you all on deck?"

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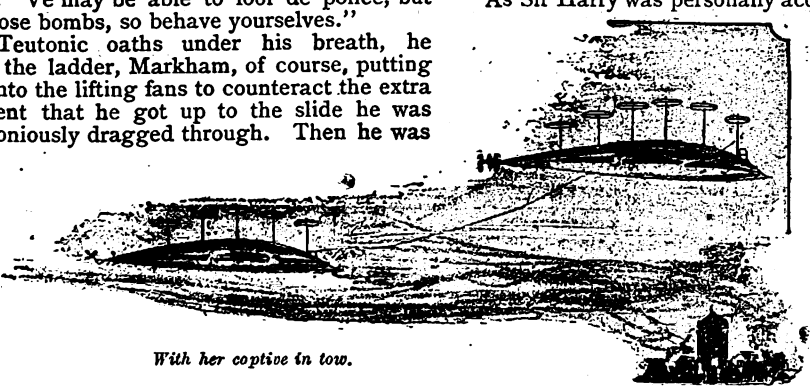
"Jah, ve are all here except de man at the engines. Do you vant us to come up de ladder?"

"Yes, but only one by one. If you're the captain, come up first by the starboard ladder. No nonsense, mind! Our bomb-tubes are loaded, and the moment I even think you are up to any tricks I'll blow you to pieces. Up you come, now!"

There was no choice save between obedience and destruction, and so Franz turned to his men and said:

"You hear dat, boys? De game is up for de present, so don't try any tricks. Ve may be able to fool de police, but ve can't argue mit dose bombs, so behave yourselves."

Then, growling Teutonic oaths under his breath, he clambered slowly up the ladder, Markham, of course, putting a little extra power into the lifting fans to counteract the extra weight. The moment that he got up to the slide he was seized, and unceremoniously dragged through. Then he was tied hand and foot, and meanwhile one of the *War-Hawk's* men climbed down the other ladder and took his place on the *Vengeur's* deck. The moment he got there he whipped a couple of revolvers out of his belt and covered the Anarchists. Then Sir Harry called out again:



With her captive in tow.

"Now then, next man, up you come!"

The second Anarchist at once commenced the ascent to captivity. As he went up, another *War-Hawk* went down, and so the two crews exchanged places until five of the Anarchists, including Hartog, were lying bound in the gun-room, and five of the *War-Hawk's* men were on board the *Vengeur*. These speedily tied up the remainder of her crew, and then took charge of her engines. Then a rope was passed down from the stern of the *War-Hawk* and made fast to the *Vengeur's* bow, and when all was ready Sir Harry went back to the conning-tower.

"Very neatly done indeed, Sir Harry," said Mr. Austen. "This will be a very pleasant little surprise to the good people in Newcastle. By the way, have you learnt whether or not Renault was on board any of the ships?"

"No, I haven't," laughed Sir Harry. "I tried to get it out of that little brute of a German, who—would you believe it?—is Franz Hartog, the man who stole the Russian torpedo boat, and turned her into the *Destroyer*, but he cursed me by all his gods and told me to find out for myself. Still, I believe he was on that one that escaped, because when I indulged in a little politic romance and told him we had blown her to pieces, he let out a gasp of genuine disgust which there was no mistaking."

"And so he's Franz Hartog, is he?" said Mr. Austen, lifting his eye-brows. "Then if that's so, whether Renault has got away or not, we can congratulate ourselves on having made the next important capture to him. I expect by this time Herr Franz is pretty sorry that he didn't stick to sea piracy instead of taking to the air."

"Yes," laughed Sir Harry. "He is about the most disgusted man I ever saw."

"All right for towing now, Mr. Austen," came a message from the engine-room, as Sir Harry ceased speaking.

"Very well," he replied down the tube. "Go slowly at first and quicken up gradually. Don't bring too much strain on the rope at once."

Then the *War-Hawk's* propellers began to revolve and she moved away to the eastward with her captive in tow at an increasing speed that gradually quickened up to fifty miles an hour. A little over an hour's towing brought the lights of Newcastle once more beneath them.

A long blur of darkness to the north-east marked the position of Jesmond Dene and Armstrong Park. Sir Harry knew the topography of Newcastle perfectly, and under his guidance the two air-ships crossed the town unseen, above the clouds of smoke that were rising from the conflagrations, and dropped like shadows on to the open space between the clump of trees and the old watch tower overlooking the now deserted valley of Armstrong Park.

It was now after ten o'clock at night, but the fire brigades were still working hard in extinguishing the fires which had been started by the Anarchist fire-shells, and nearly the whole population was out in the streets in a state of excitement bordering on panic, waiting for the air-ship to reappear in the skies and complete her work by bringing the doom of Central London upon Newcastle.

As Sir Harry was personally acquainted both with the Mayor and Captain Nicholls, the Chief of Police, he thought it would be better for him to go personally to explain the strange occurrences which had brought them with their prisoners to the town. As soon, therefore, as the air-ships touched ground he landed and went to the gate-lodge, where a brief explanation and a sovereign quickly secured his exit.

Crossing "Sir William's Bridge" he was lucky enough to be overtaken by an unoccupied cab, and in this he drove straight to the Police Station in Pilgrim Street, where he found the Mayor in consultation with the Chief Constable, discussing plans for obtaining protection for the town in case the panic in the streets should degenerate into riot. His card secured his immediate admission to the chief's private room, for his connection with the Aerial Navigation Syndicate was well known, and in addition to this his personal influence in the county, and his acquaintance with the Mayor, made him doubly welcome at such a moment.

"Good evening, Sir Harry!" said the Mayor, rising from his seat when he entered, and holding out his hand. "We were talking about you only a moment ago. I suppose you know we are in terrible trouble? The Anarchists have been bombarding the town from one of their air-ships. When is your Syndicate going to get its fleet afloat and hunt these scoundrels from the air? And where have *you* come from, by the way? Have you dropped from the clouds?"

"That is just exactly what I have done," laughed Sir Harry, as he shook hands with him and the Chief of Police. "I have just come down in one of those very ships, and what's more I've brought an Anarchist ship with me, and all her crew prisoners of war; so all you have got to do is to send out the prison-van to Armstrong Park, and bring them home and lock them up."

The Mayor and Captain Nicholls stared at him for a moment in blank astonishment. He had told his startling tidings in as matter-of-fact a voice as if he had been asking them to dinner, and it took some time for them to grasp the full meaning of what he said. Then the Mayor found his voice again, and exclaimed:

"What! You have captured the air-ship and brought the scoundrels on board her prisoners into Armstrong Park? I thought the age of miracles was past, but if you've done that it isn't, and the thanks of the two towns will be yours, for you have done them the greatest service that anyone could do them. As you can see for yourself, the scoundrels have set Newcastle and Gateshead on fire in about a dozen places, besides wrecking twenty or thirty buildings with their shells."

"Stop a moment," said Sir Harry; "I haven't fully explained myself yet. I am sorry to say we have not captured the particular air-ship that did the damage. You'll scarcely believe me, but she has got clear away, although we were floating over her at the very time she was firing on the town. We did not fire on her, because, you see, if we had done so, every shot that missed her would have struck you; while if we had hit her, she would have come down with about a ton of explosives on board and levelled half Newcastle with the ground."

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"I see! I see!" said the Mayor. "Of course you couldn't. But which air-ship is it that you've captured?"

"There were three of them," replied Sir Harry. "They came to attack us this evening on one of the Farne Islands on which we built the ship I have come in, but we just managed to give them the slip. We have destroyed one, captured another, and, as I say, the one that fired on you has escaped. But I'll tell you something else we've done. We've caught Franz Hartog, that brute of a German engineer who stole the torpedo destroyer from Elbing, and committed all those horrors on the Atlantic. So you'll have quite a distinguished prisoner you see."

"That's glorious news, isn't it!" exclaimed the Mayor, turning to the Chief of Police. "I needn't say I hope you'll hold him tight when you get him."

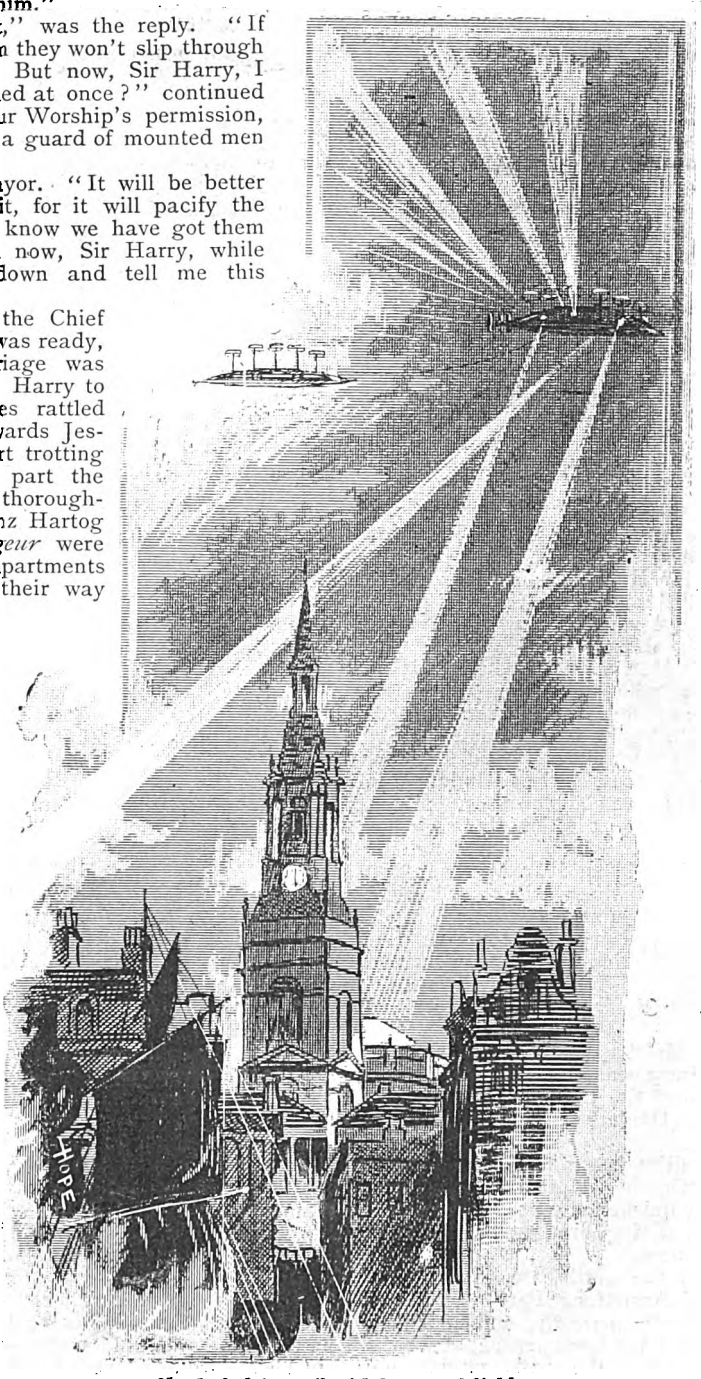
"There's no fear of that," was the reply. "If walls and doors will hold them they won't slip through my fingers, I can tell you. But now, Sir Harry, I suppose you want them fetched at once?" continued the Captain. "So, with your Worship's permission, I'll get out the van and have a guard of mounted men ready to go with it."

"Very well," said the Mayor. "It will be better not to lose any time about it, for it will pacify the people wonderfully when they know we have got them under lock and key. And now, Sir Harry, while they're getting ready, sit down and tell me this wonderful story over again."

In a quarter of an hour the Chief returned to say that the van was ready, and that the Mayor's carriage was waiting to take him and Sir Harry to the Park. The two vehicles rattled away up Pilgrim Street towards Jesmond Road with their escort trotting on either side of them, to part the crowd that filled the great thoroughfare, and within an hour Franz Hartog and the crew of the *Vengeur* were safely stowed away in the compartments of the prison van, and on their way back to the cells.

The news of the capture spread like wildfire through the towns, and was immediately telegraphed all over the country, to be reproduced with unexpected effects, as events proved, in all the morning papers.

The good people of Newcastle would fain have lionised Sir Harry, and made a public spectacle of his marvellous craft, but as the *War-Hawk* was already over-due at Lundy he declined even the Mayor's invitation to sleep at his house, and, as soon as he had seen the Anarchists safely within the grim, black walls of the gaol in Carliol Square, he returned to the Park, and the *War-Hawk*, with the *Vengeur* still in tow, rose into the air amidst a mighty roar of cheers from the thousands who had gathered on the great viaduct and about the Park gates to catch a glimpse of the now famous vessel. She flashed farewell with her search-lights and sped away up into the clouds *en route* for Lundy Island.



She flashed farewell with her search-lights.

CHAPTER XL.

MAX TO THE RESCUE.

THE next morning the whole country was ringing with the fame of the *War-Hawk* and her exploits. The reaction from the horror and panic induced by the merciless revenge which Renault had taken upon London to the cheering certainty that, after all, the world was not to be given over unresisting to the fury of its worst enemies, and that at last the Syndicate had brought into existence a power capable of successfully disputing the empire of the air with them, sent the nation almost wild with delight.

Of course the newspapers published voluminous accounts, necessarily imaginative, of the aerial combats between the *War-Hawk* and the Anarchist vessels, and more reliable if no less highly coloured narratives of her coming with her prisoners of war to Newcastle. Once more Sir Harry's portrait appeared in all the illustrated periodicals, together with alleged pictures of his wonderful vessel, which represented her under a variety of forms, from that of a flying torpedo boat to that of a gigantic bird with screw propellers instead of a tail.

Once more the whole nation was talking about nothing but the Anarchists and the Syndicate, and the hostile fleets of air-ships which the popular imagination multiplied until they were numerous enough to have shaken the heavens and devastated the earth in their conflicts.

All this was perfectly natural and indeed inevitable, and yet, as events speedily proved, it was the very worst thing that could possibly have happened. Three days passed without any of the air-ships belonging to either side having made a sign of their existence. The *Vengeur* had been taken to Lundy Island, and placed for repairs on the slips on which the *Volante* had been put together, after which both the *Volante* and the *War-Hawk* had vanished to destinations unknown to any but the directors of the Syndicate.

Then, on the early morning of the fourth day after Hartog and his ship-mates had been placed in durance vile, Newcastle woke up to find itself placarded, just as London had been, with the ominous red posters which demanded the immediate and unconditional release of the prisoners under pain of aerial bombardment.

The message from the enemy was brief and to the point. By ten o'clock Hartog and his companions were to be put on board a steam launch and taken ten miles

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out to sea, where they would be picked up by an air-ship. If a white flag was not hoisted over the police-station to show that this had been done, the bombardment would begin at half-past ten.

There was no doubt this time as to whether the threats would be fulfilled or not. The experience of London conclusively showed what the fate of Newcastle would be if the order was disobeyed. The feeling of relief that had been enjoyed since the capture of the *Vengeur* instantly gave place to panic again.

The Mayor at once telegraphed to the offices of the Syndicate and to the Home Office, imploring assistance and the protection of the aerial fleet which was believed to be in existence. Of course, the Government could do nothing. It had no engine of warfare at its disposal that could cope for an instant with the Anarchist air-ships, and Mr. Maxim telegraphed back in the name of the Syndicate saying that the only two available vessels were beyond the reach of communications, and reminding the authorities that, having taken no precautions to insure secrecy, they could only expect the Anarchists would be informed of what had happened by the newspapers and would naturally do as they had done.

With this cold comfort Newcastle was obliged to be content. The authorities were confronted with what was in sober truth a very terrible dilemma. On the one hand, there was the dignity of the law to be vindicated; and on the other, there was a practically impossible penalty to be paid for doing so. To yield meant to confess before all the world that the forces of Anarchy were superior to those of civilisation and order, and so, to all intents and purposes, held the world for the time being at their mercy; while to resist meant to consign one of the wealthiest and most populous towns of the kingdom to destruction and carnage horrible beyond all description.

What had happened a few nights before, terrible and all as it had been, would be as nothing to what was now threatened, for the placard distinctly stated that the town would be bombarded by a fleet of twenty air-ships, that they would destroy friend with foe, and that if Hartog and his companions died their tomb would be the ruins of Newcastle and Gateshead.

What was to be done? At half-past eight the Mayor, in an agony of perplexity, telegraphed to the Home Office for precise instructions. He said that the prisoners had been before the magistrates two days previously, had been formally committed for trial, and were now lying in the town gaol, awaiting the assizes. In an hour the reply came back, to the effect that the law was to take its course at all hazards. The moment this decision became known, the population of the two towns revolted *en masse*, and turned out into the streets, vowing that the prisoners should be released if they pulled the gaol down with their own hands to do it.

The psychological moment had arrived, and the habit of respect for the law suddenly succumbed to the irresistible terror which affected everyone in precisely the same way. All had lives and homes to lose, most had families and property as well. The rich man feared for his mansion just as the artisan feared for his cottage. Rich and poor were, for the moment, united in the presence of an impending fate which would make no distinctions of class or fortune.

The elementary idea upon which all law is founded—the preservation of life, peace, and property—was suddenly inverted. To obey the law meant to lose everything that the law was supposed to safeguard. In other words, a power stronger than the law had sprung into existence and annulled it at a stroke.

There was no time for demonstrations or speech-making or discussion. The Watch Committee of the Town Council had been sitting since seven o'clock. The streets were full of angry and excited multitudes animated by a single purpose, and the town authorities were speedily made aware of what that purpose was.

Considering the terrible and unparalleled position in which he was placed, the Mayor acted with wonderful coolness and discretion. Staunch respecter of the law as he was, he clearly saw, as the moment for making a final decision grew rapidly nearer, that to obey the law was to defeat it. Half a dozen troops of lancers and as many companies of infantry, with the whole police force, had so far sufficed to keep the crowd clear of the police-station and the gaol; but he knew that the moment the first shell fell from the sky it would be the signal for panic, universal and ungovernable, in the midst of which the military and civil forces would be helpless, even if, by some miracle, they were not infected by it.

Sir Harry's portrait appeared in all the illustrated periodicals.

Therefore, after a brief discussion with his colleagues, he telegraphed back to the Home Office to say that the town was practically in revolt, and that, unless the Government could furnish him with the means of protecting life and property and upholding the authority of the law, he would be compelled to take the responsibility of releasing the prisoners.

This message was despatched at a quarter to ten, but the Mayor had determined not to obey the summons of the Anarchists until the very last moment—until, in fact, their air-ship appeared in the sky in fulfilment of their threat.

All but official telegraphic communication between Newcastle and London had been stopped. In five minutes the message was being read off to the Home Secretary. In ten more two other messages were being flashed back to Newcastle.

One was to the colonel commanding the troops in the town ordering him to bring the prisoners by special train to London at all hazards, and directing him to acquaint the Mayor with his instructions. The other was to the senior captain of the coast defence squadron stationed in the Tyne ordering him to close the river until the prisoners were on their way to London.

By a quarter past ten the town was practically under martial law. The Mayor bowed to circumstances, ended the sitting of the Town Council, and retired to his private room to await the issue of events he could not longer control. The colonel in command of the troops made his way with a strong guard to the gaol and requested the governor to have the prisoners at once removed to the station, where a special train was already being made up.

The excitement of the populace had now risen to the pitch of frenzy, but the knowledge that the magazine rifles of the Infantry and the carbines of the Cavalry were loaded with ball cartridge, prevented any actual outbreak for the time being. Just as the half hour sounded from the tower of St. Nicholas the gates of the gaol opened and the prison van came out from the deep archway under the first entrance tower.

The same moment a mighty roar of terror went up from the throats of the hundreds of thousands of people filling the Manors, Erick Street, Croft Street, and all the approaches to Carliol Square, save Worswick Street and the space in front of the gaol gateway, which were kept clear by the police and the soldiers, and thousands of hands were pointed upwards to the sky. From a score of points all round the town the dreaded air-ships were rapidly approaching.

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They stopped at a height of about fifteen hundred feet, plainly in view of everyone against the clear sky. One of them, flying a plain blood-red flag from her flagstaff astern, swept down swiftly in the direction of the gaol, and stopped five hundred feet from the ground and about seven hundred yards in a straight line from the gates where the guard was drawn up round the prison van. The moment she came to a standstill, the colonel raised his sword and ordered his men to fire on her.

The rifles went up with mechanical precision, but before a trigger could be pulled three streams of fire spouted from the air-ship's broadside and a storm of Maxim bullets was poured into the broad open space in front of the gaol. Horses and men went down under it in huddled heaps to the ground. The colonel was almost the first man to fall, and before the withering hail had been raining down for five minutes there was neither man nor horse left alive within fifty yards of the prison van.

The crowds that had been watching for its departure surged back, screaming with terror, and treading its weaker members under foot in its mad rush for shelter from the bullets of the terrible machine guns. At the same moment, the other air-ships opened a converging fire of shells from twenty points upon the devoted town and the crowds who thronged the streets.

Instantly the prisoners were forgotten, and all control was at an end. Buildings were collapsing in every direction under the frightful energy of the explosives rained upon them, and hurricanes of bullets were sweeping along the streets. In the midst of the indescribable panic which now reigned supreme, the air-ship with the red flag ran forward and dropped to within fifty feet of the ground close by the prison van. She was the *Revanche*, Renault's new flagship, and the same craft which had so narrowly escaped destruction by the *War-Hawk* four days before.

Her fore and aft guns sent shell after shell down the Manors and into the ends of Worswick Street and Erick Street, until she floated over a solitude cumbered with ruins and strewn with hundreds of corpses. Then a rope ladder dropped to the ground from one of her ports, a couple of men descended, went to the van and took the keys from the corpse of a policeman lying by the step, rapidly opened the doors, and brought the handcuffed prisoners out.

They were all there, Hartog and the eight men who had been so ignominiously captured on board the *Vengeur*. Their handcuffs were speedily unlocked, and, as soon as his hands were free, Franz ran towards the air-ship crying:

"*Ach, mein lieber Max!* I knew you vould come for us. I tought you vere not de man to run avay and leave your friendt in trouble. How did you know dat ve vere in de van?"

"I guessed it, my friend," replied Max, who was leaning out of one of the port-holes laughing at the comical figure presented by the little German in his unwonted excitement. "My glasses showed me the soldiers round it, and I felt pretty sure that they wouldn't honour anyone but you with a military escort."

"Ah! jah, and vere is dat escort now?" chuckled Franz, looking round with an evil grin at the mangled and riddled corpses of the unhappy red-coats. "I vonder ven dese fools vill learn dat dey can only fight air-ships mit air-ships?"

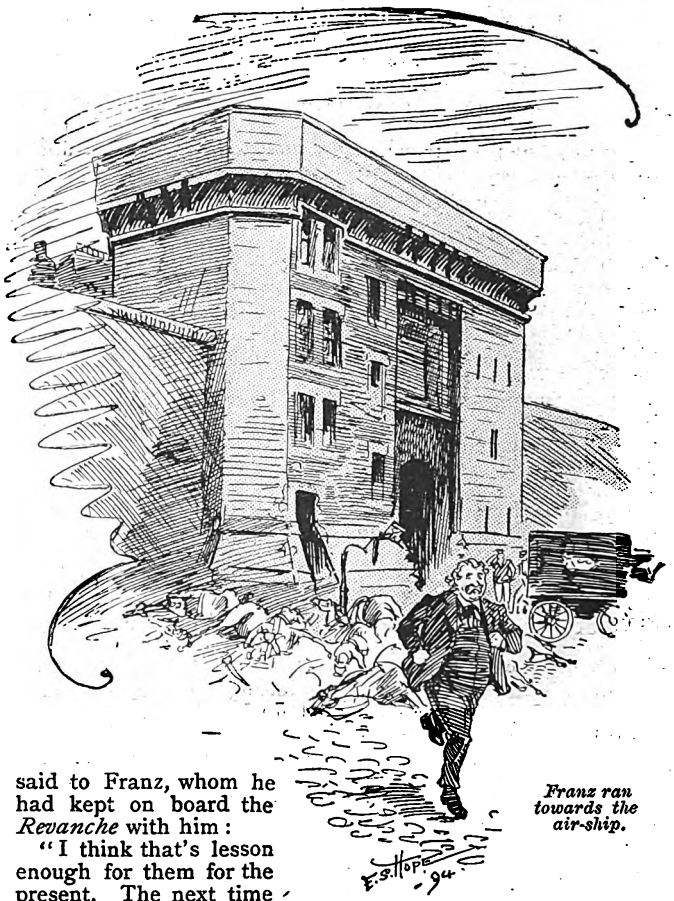
"Well, you ought to be able to teach them," laughed Max in reply. "How the deuce did you let yourselves get taken prisoners like a lot of tame pigeons?"

"Mein friendt—if you had had one of dose shells bursting among your propellers, and blowing holes in your stern like ve had, I don't tink you vould have been able to run avay quite as fast as you did," snapped Franz, and the retort was so smartly turned that Max himself could not help joining in the laugh that it raised against him.

"I fought and ran away so as I could fight another day," he said, when the laugh had died away. "And it's a precious good job for you that I did. But come along, we can't stop here talking all day. Up you come, all of you! We are missing half the fun. Stand by, there, to put more power on to the fans," he continued, turning towards the interior of the ship, and as the released prisoners climbed one by one up the ladder the lifting fans revolved faster and faster, and as soon as the last had got on board the *Revanche* rose slowly into the air, her propellers spun round until she was moving at a speed of sixty miles an hour, and the added weight, supported by the air-planes, was no longer felt.

As soon as he was on a level with the other ships, Max visited them one after the other until he had distributed the late crew of the *Vengeur* among eight of them. Meanwhile the bombardment had been kept up by the whole fleet with pitiless vigour.

When he had transferred the last of the *Vengeur's* men, he said to Franz, whom he had kept on board the *Revanche* with him:



Franz ran towards the air-ship.

"I think that's lesson enough for them for the present. The next time we ask them to oblige us, perhaps they will be a little more civil about it. We've got a better use for our ammunition than this. François, hoist the signal to cease firing, and then the one for the fleet to collect."

"Vat for is dat?" asked Franz, with a look of undisguised disappointmont. "Vat better use could you have for your ammunition dan burning dose rats out down dere? Mein Gott, see vat blazes! Dere von't be half de town left by evening. I don't see how you can find a finer game dan dis."

"Can't I?" laughed Max. "You wait till we get on the other side of the North Sea, and you'll see. I had news last night that the French and Russian fleets are going to break the British blockade of the Sound to-night, and I don't see why we shouldn't have a share of the fun. You see, they'll be battering each other to pieces on the water, and as we love one of them just about as much as the other, well just get above them and——"

"And make a tree-cornered fight of it, and smash dem all up mit a fine and generous impartiality!" interrupted Franz, bringing his hands together with a sounding clap. "Friendt Max, you are a genius! Dat vill be something like sport. Dis is no better as burning haystacks beside it. Let us go at vonce, in case dey begin before ve come."

(To be continued.)

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THE BLUE LETTER

"YOUR last evening in Russia, Charlie," said Ivan Zosemoff, my brother-in-law, as we strolled along the side of the quay at Dolganief in the cool of the evening. "Well, shall you be glad to get back to old England?"

I shook my head very energetically in reply. Ivan shrugged his shoulders with an air of comic despair.

"Well, I must say you are unpatriotic," he observed. "Here am I, in my own country, longing to be back in England, while you, an Englishman—I beg your pardon, an English boy——"

"Don't happen to have a wife in London, and am therefore less eager to get back," I interrupted.

"If Peter Petrovitch wasn't telling me lies," I went on, "I missed a good adventure this afternoon. He says there was a riot down by the Haymarket; the police pounced upon a meeting of the 'Red Fingers,' and fired upon them when they resisted. Didn't you hear about it? Two of the Nihilists were shot, but their companions got them clear away; and Peter Petrovitch says they are hidden in the city somewhere, and haven't been found yet. I wish I had been there."

Ivan had been glancing round rather uneasily all the while I was speaking. He stopped me now with a low "hush!"—and, looking behind me I saw a man apparently following us, his face muffled up closely and with his hat down over his eyes.

The stranger did not pass us, as I thought he was about to do by the way in which he came up. Instead, he turned and, taking off his hat with great politeness, addressed my brother-in-law.

"Ivan Zosemoff, I believe?"

"That is so," said Ivan, shortly, letting the match in his fingers burn itself out. As it flared up I saw that Ivan was suddenly looking quite pale.

"Perhaps you will come back and take a turn with me on the quay," said the stranger, in the same tone of studied politeness. "I am Nicholas Petrowsky, and I have a message from my brother——"

"Peter Petrowsky!" exclaimed Ivan; and as I struck another match to see Petrowsky's face, I noticed that Ivan was more disturbed than ever. "He quarrelled with me last night," he said.

"Yes—I think that is why he wishes to see you. He is dying."

Ivan turned, and said to me in English:

"Perhaps you had better go, Charlie. I will join you at the hotel some time to-night."

"And lose the chance of an adventure," I answered. "Well, I call it a thundering shame!"

My brother-in-law smiled faintly.

"I wish you could have had the adventure alone. Listen! Six years ago, when I was young and impetuous, I joined the Society of the Red Finger here at Dolganief. A week later, when I found in its midst more thirst for murder and revenge than for the welfare of the people, I was anxious to leave it. Fortunately I was allowed to retire, thanks mainly to the influence of this Peter Petrowsky who wishes to see me. I dare not neglect the summons. But you——."

"Will stick to you, old man, like a leech."

"You had better let our friend think you speak only English, then," replied Ivan; and he turned to Petrowsky and explained to him in Russian that I was English and that I wished to accompany him.

"Ah, the English are always friends of freedom!" said Petrowsky, with a bow of greater politeness than before; and I almost forgot to wait for Ivan to translate the remark before bowing in return and saying that I hoped so.

As we left the quay-side again, to turn down the dark, narrow thoroughfare where Petrowsky first accosted us, he proposed that we should walk slowly along smoking, so as not to attract attention.

It struck me then for the first time that the man we were about to see must be one of those about whom Peter Petrovitch, the hotel waiter, had told me—the "Red Fingers"—who had been wounded by the police and hidden away by friends.

"Before we go any further," said Petrowsky, when we had crossed the deserted square and turned into another dark, lonely street of dilapidated buildings, "I must extract a promise from you."

"And your condition?" inquired Ivan impatiently.

"My friends' condition is that you agree, before accompanying me to my brother's side, to remain there for twelve hours, which will place it out of your power to do us harm."

Ivan drew out his watch.

"It is nearly nine o'clock," he said. "My ship is to sail at eleven to-morrow. It is cutting it rather fine."

"Unfortunately, I am not allowed to alter the terms. It is hard to deny a dying man's request; but, of course, if you cannot keep the arrangement of my friends, we must part here."

"And Peter Petrowsky wants to ask me to forgive something?" said Ivan, almost to himself.

"And is more anxious than I can describe to see you," added Petrowsky. "Well—your decision, Mr. Zosemoff?"

"In return, will you pledge me your word that in twelve hours I shall be allowed to depart without further restriction?"

"Certainly."

"Then I pledge you my word as a gentleman, to remain," said Ivan.

A few minutes later we had turned up an almost pitch-dark alley; and Petrowsky, whispering to us to follow him, unlocked a door which we could not see in the obscurity. Then, after closing it behind him, he commenced to grope his way before us up a broken and uneven staircase. He did not pause till we were on the third landing, where we could see a faint light shining beneath the door of one of the rooms. Petrowsky gave a peculiar whistle, and the door was thrown open, showing a large room, which might have been used for a workshop or warehouse, and which at first sight, as one peered into it from the darkness, appeared to be full of people.

There were only five there, I noticed, as I stood within and looked around—three sitting beside a low smouldering fire, which, with two flaring candles, lighted the room, and two lying on some straw which was scattered over the floor.

The men by the fire stared at us as we entered. One with a big black beard spoke to Nicholas Petrowsky, our guide.

"He has promised?" he inquired.

Petrowsky nodded.

"And the youngster?"

"He is English, and does not count."

As Petrowsky spoke, he was bending over one of the figures on the floor.

"He is alive and knows you have come," he said, looking up and speaking to Ivan, who still stood in the doorway. Then my brother-in-law went over and knelt down in the straw by the dying man's side; but I hardly noticed their greeting, for I was fascinated.

The other man, who was reclining beside Peter Petrowsky

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appeared, like him, to be wounded, and as I entered the room he fixed his eyes upon me, and I could not keep mine from his face. It was deathly pale and bore traces of a recent encounter, and a linen bandage was bound round his temples. He lay in the straw with his head raised a little, his lips moving as though he were speaking to himself. His terrible eyes fascinated me, holding me spell-bound.

I wished to listen to what Peter Petrowsky had to say to my brother-in-law, but I could not tear myself away from that terrible face. I do not know how long I had been gazing at it—at the eyes that were glaring straight into mine—when suddenly the man half rose and raised his hand towards me.

"It is very cold this evening," he said quietly.

I was so utterly surprised at this commonplace remark from a man who seemed to me to be dying that I almost laughed; and, forgetful of Ivan's caution, I should have answered the remark in Russian if the man himself had not spoken again after a moment's pause.

"It is colder in the mines," he said; and then he fell back.

The men sitting round the fire had all risen at his first words, exchanging glances. One of them came over now and knelt down beside him.

"Poor Alexander Romanoff is dead," he said simply, as he looked at him.

In a little while Ivan came over to me. He looked ill, poor fellow, and his cheeks were as white as death.

"Come, Charlie—we must go at once," he said, putting his hand upon my shoulder.

"What is the matter?" I asked.

"Petrowsky has denounced me to the police and given an exaggerated account of my connection with the society. It is all up with me unless I can get out of Russia at once or stop Petrowsky's letter. The government have no mercy on 'Red Fingers.' Oh, why did I leave England, where I was in safety? Oh, Eleanor, Eleanor!"

"Stopping a letter. What letter?" I asked.

"One which Peter Petrowsky wrote this morning to the Head of the Police here at Dolganief. My poor friend is suffering terrible remorse now, and is as anxious as I am to have his letter stopped. But I am afraid it must have been delivered an hour ago."

"But may be still unread. Has he described it to you?"

"Yes, poor fellow; he has done all he could. It is large, he tells me, for it contains letters of mine. The envelope is blue, and there is a large seal on the back in green wax."

"Come," I said, "we must go at once and visit the Head of the Police, and invent some story to induce him to give it up."

"No," said Ivan. "That would be running into the lion's mouth. I must disguise myself and go to another port. They will be waiting to arrest me on the vessel to-morrow; not a moment is to be lost!"

As he spoke he took up his hat and stick and moved towards the door. Nicholas Petrowsky walked slowly across to it and put his back against it.

"You seem to be forgetting your promise, Mr. Zosemoff," he said quietly.

Ivan started. We had both of us entirely forgotten the promise he had made to remain twelve hours in Peter Petrowsky's hiding-place.

"But you hear," Ivan pleaded passionately, addressing himself to Nicholas Petrowsky and forgetting he had given me the news in English, "your brother has denounced me to the police. If I do not escape at once, I shall never see England again. I have a wife there waiting for me. You cannot keep me to my promise!"

"Why has he denounced you?" he asked.

"Six years ago I was in the society of the Red Finger——"

"And left it? Then you must look for no mercy from us," he said coldly.

Ivan's white forehead was covered with moisture. Suddenly he rushed to Peter Petrowsky's side.

"Your dying brother will speak for me," he said. "Good Heavens"—as he turned—"he is dead!"

Nicholas Petrowsky crossed over to where his brother lay; the other men all turned. I thought the opportunity too good to be lost, and, conquering an inclination to faint, slipped noiselessly out at the door. I had given no promise, and I was determined to get hold of that large blue letter with the green seal before it was opened by the Head of the Dolganief Police.

Once out in the street I was safe. The private house of General Vanrow, the Head of the Dolganief Police, was not far from our hotel; Peter Petrovitch, the waiter, had pointed it out to me. While I was making my way towards it through the narrow streets filled by people of the lowest class, a man suddenly ran out of a dark entry which I was passing, and before I knew what he was about, had snatched my watch out of my pocket and run away with it. I did not pursue him; the theft delighted me. I had been racking my brains to think of some pretext for getting into the house of the Chief of Police, and here Providence had furnished me with one.

It was not long before I had reached the place, passed the sentry at the gate, and was ringing at the door-bell, although I had only the most vague idea as to what I should do when it was answered.

The door was opened by a muscular-looking footman, to whom, in accordance with Russian etiquette, I presented a couple of kopecks before inquiring if his master were at home. The man looked at the money, pocketed it in a leisurely manner, and replied that his master was not at home. I had been fearing the two kopecks were not sufficient, so I presented the man with two more, and said it was really very important that I should see the Head of Police at once; to which the footman replied with more friendliness, after pocketing his fee, that General Vanrow was at the neighbouring town of Doushkin, and would be back possibly at midnight.

"Your master has not been at home all day?" I asked.

"He has been away since yesterday."

"And his letters—who has opened them?" I inquired, anxious to gain as much information as possible. "My business is about a letter," I explained.

"The letters have not been opened."

"Mr. Vanrow will open them to-night?"

"Yes, he is pretty certain to do so. He always glances at his letters the first thing on entering the house when he has been away."

The man was growing impatient and prepared to close the door, but I prevented him by putting my foot against it.

"My business is very important. I will wait your master's arrival," I said.

I tried to keep calm, even when the footman refused point-blank to allow me to wait, saying he would be dismissed at once if he allowed anybody to bother his master at such an unseasonable hour, when he would be worn out with his journey. I had five kopecks left in my pocket. I gave the man one to prolong his conversation; with the other four I was contemplating the purchase of the compromising letter. This promised, however, to be a ticklish matter.

"Among your master's letters," I said, rushing to the point before the effect of my *douceur* had passed off, "do you remember one in a blue envelope—a bulky one sealed with a green seal?"

"I remember it perfectly," the man said in a tone which encouraged me. "It arrived this afternoon."

"That letter was sent in a moment of passion," I went on. "The sender wished it unsent."

"Well," asked my listener in a tone which did not encourage me much—"well, what do you want me to do?"

"I have here four kopecks. To-morrow I can bring you much more, if you will allow me to take back that letter to the man who sent it, and who immediately afterwards wished it unsent."

I had misjudged the man. He made no reply, but the next moment had slammed the door in my face; and I found myself standing alone in the porch. However, I would not give up the case as hopeless, but stood there waiting, at intervals ringing the bell, till at last one of the sentinels in front of the house came and turned me away.

I wandered round and round the house and grounds, exciting the curiosity, I have no doubt, of the lazy-looking sentries who

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were placed at wide intervals round it. One of them standing outside a small door in the garden wall at the back, who seemed to eye me more curiously than the rest, startled me, as I was passing him for the third time, by saying, almost in a whisper:

"It is very cold this evening."

They were the very words which had been ringing in my ears ever since the wounded Nihilist fell dead immediately after uttering them. Almost mechanically I uttered the dying man's other remark:

"It is colder in the mines."

I was surprised at the effect of my words; instantly the man threw open the door before which he stood, and almost thrust me through into the dark garden.

"Quick!" he whispered. "There is a light in the supper-room; his library is below!"

The next moment I heard the door close behind me, and I was left alone to meditate on the strange fortune which had given me an entrance to Vanrow's premises.

Before me lay the dark house. On the first floor one window alone was illuminated, all the rest were in darkness. But, as I crouched there, shivering at every rustle of the trees around me, a light appeared in the room below.

It was the General's library, the sentry had told me; and as his words recurred to me, my heart seemed to stand still. For surely the General's letters would be waiting for him in that room, and the light might mean that the Head of the Police had returned and was about to open them. The thought brought back a little courage, and I nerved myself to creep along as noiselessly as I could towards the light.

The Chief of the Police must have trusted very implicitly to the watch of his drowsy sentries, for the window below which he sat was not even curtained, and, as he sat in the light of a small reading lamp at his desk, any one with a revolver could have shot him easily enough from the spot to which I had crawled.

One by one the letters lying on his table were torn open by the Head of the Police. The fatal missive, which I recognised at once, was the seventh.

The General took the letter in his hand and turned it over, examining the seal. Despair made me reckless. I rose from the spot where I had been crouching and advanced a step towards the window. One impulse alone possessed me—to prevent that compromising budget being read. A moment more and I should have done something desperate; but, as if under the influence of my will, the general yawned and threw the letter down on his desk unopened. I drew back to the sheltering shade; and as I did so, Vanrow rose and pushed back his chair. The next instant the room was in darkness; he had blown out the lamp.

After a few moments I crawled along to the window, crouching down beneath the sill and raising my arms to try to push up the sash. No sooner had I touched the woodwork than it moved, and I felt the window raised out of my grasp. I drew back my hands quickly, and crept close to the wall beneath the window, not daring to breathe.

It was well I could draw myself into a small space, for a man's leg came out of the room right over me, and I could just feel it touch me as he stepped out. It was almost a miracle that the man passed over me. His movements were so altogether noiseless that I had quite a superstitious dread of him. But the man's boot made no sound as he stole away from the house, and that reassured me a little.

He had left the window open. Now was the moment, I told myself, for me to enter the house and steal the letter. But I do not think I could have summoned up courage even then, with the window wide open for me, if it had not been that I was a little more afraid of the garden with the silent Nihilist creeping about it than of the house with only a matter-of-fact official inside.

With very little noise I got into the room, and, feeling my way to the desk, groped over the top of it, where I had seen the letters lying. They were all gone! I stood there completely at a loss, and then, unwilling to give up hope, groped once more over the green cloth which covered the surface of the desk. Yes—the letters were gone.

But upon the desk was something which I had not seen when I looked through the window—something square with metallic sides. I passed my hand over it, wonderingly. How silent the room was! I could hear my watch ticking quite loudly, I thought. And then it flashed into my mind that my watch had been stolen—that the low, steady ticking came from this metal box, over which my hand was wandering in its hopeless search for the letter. And with that thought I drew back my hand suddenly as if stung. But the next moment I was glad.

There was time for me to escape surely, and then the terrible, low-ticking would blow the blue letter into atoms—not a trace would be left—and with it, whether he had read it or not, the Head of the Dolganief Police.

But it seemed such a pity for General Vanrow to be blown up if he had not read the letter. With a sudden impulse, I rushed to the door of the library and threw it open.

"Vanrow! General Vanrow!" I shouted.

He met me at the top of the stairs with a revolver in his right hand, and a wine-glass, from which he had been drinking, still in his left.

"Quick—escape!" I screamed. "There is an infernal machine in your library! It is going off! We shall be blown to atoms!"

He had run past me in a moment, and came out of the library with the box in his hand. I stood on the stairs unable to move, petrified by my curiosity to see what he would do.

"Come," he said. "You may help me!"—as he ran into the supper room; and I followed just in time to see him wrench open the case with a carving fork and stop the clockwork with his fingers.

"As far as I can judge, we have won by two minutes," he remarked coolly. "Did you see the thing placed?"

"A man passed me leaving the library window," I answered.

The general turned to a speaking tube near him, and gave a few quickly-spoken orders through it.

"I will go and search the garden," he said to me. "The villains must not escape."

As he left the room, I glanced anxiously round. There was a desk under the window similar to one in the room below, and I searched every drawer of it; they were all empty, however. Then I crossed the room to where the thick curtains shut off a small inner room, and, as I drew them aside, I uttered an exclamation of joy, for lying on a table at the farther end were all the letters which I had seen on the desk in the library.

Vanrow had, as I suspected, carried them upstairs with him. I turned them over quickly with trembling fingers. Yes—there was the blue letter for which I had undergone so much! I seized it eagerly. As I did so the curtains were drawn aside, and, turning at the sound, I found myself, with the letter still in my hand, face to face with the Head of the Police.

"I am afraid he has escaped," he was saying as he entered. "There must be some treachery among my sentries;" and then, as he caught sight of the letter in my hand, he paused.

"That is so, or I should not be here," I said, frankly.

"And now I have to inquire," he began, in a slightly altered tone, "what you were doing so opportunely in my apartments, and how I can reward you for the service you have rendered me?"

He seemed a rather kind man. I saw there would be no good in attempting any but the real explanation of my presence.

"I came to steal this letter," I said, holding it up. "May I claim as my reward the right to burn it unread by you?"

Vanrow raised his eyebrows.

"I assure you on my honour as an English gentleman"—and I drew myself up to the full extent of my sixty-three inches—"that to burn it will harm nobody. The writer wished it unsent almost as soon as it left his hands."

"This is not a personal matter," replied the General, shrugging his shoulders. "My duty to the State——"

"Does not require you to read a letter which the writer wished unsent," I interrupted.

"It is a very hard thing you ask."

"Which gives you the greater pleasure in granting it."

The General smiled, and I held the letter in the flame of one of the candles which stood on the table.

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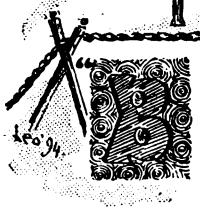
A Tight-Rope Romance



"BRAVO! bravo!" shouted the vast assembly, as Saladin, the king of the tight-rope, appeared, graceful and smiling.

Saladin looked down from his giddy height through hazy space upon the mass of upturned faces and drank in the delicious incense of their applause. Then, as the band began to play the prelude of a popular waltz, he ostentatiously blew a kiss towards a box where a little woman, with a scared look in her eyes, sat watching him. She had forebodings—vague forebodings born of ominous dreams—that something terrible would befall that night. So she had told him, and now he blew her a kiss before that great multitude to reassure her.

And yet she was not reassured. Not that she doubted for an instant her lover's sureness of foot or steadiness of head. Only she had seen a face in the stalls and a pair of eyes that had met hers and frightened her. She clutched suddenly at the sleeve of her companion.

"Look," she cried hysterically.

"Yes, dear; what is it?"

"Lord Rider. He is sitting below there."

"Lord Rider?"

"Yes. I jilted him to run away with Saladin. Didn't you know? He'll do something dreadful, I know he will. I must run and tell Saladin. Let me go, Kitty."

The other tried to calm her.

"But I can't bear to look at it, Kitty."

"Then come outside, dear. There's no danger, really; but if you stay here you may scream and frighten him."

And so saying, she took her by the arm and led her gently into the ladies' cloak-room, and made her drink a little brandy.

The rope stretched from end to end of the hall, some eighty feet or so above the floor, and Saladin walked along it, as easily and safely as a man who crosses a plank bridge over a tiny brook. He stood on it on one foot, he knelt on it, he sat astride it. He even crossed it blindfold, with a sack over his head. The multitude gazed at him open-eyed and open-mouthed, and every time he got back to his little platform in mid-air roared tumultuous applause.

"Ladies and gentlemen!" shouted the manager, "we have now arrived at the final item in Saladin's entertainment. Saladin asks me to say that if any member of the audience will intrust himself to his care he is willing to carry him across the tight rope on his back."

There was a great silence, broken presently by the voices of those who pressed the offer on their neighbours. The manager repeated his proposal.

"I can assure you, ladies and gentlemen," he said, "that there is not the slightest danger. If any gentleman will cross the tight rope on Saladin's back, Saladin will absolutely guarantee his safe return."

Again there was a silence, growing gradually to a murmur; and then a long tempest of vociferous cheers as a man in evening dress was seen to rise in his place in the stalls and climb the flight of steps which gave access to the stage.

"Who is he?"

The question passed rapidly from mouth to mouth, and at first none could answer it. But presently a man in the front seats whispered to his neighbour:—

"By Jove! that's Lord Rider; the man whose *fiancée* ran away with Saladin!"

To which the neighbour replied:—"Ugly little brute. I'm not surprised. But what's his game, I wonder? He means mischief of some sort, I'll warrant. What do you think? Oughtn't we to tell the manager to stop it?"

"What's the use? It's not our business. Saladin can stop it himself if he wants to."

So they whispered to each other, while Lord Rider was hoisted, amid ringing rounds of cheers, to the platform where stood the man who had robbed him of his love.

To anyone who knew the story it would have seemed no wonder that the athlete had been preferred to him, even by the woman who wore his engagement ring. He saw all this himself; he had seen it and known it since his rival had come across his path; and the knowledge added both to his bitterness and to his hate.

The eyes of the two men met. It was the first time since the little woman had left her home that Saladin had seen the man whom he had wronged; and they looked at each other long and steadfastly. There were two attendants with them on the platform, and in their presence neither cared to speak the thoughts that were uppermost in his mind. But Saladin's face fell at length before the other's gaze, and fear was visible in his eyes, and he began to stammer out a refusal to go further with this last item of his entertainment.

"If you are afraid," the other whispered beneath his breath—"if you are afraid, it does not matter."

Still Saladin hesitated.

"Very well," the man said. "Now I see that you are a coward."

The word stung Saladin to the quick. He was not used to have his courage questioned; perhaps there were few men whose courage was less questionable. He gripped hold of one of the ropes, by which the platform was suspended, for a moment, while a crowd of thoughts shot through his brain.

"I am no coward. Come!"

And the attendant helped the man on to his back and handed him the balancing-pole, and they passed out together upon the tight rope.

Saladin had no delusions, no false hopes. He knew, though the other whispered no word of his intentions, that he was walking the tight rope for the last time in his life. It surprised him a little that no brutal recriminations were hissed in his ear. He did not understand this silent vengeance.

He regretted nothing. If he could have had his life again he would have done the same with it. What he had done still seemed worth while, even though this was what the doing of it brought him to. And yet it was an awful end!

He was near the platform now and he began to tremble. The balancing pole swayed in his hand. Shiver after shiver ran through his frame. The perspiration broke out in great beads on his forehead. He felt a sudden inclination to break into a run, and dared not.

Already the man on his back had knotted his fingers firmly round his throat. He was only five yards from the platform, and yet he knew that between him and the gaudy, velvet-covered stool lay death!

Saladin thought:

"If only the man would be quick."

The grip of the fingers round his throat tightened. The weight of the man on his back grew heavier.

"He is nerving himself to throw me over," thought the athlete.

At this moment Lord Rider pressed his mouth to the other's ear and whispered:

"This is my triumph!"

Saladin stood still. The waiting throng below sent up a cheer, but he heard nothing. The balancing-pole was steady now.

"You fiend!" he said. "Be quick." And shut his eyes. Nothing happened. He could hardly believe his senses. Then he sprang forward and reached the platform in safety.

Lord Rider had fainted.

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THE MURDER IN THE RUE DE GAIETE. (See front page.)

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

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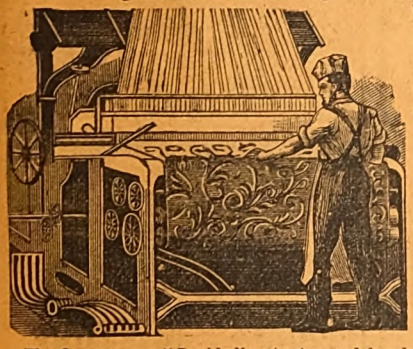

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 318.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 2, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

THE MURDER IN THE RUE de GAIETÉ.

CHAPTER I.

IN the year 18—— I obtained my degree of medicine in the University of London. My late hard studies had seriously injured my health, and taking the advice of friends I started on a Continental tour, in the hope that a change of life and scene might thoroughly recruit my shattered constitution.

In the course of travel I at length found myself in Paris, that gay city where life seems to be spent in one eternal whirl of pleasure. Naturally of a reserved and retiring disposition, I found little pleasure in the class of amusement that commends itself to most men.

One evening, after I had been located in Paris only a few weeks, I found that in pursuit of my favourite exercise I had wandered further from the city than had been my original intention. It was now quite dark, and I prepared at once to retrace my steps.

To my consternation I discovered that my mind had been so occupied with problems and theories in connection with my medical studies that I had entirely neglected to observe the route I had taken—in a word, I had lost my way.

At length, confused and bewildered, I came to a dead halt. At that moment the sound of a horse champing its bit fell on my ear. Guiding myself as best I could in the direction from whence the sound came, I suddenly came violently in contact with some dark object standing in the roadway.

Before I had time to recover from the shock a bright light flashed upon the spot where I stood, and I became aware that I was in the immediate vicinity of a palatial dwelling, one of the windows of which had that instant been illumined.

For some few seconds my eyes were rendered useless owing to the sudden transition from darkness to light. At length I was able to perceive that I was standing within a few inches of a horse, secured by its head to a light wooden paling surrounding the house.

I was just beginning to conjecture what could be the reason for the animal being left in this strange position, made more unaccountable by the fact of its owner not being present, when a low, grating sound, as of a window being softly drawn up, fell upon my ear. The next moment a suppressed cry of terror and alarm in a woman's voice broke the death-like silence, and the figure of a man was thrown on the blind of the window, from where the bright light shone.

An indescribable feeling of terror crept over me. There was no mistaking the meaning of that terrible cry. It was the cry of a human being in all the agony of hopeless despair. An irresistible impulse seized me. Climbing the low wooden fence I reached the building. A large peach tree, with spreading branches, was trained against the outside wall. By its friendly aid I soon reached the window, and what a scene met my view! Through a chink in the blind I saw the interior of the room distinctly. It was brilliantly lighted; only two persons were in it, a tall powerfully-built man, and a woman. The man had his back to me.

The murderer's right hand was raised.

The young girl was dressed in full evening costume; she had her face towards me; she was fast losing consciousness, her swollen, discoloured face, with its starting eyeballs, told me that. The murderer had his left hand on her throat. He was choking her. The struggle had evidently been a severe one, for the victim's dress was disarranged and torn, and her long golden hair had burst from its fastenings, and had fallen in disordered masses over her shoulders and bosom. The murderer's right hand was raised. In it he held a long dagger or knife. With one rapid movement it descended and, with a heavy gasping sigh, the girl sank lifeless on the floor.

I was petrified with horror. I seemed to be in a dream, and yet not dreaming. The horror of the scene I had witnessed froze the very blood in my veins. The power of speech, the power of reason, the power of preventing the fell work, all alike seemed taken from me. How I had presence of mind to retain my hold in the dangerous position in which I was placed I know not. I tried to scream for assistance, but my

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lips refused to give utterance to the slightest sound. I was fascinated with terror; my eyes were riveted on the terrible scene before me. The murderer stood motionless, gazing at his victim. A revulsion of feeling seemed suddenly to overwhelm him.

Throwing himself on the bleeding form of the young girl, he frantically kissed the cold lips of the corpse. Suddenly he started to his feet. The sound of approaching footsteps had alarmed him. He turned and saw my face at the window. With a hoarse cry he crossed the room and made his escape from the scene of his crime by an open window opposite, and was lost to my view in the dark shadows outside.

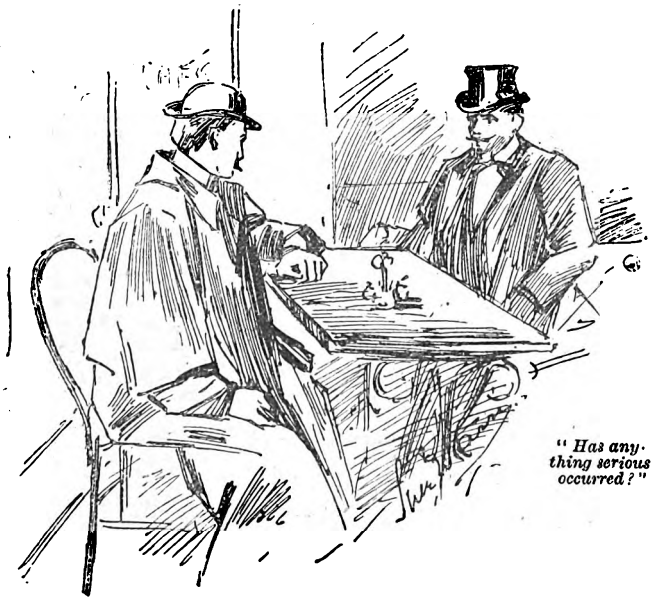
The natural instinct of self-preservation came strong upon me. I became aware of the peril in which I was placed. The risk I ran of being thought the perpetrator of a murder were I discovered in my present position. My imperfect acquaintance with the language of the country would make it utterly impossible for me to coherently relate, with any prospect of credence being given to my story, what I had just seen, and my present state of excitement would further increase the suspicion that would be sure to attach itself to me.

With a violent effort I freed myself from the chains of terror that bound me. As I reached the ground I heard a horse's hoofs clattering on the dark road, the sound gradually growing fainter and fainter, till at length it died away in the distance. I was haunted by the face of the murdered girl; every nook and corner seemed to contain her bleeding form.

In the excited state of my nerves the terrible scene I had witnessed was constantly before me. At length the moon rose, and by her pale blue light I was enabled to reach my home. I flung myself on a couch, where, with broken slumbers and horrible dreams, I wearily longed for the blessed light of day.

Next morning my memory vividly retained the events of the previous night. I was undecided what course to pursue. At first I thought of acquainting the authorities of what I had witnessed. The fear of being arrested myself for the crime deterred me, for I had enough knowledge of police procedure to be aware that, though the fact of my being in that locality could innocently enough be explained, the very simplicity of my story would in all likelihood make it the more difficult to be believed by men who, by reason of their vocation, had to deal with those whose every word was a lie, and every thought a crime.

Ultimately I decided on saying nothing about the matter till at least I heard whether the murderer had been captured or not. With this resolve I descended to the street, and soon found myself in a neighbouring *café*, which, as usual, was crowded with customers busily engaged in discussing the contents of the morning papers.



"Has anything serious occurred?"

I have said before that my knowledge of the French language was very limited, and, owing to the rapid manner in which my companions conversed, I found myself utterly unable to understand their remarks, but I could easily see from their excited gestures that something of unusual interest was the topic of conversation.

"Has anything serious occurred?" I asked of a man who sat at one of the tables, forgetting for the moment that it was possible he might not understand me.

The man looked at me for a few moments in astonishment, and then replied in broken English: "Has Monsieur not seen the papers? Has he not heard the terrible news?"

I answered in the negative.

"The Marchioness de C—— was murdered last night in her own house in the Rue de Gaieté."

The man must have noticed my excitement, for he immediately added:

"I see Monsieur is horrified. Choked first, Monsieur, then stabbed to the heart. The lovely Marchioness, who had the whole of Paris at her feet. Mon Dieu! what an end. It is ten thousand pities, Monsieur."

"And who committed this foul murder?" I asked.

"That is the question everyone is asking, Monsieur. No one saw the murder committed. The Marchioness was at an evening party last night, and, saying she felt unwell, left earlier than usual. She would not allow the Marquis to accompany her. The footman who opened the door when she arrived home says she looked flushed and excited. She retired at once to her private apartment alone.

"What occurred after no one knows, Monsieur. The Marquis, feeling anxious about his lady, left the party almost immediately after her. When he reached home he went straight to his wife's room, and, to his horror, found her lying on the floor in a pool of blood, dead.

"One of the windows in the room was wide open, but they say, Monsieur, that the murderer must have entered the room by the other window, for the great peach tree growing on the wall has many of its branches broken, as if someone had climbed up it, and there are marks of horse's hoofs on the road outside." The Frenchman stopped abruptly to sip his coffee.

"And—and," I stammered, scarcely knowing what I said, "have they discovered what was the reason for committing the murder?"

"That is the greatest mystery of all, Monsieur. Though the Marchioness was wearing thousands of francs' worth of jewellery, not so much as a ring was touched. It is whispered, Monsieur," lowering his voice as he spoke, "that the Marquis murdered his wife himself. He was terribly jealous of her. She was only a poor farmer's daughter in one of the Provinces when he married her. Such marriages seldom bring happiness with them, Monsieur."

"Describe her husband, the Marquis, to me," I eagerly demanded.

The Frenchman shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

"Surely Monsieur has not lived long in Paris, or he would know the Marquis de C——."

"Is he a tall, handsome man?" I inquired.

"Monsieur is surely joking. Would he call a hunchback, scarcely higher than this table, a tall man? No, Monsieur. If the husband had been murdered Paris would not have deplored it much; but to lose the loveliest of her women, it is hard to bear."

With this remark the little Frenchman lit his cigarette, and, bidding me good morning, left me.

And as I had been the solitary spectator of this mysterious crime, I felt thankful now that I had not divulged the secret, for I plainly saw that suspicion, made doubly strong by the fact of my being a foreigner, would have surely attached itself to me.

Paris had no attraction to me now. Next day I left the city.

CHAPTER II.

THE older a man becomes the faster do the years speed over his head, and I can scarcely bring myself to believe that ten years have elapsed since the events narrated in the preceding chapter occurred. It is long since I abandoned the medical

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profession; I soon found I could never hope to climb the ladder of fame by its aid.

My reserved manner made me little adapted to succeed in a walk of life where so much depends upon suavity and cheerfulness of disposition. I have devoted myself entirely to literary pursuits.

The efforts of my pen have been received with approbation by critics and public alike, and people point to me as being one of the most successful authors of the age.

I do not keep much company, though, Heaven knows, every post brings me invitations to all sorts of entertainments. I have only one friend, and he comes up to see me sometimes in my quiet apartment. He is manager of a well-known metropolitan theatre, and is a little, stout, cheery, chatty fellow, who seems to go through life with an eternal halo of sunshine around him.

One evening the conversation fell on the merits and demerits of a play creating a great sensation just then. After my friend left me, a sudden thought struck me: should I not write a drama myself? The more I considered the matter the more feasible the project appeared.

The long-forgotten murder in the Rue de Gaieté came vividly to my memory. Why not found my plot on it? I set my imaginative faculties to work, and some weeks later, when the drama was finished, I placed it in my friend's hand for his perusal. To my great satisfaction the play met with his utmost approval. "The white face at the window watching the mysterious murderer at his foul work is terribly sensational," he said. "How ever did you think of that?"

I told him what I had seen that night at the Rue de Gaieté.

"And the rest of the story is what you imagine would impel a man to commit such a crime. Quite likely; these Frenchmen are terrible fiends when their jealousy is aroused. Who are we to get to play the murderer? There's a man who joined my company a short time ago; from what I have seen of his acting I believe he would play the part to perfection. He speaks with a slightly foreign accent—all the better; it will make the character he depicts the more realistic."

After some further conversation my friend bid me good night and, departing, left me alone.

To my great disappointment I was unable to attend the rehearsals of my drama. A violent attack of rheumatism, an illness to which I was subject, confined me to my room. Days passed on, and to my satisfaction I found myself sufficiently recovered to be able to appear on the first night of the production of the play.

The large building was crowded to excess when I took my seat in the private box set apart for me. All the wealth, beauty, and talent of the great metropolis was there. The fact of the new drama being the work of an author who had already achieved success in a different branch of literature made it doubly attractive.

The overture is played, and the curtain rises slowly on the first act. As I sat in my box watching the development of the play, the whole of my attention was naturally concentrated on the actor who played the leading part, and on whom so much depended. He was a tall, powerfully-built, swarthy-complexioned man. To my astonishment he seemed strangely nervous and excited. His face was as pale as that of a corpse; he seemed to be labouring under some intense excitement; for, on more than one occasion, he passed his hand across his forehead as if with difficulty he was enabled to carry on his part.

Annoyed at the man's apathy, the audience showed distinct signs of disapprobation. Inwardly I cursed the stupidity of a manager who placed such an important part in the hands of a man utterly unfit to do it justice.

Of a sudden, the man's whole manner changed. With a violent effort he gained control over himself. The last scene in the first act was reached, and the culminating point in the drama approaches. Again I see the brilliantly lit room with the young girl in it; again I see the murderer approach her with stealthy cat-like stride; again I see the terrible struggle for life; again that wild cry rings in my ears, and I see, as I saw it years before, in all its terrible reality, the white, hopeless, despairing face of the terror-stricken girl.

Paralysed with terror, and for the moment forgetting entirely where I was, with a hoarse cry I sprang to my feet. The murderer turned, and saw my startled livid face. With a wild unearthly scream he raised his hands above his head, and fell with a heavy crash unconscious on the floor. The terrible truth flashed upon me now: he had been depicting the tragedy of his own life

"What spirit of darkness tempted you to write that play?"

The spectators, suddenly awakened from the spell that bound them, applauded vociferously; a dark coloured liquid trickled from the lips of the unconscious man; figures rushed from the wings to his assistance, and the curtain fell rapidly.

Something terrible had occurred, and the crowd conversed together in awe-stricken tones as they slowly left the theatre. I sat as if in a trance, speechless and motionless. A hand was suddenly placed on my shoulder. I turned and saw the face of my friend the manager.

Mechanically I rose and followed him. With all the tinsel and mockery of pleasure round him there, on a rude bed, the sufferer lay, with the clotted blood on his white lips.

"Monsieur," he muttered hoarsely, "they tell me you are the author of that play. You have written the secret of my life. For ten long years I have struggled to forget the past, but without avail. I am haunted by the face of that murdered girl. Even now," he continued wildly, "I see it as plainly as I saw it on that night of horror. God knows how I loved her. An irresistible fascination compelled me to play that part. It was the retribution of Heaven."

Suddenly he started, and with a violent effort he raised himself on his elbow.

"What spirit of darkness tempted you to write that play?" he asked fiercely.

"I saw the murder committed," I answered simply.

A terrible look passed over the dying man's face, and then he fell back. God had punished him—he was dead!

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A GIRL OF SPIRIT

CHAPTER I.

"H, will you actually be too busy, Dick, to run down to Brighton except for an occasional Sunday or so?"

Dick Stevens, who had just entered on the practice of law, failed to meet the wistful gaze of his *fiancée* as he admitted the fact of several very important cases claiming his time and attention just then.

"But you will be a sensible girl, Marie," he added. "Don't deprive yourself of enjoyment simply because I'm not there to share it with you."

"But, Dick!" tears standing in her lovely eyes, "how lonely you will be when every one is out of town!"

Dick assented with a sigh: "Time will drag of course," he said, "but the thought of seeing you at intervals will shorten anything."

Dear Richard! How unworthy Marie felt herself as the chosen companion of such a man; a man who for duty's sake could forego the delights of Brighton, and—yes—with a blush—of her society; Richard, whose every want and desire was met and gratified by a father at once rich, proud and doting.

CHAPTER II.

It was a callow youth who, a few weeks later at Brighton, sought to entertain the distrait Miss Collinson with bits of London gossip.

"Weally, now," he was saying, "the chappies who stay in town duwin' the summer have the best of it, you know, they weally do. Your sympathies are quite thrown away, Miss Collinson, they weally are."

The look of sudden interest in his listener's eyes quite staggered the youth.

"Ah!" said she, incredulously, "how can that be, Mr Sap? Business, I should think, would be——".

"Business!" as she paused, "why it's not much business the chappies of our set do, Miss Collinson, at any time, don'cher know. Oh, no, the fellahs, you see, have learned a thing or two, they have," and Mr. Sap chuckled.

"Now there's Dick Stevens, for instance," delighted at the interest he had inspired; "you know Dick, perhaps, Miss Collinson."

"Slightly," dropping her eyes.

"Well, he's just having a high old time, a high old time, don'cher know."

"Yes?" coldly, "and what constitutes a high old time in your estimation, may I ask?"

"Why, when a feller has the exclusive right to the company of the werry prettiest girl in the Folly Opera Company, and attends the races, and gives wine suppers and goes a-yachting; and time can't go slow with Dick Stevens, Miss Collinson, it weally can't, don'cher know."

"I should think not," quietly said Marie, rising to depart; "but—but you are quite sure—about—about the girl of the Folly Opera Company, are you not?"

"Oh, quite," wondering a little at her interest upon that point. "It's the talk of all the fellahs about town;" and not until the following day did the callow youth know the mischief he had wrought in that one brief hour under the stars.

Wounded affection, outraged pride! With both had Marie to battle the long night through. Letter after letter did she write only to destroy. Too bitter the reproaches in one, too tender the chidings in another, the marks of tears upon all.

"I will wait until morning," she decided at last, wearily; "perhaps the—but, oh, Dick, Dick, can I ever forget you?"

CHAPTER III.

A rather *blasé* individual a few days later received at his club in Piccadilly a letter which both surprised and amused him.

"By Jove!" he exclaimed with a hearty laugh, "my niece Marie is a girl of spirit, and wonderfully clever. Let me see," re-reading the letter, "if the thing is quite feasible. I think it is; indeed," after reflection, "I will make it so," and before many hours Marie had received from her uncle a telegram which brought her at once to town.

The next evening, in the most bewitching costume conceivable, Dick's *fiancée*, accompanied by several men, appeared in a box at the Opera.

An unmistakable constraint sat upon the party. Two of the men cast from time to time embarrassed glances upon their pretty but silent companion. But once did she unclose her lips, and then only to question the man who sat well back among the shadows.

"Rest easy," he answered. "He will be here. I had the assurance from him but an hour ago. Ah, there he is now."

Marie Collinson cast one quick glance at the party entering the opposite box, then fell to chattering in the most animated manner with the man beside her.

Dick Stevens, with complacent smile on his handsome face, seated himself well in view of the audience by the side of a petite blonde, highly rouged and conspicuously attired, while the friend of his bosom hung over the chair of a brunette of similar description.

"Why," exclaimed the blonde catching a glimpse of Dick's eyes fixed in smouldering wrath upon the occupant of the box opposite, "whatever is the matter with you?"

"Who is that girl?" drawled the brunette, levelling her glass at Miss Collinson. "Whoever she is she's a stunner."

Dick's friend looked at him in dismay.

"Why, it's——" he began, but Dick stopped him with a quick gesture.

"You know the men, Griswold?" he inquired hoarsely, rising from his chair.

"Of course," replied the other, in some embarrassment, "who does not?"

Dick grew white to the lips.

"I will be back shortly," he said to the blonde, and with a curt nod strode from the box.

Smiling and placid, Marie, a few minutes later, gazed into his angry eyes.

"Permit me," with great empressement, "to introduce you, Mr. Stevens, to my friends Mr. Box and Mr. Game."

"Glad to meet you," awkwardly said those men, each extending a hand.

The look which sprang into Mr. Box's eyes as Dick ignored their salutations brought a smile to the lips of Marie.

"Will you not take a seat?" she said sweetly, as Dick stationed himself beside her chair.

"Not in such company," he whispered angrily.

For answer Miss Collinson levelled her glass upon the occupants of the opposite box.

"Who is your companion, the pretty blonde?" she inquired calmly.

Dick muttered something, whether an imprecation or a name Marie failed to distinguish.

"And who are your companions?" he retorted, glowering upon Mr. Box and Mr. Game.

"I introduced you to them. Have you so soon forgotten?" demurely.

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"Yes, yes; but their characters I mean, Marie. Do you know their characters?"

"Why, no," reflectively. "How can a woman know the true character of any man, Mr. Stevens, even after months of companionship?"

Dick reddened.

"Well, their occupation, then?" less savagely.

"Yes," innocently, "they are professional men. Business detains them in town during the heated term, too, poor things."

Dick's hand trembled as he laid it gently upon her shoulder.

"Come," he said, huskily, "come, Marie! Let us leave the theatre."

"But the blonde across the way," coldly. "Surely you will lose her favour should you desert her thus?"

For one instant Dick Stevens wavered—for one instant—and then he said, his eyes fixed unwaveringly upon hers:

"Come, Marie! There is but one woman in the world or me. Come."

With a flash of triumph in her eyes, Miss Collinson arose.

"Good-night," coldly, to her abashed companions, "good-night," and without further ceremony she turned to leave the box.

"Ah!" said Dick, as the figure in the back ground came into view, "so, Marie was not left to—to——"

"The tender mercies of a middle-weight prize-fighter and a notorious gambler, eh?" finished her uncle, with a laugh. "No, no, my dear boy; not so bad as that, though it must have been a bitter pill to swallow to see your *fiancée* in such company. Still——"

A soft hand over the speaker's mouth put an end to the sentence.

Dick, they say, is on probation. How true it is I do not know, but the fact of the wedding being indefinitely postponed seems to lend an air of truth to the rumour.

TO THE BITTER END

ANTONIO FORLI was certainly dying. The sweat on his face and the difficult breathing told of it quite as much as the prayers of the priest, who every now and then came to a pause and lowered his head so that he could look over his spectacles at the sick man.

Forli's wife and his son Cesare were also in the darkened room.

The former's sobs were continuous. She was on her knees by her husband's bedside, holding the crucifix as the priest had directed her, and at each pause in his reverence's petitions she broke out into ejaculations of startling energy. One of her cries seemed to bring sudden vitality into the sallow, pinched face of the dying man.

"By the Virgin and San Antonio," she screamed, "have we not suffered enough wrong—we Forli? Let there be a blood reckoning between the Leonetti and us. Oh, my poor, handsome husband, see to it when thou art in Paradise!"

"Chut, chut!" interrupted the priest quickly. "Remember, woman, that he has been anointed. The time for such thoughts has passed."

But Antonio himself did not seem to think so. Resting himself up so that his back leaned against the wall, he opened his mouth as if to speak, and waved a weak hand toward his son Cesare.

"Come to thy father, son," said the woman with apparent acerbity.

Cesare Forli was but sixteen, though he had the muscles and stature of a man, and also the firm expression of a man on his dark face. He was Corsican to the toe tips.

Again the priest tried to interfere.

"The Holy Mother," he exclaimed, "likes not such compacts. Be advised. Let earthly dissensions be forgotten, and give thyself wholly to God."

"May I be forgotten of God if I do," said the sick man in a cavernous voice that sounded very grim. There was a flash in his dark eyes as he spoke. Then he turned to his son.

"I am going," he said, and it was as if he pitied himself. His wife's moans broke out afresh. "I am going, my son; but there is work for thee. Speed to the Sartene province of Corsica—ah! the dear land. I die exiled from it—and there kill first Giovanni Leonetti. Shoot him in the back as he shot thy dear brother who is in heaven. And afterwards kill all the other Leonetti in the land—like rats."

"I command you!" cried the priest. "This is infamy!"

But the dying man's voice rose above the priest's:

"It is not infamy; it is duty. See to it, Cesare. Place thy hand on my breast—ah!"

He slid down into the bed again and lay gasping. The lad, without moving a muscle of his countenance, did as his father bade him, and stood watching the struggle on his father's face.

"He is going," whispered the priest to the woman.

The latter rose to clasp her husband once more in her arms, but with a final effort the exile opened his mouth to speak:

"Swear," he sobbed, staring at the lad; "swear, or I——."

He could not finish. Even while Cesare was murmuring the words, "I swear it, father," with his right hand still on his father's breast, the man's jaws slipped and his eyes lost their life.

"It is a pity," said the priest, as he drew near, "men cannot be sensible in their last moments. But there, it is breath wasted to reproach him now; you Corsicans are all alike. Cesare, I absolve you from your bond to your poor father."

The lad lifted his eyes to the priest, but said nothing.

"Promises of so sacrilegious a kind, extorted by the dying, are not to be kept. In fulfilling them you do but protract his presence in purgatory. Dost hear me, my son?"

But the woman herself responded. She turned an inflamed face upon the priest.

"Father Correggio," she said, with terrible earnestness, "may the boy rot in this world and the next for ever if he forgets his oath! The living as well as the dead bind him."

The priest shrugged his shoulders, folded his spectacles, put his breviary in his pocket, shook his skirts to make sure they hung freely, shuffled to the corpse and made the sign of the cross on his forehead—with a protesting movement of his own head the while—and then murmuring "Benedicita!" left the room.

"They are fiends, these Corsicans!" the good father said to himself as he crossed the threshold.

II.

Barely a month later young Cesare was in Corsica with his gun. His was a pitiful errand, but he did not seem to think so; neither did his mother who, from the mainland, sent prayers

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and blessings in his wake, and confidently awaited his return with the blood of the clan of the Leonetti on his immature young hands.

In Bastia the lad bought black clothes like the native Corsicans; they went well with his set countenance and fierce eyes. His gun was his father's. It was old, but he believed it would do his work. It had shot men ere this. The experience might be of service to it and Cesare himself.

And so from Bastia Cesare walked down the coast line to the South, by the vineyards and through the orange groves of many a fertile though rather pestilential little village. He had nothing to do till he got to Portio Vecchio. For a week he could live the life of an honest man, enjoying the good gifts of sunshine and bewitching landscapes without either remorse or forebodings.

From Porto Vecchio he was to strike into the mountains and lay his snares for the Leonetti, who had their dwellings among the sources of the Stabiaccio.

It was a happy week, this that he spent between the mountains and the blue sea. But at the sight of the walls of Porto Vecchio he remembered his responsibilities to the uttermost.

Yet another brief respite was allowed him, however.

At the inn where he stayed was a lovely young girl named Caterina. She could not have been more than fifteen, though her large, sombre, blue eyes had a woman's expression. The twain soon made acquaintance. The girl's mother was fascinated by Cesare's looks, and would fain have learned all about him. But, of course, that was impossible. Nevertheless, the three days the lad spent in this ancient town were enough for both Cesare and Caterina.

"I will come back for you, my angel," said the lad, when on the fourth morning he had shouldered his gun and prepared for his hideous undertaking. "Be true to me."

The girl's eyes answered him sufficiently. But her tongue also bore witness for her.

"Thou hast all my heart, dear Cesare," she whispered.

From early morning until late in the afternoon, the lad clambered among the oaks and precipices, wondering how his task would come to him. He was bound for a village high up. Here he meant to mature his plans in the very midst of the Leonetti he had come to destroy.

But when it was near sun-down he fell in with a young man hardly older than himself, whose vivacity and gift of persuasion had a strange power over him.

"I am bent on a dark business," he told Cesare. "'Tis no less than bloodshed. We are in vendetta. Wilt join me?"

Cesare looked thunderstruck.

"I, too, am here in vendetta," he stammered out.

"Good! Then let us take an oath of friendship. You will help me this afternoon, and then I will do for you what you do for me."

"What is the name of the doomed one?" asked Cesare.

"That," replied the other, "I do not tell thee. Neither am I inquisitive about thy quarrel."

Then the thought flashed to Cesare's mind that it was Leonetti who was being pursued.

"I am thine," he said, offering his hand.

"And I thine," said the other, and they swore an oath in the matter.

This done, at the bidding of his friend, who said he might be called Carlo, Cesare loaded his gun afresh. Together they then stole by a scraggy path towards a highland glen, or, rather, basin, occupied entirely by a mountain torrent, a few pine trees, innumerable boulders, and a single black-browed hut.

"He has been away a long time," whispered Carlo, "perhaps he thinks he is forgotten. Ah! he shall be taught differently."

It was arranged that, having crept as near as possible to the house in the dusk, they should lie concealed behind the rocks until the man came out or showed in his doorway.

The plan worked only too well.

In less than a quarter of an hour a tall, broad-shouldered man opened the door to look forth.

"It is he," whispered Carlo. "Shoot!"

The victim dropped on the threshold. The two young men did not wait to hear more than one cry from the woman who rushed to the stricken man. They hurried down and down, and drew breath only when they were near the village of Carlo's home.

Here, when the houses showed, Cesare put the question that had of late hovered on his lips:

"Was he a Leonetti?"

The other laughed as he replied:

"Mother of God, no! I am a Leonetti! He was a Forli—the last of them in Corsica!"

Cesare was like to faint at first. He had not been bred in Corsica, and was unused to such shocks. Then he grasped his gun, and, looking Carlo in the face, said:

"I, too, am a Forli."

But Carlo, uplifting his gun, shouted:

"Remember our bond—we are friends. I have sworn and you have sworn."

Cesare yielded to the persuasion.

"It is terrible!" he muttered.

Nevertheless he consented to go home with Carlo, who gave him the name of Pinello to make it possible for him to receive the hospitality of the family.

III.

Giovanni Leonetti lived in the village. He was uncle to Carlo, and a stalwart Corsican to boot. He never moved five steps from his house without his gun—loaded.

Cesare slept little his first night in the very thick of the Corsican feuds. He was thinking of his father, of Caterina, of the man he had shot—his own father's half-brother, as it turned out—and of the vengeance he would sooner or later wreak on young Carlo.

But Giovanni Leonetti was to die first. His mother had told him why, ere he left the mainland. The man had shot her first-born, Angelo, when he was a pretty boy of eight—had shot him as you or I would shoot a partridge. It was not, of course, from personal enmity, but merely in perpetuation of the traditional feud. Immediately afterwards, the police had taken Antonio Forli. Antonio had shot two of them in his successful attempt to escape. And then he and his wife and the little Cesare had evaded the island.

The little Angelo remained unrevenged.

Giovanni Leonetti came and stared at Cesare.

"What is thy business in the mountains?" he asked. Something in the lad's face made him uneasy.

"He has none, uncle," said Carlo, answering for him. "He was lost, and he did us a service in helping to finish off Giacomo Forli."

"Good! Then we are friends," replied Giovanni. But if he could have seen the hungry look in Cesare's eyes when he turned to go he would have amended his words.

"Be patient," said young Carlo to Cesare; "you have bound me to aid you, I will do it. The afterward shall take care of itself. Only tarry till his granddaughter comes from the town. Let him see her; they are so fond of each other. Between ourselves, Cesare, I love that girl; but she loves not me, though perhaps she will do it. Let him see her once more and then we will decide it. There is the family feud, and there is the personal bond. The latter is stronger with the individual, the former with the clan. I would, however, we had never met."

"And I," said Cesare. The lad was perplexed. There were times when his hot blood urged him to take Carlo's life at once. And again there were times when he sobbed to himself that it was impossible he could kill his companion.

For three days this strange life went on. On the fourth day, at noon, when Cesare came in from the mountains, whither he had been roaming with his wild thoughts, Carlo told him the news.

"She has arrived."

"Who?" asked the other.

"Come and see," said Carlo.

They crossed the green village square, with the great

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chestnut tree growing in its midst, and approached Giovanni Leonetti's house. Then they entered.

"Good day, *cara mia*," exclaimed Carlo.

The girl he addressed turned, and Cesare stepped backward with a thumping heart.

"Caterina!" he exclaimed, involuntarily.

It was she, sure enough. But, though she was at first confused, she had the tact of her sex, and it was not difficult for her to explain to her grandsire her meeting with Cesare as if it were the most trivial matter under the sun. But the spark of jealousy had been struck in Carlo's soul. He saw more than his uncle saw. And when they were outside again he taxed his companion with it.

"Hast said aught of love to that girl, my friend?" he asked.

"What is that to thee?" retorted Cesare, all his pride of family in a flame.

"Good, or rather bad!" replied the other. "It makes things simpler, though it will mean the saying of more masses."

There were few words exchanged between the two young men that day. Late in the evening, however, Carlo, who had become saturnine in the extreme, called Cesare to the door.

"Let us talk," he said, "under the chestnut tree. There is a moon. You will not want a gun."

"I trust you," replied Cesare, and together they went out.

Then, with a numbed heart, Cesare listened to Carlo's cold-blooded plan for the shooting of his own uncle. The old man went out every day to see to his goats. They were to follow him by stealth the next morning. The rest would be easy.

"And afterwards?" suggested Cesare, almost trembling. His thoughts were with Caterina.

"Afterwards—we will see," responded Carlo, and his thoughts also were with Caterina.

They returned to the house in silence, and in silence each went to bed.

The morning opened with mist and rain. But that was nothing. They were used to both in the Corsican highlands. Neither deterred old Giovanni from seeking his goats, gun in hand. And neither kept the two lads from getting on his track and following him over the slippery rocks and wet grass until the opportunity presented itself.

They were close on his heels at length. He had stopped to light his pipe, with his back to them. Carlo gently touched his companion on the shoulder, pointed, and whispered:

"Behold your quarry!"

No shot could have been simpler. In one instant Cesare had his gun extended, and the next the rocks echoed with the report, and old Leonetti lay on his face, shot through the heart.

"Let us see how it has gone," said Carlo quietly.

They turned the old man over. He was dead as Julius Cæsar.

Thrilled with a demoniacal sense of elation, Cesare now offered his hand to his friend—to have it rejected with such scorn as few but Corsicans can express by word and look. Carlo was a-boil with passion—for his family's and his own sake.

"That is over," he said hoarsely, referring to their recent friendship. "There is no feud in all Corsica more mortal than ours. Load thy gun."

"But, Carlo——" began the poor lad.

"But nothing. I owe a life for this here—" pointing to his uncle's body—"and another for thy insolence in forestalling me with—with her."

Then Cesare understood. The pride of the Forli was a good match for the pride of the Leonetti.

Without another word the lad reloaded.

"Ten paces will do," said Carlo; "the signal shall be the croaking of the first raven after we are in station."

These were the last words they exchanged.

For nearly a minute they stood, each with gun leveled at the other's forehead. There was a raven hard by on a withered pine trunk, but it kept deathly silence for full fifty seconds. At last it croaked.

MR. GEORGE GRIFFITH'S NEW SERIAL STORY,

which commences in PEARSON'S WEEKLY published on JANUARY 26th, is called

VALDAR THE OFT-BORN:

A Saga of Seven Ages.

In this romance the author has forsaken those fields of the future over which the air-ships of "The Angel," "The Syren," and "The Outlaws" sped upon their devastating errands, and will transport his readers far back into the past ages of the world's history. In the forgotten days of the Golden Age, and in Asgard of the Gods within the vanished Polar Paradise, the action will commence, and from hence the hero will set out upon those strange wanderings which will lead him through many and marvellous vicissitudes on to the tremendous stage on which, at the beginning of the present century, the destinies of the world were shaped anew.

He will visit lands whose names are almost forgotten, and cities whose sites are now only marked by their ruins. Through the chapters of the story the greatest world characters will pass in swift and brilliant array. Battles which have decided the fate of empires and races will be fought out anew, not by the puppets of the schoolmen's histories, but by the living, breathing characters, whom the magic of romance will recall from their graves. As the story of each of the seven great ages of the world is told, those who during it made or marred the fate of humanity will come back out of the shadows and work out their appointed destiny, fighting and scheming, winning and losing, loving and hating, just as they did while their names were yet words of terror upon earth; and through all the changing scenes, the splendours of peace, and the sterner glories of battle, the hero will move, the one enduring figure of them all, accompanied by her who, for love of him, has elected to share his fate, to the accomplishment of his predestined doom, and the end of his marvellous pilgrimage.

Thus VALDAR THE OFT-BORN will be a story of love and war, of empire-making and empire-breaking in many ages and climes, all linked together in the weirdly drawn and yet perfectly human personalities of the two principal actors in the drama, and those who follow them through all their swiftly changing fortunes will, I think, have good reason to believe with me that the author displays no less skill in recalling the real glories of the past than he has done in portraying the ideal splendours and terrors of that future which he predicted in his previous works.

Mr. Griffith writes exclusively for *Short Stories* and *Pearson's Weekly*, and his previous novels have been so well received by my readers that I am sure they will look forward to VALDAR THE OFT-BORN with a good deal of interest. It is to those who have not yet read any of his romances I wish to appeal. Let them but read the opening chapters of this fascinating story, and I can promise them an intellectual treat.

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THE OUTLAWS OF THE AIR.

By George Griffith,

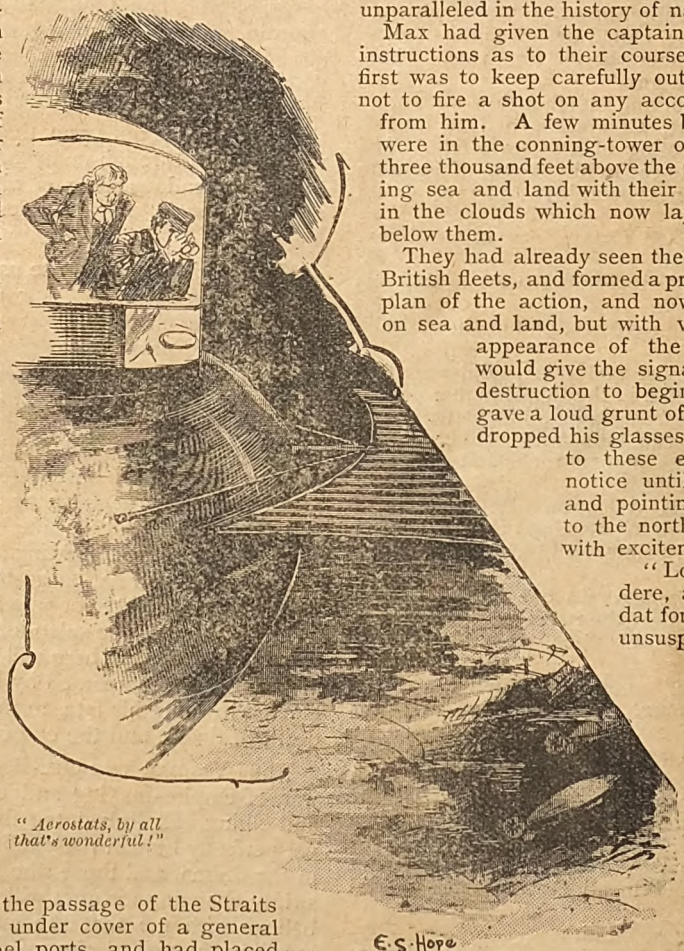
Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," etc.

CHAPTER XLI.

The Battle of the Sound.

As it was extremely unlikely that the Russian fleet would attempt to break the blockade of the Sound until it had the advantage of the darkness, Max decided to economise his motor fuel, and keep a speed of only fifty miles an hour across the German ocean. It was, therefore, close on eleven o'clock at night when the fleet arrived over what was to be the scene of action.

It was a dark, moonless, and somewhat cloudy night, but, as the ships sank through the clouds, their crews could distinctly make out the two irregular shores of the Sound, with their twinkling lights and the illuminated clusters which mark the position of the towns along them. To the north of Kronborg, in the triangular opening between Högenaes on the Swedish and Gilleleie on the Danish shore, was massed the main body of the British fleet.



"Aerostats, by all that's wonderful!"

Although Germany and Denmark had not yet declared war their governments had intimated to Russia that any attempt to violate the neutrality of the Sound, or to force the passages between the southern islands of Denmark would be considered as an act of war. The southern approaches to the exits from the Baltic were, therefore, patrolled by a powerful German fleet with Kiel and the Holstein Canal as its base, while the Danish fleet, supported by the land fortifications, barred the way to the Sound, and the Grön Sound, which forms the channel between the islands of Falster and Zealand, and the entrance to the Great Belt.

Thus the Russian fleet, strong as it was, would have been hopelessly outnumbered but for two facts. A French squadron of eight battle-ships, sixteen cruisers, and thirty-five torpedo boats had forced the passage of the Straits of Dover four days previously, under cover of a general attack on the English Channel ports, and had placed the British blockading squadron between two fires, just as the Russians would be if they once steamed into the Sound.

This was the first fact, and was by this time known to all Europe. The second fact had been kept a profound secret, confined to the Tsar and half a dozen of his most trusted engineers, who commanded a body of a hundred picked volunteers, sworn to secrecy, and chosen exclusively from the noblest families of Russia. For over five years the Russian engineering staff had been steadily experimenting in the directions of a solution of the problem of aerostation, and about six months before the outbreak of the war their efforts had been crowned with success, and a fleet of navigable aerostats had been secretly constructed far away from public observation, on one of the Tsar's private estates in the wilderness of the Urals.

The inactivity on the part of the Russian fleet in the Baltic, which had excited so much surprise, was in reality due to the necessity of waiting until the aerostats could co-operate with the battleships in forcing the passage of the Sound. No fewer than a hundred of these new engines of war had been built by the Russian Government, and fifty of them were to take part in the struggle for the command of the narrow sea, a battle which, as the event proved, was destined to be entirely unparalleled in the history of naval warfare.

Max had given the captain of his fleet strict and ample instructions as to their course of action, and of these the first was to keep carefully out of sight until night fell, and not to fire a shot on any account until he received a signal from him. A few minutes before eleven, Max and Hartog were in the conning-tower of the *Revanche*, floating about three thousand feet above the island of Moen, intently watching sea and land with their glasses through the white rifts in the clouds which now lay some five or six hundred feet below them.

They had already seen the French, German, Danish, and British fleets, and formed a pretty correct idea of the general plan of the action, and now they were waiting, like those on sea and land, but with very different feelings, for the appearance of the Russian fleet, whose arrival would give the signal for the work of death and destruction to begin. All of a sudden Hartog gave a loud grunt of astonishment, and very nearly dropped his glasses. Max, who was accustomed to these exclamations of his, took no notice until he caught him by the arm, and pointing down to a rift in the clouds to the northward, said in a voice husky with excitement:

"Look, mine friendt, look down dere, and tell me vhat you tink of dat for a nice trick to blay on dose unsuspecting sailors and soldiers vat are vaiting to plow each oder to pieces mit all the resources of Christianity and civilisation. By tam! I believe dose tings belong to de Russians, and if dey do dere will be der tuefel's own delight down dere before de sun rises."

Max looked down, and to his amazement saw three great elongated, cigar-shaped bodies drifting rapidly through the air to northward over the waters of the Sound.

"Aerostats, by all that's wonderful!" he ejaculated. "And pretty lively ones too at that. Those fellows aren't moving much less than fifty miles an hour, and what wind there is is against them. Yes, I remember now, Lea told me only the other day that she had heard rumours that the Tsar's engineers had succeeded in building some of those things in some out-of-the-way place and hoped to be able to use them in the war. Well, if they do belong to the Tsar, and he has a good few of them about, I hardly think there'll be much need for our assistance for some time yet. They'll smash one another up pretty completely without us."

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"And den—" chuckled Hartog, rubbing his hands in anticipation of a perfect carnival of bloodshed—"den ven dey are all smashed ve can sail in and go for de remains, and den tackle de var balloons and bust dem up as vell. Mein Gott, dat vill be glorious fun!"

"I don't see why we should smash up the war-balloons, at any rate just yet," said Max quietly. "Just think of the damage they are able to do to those who are our enemies just as well as theirs. Of course I don't suppose they'd be any match for us, for we could fly two or three feet to their one, but for land and sea warfare they'll be better than anything the British or Germans have got. I think we'd better see what damage they can do before we interfere with them. It all helps on the good work of Anarchy you know. The more horrible war becomes the sooner the peoples of the earth will get disgusted with the rulers and politicians who are always dragging them into it. Let them do what destruction they can manage, and then we'll go in and finish."

"Max," said Hartog, in a tone of sententious mock reproof, "I am afraidt you haf very bloodtirsty tastes. I tink it vould be a fery great slaughter dat vould satisfy you."

"Yes," said Max, with a savage laugh, "a very big one; but look, there goes the main fleet! The first three we saw were only scouts, I suppose. I don't think it will be long now before the fun begins."

The rift in the clouds had widened now, and through it they saw a long line of the strange-looking shapes, curved in the form of a crescent, drift swiftly to the north, where the unsuspecting fleets and fortresses were waiting for a very different and far less formidable enemy.

"I hope our fellows won't take it into their heads to fire at those aerostats," continued Max. "That would spoil all the fun. I wish those clouds were a bit thicker, and I'd take the risk of signalling them."

"Vy not hoist a vite flag instead of de red one," suggested Hartog, "and then fly along past dem? Dey vill understand dat after your oder instructions."

"Yes, that's not a bad idea," said Max. "We'll try that."

Ten minutes later the *Revanche* had ascended a few hundred feet and passed along the long line of air-ships which extended north and south. At the southern end towards Fehmern Island, at the entrance to Kiel Bay, one of the ships stationed there ran alongside her. When they were within hail a slide was drawn back in her conning-tower, and her captain called to Max and asked him if he had seen the aerostats. Then, on learning that he had, he told him that another squadron had passed under him into the Bay apparently heading for Kiel.

"All right," replied Max.

"I suppose you understand what the white flag means?"

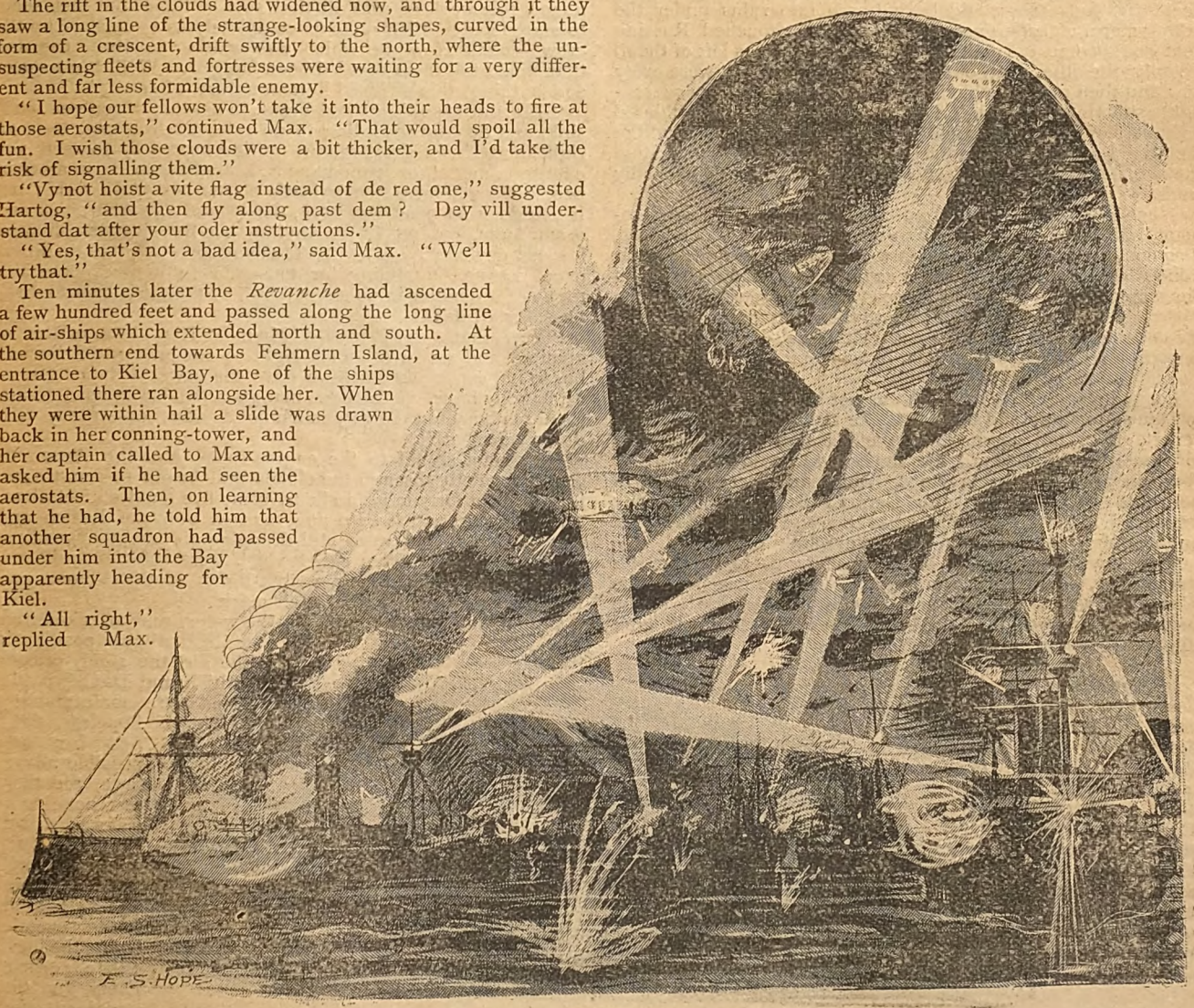
"Oh yes; you don't want us to do anything until they have got to work," was the reply. "I suppose you'll give the signal when you want us to start?"

"Yes, I'll fire the first gun. If you have nothing better to do, you may as well run along and speak the other ships, and tell them not to fire until I do, and to be careful of the ammunition, and to see that every shot does its work. I'm going to look for the Russian fleet now."

Max nodded to the captain of the *Ravachol*—for all the vessels of the Anarchist fleet, saving the *Revanche* and the captured *Vengeur*, had been named after the so-called heroes and martyrs of Anarchy—and then the flag-ship, once more flying the red flag, flew at a rapid pace toward the eastward. After half an hour's flight, during which they gradually descended to fifteen hundred feet, Max pointed ahead and said to Hartog:

"There they are, and a rare old crowd of them too! Why there must be over a hundred of them altogether."

"Jah, dat is so; and vat for a smoke and sparks dey are making. Dey will be going full speed now mit der forced draughts. Dey vill vait for der aerostats to make tings all anyhow in de Sound, and den make a rush to get trough. I tink ve had better go back or ve shall miss some of de fun."



A strange and terrible scene it was.

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"Yes," said Max, swinging the *Revanche's* head round, "I suppose we had. The bombs will be beginning to fly by this time. I am rather curious to see how those things do their work."

In an hour the *Revanche* was over the scene of action, and a strange and terrible scene it was. The aerostats had dropped to a height of a thousand feet above the fortifications of Elsinore and the Danish ships guarding the Sound, and were raining mélinite and dynamite bombs on them with fearful effect. Search-lights were flashing up from the land and water in all directions seeking the terrible foe, until the whole air was ablaze with them, and those in the forts and on board the ships saw, to their horror, not only the aerostats, but, above them, the more distant shapes of the Anarchist air-ships.

Thousands of projectiles from machine guns were being hurled in showers into the air, but none seemed to strike the rapidly moving aerostats, which were able to dart hither and thither in the almost windless atmosphere at a speed of over fifty miles an hour, so that they swept through the beams of the search-lights and into the darkness again with such bewildering rapidity that it was little better than a waste of ammunition to fire at them.

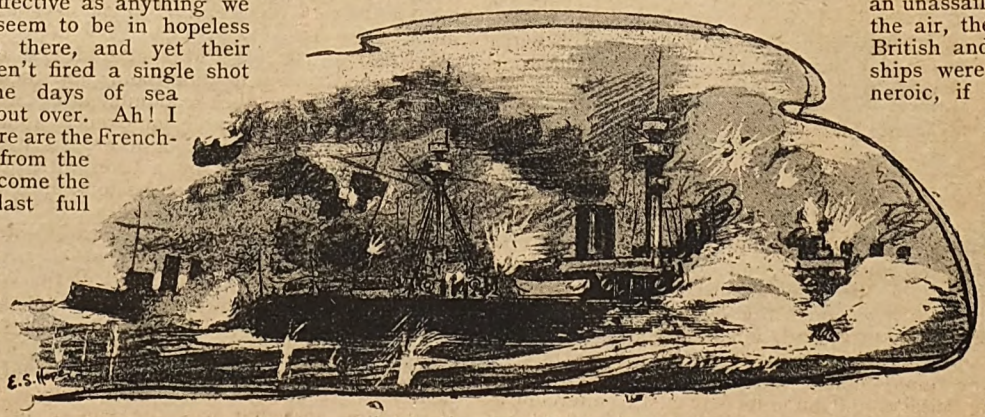
From their great size it was evident they could carry enough ammunition to keep the bombardment up for hours, possibly till daylight, and during all that time the British and Danish fleets and fortresses would be battered into ruins under the falling storm of explosives, and then the untouched Russian fleet would come and make short work of what was left of them.

As for the other fleet, one or two vessels of which were every now and then made visible by some chance ray of the search-lights shooting up through a rift in the clouds, the bewildered defenders of the Sound could make nothing of it beyond the fact that it evidently was not friendly, or it would have engaged the aerostats before they had had time to begin their deadly work.

When the Anarchists, from their unassailable vantage-point, had watched the bombardment for about three hours, they could see that Copenhagen was in flames and Elsinore in ruins; while, from the constant explosions that took place on the water, blazing up like volcanoes for a moment through the darkness, and then dying down into the night again, and from the constantly diminishing number of search-lights that were thrown up against the clouds, it was manifest that terrible execution had been done.

But the merciless destruction was not by any means confined to Danish territory and the Sound, for the air-ships brought up reports from the south to the effect that Kiel had been vigorously bombarded all the time, and was now little better than an area of blazing ruins; while another squadron of aerostats had attacked the German fleet, and not only prevented it getting out of the bay, but had greatly damaged and completely demoralised it into the bargain.

"I told you there would be no need for us to interfere for the present," said Max, who had received the news when the *Revanche* was floating over the Gut of Elsinore. "The organised Anarchy that these good people call war is, after all, nearly as effective as anything we can do. They seem to be in hopeless confusion down there, and yet their heavy guns haven't fired a single shot yet. Verily, the days of sea fighting are about over. Ah! I thought so. There are the Frenchmen closing in from the north, and here come the Russians at last full steam up from the south. I don't think there'll be much of the British fleet left by sunrise."



Through a storm of shot and shell.

CHAPTER XLII.

THE VICTORS VANQUISHED.

THE showers of sparks and plumes of flame now plainly visible north and south clearly proved that Max was right when he said that the French and Russian fleets were closing upon their more than half-disabled enemies. Under the highest speed that their forced draught would give them, the two great squadrons, loaded with potential death and destruction, rapidly converged upon the narrow waters in which the remains of the British and Danish fleets were now imprisoned.

"Ah, jah, now de big guns are beginning to speak!" cried Hartog, as the deep, dull booming of the battleships' artillery rose like distant thunder from the water.

Pale flashes of yellow-white flame streamed through the darkness to north and south of the Gut, to be answered by other flashes from the centre; and these, again, were supplemented by brilliant spheres of light which blazed out for a moment and then vanished, as the bombs from the aerostats fell on the decks of cruisers and battleships, and exploded, spreading death and ruin over them.

"Yes, that's pretty murderous work, considering that it's the latest outcome of nearly two thousand years of Christian civilisation, and the evolution of law and order," said Max, in a half-sneering, half-laughing tone. "Of course, it's fair and honourable warfare, and all that sort of thing, but they seem to mangle each other quite as completely as I smashed up the crowd round Newgate which was waiting to cheer the flag that would tell them that I'd been hanged. Well, it's a queer sort of thing, this civilised human nature, after all."

"Jah, dat is so," grunted Franz, in assent; "ven you burn, sink, and destroy according to de rules of de game, it is all right, and if you do it mitout getting busted up yourself you can get a medal, or a monument, according to de number of people dat you have sent in leetle pieces out of de vorld; but if you do it on your own hook, den you are an Anarchist, and a murderer, and not fit for anyting but hanging or guillotining ven dey catch you at it. It seems someting like de difference between gambling for tousands on a racecourse and tossing for pennies in de street; but, by tam, it is only foolishness, for all dat."

"Yes, that's so," replied Max. "It's all a matter of opinion, and we've as much right to our opinion as Society has to its, especially when we have the power to inforce it, as we happily have. I think we can go a bit lower now. They seem too busy to take very much notice of us, and if they do it doesn't matter."

He sent a signal to the engine-room, and the *Revanche* dropped quietly through the clouds and began to run to and fro, at about forty miles an hour, some five hundred feet above the aerostats, which were now massed over the British and Danish fleets, and were still dropping a ceaseless shower of bombs upon any of the ships which were sufficiently illuminated by the converging search-lights of the French and Russian squadrons to offer a fair mark.

Outnumbered as they were on the water, and attacked from an unassailable position in the air, the sorely-pressed British and Danish battleships were maintaining a heroic, if hopeless, fight, not for any possible advantage, for there was none to be gained; but simply with the object of doing as much damage as possible to their enemies before the inevitable came. Every gun that remained effective was served

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The aerostat exploded like a huge bubble.

and fired with such rapidity and precision that the fighting force of the fleets seemed doubled, and cruiser after cruiser and battleship after battleship, when her guns were no longer serviceable, made a dash with the ram upon the nearest enemy, charging into her through a storm of shot and shell, and either sinking beside her or with her rather than haul down her flag in surrender.

Indeed, so obstinately heroic was the resistance, or rather the dying struggle, of the allied fleets, that not until morning dawned, and the unequal fight had been prolonged for five hours, did the French and Russian fleets find the way of the Sound open, and steamed together southward past the silenced fortifications on land and the crippled and sinking wrecks of the blockading squadrons on sea.

To the south from the direction of the Great Belt and the Bay of Keil the sounds of conflict were still rolling up like peals of distant thunder. A portion of the Russian fleet had been detached, as soon as the defeat of the British and Danish force was assured, to co-operate with the second squadron of aerostats against the German fleet and the fortifications of Kiel. To the north the victory was complete, and so the united fleets, greatly diminished in numbers by the fierce struggle that their triumph had cost, but still in overwhelming strength, steamed south to complete the destruction that the aerostats had begun.

As the light increased a splendid, but what would have been to any other eyes a terrible spectacle, was unfolded before the gaze of the Anarchists, floating high above the smoke and din of the combat. To the south-west the smoke and flames of the burning town and docks and arsenal of Kiel were plainly visible over the low-lying land of Probstei. In the Fehmern Belt and Fehmern Sound one German fleet was making ready to attack the French and Russian squadrons, while to the eastward a second German fleet was coming up under full steam from Stralsund, apparently in the hope of catching the enemy between two fires.

As soon as the reinforcement was sighted the French fleet parted from the Russian and made its way east to intercept it. Meanwhile the aerostats had sunk down alongside a flotilla of transports which had been kept in the wake of the Russian fleet, and were taking in fresh supplies of ammunition. By the time the four fleets were fairly engaged again they mounted slowly into the air, divided into two equal squadrons of twenty-five each, and stationed themselves over the two divisions of the German force.

It was now quite light enough for Max and Hartog to see that the gas-holders of the aerostats, instead of being made of silk or balloon cloth, were really huge cylinders of a white metal, probably very thin sheet aluminium, which glistened with a silvery lustre in the beams of the rising sun, and that their cars, instead of being suspended by ropes, were simply lower compartments of one and the same structure. They also differed in another respect from all previous types of aerostats

Two propellers projected from the stern of the car, and a third and very much larger one revolved on a shaft projecting from the after part of the gas-holder itself. This was obviously an immense improvement on all previous forms, not only as regards speed, but also in stiffness and facility of management. From the jets of white vapour which constantly escaped from the stern of the cars, it was plain that their motive power was derived from steam engines, and as a matter of fact their engines had been designed and built from the published descriptions of those which had been used to propel the Maxim aeroplanes.

As soon as the sun got fairly above the horizon the clouds began to melt away rapidly, and before long the Anarchist fleet was plainly visible to the eyes of the astonished combatants, flying round and round in wide curves at just sufficient speed to keep the vessels supported on the air-planes with the smallest possible expenditure of motive power. They maintained themselves at an almost uniform speed of between forty and fifty miles an hour, and a height that varied from two to three thousand feet, as they alternately sank and soared in their swift and graceful evolutions.

That they had an interest in the combat was manifest from the fact that they remained on the scene of action, but they took no part whatever in the struggle until a signal from the Russian flagship sent three aerostats into the upper regions of the air to investigate.

"Those fellows had better mind their own business," said Max, who still remained with Hartog on the conning-tower of the *Revanche*. "If they come too close, they'll be getting hurt. We'll let them rise a bit further just to satisfy their curiosity, and then if they don't go down again we'll send them down. I wonder how they manage to rise without throwing out any ballast."

"Oh, I tink I can tell you how dat is done," said Hartog. "Dey haf a collapsible air-chamber inside de gas holder. Ven dey vant to go down dey pump air into it, vich is fourteen times heavier dan dere hydrogen, so down they go, and ven dey vant to rise dey draw de air out and den de hydrogen expands and takes its place, getting lighter de more it spreads, and so dey go up. It is very simple ven you know how. But look, von of dose fellows is coming at us as dough he tought he can do us some damage. Maybe he tinks he can fly as fast as ve can. Vill you not show him vat a foolish mistake dat is?"

Instead of replying, Max uttered a short scornful laugh, sent a signal to the engine-room, and then gave some rapid orders down the tubes communicating with the gun-room. The *Revanche* immediately quickened up a little. Max gave the wheel a turn, and brought her stern on to the aerostat which was now almost on a level with her, and about five hundred yards away. Then he took up one of the speaking-tubes and said into it:

"After guns—fire when you're ready," and then he looked back to watch the effect of his order. A minute later the two shells struck the forward part of the car, close under the gasholder of the aerostat, almost simultaneously, and burst.

The aerostat exploded like a huge bubble in the midst of a momentary mist of flame. Her car, with its cargo and machinery, plunged downwards into the water from a height of nearly two thousand feet, just missing one of the Russian battleships, and that was the end of her. The other two

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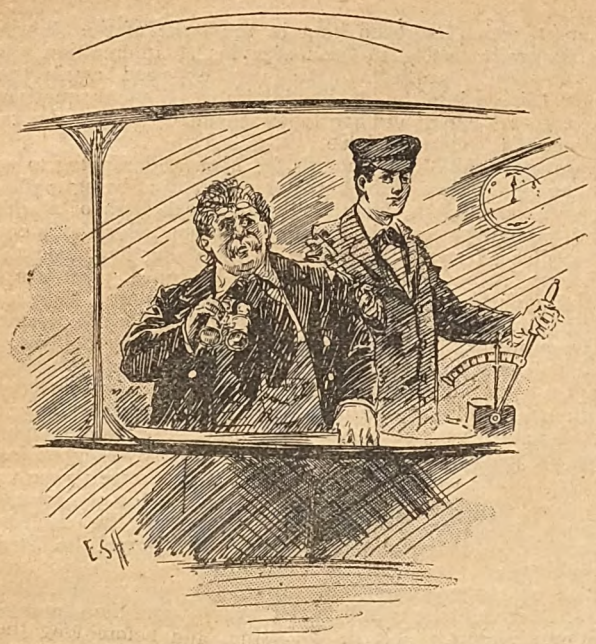

"Your fellows don't fight so well as the British.'

needed no second hint not to continue the investigation. They sank rapidly on a slanting course towards where the French and German fleets were now hotly engaged, leaving the Anarchists in undisputed possession of the upper regions of the air.

"Dot vill be a nice little surprise for dem," chuckled Hartog, as he watched the fearful effects of the two shells. "I suppose dey tought ve came here just to see de fun as ve might haf come to a circus, and so dey came to say goot morning to us. Perhaps dey vill attend more strictly to pusiness now."

"Yes," said Max, with something like a snarl, as though the fate of the aerostat had whetted his appetite for destruction. "We'll give them business when they've crippled each other a bit more. Those poor beggars of Germans are making a precious poor show against their new enemies of the air. Your fellows don't fight as well as the British did, Franz."

"No, dey don't," snapped Hartog savagely. "Mein Gott, I am ashamed of dem! Dey seems to tink dey are at a review. If I was only down dere in my old *Destroyer* I vould show dem vat proper fighting is."

"Until you got a shell on top of you from one of those aerostats," laughed Max, "and then you'd wish you were up here again I think."

"Ach, Himmel, jah! I forgot dat. No; sea fighting is no good mit air-ships. It is not a fair game, unless you happen to be in de air-ship. But don't you tink it's about time for us to join in de fun, friendt Max? Look, dey haf half crippled each oder all ready."

This was true, for ever since daybreak the fighting had been fast and furious between the fleets, and the aerostats had been discharging their fresh cargoes of bombs upon the German vessels with fearful effect. Their fire was visibly slackening, and each of their squadrons had lost at least a dozen battleships and cruisers, which had either been blown up by the bombs from the air or been sunk by torpedoes.

The French and Russian loss had also been fairly heavy, for, despite Max's characteristically French sneer, the Germans had fought their ships splendidly, considering the fearful disadvantage at which they were placed by the assault of the aerostats. At length Max, tired of watching in inactivity, yielded to Hartog's persuasions and his own inbred love of destruction, and flew from the flagstaff of the *Revanche* the signal which, according to the Anarchist code, meant: "Fleet to engage. Destroy everything."

The captains of the air-ships went to work in obedience to the signal with a business-like alacrity which proved how impatiently they had been waiting to take their share in the work of destruction. Max had reconsidered his decision as to the aerostats, and therefore had included them in the general order. In the first place, he felt it very unlikely that they would be the only vessels of the kind in the possession of the Russians, and secondly, he thought that it would not be safe to leave too great a destructive power at the disposal of Society.

The *Revanche* devoted herself exclusively for the time being to the aerostats, and almost as fast as her guns could be loaded and fired the well-aimed shells struck the huge gas-holders which offered such a splendid mark for the gunners. The impact of the shells pierced the thin metal envelope, and, as the hydrogen rushed out to mix with the air, the explosion ignited it, rending the envelope to fragments with a shock that shook the air for a hundred yards about it, and sending the car, with its crew and cargo, plunging headlong into the depths below.

The crews of the war-ships looked upwards in wondering dismay at the marvellous spectacle presented by the two contending aerial fleets, the aerostats vainly trying to outsoar or escape from the guns of their agile enemies, and ever and anon bursting with a flash and a bang, like gigantic shells, as the fatal missiles struck them, while the air-ships, like gigantic birds of prey, outsoared and outflew them, sweeping hither and thither in bewilderingly rapid curves, and then stopping for a moment or two to send their terrible shells home.

In less than an hour the marvellous but unequal battle was over, and the remains of the last aerostat had plunged in fragments into the sea. No fewer than five of them, deliberately driven by the Anarchists over the fleets, had fallen amongst them, exploding their cargoes of bombs in their midst, wrecking the helpless battleships and cruisers, and blowing the torpedo boats and catchers into atoms.

At first the Germans had thought that the air-ships were the British craft belonging to the Syndicate about which so many rumours had been flying through the Continent; but, as soon as the last aerostat had been destroyed, they were speedily undeceived, for the Anarchists now went to work with terrible effectiveness on French, Germans, and Russians alike. The war-ships, already half-crippled in their struggle with each other, fell an easy and a helpless prey to the twenty-one aerial cruisers which, from their unassailable altitudes, swept their decks with storms of Maxim bullets followed by showers of shells and bombs charged with Anarchite and fire-mixture.

By mid-day, out of the four great fleets, only six battleships and four cruisers remained afloat. Of the lighter craft, not one had escaped, and of the big ships that remained floating more than half the crews had been killed, the guns were useless, the engines crippled, and the ships themselves were only kept afloat by their water-tight compartments. And so ended the great Battle of the Baltic—in the indiscriminate destruction of victors and vanquished by the common enemy of them both.

"Dat is about de most unprofitable sea-fight vatever vas fought I should tink," chuckled Hartog, as Max flew the signal to cease firing. "I suppose you vill leave dose fellows to get home as best dey can, and tell de story for de edification of Europe?"

"Yes," said Max, "we shall produce the best effects that way I think, and they certainly aren't worth wasting more ammunition on now."

(To be continued.)

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THE TURNING OF THE WORM

JOHN ROGERS looked impatiently at the clock. He had waited now exactly half-an-hour, and was beginning to get a little restless. "Half-past ten is a pretty hour to go to a party!" he murmured to himself. He began to walk up and down the floor, and then stopped suddenly as he heard a light step on the stairs. He moved towards the door, but the light faded from his face as a trim maid entered, bearing a great bunch of yellow roses in her hand.

"Pardon, monsieur," she said, "but mam'selle says it is impossible that she should wear yellow roses."

He looked at her blankly.

"She wants you to change them—it is the pink rose that mam'selle prefers to-night."

"Oh, she wants pink roses, does she? Well, I'd like to know where I can get any at this time of night."

"The florist's is two corners off, if monsieur will go, and it is La France roses that mam'selle must have to-night, and she will be quite ready on the return of monsieur."

So John Rogers took his yellow roses and bundled into his carriage, not in the most amiable frame of mind. All his annoyance disappeared, however, when he came back and found that Miss Cora Fenton was indeed ready. She stood in the drawing-room pulling on her long gloves—a vision of rosy loveliness. Her white neck and arms rose out of a pink fleecy cloud, and dazzled him.

"Such a shame to keep you waiting," she said, "but I never had such a miserable time getting into my clothes before. Everything seemed bewitched, and my hair looks like a fiend's now. I was so sorry about the roses, but you see yourself it would have been enough to give one a headache with yellow roses and this dress."

The maid threw her long cloak round her, and in a few minutes they were seated side by side on their way to Mrs. Dillingham's cotillon.

It was not the first time that John Rogers had been her escort, but he was just beginning to realise how bitter-sweet a pleasure it was. He was an old friend, so old and trusted that often he went with her, as to-night, without a chaperon.

She was "poor Cora Fenton" in this, that although young, beautiful, and an heiress, she was an orphan, and in a certain sense without a home. To be sure, her brother with whom she lived, was devoted to her, but he cared very little for the society which she loved, and his wife was entirely engrossed with the four little children, who seemed to be all babies at once.

Cora felt dimly that it would be a relief to them both if she were married and established in a home of her own, and perhaps it was this very feeling that made her so wilful and hard to please. No girl likes to be driven along the matrimonial path. She prefers to be guided, and by nothing less masterful than fate itself. She knew perfectly well how satisfied everyone would be if she should marry John Rogers, and the thought of their satisfaction irritated her. She wanted to be her own Columbus, and cross an unknown sea, instead of travelling over a well-worn road, with a sign-post at every corner, and dozens of friendly eyes watching her as she went.

The immediate effect of all this was that she was sometimes quite rude and chilling to poor John Rogers. She was dissatisfied with things in general, and, in the slang phrase, she "took it out of him." On this particular evening at Mrs. Dillingham's she seemed more illusive and distant than ever.

John Rogers watched her dancing with other men nearly all the evening, and it was with a feeling of relief that he helped her into the carriage at last and slammed the door behind them.

"I hope you have enjoyed yourself," he said grimly.

"Indeed I have," she answered airily. "I thought it quite the prettiest cotillon this winter. The Dillinghams always do things so well—don't you think so?"

"Yes," he said, feeling that they had not done particularly well for him.

"It was such a pretty idea," she went on, "having those snowball favours of swansdown. But, do you know, they were heavier than lead. I threw one at Will Lawrence, and it nearly knocked off his ear."

"Did it?" he replied, so wearily that she hastened to say: "Do you know, I believe you were bored to death the whole time."

"You know I love to go anywhere with you, Cora, but this is somehow so unsatisfactory." There was a moment's silence, and then he added impetuously: "I want you all to myself, not shared with all those chattering idiots. I said I wouldn't worry you, and I don't mean to, but if you knew how hard this waiting was. But why can't you decide now, Cora? Why can't you tell me to-night? I love you so——"

Her clear laugh interrupted him. "I never heard anything so ridiculous! Proposing in a carriage at two o'clock in the morning. Why, there isn't room to answer in."

"There's room enough to say 'yes.'"

"Don't be ridiculous. You know I like you better than anyone, but I don't want to marry for a long, long time."

They were silent until the carriage stopped, when she sprang quickly out, as if eager to escape. At the door she paused.

"You're going to take me to the Barclays' on Tuesday, aren't you?"

"Yes, I expected to. Is your sister going?"

"Yes, she and Charlie too. You won't forget?"

So, with the cheerful prospect before him of repeating his evening's experiences, he drove home alone. He remarked to himself several times that he was a fool, and he felt quite sure of it the night at the Barclays' dance. He had been "flocking by himself" for some time, and wondering why on earth he allowed Cora to drag him to these ghastly entertainments. He was standing by a screen of palms, when he suddenly became conscious of voices on the other side of it.

"There is no chance that you should ever think differently!" a man's voice was saying.

"I think not," answered the girl, gently and softly.

John Roger's heat leaped within him, for it was Cora's voice. He knew he ought not to listen, knew that he ought to walk promptly in an opposite direction—but—but—here was another man proposing to *his* Cora.

"Of course," the man's voice said humbly, "if there is someone else——" he hesitated, and there was a little silence.

"There *is* someone else," said Cora, in a very low voice that trembled slightly. "I have always thought the least a girl could do was to be perfectly frank and honest, and so I will trust you—I will tell you. We are not engaged, and I have treated him very badly, but—it is John Rogers. I think I have always cared more for him than for anyone. Oh, I am so sorry!" she added impulsively.

Just then there was the hum of other voices, and they moved away, or were silent, for John Rogers could not hear them any more.

He stood for a moment, dazed and blinded by his happiness. Cora's low broken words were ringing in his ears. He came

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out of his corner with such a beaming face, and his spirits were so high for the rest of the evening, that several of his partners had doubts as to his sobriety. It seemed as if he could not wait to see Cora alone. Her brother and sister were in the carriage driving home, but he contrived to find Cora's hand, and to press it hard. To his surprise she drew it quickly away.

"May I come to see you in the morning?" he asked at the door.

"In the *morning*?" she questioned, with a puzzled look.

"Yes, I *must* see you. I cannot possibly wait."

Cora kept him waiting a long time next morning, and when she finally appeared, looking very lovely in her morning dress, she seemed entirely oblivious of her confession and his happiness.

"I was in the hall behind the palms, Cora, last night. I don't know who he was. I don't want to know; but I heard you tell him—oh, Cora—I heard you tell him that you cared for me." His voice sank almost to a whisper, and his face was quivering with the intensity of his feeling.

A deep wave of colour swept over the girl's face. Then she grew very pale, and it seemed as if her whole attitude toward him stiffened and hardened. "May I ask," she said, "if it is your habit to go round listening to conversation that is intended for other people?"

"I know it was wrong," he answered, in a troubled, humble way; "but, Cora, I heard him speak before I had a chance to get away, and then, oh, Cora, it was so sweet to hear your answer."

He looked at her imploringly, but there was no relenting in her face or manner.

"I think it was, to say the least, a most ungentlemanly thing to do. However, since you *did* see fit to listen, I cannot possibly understand how you could twist the conversation into any reference to you whatever."

He seemed bewildered. "Why, you said——" he began.

"I said," she interrupted calmly, "that I cared for someone else. If you, in your vanity and complacency, think I meant you, I cannot help it."

"And you meant *nothing*! Oh, Cora, I can't believe it! I have been so happy. I thought that at last you knew your heart, and now it is a thousand times worse than ever!"

"I am very sorry for your misunderstanding," she said, coldly; "but really if people *will* listen——" she stopped abruptly, struck by the dumb despair in his face. "Don't let's talk about it any more," she said, in a kinder tone. "You dine with us to-morrow, you know—New Year's Day."

"I shall never dine here again," he answered grimly; "I am a worm of the dust before you. You are as cold and heartless as a stone image. At times I hate you. If you were only honest, if you would only tell me frankly that you cared nothing for me, why, I'd crawl away and try to get over it somehow. But you are a flirt; you are not true. You give me a little hope and then grow more distant than ever. You are a thorough flirt—a woman without a soul!"

Cora Fenton trembled a little at this arraignment, but her voice was steady as she answered: "If this be so, I advise you to have nothing more to do with me. It is easy to leave me, and I shall not follow you."

They eyed each other fixedly, measuring their strength. Then the man quailed. "It's no use," he said miserably. "What do you want me to do?"

"Behave like a sane person in general, and come to dinner to-morrow in particular."

"And then?"

"Oh, John, how can I tell?" She looked at him appealingly, and put a little white hand on his arm. She had conquered. She could afford to be generous. "You know you are the dearest friend I have," she continued, in a soft, caressing voice. "It nearly kills me when you talk to me like that. I *do* care for you, truly, honestly—only I cannot tell yet. How is a girl to know? I am *not* a flirt. I like to have a good time, and to have attention—what girl doesn't? But I hate to have you feel so. Cheer up. Perhaps it will all come out right yet." And she looked at him shyly and sweetly.

"Well," he said gloomily, "perhaps it will."

"And you will come to dinner to-morrow?"

"I suppose so; although it seems such a farce."

"Well, that won't affect the menu, and—we all want you, John!"

And so the worm, having been well trodden upon, crawled off to prepare for the New Year. But he was very unhappy.

He remained in his own room that evening restless and uneasy. He lighted a number of cigars, which he allowed to go out, and then tried to read. Finally, he found a volume that interested him, slightly at first, and then more deeply, till pushing all the other books and papers aside he read on into the night. It struck him simply as the truthful story of a woman's heart, the book being a masterpiece of Balzac's.

"By George!" he exclaimed, throwing the book from him and walking up and down the room; "that's the way to treat such a woman!"

Then he thought of Cora, and the little fire of resentment that had burned in his heart ever since parting from her suddenly glowed afresh. He thought a long time, and when he finally put out his light, and went to sleep, he was a different John Rogers from the disheartened fellow he had been all day. Determination had taken the place of endurance; long-suffering had ended in resolution. It would have disturbed Miss Cora Fenton's dreams had she known that the worm had made up its mind to turn.

New Year's Day dawned with a sharp frost, a gleam of sunshine on the icicles and a hint of snow in the air.

It was just the day for a drive, and Cora Fenton, although a little surprised, was delighted when John Rogers came for her in the afternoon. His pretty turn-out stood waiting at the door, while his prettier horse pawed the snow, and shook his head as if impatient to be off.

"I shall be glad to go," said Cora graciously. "All houses seem stuffy such a day as this. You're not going far?"

"That depends," he answered smilingly. "We'll come home whenever you say the word."

She looked at him, and was suddenly struck by the fact that he was a very handsome man, tall and straight, with broad shoulders, and such a kind, good face. But to-day it seemed to Cora that his honest eyes were a deeper blue than usual, and she had never before noticed how firm and strong the lines of his mouth were, half hidden under his brown beard. She was unusually light-hearted, and chattered gaily as they drove along.

Everybody they met seemed smiling and happy, and the drive was so pleasant that it was with a feeling of regret Cora finally said:

"Oughtn't we to turn round now? I've lost all track of time."

"I don't think we'd better turn," he answered steadily, "until I have asked you a few questions and you have answered them."

Something in his voice surprised her. She looked at him in amazement.

"I want to know," he continued, in a low tone, "if you have made up your mind to marry me."

"Why, John," she said uneasily, "how queer you are! Everything has been so nice and pleasant, and now you must needs go and rake up that old subject."

There was a cold gleam in his eye that she didn't like. She watched him for a moment in troubled silence. Then she added:

"I've told you over and over again that I didn't know how much—I cared."

"Well," he said quietly, "I propose to drive until you find out."

"What?"

"Just that. You will have to know your own mind to-day. You can take all the time you want, and I won't interrupt you while you think."

"Why, John!" she exclaimed. "You're perfectly mad! Take me home at once! I never heard of such a thing. Take me home—or I'll—I'll jump out."

He put his hand on her arm, and held her firmly. "Look here, Cora," he said quietly, "you can't jump out. Of course

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you can scream, if you want to, and attract attention, but you know well enough that that means publicity, and perhaps notoriety. You know that you can trust me, Cora. I wouldn't hurt a hair of your head, but to-day you've *got* to answer me."

"How long are you going to drive?" she asked indignantly.

"Until you answer."

"But if I don't?"

"Oh, you will before to-morrow morning."

"To-morrow morning!" she gasped.

"Yes," he said calmly; "it's going to be a beautiful moonlight night. I've got plenty of wraps and robes. I see no reason why we shouldn't drive all night."

"I don't believe you," she cried; "you're not in earnest."

He turned to look at her squarely. "You're very much mistaken if you think this is a joke," he said soberly. "I never was more serious in my life."

"And do you think this is a manly, honourable way to act? Do you think a *gentleman* would steal a helpless girl like this, and run off with her? I call it mean and contemptible," and her eyes flashed at him.

"You are mistaken, Cora," he said, in the same even tone; "I am not running away with you at all. It is in your power to make me turn round this minute. I want you to say 'John Rogers, I love you, and I will marry you,' or, if you cannot say that, look me in the face and say, 'I do not love you, and never want to see you again,' and in either case I will turn instantly and take you home. One or the other you *shall* say before you leave this cart."

She began to cry. "Very well," she said, between her sobs, "if you are so anxious to hear it I'll say it. John Rogers, I cannot bear the sight of you. There!"

"I didn't tell you to say that, and, besides, you never looked me in the face."

"I will."

"Very well, do."

She raised her tearful eyes to his, and began, bravely enough: "John Rogers, I do not l——" and then she faltered, and turned her head away.

"You do not *dare* to say it," he cried triumphantly.

She was silent.

"Oh, Cora," he pleaded, "why won't you yield? I know you love me. I have felt sure of it ever since that night at the Barclays'. Nothing you said has really shaken my faith in it. Why, I heard you say so, dear. Say it again, darling, and make me happy for ever."

But she did not answer, and they drove on in silence.

"Are we far from home?" she asked, in a choked voice.

"About fifteen miles, I should say."

"They will wonder what has become of us."

"Yes," he assented, "they will."

"Don't you think this is very unfair—very ungenerous?"

"No; not when I consider the woman I am dealing with."

There was another long pause.

"Are you very sure you care for me, John?"

"Sure! Good Heavens! Why, Cora, I haven't had a thought but for you for years. I haven't been able to work, to think, or to do anything. You've just filled the world for me, Cora."

"Well," she said hesitatingly, "I don't like this trick of yours at all; I think it's horrid; but I—I will, John—there! are you satisfied?"

He dropped the reins and put his arms round her.

"My darling," he began, but she struggled away from him and cried:

"You said you'd turn round!"

A little chilled in his rapture, he turned his horse. Then he looked at her. She was very pretty in the dim light. Her eyes were shining, and in the gathering twilight he could still see the clear bright colour in her cheeks.

"Oh, Cora," he exclaimed, "I think I am the happiest man on earth!"

She looked at him archly.

"I have said I would marry you, John, because you made me, but I didn't say *when*. It won't be for a long time yet!"

He felt faint and sick. Was all this struggle for nothing then? She was playing with him again, like a cat with a mouse.

"What do you mean?" he said hoarsely. "Won't you marry me now—soon? I have waited so long."

She smiled and shook her head. "Not for years and years," she said cheerfully.

He drew the horse up so suddenly that it reared and nearly fell over backwards. Then he turned it sharply in the opposite direction. He muttered something under his breath, gave the horse a quick cut with the whip, and off they drove again.

This time there was a long silence. The stars began to come out. They were well out in the country, and could see the lights in the few houses that they passed. They were almost alone upon the road. Now and then a solitary figure passed them.

Cora looked at him furtively, but he never looked at her. His face was fixed and stern, and there were some ugly lines between his eyebrows.

Presently she said, softly, "John."

At first he paid no attention, but when she repeated his name he answered sharply, "What?"

"John," she said timidly, "isn't it very late? What time is it?"

He pulled out his watch and tried to look at it, but the moon was not yet bright enough. Then he lighted a match, which went out. The second was more successful. "It's a quarter past eight," he said at last.

"Oh, what will Charlie and Nettie think?" she said, with a little sob. "It's long past dinner time."

He made no answer.

"And it's New Year's Day, too," she added, tremulously.

"Yes," he said.

Presently she spoke again. "John, don't look like that! Don't, don't! I cannot bear it! I will promise you anything, John—*anything*!"

"I couldn't trust you if you did."

She cried softly to herself for a few minutes. Then she said in a low voice, leaning towards him a little as she spoke, "John, I will marry you whenever you want me to."

"I am not sure that I ever want you to," he answered grimly.

She gave a little cry, and turned away from him, and for a long time he heard her stifled sobs. By-and-bye she turned towards him again.

"You are killing me!" she said, and she gave one last look at his stern set face. He looked at her in return, unmoved and unrelenting. Then, with a little quivering sob, she put both arms round his neck and kissed him full upon his lips. "Oh, John," she said, "I love you—love you, with all my heart!"

He believed her then, and gathered her to him, and she was calmed and comforted. He was not elated because he had conquered, only joyfully happy, because at last he had secured her; but she knew that she had been vanquished by something stronger than anything within her, and in her heart she rejoiced over her defeat.

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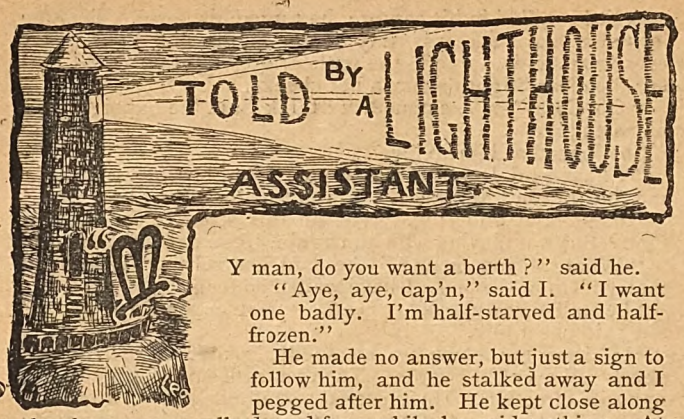

Y man, do you want a berth?" said he.

"Aye, aye, cap'n," said I. "I want one badly. I'm half-starved and half-frozen."

He made no answer, but just a sign to follow him, and he stalked away and I pegged after him. He kept close along the shore as we walked, and for a while he said nothing. At last, however, he turned and pointed seaward.

"You see that?" he asked.

He indicated a lighthouse on a lonely rock.

"I'm the keeper," said he. "I want you to cook my meals and keep my bachelor's hall for me. Now and then I shall want you to row in and buy provisions. The work won't be hard. I think the pay will suit you. Do you know why I chose you?"

"No, cap'n," said I.

"Because I saw that hope was at an end with you," he said. "It is only a man who has come to that who could live with me in a lighthouse."

"I was on a desert island once," said I. "After that I shan't be afraid of a lighthouse."

I'd been in a lighthouse before; it was no new thing to me, but after I'd been there a few hours I wondered what my master hired me for. It was like being pensioned off; there was nothing to do. But, mark ye, when night came on, and the wind began to moan about the lighthouse, and the lamps were lit and all outside was black as pitch, and all the sound we heard was the swash, swash, swash, of the waves, my master mixed some grog and called me to sit along with him. That looked sociable, but I can't say he did. He sat glowering over his glass for a while, and opening his mouth as if to speak, and shutting it again. Then said he:

"What's your name?"

"Ben Dare," said I.

"Would you mind calling yourself Brace?" he asked.

"I've no reason to be ashamed of my name," said I.

"Look here," said he, "I am a gentleman born and bred. I never came to earning my living before. I'm ashamed of it. This is what I mean. If any strangers come out here and ask for William Brace, why, you can say you are the man. You claim to be lighthouse-keeper. It's easy. I don't suppose much company will call; but I choose not to see them, if they do. That's what I hired you for."

"Oh," said I.

"You see," said he, "I got this place through a rich man who had influence. Those who gave it to me never saw me. If I die some day, why, here you are in the place. If I go off, and I may, here you are still until then. I'll pay you well, and you know your duties."

"Well, it's shamming," said I. "But, after all, what does anyone care what my name is, and what shall I call you?"

"Call me nothing," said he. "Call me Captain, as you did when I met you, but never speak of me to any one."

Gentleman or no, he wasn't lazy. He didn't care how he worked. The lamps were as bright as jewels. There wasn't a speck of dirt in the whole tower. But let any boat come nigh us, away he went and hid himself, and came out with a white, scared face and a shaking hand. At night he was afraid to go up to the lamps alone, and he'd look over his shoulder and turn white as we stood together. At last he took a new turn. He stood staring for awhile. Then he spoke to me in a low voice:

"Brace, do you believe in ghosts?"

"I hadn't considered the question," I answered.

"Well," said he, softer than before, "look into that corner," and he pointed. I looked.

"Don't you see anything?" he asked.

"No," said I; "no, cap'n."

"Ah," he muttered, "very well, very well, I'm glad you don't."

But that wasn't nothing to what happened the very next night. We slept in two bunks nigh each other, and naturally, when he woke up with a yell, I woke too. He was shrieking and shaking and wringing his hands.

"The woman! the woman!" he said. "She stood here just now, all red with blood. It dripped down the white ruffles. It dripped on her hands. Stop her! Stop her! She has gone to call them. Stop her! Stop her!"

"Where did she go?" I asked.

He stared at me with his wide-open eyes, all the whites showing, below and above.

"She couldn't have been here," said he. "It was a dream."

"Lord love you—a nightmare," said I.

So we went to sleep again. But I heard of the woman so often after that I grew used to her. The cap'n, as I called him, got to be worse and worse every day. I wanted to go ashore and fetch the doctor, but he wouldn't hear of it. He raved if I tried to leave him.

At last there came a hot night in June. It was burning hot all day, and a dead calm at night. About dark the cap'n went to sleep, and I went and sat where I could see the water and the lights ashore. It was so clear that I could hear the sailors in a Spanish ship moored not far away singing in their foreign lingo. And I was sort of quiet and dreamy like, when something happened that waked me mightily wide and sudden. Something was standing on the steps below me, something white. Something came towards me.

It was a little slender figure, with long hair all about its shoulders. I couldn't see its face. I don't think I really saw it plainly at all. But it went by me so softly while I looked, and I knew it was a woman in a white ruffled gown, and that she had gone to the room where my master lay. I shook too hard for a moment to move; but as soon as I could I started up to go to him. Just then a voice cried:

"Lighthouse, ahoy!"

I answered "Aye, aye," and stopped a bit. Duty first of all things with a sailor.

A boat lay at the foot of the steps, and four men jumped out of it.

"We want William Brace, keeper of this lighthouse," said one, a big man in a linen overcoat.

"I'm one that answers to the name," says I.

He swung a lantern over my face.

"Search the place, my men," said he.

There was no use saying anything, but I did try to stop them.

"I've got a sick friend aloft," says I. "Don't disturb him. I'm afraid the woman will skeer him, he's so low."

"What woman?" said he.

"The one that came aboard with you, sir," said I.

"No woman came with us," he snarled.

"Stand aside. Men do your duty."

They went upstairs. I followed. I saw them walk into the cap'n's room. I heard them cry out and stand still. When I got to the door they stood in a row looking down on the bed. I looked too. Man nor woman couldn't frighten the cap'n more. He was dead.

"What had he done?" I asked the officer.

"Killed his wife," said he, "that's all. No doubt she deserved it; but it's not allowed by law when they do."

"Heaven help him," said I.

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HOW SHOULD STOUT LADIES DRESS?

Some considerable controversy has been going on in one of the American fashion magazines on this subject, started by the threatened inundation of crinolines.

Fancy a fat lady in a crinoline! Or better still, fancy ten fat ladies in ten fat crinolines, with, say, five a side in a none too fat omnibus!

The Yankee humorist says: "A fat lady can beat a fat man; she can stick a stiletto-like pin through her head till it comes out the other side and hold on her bonnet, but the fat man can't." Let's have those ten pins to complete the picture of those ten crinolines. Would we of the sterner sex not like to "lynch" the fiend who invented mountainous hats and feathers for front rows in theatres? Blondin can walk across Niagara on a tight rope, but can he walk a theatre corridor with three ladies' trains in front of him? The fashion miscreant, and the barbed wire inventor, have much to answer for. One fashion paper argues that if the portly lady adds a little slashing of light on a dark backgrouud, artistically and judiciously, it has the effect of *apparently* reducing her size by half a stone. How ludicrous all this seems! What is the seven pounds *imitation* reduction? We have known Mr. Russell, the eminent Specialist on Corpulency, reduce a lady eleven pounds in seven days, and not an *imitation* reduction, but an absolute fact, at a cost of probably less than is paid to the "faking" dressmaker. Those who are acquainted with his methods, or have read his work, "Corpulency and the Cure," can bear us out that he talks with as glib unconcern of fourteen-pound, twenty-eight pound, and even half-hundredweight reductions of unhealthy waste accumulations as a steamboat stoker would talk of coal. The dressmaker simply attempts to hide the disease—creating adipose, carried about by the unfortunate victim to obesity—whereas Mr. Russell (of Woburn House, 27, Store Street, London, W.C.) aims to remove the cause, and thus impart health. Of course, no lady likes the brute of a man who enters into a crusade against tight-lacing in a blunt common-sense way; but he is, however, right when he claims that tight stays with *embonpoint* is suicidal, especially when a few doses of a most pleasant, agreeable, and exhilarating tonic, made entirely from herbs, will reduce one's weight so easily with a corresponding improvement of health and strength, and with it that bright eye and healthy complexion which we all like to see in a lady. If our roof leaks and lets the rain in, we can shelter ourselves from it by opening an umbrella; but if we get the slater to stop the cause, he is the true benefactor, and not the umbrella maker. So it is with the reducer of fat and the dressmaker. The fair sex begin to see that he is their benefactor; he does not ruthlessly rip up the bodice, like uncouth Dr. Abernethy; he is better informed, for he actually knows that in twenty-four hours that identical inimical appendage will be in a state of subjugation. In other words, a dangerously tight lacing on Monday will be slack by Tuesday, after taking three simple doses of his mixture. "Has one to starve one's self?" asked a lady once. Not at all, for it is a singular fact that one eats more under his treatment.

It is perhaps not singular, if we investigate. A fat man is unhealthy; he is, in fact, diseased; as the disease is being cured the organs become healthy, the patient is more buoyant, and takes more exercise, and requires more food (it is also traceable to other reasons without exercise). Then, again, with stilt-like high heels, fashion—well, I think we had better drop this theme, we shall get into hot water with our fair readers; we are married. We generally get the old bachelor-editor to write on these subjects; he is not a bit afraid of women, as he calls them.

But seriously, if any lady, or gentleman, as far as that goes, wishes to reduce their weight, we commend them to Mr. Russell's work, "Corpulency and the Cure," which is published at Woburn House, Store Street, London, W.C., and only costs 4d. in stamps, post free. But to revert to the subject of crinolines, honestly we are pleased to see the really sensible and steadfast way in which ladies have made their standpoint, and we suggest that they should have a medium of their own to rule the fashions to their own liking, and not be the victims of the profit-seeking professional modiste.

DO STOUT PEOPLE LIVE LONG?

This is a question which has occupied the attention of medical authorities from time immemorial. Some argue that the lean kind take longer to shuffle off the mortal coil than their stout brethren. The statistics naturally favour this argument, and no doubt are correct to a great extent, because sufferers from obesity are more susceptible to disease in consequence of the debilitated state of the system when clogged with abnormal adipose tissue; but a curious fact has been overlooked, viz., that corpulency generally commences about the age of thirty-five to fifty, after which time it seems to decrease; therefore, before the proverbial "three score and ten" is reached, the whilom fat man is, by a natural process, again reduced to what may only be called moderate plumpness, and thus cheats the statistician. Stout persons can now, thanks to science, reduce their weight in a most extraordinarily rapid manner, without the slightest injury to their constitutions, or without resorting to those drastic remedies which only operate for a time, or by the continuance of the use of toxical drugs extending over such a period that renders it baneful to the long-suffering patient. An eminent Continental therapeutist recommends the victim to obesity to eat fat meat, while an equally eminent American prescribes lean ditto, and the stomach is to risk an accumulation of serious disorder by swallowing a pint of hot water daily, a most nauseous remedy, we should think, and not unattended with danger. The past master in the cure of corpulence is Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, London, W.C., whose book (256 pages), entitled "Corpulency and the Cure," price only 4 stamps, seems to impress us considerably, for he reduces more weight by his system than the Continental and American physicians, without any of the absurd restriction which would make life scarcely worth living. He uses simple herbs, the properties of which he seems to possess a more than usual knowledge of, and he makes but little secret of his method, so refreshing after the mystery made of most chemical and herbal concoctions of various complaints.—*Wetherby News.*

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WHAT A HOST OF US FEEL THIS WAY.

HALFWAY measures and halfway situations are often more disagreeable than extreme ones. Knowing this from experience, we can the better understand what Mr. James Sutcliffe means when he says that at a certain time in June, 1891, he was "too well to lie up and too ill to be at work." In case one is downright ill and no mistake about it; ill enough to go to bed indefinitely, and to leave everything to others—why, there is a sort of completeness and sincerity in it that brings some consolation. And, to be sure, when one is well and hearty from top to toe; as full of life as an egg is of meat—why, that is a plain, simple, and enjoyable situation. But to be responsible for work without the vim or ability to do it right, or to be ailing without those sharp symptoms that make our friends concerned about us—*that* is a mean, nasty attitude to be in.

Yet as an actual fact the great bulk or proportion of the suffering borne by humanity—physical, mental, and moral suffering—is borne by the very people in this condition, not by those who lie quietly on beds at home or receive intelligent and expert attention in hospitals. There now! We have said it, and it's true.

Mr. Sutcliffe will be understood, therefore, by millions who are in the form he was in; who work away and do their best; who seldom or never grumble; *and yet*—who *need help*, every man and woman of them.

He (Mr. Sutcliffe we mean, of course) says that no terrible pains took him, nothing scaring, nothing that made him send somebody to fetch the doctor, but he just felt bad; low, weary, languid, tired, out of sorts. Dear, dear, what a crowd, what a host, of us there is who can fit every one of those words on himself as though they were coats that had been made to measure. We don't feel like work, we hate to give up—that is where we are; and we should be more grateful, really, for a medicine that would set us right *just now* than we are likely to be for some magic balm which shall bring us back to the world in the hour when its vain sights and shows are fading in the mists of death.

Well, well. Let us hear Mr. Sutcliffe out; he has but a few words to say: "My energy seemed gone out of me. In my mouth there was a bad, sickening taste, worse in the mornings than at other times. I lost all relish for my meals, and what I did eat I ate because we all *do* eat as long as we can, whether we feel like it or not. I was much troubled with flatulence, and in short was too well to lie up and to ill to be at work. In this way I continued about four months; nothing doing me any good. After a while something put it into my mind that maybe Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup might help me. So I began to take it, and in three weeks I felt much better. This gave me reason for keeping on with it, and I did keep on. The result was that my appetite returned and my food agreed with me and did me good. In this way the improvement went on until I was as well as ever, and I have been in the best of health ever since. I know many persons living in Low Moor who have found great benefit from using Seigel's Syrup. (Signed) James Sutcliffe, 110, St. Paul's Street, Low Moor, Clitheroe, December 1st, 1893."

We have no doubt of it, dear Mr. Sutcliffe, no doubt of it at all. People who have found benefit from that medicine are to be come across all over the earth. They speak almost every tongue known to human lips, and the words "Mother Seigel's Syrup" have been translated into every one of them.

And, what is better still, most of them are like you—thankful, not for having been rescued from impending death (although that often happens), but for having been picked up out of the vile middle ground between illness and health, and put where they wanted to be—squarely on their legs, with a relish for their meals and a relish for their work. Good luck to the people of Low Moor.

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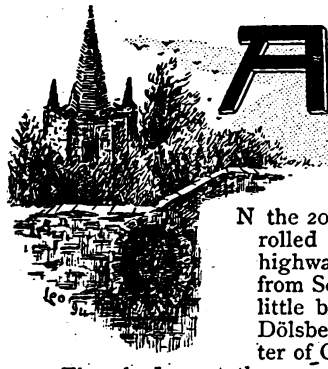
EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 319.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 9, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY



A SAINT IN PAWN

ON the 20th of May, 189—, a light carriage rolled rapidly along one of the finest highways in the world—that which leads from Sorrento to Salerno. On the narrow little back seat sat Count Dietrich von Dölsberg and his bride, the lovely daughter of Councillor von Gumpel.

They had spent three weeks on the Riviera, and along the Gulf of Naples, and for the last week had engaged separate apartments at the inns, and had omitted the good-night kiss. Little misunderstandings had arisen between the newly-married pair.

The Countess Lenore was a petted child, exacting, and a little imperious, and, above all, very obstinate. She was as deeply in love with her husband as he with her, but she greatly resented any attempt to exercise authority over her; so now they sat, side by side, cold and silent.

Count Dietrich was keenly appreciative of the beauties of nature, and would gladly have thrown his strong arms about her and whispered in her pretty little ear, "Lenore, only open your eyes and look about you. How can you be so cold among such scenes? How can you give yourself up to such petty whims in the presence of such grandeur and beauty?"

But he said nothing till, at a sudden turn in the road, one of the picturesque old Saracenic towns lay before them. Flat-roofed grey stone houses, with outside staircases, arched bridges over the court yards and narrow alleys. Then he could no longer repress an exclamation of delight and surprise.

"Lenore, look! how wonderfully picturesque! It is the most enchanting little nest in all Italy. We must stop here. Do you hear, coachman? Drive us to the best hotel!"

The coachman smiled pityingly. "The best hotel! There is no choice here. I think we had better drive on. There is nothing here for your Excellencies."

"All the same, here I shall stop, if I have to sleep on straw. I must see the place by daylight."

The coachman protested in vain, and the young Countess made a few sharp observations on her husband's inconsiderate self-will, but Count Dietrich insisted on stopping.

They turned into the principal street of the little town. An excited crowd stood in front of one of the best houses, shouting and screaming. The carriage was obliged to halt, and the coachman called out to ask what was the matter. At least twenty voices hastened to satisfy his curiosity, but the Count and Countess could only make out that Santa Elena had something to do with it.

Now a door opened in the high wall of the house, and out stepped a priest.

The excited crowd rushed up the steps and pushed the old gentleman back against the door, which had been closed behind him. A hundred voices called out a question, then stopped to hear his answer.

The old priest shrugged his shoulders and said, shaking his head, "Nothing can be done. He is as stubborn as a donkey."

Then arose such a howl of rage that even the Neapolitan carriage horses—well used to such demonstrations—shied violently.

Fists were shaken in the air and a few stones thrown at the small windows in front of the house, but at last the old priest managed to make himself heard again, and finally succeeded in dispersing the crowd. The "Golden Eagle" was only a few steps away, and the young couple soon reached it in safety.

Out stepped a priest.

The stout little round-faced host received his distinguished guests with the utmost cordiality, and led them through a little orange garden and up a stairway to a flat roof, then over an arched stone bridge and up another stairway to the lodgings assigned them. It was a lofty, vaulted room, with glass doors at either end. The scanty furniture was old fashioned and rickety, and a slight odour of mould and dust filled the dim, cellar-like apartment.

The Count found this ancient banqueting hall far more attractive than the finest rooms in a modern hotel, but Lenore shrugged her shoulders, and sniffed suspiciously about. "It is more like a potato cellar than a bedroom," said she, "and looks as if it had not been dusted since the last century. Pah! how stifling!"

Half an hour afterwards, the host came and escorted them to supper, which was well cooked and daintily served. The fat, curly-headed host was also cook and waiter. Count Dietrich made up for his wife's silence by a lively conversation with the landlord; and, after praising the excellent supper, asked for an explanation of the popular disturbance which he had witnessed.

"Ah, you mean the scene before Novelli's house," answered Curly-head.

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"May the plague take—beg pardon, Signora. The people have good cause to be angry with this Signor Novelli. The worst of it is that he is, not only the cloth merchant, banker, usurer, and cut-throat Novelli, but he is also our Podesta (Mayor). If it were not for that, you would probably have seen him hanged over his own doorstep."

"Ah, per Bacco! this begins to be interesting," said the Count.

"Well, your Excellency must know that the day after to-morrow, the 22nd of May, is the feast of St. Elena, our patron saint, and there are not many little towns in Italy which can boast such a celebration as ours on her fête-day. People flock here from all the country round. It costs us hard work and a great deal of money to do honour to our most holy patroness, but we have good reason to make a special effort, for our church is lucky enough to possess an ancient treasure which is the envy of all Christendom. It is a solid silver bust of the saint, set with precious stones, and with a golden crown upon her head. Our Bishop has an old document which he will show you if your Excellency cares——"

"Not particularly," said the Count, smiling. "I would rather hear what Signor Novelli has to do with your St. Elena."

"Ah," said the little man, "that is a story! I am ashamed to be fellow-citizen to such a villain. Our cathedral dates back to Saracenic times, and is naturally rather out of repair, and experts have pronounced it unsafe. But, as we are very poor, we trusted to the dear Lord's protection and St. Elena's intercession, till a large stone fell from the wall and killed an old woman. Then, of course, we took up the matter in earnest.

"The people gave all they could, and His Holiness the Pope added something; but it fell far short. Then Novelli offered to make up the deficiency if we would make him Podesta and give him the Saint's bust as security. Of course, we had to accept his terms. Money is power all the world over, and the devil is in every gold piece. So, Heaven forgive us, Signor Novelli has the key of the Saint's shrine, and will only give it up when his interest is paid. We have managed to pay it for five years, but these are hard times.

She danced about with him until he quieted down.

"The women and the priests have tried to influence him through his young wife, the most beautiful little woman in all the country round, and a perfect angel—of course, a man can buy anything with money. The old ruffian is desperately fond of her, but even Signora Elena can do nothing with him when there is money in the question."

Early the next morning, the Count opened the door and stepped out on the balcony which looked out toward the sea. His wife was still asleep, and the young husband, as he bent over her, could hardly refrain from waking her with a kiss. But he must not be weak, and so lose the upper hand for life.

Count Dietrich gazed gloomily out upon the smiling heavens and the pretty old town bathed in sunshine; bit his lip and tugged nervously at his moustache. How happy they might be if only this self-willed young creature—— How would it all end? And yet every day he was more and more in love with her.

He paced slowly up and down the broad balcony, then went on tip-toe back into the room. Lenore was awake, and her eyes were full of tears. He saw that, though she turned her head away.

"Good morning, Lenore. Will you not at least say good morning to me?"

"Good morning."

That was all. He stamped his foot, got his field-glass and went out again, slamming the door behind him. The distant sounds of the gay Southern street-life filled the fresh morning air. Children's voices came shrill from some quarter near at hand, and when he turned his glass in that direction, he saw, on a flat roof, perhaps fifty feet distant, three lovely children, from three to six years old. The youngest, an exquisitely beautiful child, was kicking and crying furiously in his little sister's arms and she tried in vain to quiet him.

A door opened and out came a young girl in a loose white gown, over which fell her luxurious black hair. She took the crying child in her arms, wiped his eyes, kissed him, and danced about with him until he quieted down. Then she came to the edge of the parapet and pointed out to the little one all sorts of things to divert his mind.

If Count Dietrich had admired the child, he was enraptured with the lovely face which glowed in tender freshness from its frame of coal-black hair. Through his glass he could see even her white teeth and the dimple in her round cheek when she smiled. Now she turned and looked directly at him. What eyes! Alas! she saw him looking at her, and went quickly into the house with the child in her arms.

A hand was laid on his arm, and he started like a sinner caught in the act.

"What interests you so much?" asked Countess Lenore in a cold, indifferent tone.

The Count was annoyed and spoke with exaggerated admiration of his charming neighbours, thinking to arouse her jealousy.

The Countess looked through the glass, then said, turning away:

"Strange taste! Shall we not go down to breakfast?"

He made her a formal little bow and accompanied her to the guest-room below.

"Don Pasquale," said he to the host, "there is a raving beauty in your neighbourhood. Are there many such pretty girls in your town?"

Curly-head bowed and said: "Your Excellency is very kind. We have indeed some pretty girls, but I do not know which of them lives near here."

Count Dietrich described the locality, and had hardly mentioned the three children when Don Pasquale interrupted him.

"Ah, it must be Signora Novelli herself."

"But she looks like a girl of sixteen."

"Quite true; she looks very young, but it must be the Signora, for all the other women in the house are old."

"Corpo-di-Bacco!" cried the Count enthusiastically, "then I solemnly swear that for a kiss from that angel, I will gladly pay the thousand lire out of my own pocket to her skinflint of a husband."

"Your Excellency must be joking," said Don Pasquale incredulously.

"And your joke is in rather bad taste," murmured the Countess in German.

Count Dietrich pretended not to hear her remark, and insisted that his offer was made in all seriousness. The guest who was willing to give one thousand lire for a kiss, went up several degrees in Don Pasquale's estimation, and shortly after the Count found him in close conversation at the door

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with several portly old men. Don Pasquale approached him at once and whispered that these dignitaries had just returned from another interview with the Podesta, but in vain. "Ready-money and nothing but ready-money could get the key out of his pocket." "Are we really to understand," added Don Pasquale, "that your Excellency was in earnest about the kiss?"

"I give you my word of honour."

Don Pasquale's first step was to tell the chief dignitaries of the town of the stranger's munificent offer. They finally decided to commit the intelligence to the highest clerical authority.

The worthy Padre Sebastiano could hardly refrain from a right worldly expression, so great was his surprise. They had to assure him again and again that the distinguished foreigner was not joking.

Finally he leaned back in his chair, crossed his legs, took a pinch of snuff, and gave the matter his serious consideration.

"A most absurd story!" cried he, rubbing his hands. "As you know, my friends, the Lord Bishop comes to-morrow. We must try and get this business settled before he comes. I think I will undertake it. The good Bishop will absolve me. Dear me, what does the proverb say: 'A kiss given in honour harms nobody.' And if it should serve to liberate our Holy Patroness, old Novelli will certainly give in when he sees the money."

The Countess came in from the balcony.

"Oh, Holy pity!" cried one of the men, aghast. "Reverend sir, you are not thinking of making the proposition to the Podesta himself?"

"Yes, why not?" answered the priest. "He is the lord and master of Signora Elena's lips."

"Then all is lost," said Don Pasquale, in distress. "His avarice is great, but his jealousy is greater. I know what I am talking about, Reverend Father!" and the five old men nodded assent. Then Padre Sebastiano became very serious.

"So you want me to treat with the fair lady herself; ah-ah!" he took another pinch of snuff, reflected a little, then started to his feet with a comical sigh, and said:

"So I am going to make a go-between of myself in my old days! But what will not a man do for his patron saint. I may as well start at once."

Padre Sebastiano put on his newest Sunday cassock, brushed his hat with special care and started off. He chose the least frequented streets so that no one might detain him on the way, and also that he might reach the Podesta's house unobserved.

His plan of operation was, however, not very clear to him. More than once he stood still to think it over. His mind was so occupied that before he knew it he found himself on a terrace overlooking the Novelli's back building. He could see Signora Elena at her needlework and her little ones playing about.

By a round-about way Padre Sebastiano reached the wall of the same fruit garden where Don Pasquale had lain in ambush. The whole neighbourhood seemed deserted, so he might venture to try and attract Signora Novelli's attention. But he was a little man and would be obliged to climb a tree as Don Pasquale had done before him. To be sure, he was rather afraid of spoiling his new cassock, and besides—what if anyone should see him! He laughed softly to himself. "Ah, saints in Heaven, I certainly never dreamed of playing such boyish pranks in the service of my blessed patroness!"

Presently the Signora caught sight of the good padre, her reverend confessor, a comical-looking object, perched in the green tree-top, smiling up at her rather sheepishly, and gesticulating eagerly with his walking-stick.

"Good day, my daughter!" said he in a loud whisper. "I must positively speak to you without your husband's knowledge. Are you sure that nobody is listening?"

"No, no, indeed, Father!" answered her sweet voice plaintively. "I am never safe from him anywhere and especially to-day. He thinks that there was somebody in that tree before, trying to attract my attention. What can you want of me?"

"A kiss, my little pigeon; only a kiss," whispered Padre Sebastiano with a roguish smile. Her childish terror made her look so charming, that he could not resist the temptation to add to the little woman's bewilderment. Then she stood with wide eyes and open mouth; the crimson blood rushed to her face; then she uttered a low cry and vanished.

After a while she came back and peeped shyly over the parapet. "Reverend Father, are you still there?" whispered she, behind her hand. The Reverend Father had been sucking an orange to while away the time, and had not seen her return. When he heard her voice he started and answered with his mouth full of orange juice, "Yes, indeed, my daughter. I am still here. Why did you run away in such a hurry?"

"Oh, I am so terribly frightened. Suppose somebody should hear us. He follows me about everywhere, and the servants are not to be trusted. But it is not right for you to make fun of a poor woman like me!"

Padre Sebastiano answered eagerly: "But I am not in

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fun. What I said is sober earnest. Can you not come down into the garden, child, so that I can tell you about it?"

"No, no, impossible! All the doors are locked. But he has given me permission to go to church in the evening."

"Alone?"

"Yes, alone. He is not going. He is afraid of the people, proud as he is."

"Very well; I shall rely upon your coming," said Padre Sebastiano gravely, "for, let me tell you, Santa Elena's ransom depends on you, and you alone. God bless you, my child!" and with a kindly smile he climbed down from his perch.

A quarter of an hour later he knocked at the door of the Count's apartment.

The Count had returned from his walk warm and dusty, and stood at the washstand in his shirt-sleeves.

He thought that Don Pasquale was knocking to announce dinner, so called out "Come in!" and in came Padre Sebastiano with a polite bow. "Ah," was the Count's first thought, "that chatterbox of a landlord has brought the clergy about my ears. Now I suppose this Reverend Father will point out to me the exceeding impropriety and sinfulness of my offer, and show me how a miserable heretic like myself can earn the Church's blessing and St. Elena's thanks by spending one thousand lire, leaving the kiss out of the bargain, however."

He was so confused that his knowledge of Italian deserted him, and his apologies for his incomplete toilet, as well as his inquiries as to what procured to him the honour of so unexpected a visit, were a jumble of several different tongues.

The reverend gentleman was also embarrassed, and their mutual apologies would never have come to an end, if the Countess had not come in from the balcony and invited Padre Sebastiano to take a seat.

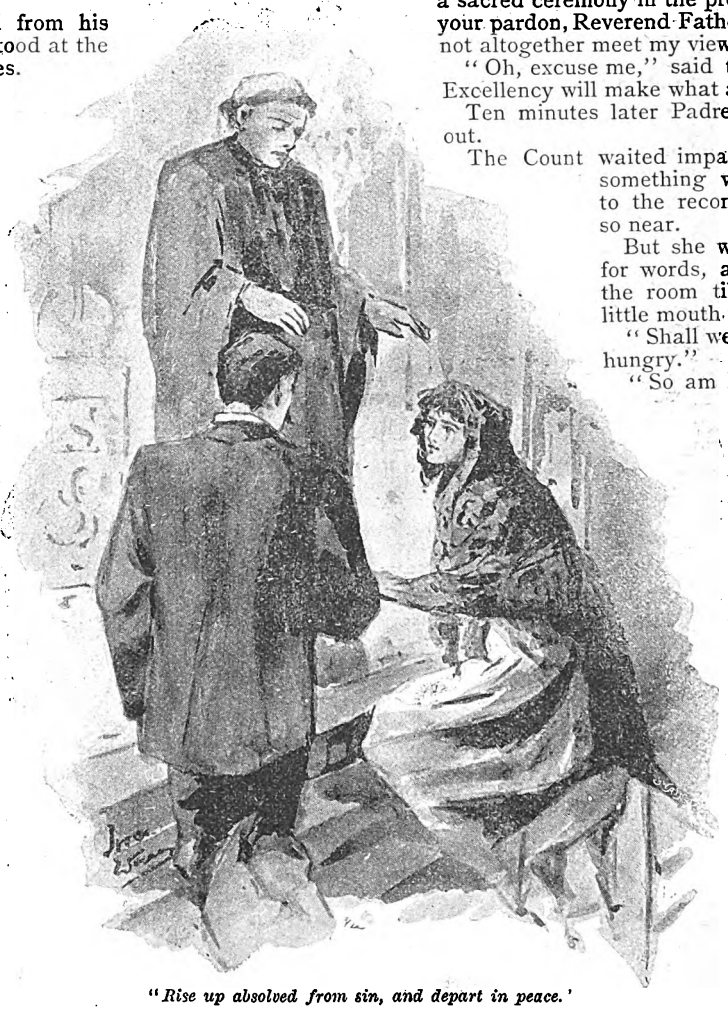
She sat down opposite him smiling, and opened the conversation in the most matter-of-course tone of voice, by the question, "I suppose you have come about the kiss, Reverend Father?"

Padre Sebastiano looked in amazement from the Count to his beautiful young wife, and at last managed to say: "Yes, of course—I mean—Signor Pasquale told me that your Excellency—Does the Signora know about it?"

"Yes, certainly," said the Countess, smiling. "My husband has no secrets from me. I think it is a charming idea."

The Count, with his red face buried in a towel, could not help muttering, "Well, upon my word!"

The Countess pretended not to hear him, and went on quite composedly, "I have been looking at the little woman all the morning. She is really lovely. I must confess that if I were a man I would give two thousand lire for a kiss from her. Indeed, I am afraid I should go so far as to carry her off from her old scarecrow of a husband."



"Rise up absolved from sin, and depart in peace."

The Countess went on cheerfully: "And you think that the young woman will consent to the kiss?"

The Reverend Father blushed like a bashful boy, and answered shyly: "Yes; I do not see why she should refuse. Your husband, Comtesse, is by no means repulsive. I—I mean—she has promised to come to church this evening. The Lord Bishop will be there you know. The church is beautifully dressed. The clergy and the choir boys will wear their finest vestments. Oh, your Excellency must see it! It will be fine. And after the service, when the people are gone and the church is dark, I think—I think she will not refuse. And if she should be so foolish, the Lord Bishop will have a serious word to say about it."

"So it seems that this unfortunate kiss is to be solemnised at a sacred ceremony in the presence of the clergy. I beg your pardon, Reverend Father, but this arrangement does not altogether meet my views," said the Count.

"Oh, excuse me," said the Padre politely. "Your Excellency will make what arrangements you please."

Ten minutes later Padre Sebastiano bowed himself out.

The Count waited impatiently for his wife to say something which should open the way to the reconciliation which now seemed so near.

But she would not speak. She hoped for words, and he paced up and down the room till she opened her charming little mouth to say:

"Shall we go down? I am dreadfully hungry."

"So am I," said he, hastily opening the door for her to pass.

. . . . .

The bells announced with joyful clamour the approach of St. Elena's festa. The day's heat had been succeeded by a cool, refreshing sea-breeze, and the Count, weary with climbing about the rocky streets, sat smoking in the balcony.

The Countess came out and said, still with the same ironical smile:

"Well, don't you hear the bells calling you? St. Elena is waiting for her deliverer."

Count Dietrich tossed his head angrily and tugged at his moustache. But, after a moment's reflection, he answered quite meekly, "Yes, I am ready. Are you going with me?"

"No indeed! I would not be so indiscreet as to interfere with your amusements."

The Count sprang to his feet and his eyes flashed. He took two steps towards his wife.

"Do you know, Lenore, I——" He had almost humbled himself to make the suicidal confession: "Do you know, Lenore, I have made an awful ass of myself!" But just in time he noticed her calm, superior smile, and his words remained unspoken. He seized his hat, and, with a stiff little military bow, he left the fast darkening room.

With a grim determination in his look, like a noble criminal determined to carry out his own sentence, he walked down the street to the church.

At the close of the ceremonies the clergy formed a procession and made a short visit to each of the saints in the little side chapels. The Count stood leaning against one of the slender Moorish pillars which supported the low gallery which ran round the rotunda.

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The procession passed; everybody bowed deeply, some women fell on their knees and tried to kiss the Bishop's hand outstretched in blessing. Just behind the Bishop walked Padre Sebastiano, his kindly old face full of anxious care. His eyes were searching here and there over the heads of the crowd. Ah, now he catches sight of the eccentric German gentleman. He touches his arm in passing and whispers: "I am in despair, my dear sir; she will not do it. She is in such fear of her tyrant's anger, that even the promise of all manner of heavenly blessings cannot move her."

He kept hold of the Count's sleeve and drew him gently along. Suddenly he grasped him tightly by the arm, so that the Count could hardly suppress an exclamation of pain.

"Eccola!" ("There she is") whispered the Padre hastily, and nodded towards a little woman kneeling near by. She had just caught the Bishop's hand, and was looking up beseechingly into the benignant prelate's face.

The Count broke from the Padre's grasp, and stood as if rooted to the spot. Yes, it was she! And she was so far, far prettier close at hand than at a distance. He had never seen such fabulously innocent, childish eyes in a woman's face, and it seemed far less idiotic and reprehensible to have offered one thousand lire for a kiss from those lips than it had done half-an-hour ago.

After the procession had passed he stepped forward, intending to speak to the devout little beauty; but she seemed to recognise him, and a burning flush suffused her pale cheeks.

She rose hastily, drew her black lace veil over her face and slipped away in the crowd. After a moment's hesitation, the Count followed her. But he had hesitated too long; she had already disappeared in the crowd. The Count elbowed his way recklessly out, but she was nowhere to be seen, neither on the steps nor in the Piazza. Could she have slipped out by another door? He ran round the church. No, there was no other entrance. Perhaps, she was still inside. He entered the cathedral again. Choir-boys and acolytes were extinguishing the lights. She was not there.

But wait, what was that? A slender female form, with a black lace mantle over the head. Ah, there she was at last! She stood below the pulpit in earnest conversation with a black cassock which could hardly belong to anybody but Padre Sebastiano. Now the old gentleman turned round. It was indeed he. The sound of footsteps had attracted his attention and when he recognised the Count, he opened the little bronze door under the pulpit steps and pushed the lady through.

The Count rushed up, seized the good priest by the arm and in his excitement said to him in German: "What have you done with her? Why do you hide her from me? Am I to have my kiss or not?"

Padre Sebastiano placed his broad back against the door and waved the excited man gently away. A broad smile lighted up his kindly face, and he cooed softly to him: "Gently, gently; be quiet, be quiet, my son! She has changed her mind, the little pigeon. You shall have your kiss, Excellenza, but not here in the lighted church. The poor little thing is too timid."

"Of course, of course; in outer darkness, if she likes it better," cried the Count impatiently. Then he tried to get hold of the door handle.

"Excuse me a moment. Do you happen to have the one thousand lire by you? If so, I must beg you to——" and with an insinuating smile he held out his open hand.

The Count felt in his breast-pocket, and said with an angry shrug: "How suspicious you Italians are. Well, I'll pay in advance," and hastily took a red bank-note from his pocket-book and pressed it into the hand of the priest, who now drew aside with a polite bow.

Now at last the road was clear. Padre Sebastiano himself threw open the little bronze door for him. His heart beat faster than on the day when, as an ensign, he had fought his first duel. The door closed behind him. It was very dark, but by the faint gleam of light from the little shuttered window, he could see a shadowy form. He whispered softly, "Signora Elena!" a garment rustled, the shadowy figure glided towards him, and the next moment he felt a pair of soft warm lips against his own, two arms were thrown about his neck, and the delicate little hands clasped behind his head.

His expectations were more than realised. Never in her most loving moments had his Lenore kissed him so tenderly, so fervently. Ah, these hot-blooded Southern women knew how to love! It would be a pious mission, a work of humanity to rescue this lovely creature from that horrible, ogreish miser. He clasped her closer, and warmly returned her caresses.

But now sighed Lenore: "Stop, stop, enough! You will smother me! Forgive me, Dietrich, forgive me! I have been very silly! Forgive me the deceit. I love you so dearly. I cannot live when you are angry with me."

The Count's arms sank helplessly down. "You, Lenore!" cried he, quite overcome with astonishment.

"Yes, you dear, faithless man. It is I, your wedded wife! To be sure I cannot give you kisses worth one thousand lire apiece, but——"

He silenced her with kisses, and murmured, "You dear, sweet, lovely creature; can you, indeed, forgive me?"

He felt her tears upon his cheeks, though she did not answer, and then they went out of the dark, close little room.

Padre Sebastiano stood outside the door and shook his finger playfully at them.

"Aha!" said he. "You have kept me waiting a long time!"

With one accord they each seized one of his hands and stooped to kiss it. He drew back and said modestly, shaking his grey head: "No, no; not that, my dear children. I do not deserve that. I am only a poor, sinful man, and have been cherishing sinful thoughts. May St. Elena intercede for me when I come to make my atonement. But I am a priest, and have power to absolve from sin when I see true repentance. You are, I know, arch-heretics and Lutherans, but if you do not despise God's mercy——"

Count Dietrich seized his wife's hand and drew her to her knees beside him, and the old priest laid his hands on them in blessing, and said, in rather a trembling voice: "Rise up absolved from sin, and depart in peace!"

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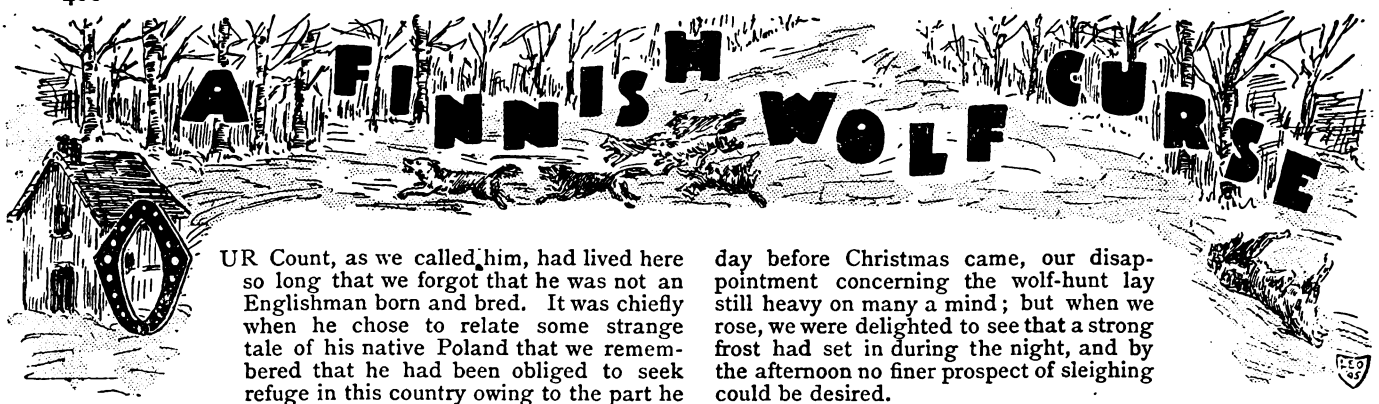

OUR Count, as we called him, had lived here so long that we forgot that he was not an Englishman born and bred. It was chiefly when he chose to relate some strange tale of his native Poland that we remembered that he had been obliged to seek refuge in this country owing to the part he took in the unsuccessful uprising of 1831. One winter evening a conversation about hunting led him to relate, in perfect seriousness, the following wild and legend-like story of his early life in Poland:—

The year before the rising I went from my native place to spend Christmas at the house of my uncle in the wooded country of Upper Lithuania. He was a nobleman who boasted his descent from one of the oldest houses in Poland, and still held the estate which his ancestors had defended through many a Tartar invasion. My uncle had three sons—Armand, Henri, and Constantine—brave, handsome young men. His nearest neighbours were a family named Lorenski whose property bordered on my uncle's land. There was not a family of their station within leagues; but, independently of that circumstance, the household had attractions for my cousins, as it consisted of the young Count Emerich, his sister Constanza, and two orphan cousins, Marcella and Eustachia, who had been brought up with them from childhood.

My stay at my uncle's house had not been long when I discovered that Armand was as good as engaged to Marcella, and Henri to Eustachia, while Constantine, the youngest and handsomest of the three brothers, paid vain though deferential court to Constanza. The rising was not then publicly talked of, though known throughout the country to be in full preparation. All the young and brave hearts among us were pledged to it, and my cousins did not hesitate to tell me in confidence that Cousin Emerich and his sister were its chief promoters in that district. They had a devoted assistant in Father Cassimir.

I had scarcely got well acquainted with him and the Lorenskis when two more Christmas visitors arrived at the house. They were a brother and sister, Russian nobles, known as Count Theodore and Countess Juana. Their native place was St. Petersburg. They had spent years in travelling over Europe, and, though nobody knew the extent of their estates, it was supposed to be great, for they spared no expense, and always kept the best society.

Latterly they had been somewhat attracted to Poland, and became so popular among our country nobles that they were invited from house to house, making new friends wherever they went. Count Theodore was a splendid shot, his sister was matchless in singing, and neither ever tired of fun or frolic.

The Lorenskis and the travellers had become fast friends almost on their first acquaintance, which had taken place the previous winter; and Count Theodore and his sister had performed a long winter journey from St. Petersburg to celebrate Christmas time with them.

The peasants said it was never lucky when Christmas came without a wolf-hunt; but that year it was likely to do so. The snow kept falling at intervals, with days of fog and thaw between, till the night before the vigil. In my youth the Lithuanians kept Christmas after the fashion of the old northern times. The celebration began with great devotion, and ended with great feasting.

Christmas Eve was considered particularly sacred; many traditional ceremonies and strange beliefs hung about it, and the more pious held that no one should engage in any profane occupation, or think of going to sleep after sunset. When the day before Christmas came, our disappointment concerning the wolf-hunt lay still heavy on many a mind; but when we rose, we were delighted to see that a strong frost had set in during the night, and by the afternoon no finer prospect of sleighing could be desired.

My cousins and I stood at my uncle's door. Suddenly our ears caught the sound of bells and laughing voices, and in a few minutes up drove the Lorenski sledge in its gayest trappings, with Constanza, the Russian countess, and the young cousins, all looking blithe and rosy in the frosty air, while Emerich and Theodore sat in front, in true hunter's trim, with Father Cassimir himself in charge of the reins.

They had two noble horses of the best Tartar blood, unequalled in the province, as we knew, for speed and strength; and Emerich's cheerful voice first saluted us with: "Ho! friends, it is seven hours yet till midnight, won't you come with us? It is a shame to let Christmas in without a wolf-skin!"

Our hunting gear was donned in a trice; and with my uncle's most trusty man, Metski, to assist in driving, away we went at full speed to the forest. Father Cassimir was an experienced general in expeditions of that kind. He knew the turns in the woods where the wolves scented best; and when we had got fairly among the oaks, down went the pork. For some time it dragged on without a single wolf appearing, though the odour came strong and savoury through cords and straw. "If I were a wolf myself, I would come for that," said old Metski.

The priest quickened his speed, vowing he would not say mass without a skin that night; and we got deeper into the wilderness of oak and pine. Like most of our Lithuanian forests, it had no underwood. We could see the long icicles gleaming like pendants of diamonds for miles through the wild woods, but never a wolf.

The priest began to look disappointed. I have said they were in great spirits, particularly Count Theodore; indeed, he was generally the gayer of the pair; his sister being evidently more prudent—and in this respect they resembled the Lorenskis. Many a jest, however, on the non-appearance of the wolves went round our sledge, of which I remember nothing now except that we all laughed till the old woods rang.

"Be quiet, good children," said the priest, turning in his seat of command; "you make noise enough to frighten all the wolves in creation."

"They won't come to-night, father; they are preparing for mass," cried Count Theodore. "Juana, if the old Finn were here now, wouldn't he be useful?"

"Perhaps he might," said the Countess hesitatingly, with a forced laugh; and she cast a look of strange warning and reproof on her brother.

"What Finn?" asked the priest, catching the Count's words.

"Oh, he is talking of an old nursery-tale we had in St. Petersburg," hastily interposed the lady, though I thought her face had no suggestion of a nursery-tale in it at that moment.

"About the Finns, I'll warrant," said Father Cassimir; "they are a strange people. My brother, the merchant, told me that he knew one of them at Abo who said he had a charm for the wolves; but somebody informed against him for smuggling, and the Russian Government sent him to the lead mines of Siberia. By St. Sigismund, there's the first of them!"

As the priest spoke a large wolf appeared, and half the guns in the sledge were raised.

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"Not yet, not yet," said our experienced commander, artfully turning away as another and another came in sight; "there are more coming," and he gradually slackened the speed of our horses. Far off through the moonlit woods and the frozen night we could hear a strange murmur, which grew and swelled on all sides to a chorus of mingled howlings as the wolves came on by troops.

"Fire now, friends," cried Father Cassimir. "We are likely to have skins enough for Christmas." And, bang! went all our barrels. I saw five fall; but, contrary to expectations, the wolves did not retire—they stood for an instant snarling at us. The distant howling continued and grew nearer; and then, from every glade and alley, down the frozen forest, came by scores and hundreds such a multitude of wolves as we could not have believed to exist in all Lithuania.

"Hand me my gun and take the reins, Metski," cried Father Cassimir. "Drive for your life!" he added, in an undertone; but everyone in the sledge heard him.

Heaven knows how many we killed, but it seemed of no use. Our pork was swallowed—straw and all. The creatures were pressing upon us on every side, as if trying to surround the sledge; and it was fearful to see the leaps that some grey old fellows would take at Metski and the horses.

Our driver did his part like a man, making a thousand winds and turns through the wood; but still the wolves pursued us. Fortunately the firing kept them off, and, thanks to our noble horses, they were never able to get ahead of us; but as far as we could see in the moonlight came the howling packs, as if rising from the earth.

We had seen nothing like it, and all of us did our best in firing, especially Count Theodore, but his shots had little effect, for his hand shook, and I know not if any but myself saw the looks of terrified intelligence which he exchanged with his sister. Still, she and the Lady Constanza kept up their courage, though the young cousins were white as snow, and our ammunition was fast decreasing.

"Yonder is a light," said Constanza at last, as the poor horses became unmanageable from fright and weariness. "It is from the cottage of old Wenzel, the woodman."

"If we could reach that," said Father Cassimir, "and leave the horses to their fate. It is our only chance."

No one contradicted the priest's arrangement, for his last words were felt to be true—though a pang passed over Constanza's face at the thought of leaving our brave and faithful horses to the wolves. Louder rose the howls behind us as Metski urged on with all his might, and far above all went the shout of Father Cassimir—he had the best lungs in the province: "Ho, Wenzel! Open the door, for pity's sake!"

We heard the old man reply, sent one well-aimed volley in among the wolves, and as they recoiled man and woman leaped from the sledge—for our Polish girls are active—and rushed into the cottage, when old Wenzel instantly double-barred the door.

It was woeful to hear the cries of pain and terror from the poor horses as we deserted them; the next instant the wolves were upon them. We saw them from the window, as thick as flies stuck on sugar. How we fired upon them, and with what goodwill old Wenzel helped us, praying all the time to every saint in the calendar, you may imagine.

Ammunition was by this time getting scarce among us There was not a man with a charge left but old Wenzel, who supplied us as long as he could. At length, loading his gun with his last charge, he laid it quietly in the corner, saying one did not know what use might be for it, and he never liked an empty gun.

The wolves had now left nothing but the bones of our horses, which they had dragged round and round the cottage, with a din of howling that almost drowned our voices within. Then they seized on the bodies of their own slain companions, which were devoured to the very skins; and still the gathering was going on. We could see them coming in troops through the open glades of the forest, as if aware that some human prey was in reserve. The hut was strongly built of great pine logs, but it was fearful to hear them tearing at the door, and scratching at the foundations.

The bravest among us was terrified by these sounds. Metski loudly avowed his belief that the wolves were sent upon us as a punishment for hunting on Christmas Eve, and fell instantly to his prayers. Wenzel flung a blazing brand among them from the window, but they did not seem to care for fire; and three of them were so near leaping in that he drove to the log shutter and gave up that method of defence.

None of the party seemed so far overcome with terror as Count Theodore; his spirit and prudence both seemed to forsake him. When the wolves began to scratch he threw himself on his face in a corner, and kept moaning and praying in Russian, of which none of us understood a syllable but old Wenzel.

Emerich and I would have spoken to him, but the woodman stopped us with a strange sign. Count Theodore had taken the relic of some saint from a pocket-book which he carried in his breast, and was, in Russian fashion, confessing his sins over it; while his sister sat silent and motionless by the fire, with livid face and clasped hands. The fire was burning low, but I saw the woodman's face darken. He stepped to the corner and took down his gun, as I believed, to take a last shot at the wolves. Count Theodore was in his way. Wenzel levelled the weapon for an instant at the prostrate man, and before I could speak or interpose a report, followed by a faint, shrill shriek from the Russian, rang through the hut. We rushed to him, but the count was dead. A bullet had gone right through his heart.

"My gun has shot the count, and the wolves will leave us now," said Wenzel coolly. "I heard him say in his prayers that a Finn, now in the Siberian mines, had vowed to send them on him and his company wherever he went."

As the woodman spoke, he handed to Count Emerich, with a hoarse whisper, a bloody pocket-book, taken from the body, and, turning to Juana, said something loud and threatening to her in the Russian tongue. The lady only bowed her head, seeming of all in the hut to be the least surprised or concerned at the death of her brother.

As for us, the complicated horrors of the night had left us stunned and stupefied, till the rapid diminution of the wolfish din, the sounds of shouts and voices, and the glare of torches lighting up the forest, brought us to the window. The wolves were scouring away in all directions; there was a greyness in the eastern sky, for Christmas day was breaking; and from all sides the tenantry of the count, and my uncle, with skates and sledges, guns and torches, were pouring to the rescue.

They had searched for us almost since midnight, fearing that something fearful had detained Father Cassimir and his company from mass. There were wonderfully few wolves shot in the retreat, and we all went home to Count Emerich's house, but not in triumph, for with us went the body of the Russian, of which old Wenzel was one of the bearers. The unanimous determination we expressed—to bring him to justice as a murderer—was silenced when Emerich showed us in confidence a letter from the Russian Minister, and a paper with all our names in a list of the disaffected Upper Lithuania, which he had found in Theodore's pocket-book.

After that we all affirmed that Wenzel's gun had gone off by accident; and on the same good Christmas Day Count Emerich, with a body of his retainers, escorted the Lady Juana to a convent at the other end of the province, the superior of which was his aunt. There is a wooden cross with his name and a Latin inscription on it marking Count Theodore's grave, by our old church on the edge of the forest. No one ever inquired after him, and the company of that terrible night are far scattered.

To prevent unnecessary labour, and consequent disappointment, to any readers of this paper, who in the past have forwarded original stories for insertion, we would take this opportunity of saying that our arrangements for the provision of matter for "Short Stories" are complete for some time to come.

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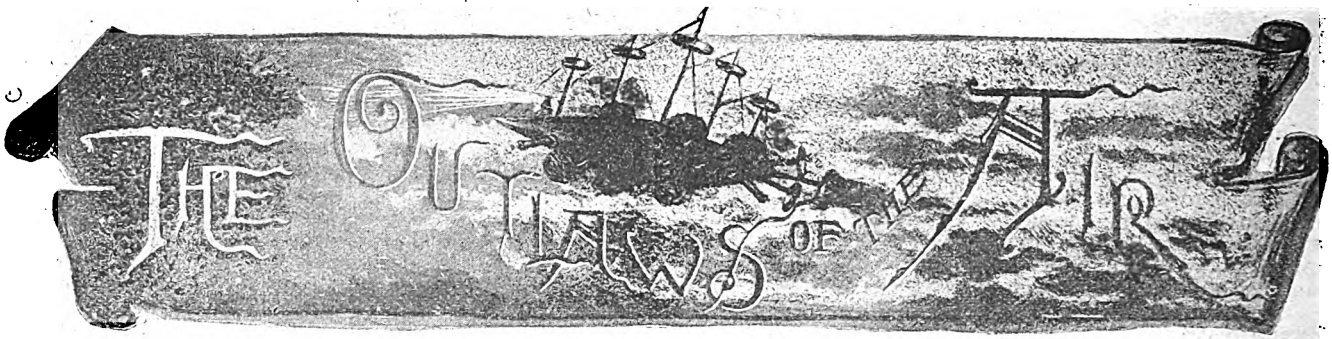


By George Griffith,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," &c.

CHAPTER XLIII.

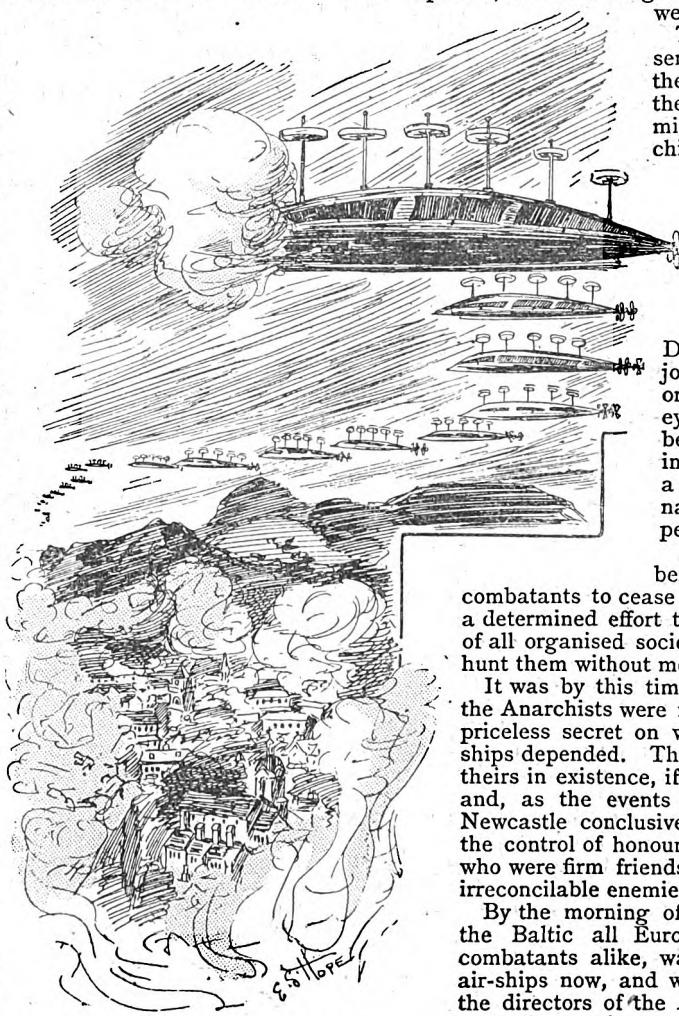
The Outlaws' Eerie.

Immediately the signal to cease firing had been obeyed the air-ships formed in line, and then the *Revanche* flew the signal, "Mount Prieta at a hundred miles an hour. Follow me. Do as I do."

The fleet was now floating over the Bay of Kiel. An almost straight line of over a thousand miles in length drawn south-west from Kiel, marked the course that the *Revanche* began to steer towards the stronghold, which the organised forces of Anarchy, now ranged under the leadership of Renault, had established, in a little rock-walled valley, or rather a deep gorge fenced in with precipices impassable to man or beast, which lay on the northern verge of Mount Prieta.

This is the highest peak of the Cantabrian mountains, the chain, which a glance at the map of Europe will show, running in continuation of the Pyrenean chain from the Bidassoa to Cape Finisterre. Another look at the map will show that the line of flight would pass over Hamburg, Bremen, Antwerp, Paris, and Bordeaux.

Max kept the fleet at an elevation of two thousand feet, and as each of the cities was reached he halted his fleet, sent a couple of shells from the bow gun of each vessel into the midst of it, and then, passing over it at ten miles an hour, dropped half-a-dozen fire-bombs from each of the ships which were flying extended in a long line abreast. This was, of course, merely done for the sake of further intensifying by purely wanton destruction the terrorism which the news of the frightful termination of the Battle of the Baltic had by this time carried like wildfire over the telegraphs of the Continent.



Dropped half-a-dozen fire-bombs from each of the ships.

That night Europe went almost mad with fear. The impartial destruction of the remains of the contending fleets in the Baltic proved, not only that the Anarchists saw in the warfare that was being waged on land and sea an opportunity ready made to their hand for intensifying their terrorism of Society ten-fold, but also that against a fleet of air-ships so powerful as the one under Renault's command, both the Russian aerostats, from which such tremendous results had been expected, and the mightiest naval armaments afloat were absolutely defenceless.

This of itself was enough to send a thrill of terror through the Continent, but when, within the space of twelve hours from mid-day to midnight, five of the chief cities in Germany, Belgium and France had been set on fire in a hundred places at once, it did not take long before terror was aggravated into something like delirium. The war, in which Germany and Denmark had now definitely joined, and upon which, under ordinary circumstances, the eyes of the world would have been fixed with all-absorbing interest, already occupied quite a secondary place in the imagination and the fears of the peoples of Europe.

Indeed, voices were already being raised in appeal to the combatants to cease their own strife and unite in a determined effort to meet the common enemies of all organised society in their own element and hunt them without mercy out of the world.

It was by this time perfectly well known that the Anarchists were not in sole possession of the priceless secret on which the power of the air-ships depended. There were other air-ships than theirs in existence, if anything superior to theirs, and, as the events that had taken place at Newcastle conclusively proved, they were under the control of honourable and distinguished men, who were firm friends of order, and therefore the irreconcilable enemies of Anarchy.

By the morning of the day after the Battle of the Baltic all Europe, combatants and non-combatants alike, was asking where were these air-ships now, and what possible reasons could the directors of the Aerial Navigation Syndicate have for keeping their ships out of the way and allowing the Anarchists to pursue their unheard-of depredations unmolested?

The next morning the *Times* published the following letter from the Chairman of the Syndicate:—

"Sir,—Will you allow me to remind those who are apparently under

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the impression that the Aerial Navigation Syndicate has a special mission and obligation to protect Society at large from the onslaughts of the Anarchists, that this Syndicate is a private Corporation founded primarily upon a commercial basis for the furtherance of the purposes of those who have put their work and their money into it. What those purposes are, or in what manner they will be carried out, is our business and no one else's.

"We recognise no obligations to employ the force at our disposal according to the direction of any Government or Governments. We have broken no laws and attacked no one save the enemies of Society, and therefore our right to complete freedom of action cannot be impugned. We shall act when and how we think fit, and that is all that I either can or will say on the subject.

"I may add that, so far, the publicity given by the newspapers with regard to events still fresh in the public memory has, in each instance, directly assisted the Anarchists in their designs. Through the newspapers Renault's accomplices received the disguised message which he gave them from the dock at Bow Street; through the same medium they were informed of the precise hour at which his execution was to take place, and so were able to rescue him in the nick of time; and thus, too, the rescue of the crew of the *Vengeur* and the terrible tragedy at Newcastle were directly due to information derived from the minute details published in the newspapers.

"I feel sure that all sensible people will agree with me that it would be something worse than madness for us to follow the same foolish course.—Yours truly, "HIRAM S. MAXIM."

To this letter there was obviously no other answer than the admission that the position taken up by the Syndicate was unassailable from the points of view both of legality and expediency. Neither the British nor any other Government had any claim to the knowledge of the secret of the motive-power which was practically the sole yet priceless possession of the Syndicate. The Government was free to experiment in the same direction if it chose, but it had no power to compel a disclosure of the secret which had been brought from Utopia.

Therefore, there was nothing else for Society to do but to wonder and to wait, while warfare on land and sea and Anarchy militant in the air spread terror and disquiet through the nations, and undermined the very foundations upon which the social fabric rested. But great and all as was the panic which obtained under the new reign of terror, it was by no means lacking in justification. Indeed, if all the facts could have been made public, they would rather have intensified than diminished it.

During the short period that had elapsed since Max had escaped with the *Vengeur* from Utopia he had accomplished wonders both of construction and organisation. He had used the practically unlimited funds which the depredations of the *Destroyer* on the North and South Atlantic had placed at his disposal with an administrative skill well worthy of a far better cause.

By means of the disguised agencies which Hartog had established, and he had perfected, he had been able to obtain the materials for the construction of a fleet of twenty-five air-ships for warlike purposes and one aerial transport, a very large craft capable of lifting great weights and conveying them through the air at a speed which, though only about half that of the cruisers, was still quite enough to put her beyond the risk of capture save by the Syndicate's air-ships, of which only two were known to be in existence.

This transport, which he had named the *Voyageur*, formed the link of communication between the camp of the Anarchists on Mount Prieta and the outside world. She never travelled save by night and under the escort of two of the cruisers, and her duty was to meet the *Pilgrim*, which still passed unsuspected as the private yacht of a wealthy South American gentleman, whose real name was Leo Marcel, at stated rendezvous at sea, out of the regular tracks of shipping, and to relieve her of the stores, guns, ammunition, or treasure which she carried, and bring them back through the air to the camp, which none of the air-ships were permitted even to approach, save under cover of clouds or darkness.

The camp itself, despite the ruggedness and forbidding character of its surroundings, was admirably fitted by nature for the purpose to which Max had devoted it. The gorge was walled in by rocks ranging from a hundred to a hundred and fifty feet in height on all sides save the north, where, through a deep narrow cleft, the stream of water, which came from the

The dark summit of Mount Prieta.

upper part of the mountain and traversed the centre of the little sheltered valley, found its way down the slopes which inclined toward the shore of the Bay of Biscay.

On either side of this stream extended for about three hundred yards to the walls of rock a fairly level sloping plain of light sandy soil, on which between fifty and sixty wooden huts and workshops were now standing. As long as it remained undiscovered by the only enemies that Renault and his followers had to fear, this refuge formed a hidden, entrenched camp from which the Anarchists could safely defy the combined forces of Europe.

From it they could issue forth to slay and plunder and destroy, and to it they could return without the slightest fear of being followed. It was, in fact, a very fortress of Anarchy entrenched in the midst of Civilisation, impregnable and unassailable by all means save one, and only treachery or the most improbable accident could bring that means into operation against it.

A few minutes after midnight on the 17th July, Renault's fleet sighted the dark summit of Mount Prieta rising high above the sea of clouds over which the air-ships had been flying at an ever-increasing altitude after leaving Bordeaux in flames behind them.

Speed was immediately slackened, and the fleet swept slowly forward until a single faint ray of light became visible at the bottom of the dark gulf formed by the gorge in the mountain side. Then the propellers stopped, and one by one the ships sank downwards, until they rested side by side on a little plateau at the upper part of the valley. The *Revanche* landed last, and as they disembarked Max said to Hartog:

"Well, aerial navigation is a very fine thing in its way, but it's a relief to get your feet on *terra firma* again and have a good stretch, after all. Isn't the air of this valley splendid? I wonder what the powers that be down yonder would give for a sniff at it."

"I don't tink myself," said Hartog sententiously, "dat dey vould find it very goot for deir healts unless dey came mit an air-fleet dat vould make it very unhealty for us. But goot air it is, and I can tell you I am as hungry as a volf. Ve had better go and get some supper."

"Yes," replied Max, "that's a very sensible and practical remark. I used to think birds of prey voracious to the extent of greediness——"

"But now dat you are a bird of prey yourself you see dat flying gifs a big appetite. Dat's so, eh?" interrupted Hartog, with a guttural chuckle at his own joke.

"If you like to put it so, yes," laughed Renault. "But you might have put it more politely, perhaps. Still I'll return good for evil for once, and ask you to supper. Lea expects me to-night, and I daresay she'll have enough for two or three."

"Eh? Vat is dat? Is Mam'zelle Lea here? I did not know dat de camp of de outlaws vas putified by such a charming presence as hers."

"Look here, Franz," said Renault, with another laugh, "I shall begin to think that the air of the upper regions has made you drunk if you begin to talk like that. That speech was the nearest approach to poetry that you've made by at least a thousand miles. I must try and remember it for Lea's

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benefit. But, by the way, you mustn't call her 'Mam'zelle Lea' now."

"Ah, I see!" said Hartog, nodding and patting him on the shoulder with his little fat and somewhat flabby hand. "I remember vat you said dat night in de club-room. And so de proud demoiselle has surrendered at discretion, has she? Vell, I congratulate you, friendt Max. I don't tink fery much of vomen myself, for deir mental machinery is altogeder too complicated. I likes my own machinery much better. I feel I can depend more upon it. But still Lea is as putiful as she is goot, and in every way a vorty mate for de chief of de Outlaws of de Air. But you haf not told me yet how she came here."

"Franz," said Max, "if you were not literally rolling in your ill-gotten gains, I should think you wanted to borrow something from me, but as that can't be the case I suppose I must put it down to pure good nature. As for the way Lea got here, that's very simple.

"You see the notoriety that Mrs. Cora Dail got through that unfortunate affair at Bow Street and the Old Bailey got rather oppressive, and then some long-nosed mouchard in the service of the French police managed to smell out a distant connection between her and one of the President's servants, who was suspected of putting that bomb in the carriage, and so Madame Dail decided to return to America while the road was yet open to her.

"She sold off her house before any of our stray shells or bombs smashed it up, and sailed from Marseilles to New York in that Messageries steamer, the *Champagne*, which you remember never was heard of again. She had the misfortune to fall in with three of our air-ships, of which the *Revanche* was one, and they stopped her, kidnapped Madame Dail and two or three other lady friends of hers, some of whom you know. Then they cleared everything that was light and handy and valuable out of the ship, and then sent her to the bottom, as it wasn't thought advisable that she should get to New York and tell any tales."

"Ah!" said Hartog, with a chuckle. "So dat is vat became of her, is it? I tought some accident of dat kind had happened, ven I heard she had not arrifed. Max, I am fery glad to heard dat you haf learnt visdom at last, and seen de folly of being merciful to your enemies. De oder course is just as cheap and piles safer."

"Yes," said Max. "I think you're right. I haven't forgotten what a fool I made of myself when I let those fellows from the *Bremen* go, and I can tell you that the Society that tried to hang me isn't going to get much more mercy at my hands. But here we are at my humble home, for the time being, and there is Lea's own fair self coming to meet us. Now do try and remember that pretty speech for her again."

CHAPTER XLIV.

NEWS AND BAD NEWS.

THE building from which Lea, clothed from head to foot in costly furs, came to meet them was a small wooden house of the bungalow type, which can be purchased in sections and put together with very little trouble. Most of the dwelling houses in the camp were of this kind, and had been taken out to sea in the *Pilgrim*, transferred from her to the *Voyageur*, and then carried through the air to the gorge.

"Welcome, my lord, you come in victory, as usual, I suppose?" said Lea as she came forward to meet Max with her gloved hands outstretched.

"Yes," said Max. "In victory, as usual, if you can call it victory where all the destruction is on one side; but, as far as amusement has gone, we have done very well indeed. We have rescued friend Franz here with his crew from the clutches of British law, set Newcastle on fire, watched the British, Russian, and German fleets do each other mortal damage in the Baltic, and then finished the work for them, and after that, as we came home, we left our cards on the good bourgeois of Hamburg, Bremen, Antwerp, Paris, and Bordeaux, and gave them the wherewithal to illuminate their cities in honour of our visit. Altogether, we have had a fairly busy and most enjoyable four days of it."

"Bravo!" said Lea, slipping her hand through his arm as she turned back towards the house. "What a pleasant state of excitement Europe must be in now. But I suppose you must be as hungry as the usual hunter, so you won't be sorry to hear that supper is ready."

"Not at all," said Max. "Franz here compares his hunger to that of a wolf, and mine would do credit to an Indian after a four days' fast. I suppose you've got enough for both of us?"

"Oh, yes, plenty, and the *Voyageur* has brought back some very nice champagne you will be glad to hear. I believe it originally came from the Duke of Downshire's yacht, which met with an accident the other day on a cruise to the North Cape."

"Oh! so the *Voyageur's* back, is she?" said Max, as they entered the house. "I am glad of that, because it's quite time that we had some definite information as to the movements of the enemy. We had better ask Maurin to supper, and then he can give us the news."

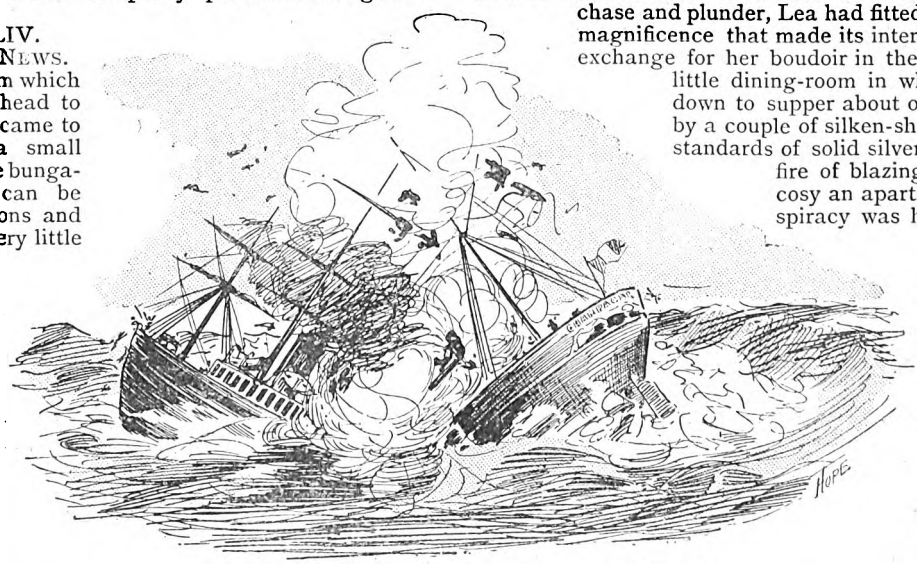
"While we're about it," said Lea, "we may as well have a party, so I'll ask the Rollands and your engineer Raoul to come too, for I know Sophie is dying to see him. Those two will be going into partnership before long, I fancy."

"Dey vouldt make a very goot match if dey did," observed Hartog. "Taxil is a fine young fellow, and a goot Anarchist, and Sophie Vronsky is a goot girl, and fery clever mit her pen, as dose Russian passports she vonce did for me clearly proved. Jah, dey vill do very vell for each oder, I should tink."

"Very well, then," laughed Lea, "we will make a match of it. Now, if you two want a wash, you had better go and get one. I'll have supper ready in half an hour, and then we can make an interesting night of it. Sophie and I had a good nap this afternoon, so we don't care how long we sit up."

Unpretentious as the bungalow looked from outside, its interior was a marvel of warmth and luxury. Between purchase and plunder, Lea had fitted it up with a dainty magnificence that made its interior at least no bad exchange for her boudoir in the Rue Vernet. The little dining-room in which the party sat down to supper about one o'clock, lighted by a couple of silken-shaded lamps on high standards of solid silver, and warmed by a fire of blazing pine logs, was as cosy an apartment as ever a conspiracy was hatched in, and the supper to which these epicurean Anarchists sat down, would not have disgraced the Hotel Bristol or the Café de l'Opera.

Lea and Sophie had cooked it with their own hands, for domestic service was as yet unknown in the Anarchist camp, and the company waited upon them



It wasn't thought advisable that she should get to New York.

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selves and each other with a free-and-easiness which was of the essence of true Bohemianism. In fact, no more well-bred, pleasant-mannered supper party could have been found in Europe than this little company of murderous conspirators, whose names, so far as they were known, were execrated throughout the continent, which was just then shuddering in a frenzy of panic under their last assault.

Until the meal itself was over the conversation was general, but as soon as the two girls had cleared the table of the remains of the eatables, and replaced them with a variety of liquids, cigars and cigarettes were lighted, and Max called upon Maurin, the captain of the *Voyageur*, for such news as he had to tell of the outside world.

"You will be able to get most of it pretty fully from the newspapers I have brought with me," he said in reply. "But I can give you an epitome of it now, and also some particulars which have not found their way into print. In the first place, nothing has been heard of the air-ship *War-Hawk*, commanded by Sir Harry Milton, which captured M. Franz here. After leaving Newcastle, she vanished with the *Vengeur*, and we have not been able to pick up a trace of her since.

"It is rumoured that the Syndicate has another vessel ready to take the air, if not actually afloat, and also that before long a large fleet will be ready for service, but in what part of the world the ships are being built, or when they will actually get afloat, we have not been able to learn."

"That doesn't seem to say much for the intelligence of our agents," said Max with a frown.

Maurin shrugged his shoulders and replied apologetically: "It would seem so, but unhappily the Syndicate appears to have unlimited command of money and so can pay any price for secrecy. Added to that the terrorism which you have inspired both in Europe and America has led to the most extraordinary precautions being taken at all the dockyards and arsenals, ship-building yards, and manufactories, and it is practically impossible to obtain reliable information.

"It is believed that the ships are being built on islands in remote parts of the sea, and that no one is allowed to put foot on these islands who is not personally known to the directors or their friends. We have found that the Syndicate holds no meetings, but Maxim, the chairman, goes to his offices in Victoria Street, Westminster, quite in the ordinary way, and as though nothing had ever happened."

Lea, clothed from head to foot in costly furs, came to meet them.

"Then we must pay him a visit," said Max. "What is the number? Thirty-two, isn't it?"

"Jah, dat's it," chimed in Hartog. "I vent to see him dere vonce about an engine for his aeroplane, and de old fellow insulted me by telling me dat he tought he knew more about engines as I did, so I came avay; but I should like to see him again—at de oder end of von of his own guns."

"All right, we'll go and leave cards on the Maxim-Nordenfelt Company in a day or two, and now, Maurin, can you tell us anything about the *Nautilus*, and that Lieutenant Wyndham, who ought to have been dead long ago?"

"Ah, yes. Lieutenant Wyndham is by this time almost as famous a man as you are yourself, and that *Nautilus* has proved herself to be a really marvellous craft. You know, I suppose, that the French squadron which went to the Baltic to assist the Russians, got through the narrow seas under cover of a general attack on the English Channel Ports and Dover?

"About a week before, the British had been very badly beaten in the Mediterranean. They had neither ships nor men there to give her anything like a chance against the Toulon fleet and the Russian Black Sea fleet, which had forced the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus. What force she had in the Mediterranean was caught between the French and Russians and almost annihilated.

"Then the combined Franco-Russian squadron forced the passage of the Straits of Gibraltar, and made a descent on the south coast of England just when the French squadrons from Brest and Cherbourg were ready to make a dash for the north. The dash, as you know, was quite successful, but the other part of the operations ended in complete disaster, thanks chiefly to Lieutenant Wyndham and the *Nautilus*. She had been fitted with two guns of a new type, only lately invented by Maxim——"

"Always that confounded Maxim!" interrupted Renault, between his clenched teeth. "That man's dangerous, and the sooner we go and pay him a visit the better. Well, go on, Maurin; what about the *Nautilus* and her guns?"

"Well," continued Maurin, "according to the descriptions of them published in the papers, they are pneumatic dynamite guns, which will carry cartridges containing five hundred pounds of dynamite to a distance of four miles, and drop these every time within a space of twenty feet square. The guns can be fired four times a minute, so you will see that means that she can throw two thousand pounds of dynamite a minute on a fleet or a fortress. You can easily imagine what that would mean.

"You know also that this *Nautilus* goes into action with nothing but a little oval platform and a conning-tower showing above the water, and therefore invisible at any range over about two miles.

"The French and Russians began with a torpedo attack on Plymouth. This was beaten off with great loss, and just as the French and Russians were drawing off, the *Nautilus* was sighted coming down from Portsmouth. It was about two hours after daybreak then, and the air was clear enough for very good shooting.

"She was made out first by a French torpedo-catcher, which turned and ran for the fleet to report. She was a thirty-knot boat, but she hadn't run half a mile before the *Nautilus* had her ram into her and ripped her up from end to end. Then she got the outside of the fleet, and went to work with her guns. Every shot that struck either disabled a ship or sent her to the bottom. The British warships kept out of the way, and contented themselves with blocking the western end of the channel, until the *Nautilus*, which simply danced round the fastest vessels in the French and Russian fleets, and pounded them to bits with dynamite without their once getting a shot into her.

"When the biggest ships were crippled, the British battleships and cruisers went in and finished them, and then the *Nautilus* turned her attention to the torpedo flotilla. The papers compare it to what a sword fish might do among a lot porpoises. She rushed at them at a speed that made them look as if they were standing still, and smashed them up one

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after another like so many eggs, and by mid-day there wasn't a single battle-ship or cruiser or torpedo-boat left of the division that had attacked Plymouth.

"Then the *Nautilus* and a lot of the British ships came up the Channel, and found two divisions attacking Portsmouth, while a fourth had gone on to Dover. By nightfall a few shattered French and Russian vessels got away to Cherbourg, where they were blockaded by a detachment of the British Channel squadron, and that was the end of the fight.

"Later on that night the *Nautilus* joined them, and by morning her dynamite guns, assisted by the bombardment from the fleet, had laid the fortifications of Cherbourg and half the town in ruins.

"Meanwhile the other French squadron had got away to the north through the Straits of Dover. It was reported that Wyndham wanted very much to pursue it in the *Nautilus*, as he declared he could have destroyed it ship by ship before it reached the Sound, but he was under the orders of the Admiral commanding the Channel squadron, and he sent him to Cherbourg instead."

"Then," said Renault, "between what they've done and we've done, the French and Russian fleets are about destroyed, and the British have lost their Mediterranean Squadron and the one that was blockading the Sound. That, with the two German squadrons that we destroyed, makes a total of, say, six fleets smashed up within as many days. That's pretty good work, even for modern warfare."

"Even mit der valuable assistance of an Anarchist air-fleet," chimed in Hartog, with a chuckle, rubbing his hands with pleasure at the idea of such fearful slaughter and destruction as this meant.

"Yes," said Lea, sending a little cloud of scented smoke from her pretty lips. "I should think a few more experiences like that ought to give even the most civilised nations of Europe enough of fighting for some time to come. What a pity you couldn't get hold of the *Nautilus*, Max. She'd have been very useful as a toll-collector along the steam-ship routes. Wouldn't it be possible to capture her in some way?"

"Max, I've got bad news for you."

"I'm afraid not," said Max, shaking his head. "Of course, I've no doubt we could destroy her, but I don't see much good even in doing that yet, for all the damage she does helps on the cause of Anarchy in general. By the way, Maurin, is there any fresh news about the fighting on land?"

"Not much," replied Maurin. "You remember, of course, that the ten thousand men which the British were able to throw into Antwerp, thanks also to the assistance of the *Nautilus*, frustrated the designs on Belgium, and enabled England to form a junction with Germany in the Low Countries and to make the Quadrilateral practically impregnable.

"That was checkmate to France on the north. The Germans are massing on their eastern frontier, and the Russians on their western frontier, so that there will be some pretty heavy fighting in the next few days; that is, if what has happened at sea, and the general terror that we have spread pretty well all over Europe doesn't put a different aspect on the face of affairs. Now I think that's about all I've got to tell. We've brought a lot of English, French, and German papers with us, and you'll be able to read the accounts in full in the morning."

"All right," said Max, with a half-stifled yawn. "And now I think it's about time to get to bed, for a good many of us haven't slept for two nights. We'll have a council of war in the morning, and decide what is to be done next."

The party broke up very soon after this, and as soon as Max and Lea found themselves alone, all the careless gaiety that she had worn while the others were present suddenly vanished from Lea's manner, and going up to Max, who was standing on the hearthrug by the fire, she put her hands on his shoulders and said very seriously:

"Max, I've got bad news for you, and you ought to hear it at once, so that you can decide what to do before the morning."

"You have bad news, Lea!" he said, in a voice whose gentleness would have astonished anyone who had heard him giving an order on board his ship, or laughing at the slaughter of the helpless crowd in London. "You! Well, if I'm to hear bad news, I would rather hear it from those pretty lips of yours than anyone else's. Now, what is it?"

As he spoke he took her face between his hands, and, holding it there, kissed her two or three times upon the lips before he would let her speak, saying when he at last released her:

"There, that will sweeten the bad news, whatever it is. Now, out with it."

"It's this," she said. "At the council of war you are going to hold to-morrow, the captains of the air-ships are going to make a united demand that you shall appoint a committee of five of them, and tell them the secret of the motor fuel. It has been talked about quite openly while you have been away. They say that it is dangerous for it to remain in the keeping of one man, because if you were to be killed or captured, the fleet would soon be useless."

Max's brows had been gradually coming together while she was speaking, until they formed an almost straight back line across his eyes. He was silent for a moment, and then he said slowly:

"Yes, that's bad news indeed; it means conspiracy, and probably treachery. I wonder who's at the bottom of it? However, I'm too sleepy to think very clearly to-night. Let's go to bed now; I daresay I shall either dream or think of a way out of it by the time I meet them in the morning."

(To be continued.)

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THE CARD.

IN the house—a perfect hive of working people, in the Rue Delambre, where Tony Robec had occupied a room for the last two quarters—everybody believed him to be a widower. And not for very long either, for his little boy, with whom he lived all alone, this little boy always so well cared for, as though by a loving mamma, was hardly six years old. And besides, neither the son nor the father had crape on their arms or hats.

Early every morning Tony Robec, who worked as a compositor in a printing house in the Quartier Latin, set out with his little Adrien, the sleep still in his eyes, his head resting on his father's shoulder, and left him at a neighbouring school. After his day's work was done he went to fetch him, and taking his little man by the hand, visiting the butcher's and baker's, carried his purchases home in the child's basket, as any housekeeper would have done, and shut himself up until the next day.

The good-hearted gossips pitied the poor man—he could not be forty years old yet, and his pale face wore so sad a look, his black beard was so profusely streaked with grey, they said to themselves, behind his back:

"That man ought to marry again. He is a good man, never drinks. Surely he could easily find a good young girl who would take care of him and his little son. Have you remarked how well cared for his little one is? Not a tear nor a speck on him. You may be sure he is an orderly man. It seems he earns as high as ten francs a day."

They tried to make his acquaintance. Ordinarily it is not difficult to strike up a friendship in these overcrowded houses, where every one lives with his door open. But Tony had a reserved air about him, a polite way of bowing to persons when he met them on the staircase, which intimidated them.

Every Sunday the father and son, as neat as new pennies, set out for a walk together. They had been seen in the museums, in the Jardin des Plantes. They had also been seen before dinner, in a little café in the Quartier, where Tony indulged in the only dissipation of the week, a glass of absinthe, which he tarried over and sipped slowly, while Adrien, sitting alongside of him, on the leather-covered bench, looked at the illustrated papers.

"No, Mesdames," said the concierge, who was given to sentimentality, to the gossips; "that widower will never marry again. The other Sunday we ran across each other, in the Montparnasse Cemetery. It is there his wife is doubtless buried. It makes one sad to see him with his child. He must have loved the dead wife dearly. It is a rare thing, but there are some like that. He is inconsolable."

Alas, yes; Tony Robec had loved his wife tenderly; and would not soon console himself for her loss. But he was not a widower.

His life had been simple and unhappy.

He was a conscientious workman, but not an expert at his trade; it had taken him a long time before he had been able to "set type" rapidly and make good wages; and for this reason he had not thought of marriage until after he had passed his thirtieth birthday. He should have chosen a sensible girl, having like himself learned the lesson of economy. But love is never conventional.

Tony lost his head to the pretty frivolities of an artificial flower-maker of nineteen years; a good girl, but so frivolous, thinking of nothing but her clothes, and knowing how to dress on a few francs like a little princess.

He had some money saved which he spent in setting up housekeeping; buying a wardrobe with a long mirror front, for which he paid eighty-five francs in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, so that his wife could see her pretty figure from head to foot. He married his Clementine, and the first few months were a foretaste of Heaven. How they loved each other! They had two rooms on the fifth floor in the Boulevard Point-Royal, with a mite of a balcony from which they could obtain a bird's-eye view of Paris.

Every evening as he left the printing house on the left bank, Tony, his overcoat hiding his blouse, and looking almost like a gentleman, waited at the corner of the Pont des Saints-Péres for his little wife, who was on her way home from the Rue Sainte Honore, where she worked.

Arm in arm they hurried gaily along to the far away home and gaily prepared their evening meal. But the Sundays were inexplicably delicious. It was so pleasant a home that they would not go out. Oh, what charming summer breakfasts they partook of by the open window, the panorama of the great city spread out before them and the blue sky above.

While he sipped his coffee and smoked his cigarette, Clementine watered her flowers on the balcony. Overcome by her prettiness, he would rise and kiss her white neck; she would cry out in her soft voice: "Stop now—you naughty fellow!"

Then came a child, their little Felix, and every fortnight they went to visit him at Margency, where he was out at nurse. He died of convulsions at the end of a year. They had soon been consoled by the birth of Adrien, whom the mother desired to nurse herself. She left the shop and took home work, but made only half her usual wages; she dressed tastily and played the lady in the Luxembourg gardens as she pushed her baby in his wicker carriage in front of her.

Tony had to make a greater effort; he took extra work on a daily paper, the housekeeping was straitened, they ran into debt.

Then the child grew and went to the infants' school, and the mother, without occupation, naturally a coquette, fell into the habit of dangerous flirtations.

Imagine this poor man, old before his time, and this foolish young thing of twenty-five as pretty as a Greuze.

One evening, coming home with the boy, whom he had taken from school as he passed by, he had found a letter on the mantelpiece, from which, upon opening it, had fallen Clementine's wedding ring. In this letter the naughty child had said good-bye to him and her child, and had asked him to forgive her.

Tony was more broken-hearted than angry. He mourned deeply, and when Adrien said to him, "Where is mamma? Will she return soon?" he would embrace the little one passionately and reply, "I do not know."

Clementine had gone away in the first part of May. Oh! how perverse the odour of lilacs sometimes is. Tony in the July term had sold nearly all his furniture in order to liquidate his debts, and had gone to live in the Rue Delambre, trying to economise. This was where he was living so quietly, so honestly with his little boy, and where they took him to be a widower.

Towards the end of September the workman had received a letter from his wife, four pages of incoherent, despairing pleadings. She was abandoned and repentant, and she cried out, begging for mercy. But Tony was proud, and made no reply to the guilty woman.

He heard nothing more from Clementine until Christmas Eve.

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On that day for several years he had been in the habit of going with his wife to lay a modest bouquet—a few artificial violets with a rose in the centre—on the grave of their little Felix, their first-born, who had died so young and who was buried at Montparnasse.

For the first time since his marriage Tony Rubec was obliged to perform this pious pilgrimage alone, but for his little Adrien; and, as he passed under the cemetery gateway in the gloomy winter, the image of the absent fugitive came more vividly before his eyes and caused him poignant sorrow.

"Where is she now?" he thought. "What has she become?"

But on reaching Felix's grave, which he only found after a long search, he stopped in surprise.

On the flat stone lay three or four playthings, such as one would give to the poorest children—a trumpet, a punchinello, and a jack-in-the-box. They had just been laid there evidently, for they were brand new having been bought that very day.

"Ah! here are some toys," cried Adrien joyously on his knees before his treasure-trove.

But the father spying a piece of paper tied to the playthings took it up and read these words, the writing of which he recognised: "For Adrien, from his little brother Felix, who is now with the Christ Child."

All at once he felt his son press against him and heard him murmur in a frightened voice: "Mamma!" and some few feet away from him, kneeling among a group of cyprus trees, he saw his wife, clothed in a poverty-stricken robe and shawl. Oh, so pale! her eyes so sunken! her joined hands extended towards him in supplication.

Between ourselves, readers, I am sure that Tony Robec had not until then given one thought to Him who, born on this Christmas Day, taught by word and by example the Divine precept of pardon for injuries done to us. The workman had no religion, but his plebeian heart knew not self-love or rancour. After a shiver, caused more by the anger at the remembrance of the wrong done him than by pity for the condition of his miserable wife, whom he had once so passionately loved, he pushed the little one towards her gently.

"Adrien," he said, "go and kiss your mamma."

She seized the child and strained him to her convulsively, kissing him hungrily on his lips, his eyes, his hair, and, then rising and turning a beseeching look upon her husband, she murmured:

"How good you are."

But he was already standing near her and replied, his dry mouth emitting a harsh sound:

"Do not speak. Give me your arm."

It is not far from the cemetery to the Rue Delambre. They walked the distance quickly. Tony felt Clementine's arm trembling as it rested on his. The child walked beside them, his mind already occupied with his playthings.

The concierge of the house in which Tony lived was standing upon the threshold of her room.

"Madame," he said to her, "here is my wife, who has been in the provinces for the last six months, tending her sick mother, and who has returned now to care for me and the little one."

And as they climbed the staircase he was obliged to partly carry the poor woman, who had burst into sobs and was almost fainting from emotion and joy.

On reaching his room, Tony seated his wife in the only armchair, placed her child in her arms once more; then he opened a drawer, drew forth a common pasteboard box, and took Clementine's wedding ring from it, placed it upon her finger without one reproach or bitter word; without one rebuff for the past; and silently and gravely, with the large generosity of simple hearts, he kissed her on the forehead, to assure her more completely that he pardoned her.

A LADY OF WESTMORELAND

THE days and the nights were very lonely for Mrs. Francis Evelyn. Francis, her husband, was in India somewhere with the army, and she was here in the old house in the north, alone with her servants.

Mrs. Evelyn was very beautiful. So beautiful that she found much diversion in sitting for hours before the mirror contemplating her own loveliness; admiring the brilliancy of her golden hair, the sweet languor of her blue eyes, the graceful contours of her figure, and the peach-like bloom of her skin.

She was very young. So young that she romped with the dogs, teased the parrot, and could not fall asleep at night unless old Mrs. Simkin sat beside her bed and told her stories.

Lord Nolan found her looking very lovely and disconsolate one day when he stopped to talk with her. She was pale, and her blue eyes were dim with unwept tears.

When he left Mrs. Evelyn that day her eyes were no longer dim and a something of the dreariness that weighed upon her had been lifted away. That mysterious, that treacherous bond called sympathy had revealed them to each other.

He came to her very often that summer, clad always in cool white flannels, with a flower in his button-hole. His pleasant brown eyes sought hers with warm, friendly glances that comforted her as a caress might comfort a disconsolate child. She took to watching for his slim figure, a little bent, walking lazily up the avenue between the double line of chestnuts.

They would sit sometimes during whole afternoons in the sheltered corner of the verandah; playing the piano and talking, talking incessantly during the first days when they were unconsciously unfolding themselves to each other. Then a time came—it came very quickly—when they seemed to have nothing more to say to one another.

He brought her news of the war; and they talked about it, listlessly, between long intervals of silence of which neither took account. An occasional letter came by roundabout ways from Francis—guarded and saddening in its tone. They would read and sigh over it together.

Once they stood before his portrait that hung in the drawing-room, and that looked out at them with kind, indulgent eyes. Mrs. Evelyn wiped the picture with her gossamer handkerchief and impulsively pressed a tender kiss upon the painted canvas. For months past the living image of her husband had been receding further and further into a mist which she could penetrate with no faculty or power that she possessed.

One day at sunset, when she and Lord Nolan stood silently side by side, looking across the wild expanse of moor to the mountains, aflame with the western light, he said to her: "Dearest, let us go away from this gloomy country. Let us go to Paris, you and me."

She thought he was jesting and she laughed nervously. "Yes, Paris would surely be gayer than Westmoreland," she

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answered. But he was not jesting. She saw it at once in the glance that penetrated her own; in the quiver of his sensitive lip and the quick beating of a swollen vein in his brown throat.

"Paris—or anywhere—with you—ah, yes!" he whispered, seizing her hands. But she withdrew from him, frightened, and hurried away into the house, leaving him alone.

That night, for the first time, Mrs. Evelyn did not want to hear any stories, and she blew out the wax candle that till now had burned nightly in her sleeping-room under its tall, crystal globe. She had suddenly become a woman capable of love or sacrifice. She would not hear Mrs. Simkin's stories. She wanted to be alone, to tremble and to weep.

In the morning her eyes were dry, but she would not see Lord Nolan when he came. Then he wrote her a letter.

"I have offended you and I would rather die!" it read. "Do not banish me from your presence that is life to me. Let me lie at your feet, if only for a moment in which to hear you say that you forgive me."

Men have written just such letters before, but Mrs. Evelyn did not know it. To her it was a voice from the unknown, like music awaking in her a delicious tumult, that seized and held possession of her whole being.

When they met he had but to look into her face to know that he need not lie at her feet craving forgiveness. She was waiting for him beneath the spreading branches of an oak that guarded the gate of her home like a sentinel.

For one brief moment he held her hands, which trembled. Then he folded her in his arms and kissed her many times. "You will go with me darling? I love you—oh, I love you! Will you not go with me, dearest?"

"Anywhere, anywhere," she told him in a fainting voice that he could scarcely hear.

But she did not go with him. Chance willed it otherwise. That night a telegram brought her a message from the frontier telling her that Francis, her husband, was dead.

When the new year was still young Nolan decided that, all things considered, he might, without any appearance of indecent haste, speak again of his love to the little widow. That love was quite as acute as ever; perhaps a little sharper, from the long period of silence and waiting to which he had subjected it. He found her, as he had expected, clad in deepest mourning. She greeted him precisely as she had welcomed the parson when the kind old priest had brought to her the consolations of religion . . . Clasping his two hands warmly, and calling him "My friend." Her old attitude and bearing brought to Lord Nolan the poignant, the bewildering conviction that he held no place in her thoughts.

They sat in the drawing-room before the portrait of Francis, which was draped with his scarf. Above the picture hung his sword, and beneath it was a huge bunch of flowers. Lord Nolan felt an almost irresistible impulse to bend his knee before the altar upon which he foreshadowed the immolation of his hopes.

There was a soft air blowing gently over the garden. It came to them through the open window, laden with a hundred murmurs and scents of the springtime. It seemed to remind Mrs. Evelyn of something far, far away, for she gazed dreamily out into the blue firmament. It fretted Lord Nolan with impulses to speech and action which he found it impossible to control.

Playing the piano.

"You must know what has brought me," he began impulsively, drawing his chair nearer to hers. "Through all these months I have never ceased to love you and to long for you. Night and day the sound of your dear voice has been with me; your eyes——."

She held out her hand deprecatingly. He took it and held it. She let it lie unresponsive in his.

"You cannot have forgotten that you loved me not long ago," he went on eagerly, "that you were ready to follow me anywhere—anywhere; do you remember? I have come now to ask you to fulfil that promise; to ask you to be my wife, my companion, the dear treasure of my life."

She heard his warm and pleading tones as though listening to a strange language, imperfectly understood.

She withdrew her hand from his and leaned her brow thoughtfully upon it.

"Can you not feel—can you not understand," she said calmly, "that now, such a thing—such a thought, is impossible to me?"

"Impossible?"

"Yes, impossible. Can you not see that now my heart, my soul, my thought—my very life must belong to another? It could not be different."

"Would you have me believe that you can wed your young existence to the dead?" he exclaimed with something like horror. Her glance was sunk deep in the pile of flowers before her.

"My husband has never been so living to me as he is now," she replied, with a faint smile of commiseration for Lord Nolan's fatuity. "Every object that surrounds me speaks to me of him. I look yonder across the moors and I see him coming towards me, tired and toil-stained from the hunt. I see him again sitting in this chair or in that one. I hear his familiar voice—his footsteps upon the galleries. We walk once more together beneath the stars; and at night in dreams I feel that he is there, there, near me. How could it be different? Ah! I have memories, memories to crowd and fill my life, if I live a hundred years!"

Lord Nolan was wondering why she did not take the sword down from her altar and thrust it through his body then and there. The effect would have been infinitely more agreeable than her words, penetrating his soul like fire. He arose confused, enraged with pain.

"Do not be offended," she said kindly, holding out her hand. "You are going to Paris I suppose?"

"What does it matter," he exclaimed desperately, "where I go?"

"Oh, I only wanted to wish you *bon voyage*," she assured him amiably.

Many days after that Lord Nolan spent in the fruitless mental effort of trying to comprehend that psychological enigma—a woman's heart.

Mrs. Evelyn still lives in Westmoreland. She is rather an old lady now—a very pretty old lady, against whose long years of widowhood there has never been a breath of reproach. The memory of Francis still fills and satisfies her days.

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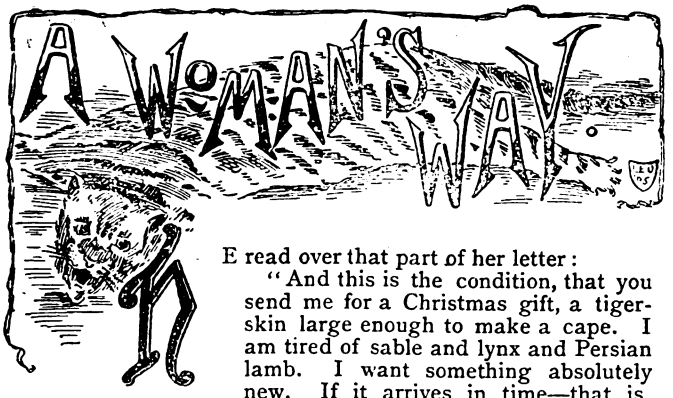

E read over that part of her letter:

"And this is the condition, that you send me for a Christmas gift, a tiger-skin large enough to make a cape. I am tired of sable and lynx and Persian lamb. I want something absolutely new. If it arrives in time—that is, before the 25th—you may consider that I am engaged to you. A caprice? Well, perhaps I am a creature of caprice!"

In the shadow of the splendid mountain he lay at ease that balmy November afternoon. He had yet some six or seven leagues to ride to the capital; but his horse was a good one and he could ride by moonlight. He was returning from the port. The tiger-skin was already on its way to London, it would be in her hands within two weeks. He had gone far out into the wilderness to the south and he had shot and skinned his tiger, and the skin was a glorious one, more beautiful than he had hoped to find. Dorothy would be delighted. All was well. He would go back in April and press an immediate marriage.

In the distance, winding up the mountain in the path that Jerome had come, another traveller toiled along slowly and ill at ease. He had misjudged his horse, and had ridden too furiously for the first ten miles. The beast had suddenly gone lame. The traveller knew no Spanish, and could gain little assistance from houses by the roadside. Jerome watched him lazily from his resting place, until the new-comer was close at hand, then suddenly sprang up.

"Norton!" he shouted. "Melville Norton! In the name of all that is good! Is that you?"

The lame horse stopped. The traveller gazed intently for a minute.

"Ah! There you are, Phil! Rather surprised to see me? Well, I just thought I'd come down here. Got a confoundedly bad bargain in horseflesh here. Made good time for awhile, but the brute's gone to pieces. I'll be a couple of days in this old Mexican saddle, I suppose."

"We'll ride along together," said Jerome. "But this is a surprise. You told me nothing on earth would induce you to come to such a country, you know."

"Yes, I know; but I changed my mind. The truth is, I got into a beastly scrape. Thought best to get out of the way."

"Was it—a woman?" Jerome smiled faintly.

"You guess easily."

"Well, what then?"

"Why, another man was going to shoot me. And as the pretty creature happened to be the one she wanted, I didn't think it worth while."

"You didn't love her?"

"No."

"She loved you?"

"Never cared a straw for me. Used me as a convenience. Other fellow is very rich and very devoted. She keeps him at a high pitch—stirs it up to the boiling point of jealousy. We were engaged in a flirtation when he came in on us. Old Steele—you know Steele? She'll manage him as she does her father. A knowing girl is Dorothy."

"Who did you say?" asked Jerome, very quietly.

"Dorothy Holman. Why, you know her well enough. Flirted with her yourself, I should say."

Jerome had untied his horse that was grazing close by. He bent over and let down the stirrup on the near side. After a moment he spoke soberly:

"When did you arrive?"

"This morning, of course."

"I didn't know any steamer had come in. It will be going out again to-night or to-morrow, I suppose; I think I will return to the port at once. I must go back to England."

Norton stared. "Go——to——England?"

"Yes, I have just thought of something most important. I——I had meant to go back in a fortnight." He sprang into the saddle. "You can't miss the road to the capital—it's plain enough. Good-bye." He struck his spurs into the horse and was off down the mountain again.

Philip Jerome rode at wild speed for a time. His heart was beating crazily within him. To be tortured thus thousands of miles away! Had Dorothy deceived him?

The next four hours were only a confused horror for him. At midnight the steamer sailed and he was on board.

. . . . . .

It was bitter weather in the metropolis when Jerome arrived in England. A cab took him direct from Waterloo to her father's house. Miss Holman was in her boudoir; the maid hesitated and looked again at him. It was getting late. Miss Holman was having her afternoon tea—he would go straight up. There were no words spoken, yet this was somehow the understanding. Jerome flew up the easy staircase. At the top he paused. It was her voice:

"Yes, it only arrived this morning. Handsome, isn't it? Didn't I tell you I would have a tiger-skin cape? You didn't expect me to take that rug of papa's in the library? Isn't he a darling fellow. Poor Philip! You never would take all that trouble for me, would you, Mr. Steele? Poor Philip! I daresay he has the fever out there, and a lot of devoted Indian maidens to nurse him. It makes me quite blue. If I married him instead of you—oh, don't be silly, George, you know very well it's you I'm engaged to. Nobody else could afford me. I'm an expensive piece—a luxury—eh, George?—There, stop I really don't want my hair disarranged—fancy papa or some one else coming in—No I won't hear any more of your silly jealousy. It was just the same way with Jordan and Charlie Hunt and Mr. Norton. I can't imagine such a stupid—hush! There is——"

Jerome went on and in with white, drawn face. He bowed to Steele and uttered a brief greeting. Dorothy received him with gracious surprise. It was so delightful. But Jerome seemed to have no words. Steele presently rose and withdrew. The two were left alone.

"You look out of temper," she said, with a careless shrug of the shoulders.

"I overheard your conversation," Jerome replied, the words coming with difficulty from his lips.

"Well? And then?"

"You really intended to—to marry Mr. Steele? You—you were not in earnest when you wrote to me about the tiger-skin?"

A sudden passion came over her.

"You've come here to torment me—all about your nasty tiger-skin. Take it away. What do I care for it—or you?"

She stamped. "Go, I say! And never come near me again. I never dreamed of marrying you, you simpleton——"

A flash—a sound that seemed to stun—smoke—and Philip Jerome lay stretched across the tiger-skin.

It was a sudden, desperate impulse; he had not thought of taking his life. He was still breathing when they carried him out.

Two months later Dorothy married Steele. The shooting had been hushed up as "an accident," but Melville Norton read of it in a New York paper weeks after in the far away tropics. With a smile and a sigh he murmured:

"Poor Phil! That was the business that made him leave me there in the road. What a fool she made of him! She'll keep the tiger-skin, no doubt, with blood stains on it.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 320.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 16, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

THE WOMAN IN BLACK

THE men had driven away. Their carts and horses disappeared behind the low hills. They appeared now and then like boats on the crest of a wave, farther each time; and their laughter and singing and shouts grew fainter as the bushes hid them from sight.

The women and children remained, with two old men to protect them. They might have gone, too, the hunters said. "What harm could come in the broad daylight? The bears and panthers were far away. They'd be back by night, with only two carts to fill."

Then Jim, the crack shot of the settlement, said: "We'll drive home the bears in the carts."

The children shouted and danced as they thought of the sport to come, of the hunters' return with their game, of the bonfires they always built.

One pale woman clung to her husband's arm. "But the Indians?" she said.

That made the men all laugh. "Indians," they cried; "why, there've been none here for twenty years. We drove them away down there"—pointing across the plain—"to a hotter place than this, where the sand burns their feet and they ride for days for water."

The pale woman murmured: "Ah, but they returned."

"Yes," cried her big husband, whose brown beard covered his chest, "and burned two cabins. Small harm they did, the curs."

"Hush," said the pale woman, pressing her husband's arm; and the men about were quiet, pretending to fix their saddles as they glanced at another woman, dressed in black, who turned and went into her house.

"I forgot her boy," said the bearded man, as he gravely picked up his gun.

They started off in the morning cool, towards the mountains where the trees grew. And the long shadows lessened as the sun crept up the sky.

The woman in black stood silent by her door. No one bade her good-bye. The other women went back to their houses to work. The children played in the dust; clouds rose as they shouted and ran. A day's freedom lay before them.

But the woman in black still stood by her door, like a spectre in the sunshine, her thin hands clasped together as she gazed away over the plain towards Mexico.

Her face was parched and drawn, as if the sun from the sand had burnt into the bone. Her eyes alone seemed to live; they were hard and bright.

Her house was a little way from the rest, on the crest of a hill facing the desert plain.

She had heard the words of the bearded man—"Small harm the Indians did." Had he forgotten her boy? How could he forget while she was there to remind them of the dead? Near her house was a small rock roughly marked. The rude letters "Will, gone in '69," she had cut on it with her own hands. It marked the last place where her boy had played. She remembered how she went away softly—so he should not cry to follow her—without a word, without a kiss.

Here her hands beat the side of the house.

"Oh, to have that kiss now and die!" But she had gone, unthinking, up the road where the pale woman lived, when a rosy-cheeked bride, not a widow, like herself. They laughed and discussed the newcomers at the settlement. It was a holiday; for the men were away over the hills, cutting down trees to build their houses with.

As they talked there idly, they heard what they thought was the shrill bark of dogs running up the hill. Startled, they went to the window. Round the curve of the road came horses wildly galloping, and upon their backs——Here the pale woman shrieked and fled. They were Indians, beating their

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horses with their bare legs, their black hair streaming in the wind.

Like a flash she had bolted the door and barred the shutters as they galloped up. She turned then. Through the open back she saw the women run screaming up the hill, their children in their arms.

Their children! Where was hers? She stopped as if turned to stone, then undid the door.

They dragged her out by the wrists, by the hair. She fought with them stronger than ten men. But there were twenty; she was alone. The little street was empty. They strangled her, beat down her face, dragged her upon a horse, and, with her crossways on the saddle, galloped up and down, as they fired the cabins and the sheds. Her hands were shackled, and her eyes blind with blood, but she thought only of her child. "Where could he be?"

There were gunshots. Down the hill like mad came the white men for their wives and children.

Then the Indians turned back towards the plain. They rode past her house.

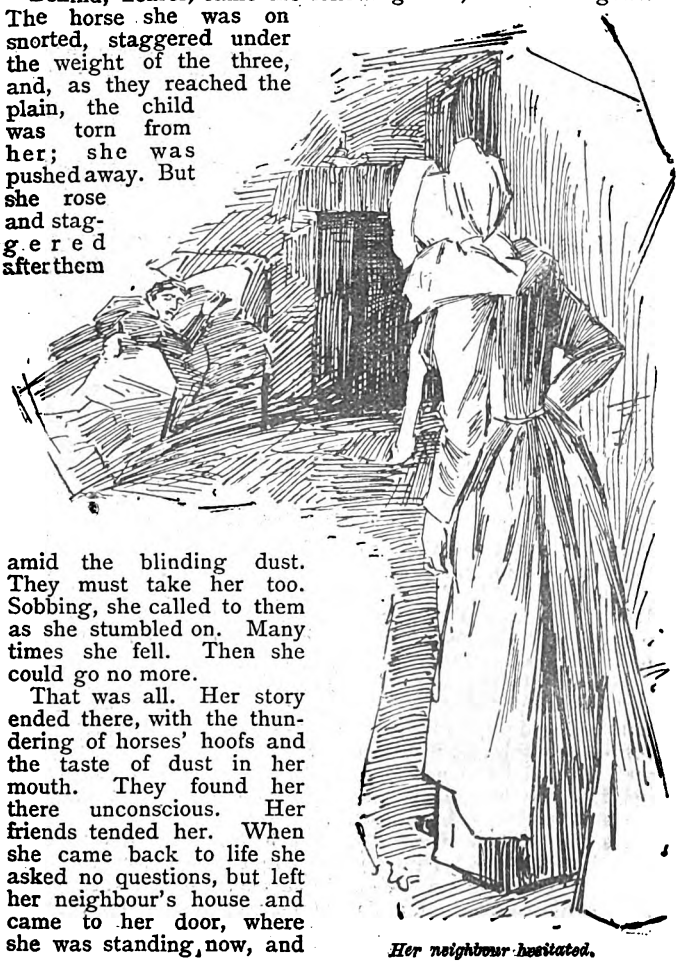
There, where she had left him, stood the child, dazed with surprise. She held out her arms, tied together, and called to him to come.

"Fool! fool!" Here the woman in black struck her temples with her hands. "Fool!" Why had she not galloped by and never noticed him?

But she begged, caught at the horse's head, struggled to get to him, and the Indian stopped for a moment in his flight and caught up the child and went on.

Then the thought came to her of the end of that ride—what was to come—after! And she tried to drop the boy, to let him slide gently to the ground; but the Indian held them fast.

Behind, nearer, came the following men, louder the guns. The horse she was on snorted, staggered under the weight of the three, and, as they reached the plain, the child was torn from her; she was pushed away. But she rose and staggered after them amid the blinding dust. They must take her too. Sobbing, she called to them as she stumbled on. Many times she fell. Then she could go no more.



Her neighbour hesitated.

That was all. Her story ended there, with the thundering of horses' hoofs and the taste of dust in her mouth. They found her there unconscious. Her friends tended her. When she came back to life she asked no questions, but left her neighbour's house and came to her door, where she was standing now, and gazed away over the sand where *he* had gone, down towards Mexico.

The years went by, and she was still alone in the house where *two* should have been. And now, far off, she saw the dust blowing in a long, rolling, pinkish line. But the dust blew so often, and nothing came of it—not even the Indians.

The boy, she knew, was dead, but they—his murderers—remained, somewhere.

If she could have one now in her power!

The woman in black pondered, as she had so many times, how she should torture him. No pain could be too horrible. She looked at the fire in the stove, and piled on the logs—the logs that were brought with so much trouble from the mountains where the trees grew. She could not make it hot enough. She dropped on her knees and watched the iron grow red. And the letters of the maker's name stamped on it grew distinct, and the word "Congress," half defaced, and the figures "64." Ah, those letters! She could have kissed the spot, for her child had touched it. Charmed by the glow when alone, he laid his baby hand flat upon it, and burned deep into the parts were those letters, "ss, 64."

She would know him among a million by that mark.

But he was dead. The Indians remained.

The woman in black stood up. Why should she not go to them? There were pools in the plains where she could drink. That would be enough.

The men were away; the women were at work. Who would stop her?

She put on her bonnet and started off down the hill through the green bushes. The air was still crisp, though the sun was hot.

The desert must have an end. She would keep on to Mexico. She walked quickly, and her dress grew grey with dust, and the air scorching, as she reached the plain. But she kept on, and only looked back once at the house on the hill, and at the window where the pale woman sat.

The dust choked her, and she stumbled, and the sole of one shoe came half off, and slapped, and banged, and delayed her as she walked. She tore it off and went on, but the sand cut and burned her so that she sat down and wept, and wanted to go back for her other pair, the ones she wore on Sundays. The hill, though, looked so distant that she wearily got up and went on, till she could go no more, and crept under the shadow of a rock. There was no water near. Her throat was parched, and her temples beat wildly. She must go back and start again, strengthened, fortified. She would start to-morrow, or at night, when the cool would let her get too far to return.

By slow degrees she dragged herself up the hill. The pale woman came out of her house, and nodded; but the woman in black did not smile in return. She closed the door, and went up to her bed, and fell on it and slept, amid the buzzing of the flies, and the fitful flapping of the window-shade in the breeze.

The pale woman sighed and glanced across the plain. The roll of blowing dust was larger, and more regular, and nearer. The woman shuddered as she watched it creep slowly along behind the sand mounds. "It always blows," she said to herself, "but not like that, so steadily, so even." She strained her eyes, but there was only dust to be seen. Then she thought of a telescope that belonged to the minister's wife, who came from a seaport town, and ran to fetch it. The two women came out with it together, the minister's wife laughing at her friend, she was such a timid thing.

But the pale woman was paler than ever, and trembled so that she could not steady it. The laughing one looked through it, and laughed no more.

"I see a head over the mound there," she said.

The pale woman shrieked.

"They are miles away; we may have time."

"For what?"

"To get away."

"They may be friends——"

"They are Indians! White men would not live through that sand. We must go to the woods. Help me! Warn the women! Gather the children! Come!"

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The axe fell upon the wrist.

She rushed into her house. The other still stood and looked.

The dust-cloud was a little nearer. In a moment all was wild confusion; names were called, but not loudly; girls sobbed; some carried their little treasures; mothers held their children. All gathered together, hidden from the plain by a house.

The pale woman led out her father, then ran to her neighbour's door. She opened it and called clearly, but softly, "Mary! Mary!" There was no answer. The woman in black, on her bed, slept on. Her neighbour hesitated, then hurried after the others, as they ran up the low hills towards the mountains, where their men had gone.

The dust-cloud grew nearer. Now and then a head could be seen. But all was still as the grave. The woman in black slept heavily, and dreamed that revenge had come at last—that in her hand she had an Indian's head.

The window-shade flapped loudly, and she woke with an apprehension crushing her. She went to the window and looked out. There was no blowing dust upon the plains, and the street was empty. The doors of the houses stood open; a shawl lay in the middle of the road. The woman leaned out and looked towards the woods.

She saw on the crest of a hill the white skirts of the flying women, and then below, down the road, her ears sharpened, her heart tightening, she heard the soft, regular thumping of horses' feet.

Then she *knew*.

She sat on the edge of the bed. This was what she had waited for! Was it her turn now!—Or theirs again?

She could kill *one*.

Where was her gun?

She had lent it to the men.

But her axe—that was below.

As she started for it there was a burst of war-cries.

She ran down the narrow stairs and took the axe from its place on the wall.

They were passing her door. The room grew lighter. She turned. One stood in the open doorway, black against the sunshine. She set her teeth hard, hid the axe behind her skirts, and watched him, motionless.

He stretched out his hand, claw-like, and laughed, his eyes gleaming, as, cat-like, he moved nearer. A terror seized her; with a hoarse cry she sprang up the stairs, flinging down a chair as he followed, panting.

Quickly she climbed up the ladder to the loft, threw down the trap-door, fell on it, bolted it, waited. All was still. Outside she heard the distant yells. She stooped noiselessly and put her ear upon the floor. There was soft breathing underneath, and through a crack in the floor she saw an eye peering up at her.

She stood a long time motionless, axe in hand, ready.

Her back was to the bolt, but suddenly she *felt* that there was something there. She turned softly. A slim, brown hand was almost through a crevice in the floor.

She raised her axe. The slender fingers touched the bolt and gently drew it back.

Then, with the force of all her hatred, fell the axe upon the wrist. The hand sprang up at her. With a howl of agony the creature fell bumping beneath.

Then all was again still.

Her face was wet and warm with the spattered blood.

Outside she heard the crackling of a burning house, then gunshots far away, and distant shouts. On tiptoe she went to the garret window, and peeped round its edge. Over the hills, quite near, she saw the men returning. One house was blazing—the minister's. The Indians were retreating. Near her door, grazing, stood a riderless horse. *She* knew its owner. As they rode past they caught at it, but were stopped by a shout from her door. An Indian rushed out, handsome, young, holding aloft a bare right arm without a hand. In his language he shrieked to them for revenge, pointing up with his red wrist to the attic where she stood.

The eyes of the woman shot fire. She leaned far out and shook her fist from the garret window.

"One Indian, at least!"

She hurled the axe at them. It fell far short. They fired as they passed, but none hit her. Nearer came the men.

The wounded man leaped to his horse and rode on. The woman laughed as he passed beneath, then sat down in the dusty loft with a red pool at her feet.

Shortly the men returned. Some went by down the hill

"Have you killed any?"

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after the Indians. Others put out the fire. All was confusion, bustle, shouts.

Then the women and the children came and added to the din, and the men who had followed returned. But the woman in black sat alone in the loft till she heard the crowd at her door below, and the voice of the pale woman say:

"Where is Mary?"

She rose and lifted the trap-door—it was unbolted—and went down.

The pale woman came to her, but she pushed her aside, and wiped her face with her sleeve.

"Are they killed—any of them?" she said. Her friend answered, "No, Mary, not one." "No harm this time," said the bearded man. "Except my house is burned," said the minister's wife. "We'll soon have another."

"I don't mean *you!*" cried the woman in black. "I mean them—the red devils. Have you got any?—killed any? *You*"—this to the bearded man—"Have *you* killed any?"

And the men answered, "No."

And one man said, "Their horses were faster than ours."

"Not one!" The woman in black drew herself up proudly. "Yes, one; better than killed. Wait!" The women shrunk from her as she climbed up the stairs. They looked at each other wonderingly. The woman returned with something in her grasp. She flung it on the table. "It is an Indian's hand. His arm will shrivel to the bone. They will leave him some day to die in the sand." The women shuddered and drew back; the men crowded round, but they did not touch the hand.

"Are you afraid?" said the woman in black; "afraid of that thing?"

She bent back the fingers and looked in it with a smile of contempt. Her face took an ashen hue; the hand struck the table edge and fell on the floor. She seemed to be trying to think for a second, then she gave one awful cry, and leaned her face against the wall, with her hands hanging at her side.

The pale woman tried to go to her, but her husband drew her back, and, with a silent crowd around, slowly picked up the hand.

For a second he hesitated, then did as she had done, but gently. He bent the fingers of the severed hand, and read its history written there, "ss, 64," in white letters on the palm.

He remembered then how, twenty years ago, when she brought the child to him, he had tied its little hand in cooling salve.

It was larger now.

The whisper went round, "It is her boy's hand," and they crept towards the door.

The pale woman took a flower from her dress, one she had put there hours before, and placed it in the brown fingers on the table, and went out.

The woman did not stir from the wall. "Leave the hand," she said.

"It is there," and the bearded man closed the door gently after him.

The woman in black turned. Her hard eyes were dim now. She took the hand from the table and undid her dress and placed it in her breast, and went to the window and watched, far off, a cloud of dust made golden by the sun as it rolled away across the plain, down towards Mexico.

BIBLIOTECA BODLEIANA

His Lordship.

IT was in the deep pine woods of Florida. The wind, dallying through the needles, played soft music above their heads and wafted balsamic scent about them. Sandy, stretched at full length, could only answer her tirade of girlish talk in monosyllables for looking at her. She was surpassingly pretty, with auburn hair which the Southern sun kissed into ropes of gold. Her eyes were brown, with a dangerous tendency to grow soft and deep. Her skin was very fair, with clear pink colouring and some tiny freckles. She sat leaning against a moss-covered tree trunk, her hands toying with a pine cone as she talked.

"I should have been a man," she said. "When I graduated last June I had a very fair prospect in the world. When one is born merely a Society girl one's place is in a city, of course. I had no thought under heaven but that I should stay in London and enjoy living. Then, when papa announced his intentions of going to Florida in the autumn, I looked upon it merely as a lark. Now I know. And we are to live here always. Think of it! In this wilderness, with no advantages, no servants. Some of my girl friends write to me. I do not tell them I wash the dishes and make the fire for my mother to get the meals upon. I am learning to cook."

"What do you tell them?" asked Sandy, to brighten her thoughts.

"I tell each one something different. I tell my art student friend of the beautiful scenery; my literary chum of the queer backwoods people. To another I write merely chatter. I wrote of the dance we went to in Fallonton's barn. I—I described the only man I have met. That is you, sir."

"How did you describe me?" he asked.

"I told her you were as tall as the pine trees, and just as painfully thin. Nay, now, but I did not. I said you were tall and slender, with blue eyes, dark hair, and fine teeth. I said that you did not talk much, but that what you said was good." Her eyes laughed.

"Does she know you well?" he asked.

"Better than anyone."

"Doubtless, then, she will understand that I cannot find opportunities to talk much."

There was a little silence after this, broken by Sandy's peculiar soft laugh.

"My lady," he said gently, "that is but as one of the pine needles. It pricks a bit, but it is easily bent."

"Then I told her," continued Cris, "that you had come from Scotland for your health, and that, like myself, you were poor, and trying to raise a crop of potatoes off a patch of ground no larger than a man's hand."

Sandy blushed faintly, but he did not remove his blue eyes from her sparkling face. Cris, quite unconcerned, finished her story.

"My friend calls you 'his lordship.'"

"She invests prosaic me with a romance, then?"

"Yes. It makes it more interesting, you know." Cris

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rose. "I am going. You need not come. Call for me on Sunday at four o'clock."

"Then you will go rowing after all?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes, of course. I was only tantalising you. Good-bye, your lordship," she laughed.

"Good-bye, your ladyship," he said, lifting his hat.

Cristine Hayden, commonly called Cris, went her way over the fallen pine needles, and he went his. He walked with his head bent, thinking.

"I have known her five months. She is only eighteen; I am twenty-five. She has beauty, health, youth, no regrets. I have but a delicate body and a mind oppressed. Oh! well. It may all come right some day yet!"

Heaving a tremendous sigh he struck into a brisk pace, and soon neared the little piece of land and the cabin he called home, and as he beheld it a light danced into his clear eyes, and he gave a short mirthful laugh.

Cris, meantime, had a longer road to travel. The soft-carpeted woods were with her for the most part; then along the river, and so home.

Then she went indoors to help her mother prepare dinner. At the table Mr. Hayden was quite talkative, and had much to say about the orange plantation where his business interests lay.

"Cris, your friend Mr. Irvin has been promoted. The boss is very well pleased with him. Quiet young man, but good worker. Delicate, isn't he?"

"Yes, but Sandy Irvin has a brave spirit. I think he is an honest young man."

"Precisely. That is why they raised him."

So, he had been promoted and had not told her! What a queer fellow he was. But then, it was her own fault! It was just as he had said. She had not given him an opportunity to talk. She had met him by accident as she walked home through the woods, and she had at once begun to tell him of a report she had heard. The district school was in need of a teacher and she wanted the place in order to make a little money for herself. They had always talked poverty to each other. So he was promoted!

On Sunday afternoon his lordship came strolling in at half-past three. He was always a trifle early, because then he did not have to hurry. They started at four o'clock in the trim little boat which was the apple of Sandy's eye. There was a charm about the river which Cris could never explain. She always connected Sandy with it, for she had never been for a row with anyone else.

"I am going to take you up the river to-day," he said; "I have often promised that I would do so, but by some fate or another we have always gone down."

"We are going up?" asked Cris.

"Yes."

"Towards the plantation?"

"Yes." Sandy looked at her a bit keenly.

"I feel hurt that you did not tell me you were promoted," she pouted; "to have a bit of news in this desolate region, and not to tell me!"

"You were so much more interesting that I forgot it," he said, audaciously. Cris, mollified, congratulated him.

Sandy looked at the shore, at his feet, at his hands on the oars, at Cris.

"I have some news to-day," he said, "that may interest you. I saw Hobber this morning. He says you may perhaps obtain the school, but he wants to question you first."

Cris leaped to her feet in the boat.

"Take care!" warned Sandy.

Cris sat down again, demurely folding her hands together and gazing at his lordship.

"Don't look at me so," he said, in his quiet way, "or I may be tempted to tell you something else."

Cris dropped her eyes, and the most exquisite colour streamed over her face.

"I shall tell you, anyway," he said.

"No—oh, no—don't," cried Cris.

"Oh, I wish to tell you," he said; "I have been having a small house built. It is copied from one in Chicago. It is there behind you."

Cris turned and looked. It was back among trees and shrubs, but she could see that it was a charming cottage—all but completed, clean and new.

"Would you like to look at it?" he asked her.

"Yes," said Cris, quietly.

They landed. The sky looked very blue and clear, and formed a background for the little gabled house which sat amidst the deep green of the pines. Down to the left stretched out the river in a long, broad, shining ribbon. To the right, in the distance, began the orange groves where Sandy was to work in the management. Cris's heart beat excitedly as they went up the lawn to the cottage. His lordship unlocked the portals of his domain, and threw wide the door for Cris to step across the threshold. It was quite an immense house. There were six rooms. What would his lordship do with six rooms?

Cris raved over it. How pretty it would be when it was furnished. He must have such and such a thing here, and she herself would make the curtains for the little windows in the hall, and so on.

"It shall not be completed for a year," he said.

"Why not, your lordship," asked Cris, who was pleased to maintain the little fiction.

"Because I do not wish it," he said, locking the door behind them.

They were out into the sunshine again. From much thinking Cris was quiet. At the brink once more he helped her into the boat, and as they floated down the enchanted river Sandy lifted up his beautiful voice and sang while they glided by the mist-green shores.

Cris obtained the school, thanks to Sandy. The children soon adored her, and she grew quite fond of her life.

One day she was riding through the pine forest, near the place where she and Sandy had talked that day almost eight months ago. She was thinking over what one of her scholars had said—a girl as old as her teacher. This pupil and Cris had become great friends. She told Cris that there had been whispers in the neighbourhood about Sandy Irvin.

They all believed he came from Scotland, but they said he was an outlaw. Rapt in indignation over this, Cris rode almost plump upon him. He sat by the mossy tree reading a letter of many thin pages. When he saw Cris he rose, blushing like a boy. But his eyes burned into hers with a deep intensity.

"I want to ask you something," she said.

And then she told him what she had heard, boldly and fearlessly, with never a wince. She finished, and waited his reply.

"I will go home with you," he said.

"No," said Cris, drawing rein, "tell me here."

He leaned upon the pony's neck, looking at Cris as he spoke.

"I was born in Scotland. My father, Lord Wavertree, was a rich landowner. I had a brother older than myself, with whom I could never agree. When my father died Angus succeeded to the titles and estates. I had just graduated at Edinburgh, and was to have been a lawyer. My health failed me, and I came to this country. Of course, I was poor. I was hopeless—until I met you. Then I went to work. I was ashamed to offer myself until I could give something with it. I built the cottage out of what I had. I said, I will work for a year first, that I may start a small fund I—I find I need not wait to tell you that I love only you in the whole world, and ask you to be my wife. Give me my answer now."

"I do not know," began Cris, slowly. "I—you must have seen that I love you, for I do. But—I have others to think of. If we are poor it is best not to marry."

"You said you loved me," he said, with her hand to his lips, "that is enough. I have received word to-day that—ah! my darling, how can I tell you? It seems so unreal. My brother is dead. He had no children. Therefore, I succeed, and must go back home to Scotland."

"After all, then," said Cris, "Mamie was right. You are your lordship."

"And you?" he said, looking into her eyes.

"I? I—I shall—be—"

"Your ladyship," he answered for her.

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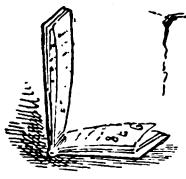
THE STORY OF A STRANGE DEVICE



LIKE all really great men, Mr. Phillipus Snodgrass was modest about his own accomplishments. Few people, not even his own relations and friends, had any idea of the actual position which he occupied in the great world of business. The loose expression that he was "something in the City" by no means gave the impression that the heads of three or four hundred of the largest firms in London were in constant consultation with him over some of their most delicate daily transactions.

That Mr. Snodgrass suffered occasionally from periods of financial depression was not a matter of any great surprise in these times when the millionaire of yesterday is the dustman of to-day, and the mendicant of to-day is the philanthropist of to-morrow.

There were those, however, who noticed that it was during one of the most enduring of these moments of temporary embarrassment that Mr. Snodgrass, at the age of 51, suddenly grew tired of living alone, and startled the whole circle of his friends by the announcement of his marriage with a certain Miss Willoughby, whose father had recently died leaving her £50,000 entirely at her own disposal.

The coincidence, if it was nothing more, was a remarkable one, and all the more so because Miss Willoughby, who might have been pretty fifteen or twenty years ago, was now decidedly passé and faded.

Mr. Snodgrass, however, was entirely indifferent to the covert criticisms of those who, from the blackness of their own hearts, considered that no other motive than the love of money would have led him to take the great irrevocable step of wedlock. At first it was apparent that he even neglected his business to devote himself to his wife, with that absolute desire to make life happy for her, and to insist on her slightest whim becoming law, which has an exactly opposite effect to that intended on silly empty-headed little women like Mrs. Snodgrass, who cry their eyes out until a man grovels at their feet and then kick him to show how they despise his attitude.

Now this policy is all very well in the hands of a lady who is young and pretty, and it was unfortunate for Mrs. Snodgrass she did not realise that the time when she could afford to be charmingly capricious had passed. There is a certain type of womanhood, however, who can never be brought to understand this any more than that the fact that they paint and powder their face, and wear false teeth and camel hair fringes, is no secret between themselves and their maid.

For a time Mr. Snodgrass took his wife's hectoring in excellent part, but as days went by and she grew more exacting and less inclined to fall in with his views, it became very clear to everyone that the relations between husband and wife were strained, to say the least of it.

Finally there was the inevitable scene. Mr. Snodgrass came to the conclusion that he had been wasting his time in adoring a painted idol of wood or stone, and returned to business condoling himself upon his unfortunate selection by the thought that, if his wife had no affection and no womanly feeling, she had a very desirable little fortune of £50,000 in the bank.

Picture, then, his indignation and disgust when Amelia flatly refused to allow him to touch a penny of her money, and still less to invest it in his business, of which she did not even know the nature. In vain Mr. Snodgrass pleaded; in vain he protested that as a partner in his concern her private fortune would increase a hundred per cent. per annum; in vain he went down on his knees; in vain he threatened and used hard words. Mrs. Snodgrass remained obdurate.

"I see it all now," she declared with tears in her eyes, "you married me for my money. That was all you cared for. But you were mistaken if you thought you were going to twist me round your little finger. You are very much mistaken if you think I am going to sacrifice everything to a mean, selfish, unprincipled man like you," and if her feelings had not been restrained by the fear of revealing the rouge on her cheeks by the tear tracks, Mrs. Snodgrass would certainly have burst into a storm of weeping, or, at the least, gone into hysterics.

After this defeat and rebuff Mr. Snodgrass grew more and more cold in his manner. He spent longer hours at his office and three or four nights in the week came home after dining at the club. If relations were strained before, they were on the point of breaking now. His behaviour removed all doubt from Amelia's mind that her husband had married her simply and solely for what he could make out of her purse. This made her desperate.

Those who sided with Mrs. Snodgrass afterwards (when the Snodgrass family matters became the topic of the hour) were disposed to the belief that the course she adopted of flirting desperately with the Hon. Frederick Charles was merely a little ruse to bring her husband to his senses; while those who looked at the matter from a less frivolous point of view said that she deserved all she afterwards got as a senseless and unprincipled woman.

The way of it was this.

One afternoon at the height of the London season, Mrs. Snodgrass had ordered her carriage for her customary afternoon drive in the park, and while listening to the band she suddenly became conscious that an elegantly-dressed young man, lounging against the railings, was staring at her in a very marked manner.

At the moment she was annoyed, and studiously turned her head in an opposite direction. Presently, however, a vague feeling of gratified vanity stole over her, and she shot a little glance in his direction.

The young man immediately dropped his eyes in a well-bred manner with a little start of apology, but the next instant he looked again in Mrs. Snodgrass's direction, and this time their eyes met.

Mrs. Snodgrass felt her pulses quicken at this flattering attention from a young man whose dignified bearing, and many acquaintances among the well-dressed and fashionable crowd passing up and down, marked him out as a man of some standing in society.

No doubt Mr. Snodgrass's recent neglect made this tribute to her attractive appearance all the more acceptable, and when, after their eyes had met several times, the young man suddenly raised his hat and approached her carriage, Mrs. S. flushed with pleasure at the thought of a little romance.

"I believe we have had the pleasure of meeting before, Mrs. Snodgrass," the young gentleman observed, with a slight inclination of his head.

The lady started when he mentioned her name, for she was quite convinced that they had never set eyes on one another previously. Evidently he had been attracted by her appearance, and had taken the trouble to ascertain her name for the sake of an informal introduction.

"What a long time it is since I have seen you," she cried, gaily, stretching out her hand, and holding the young man's, perhaps a little longer than was necessary.

The Hon. Charles took the cue at once, and the most careful

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listener could not have detected a single syllable to raise the suspicion that they were absolute strangers to one another.

At last there was a general movement among the carriages, and Mrs. Snodgrass felt that it was a moment which would require considerable tact.

"Perhaps I may call to-morrow afternoon in the hope of meeting your husband," observed the Hon. Charles, as their hands clasped for an instant.

"Tea at any time between three and five," answered Mrs. Snodgrass, with a fascinating smile. "Delighted if you care to come."

"Let me see—13, Eaton Square is your new address, is it not?"

"17, Grosvenor Place—yes. Don't forget. Good-bye," and the next moment she was leaning back in her carriage with flushed cheeks, and feeling deliciously naughty and happy.

It was not until the next day, when, needless to say, Mr. Snodgrass was not at home, that his wife learned the name of her new acquaintance. From that moment she was doubly charmed, and began to fall in love with the handsome young Guardsman in earnest.

Although his visits were soon of almost daily occurrence, Mr. Snodgrass, owing to the late hours he kept at his office, was not allowed to hear anything of them. In this way things went on for a time, until what had begun as a more or less harmless flirtation became a very serious matter with at least one of the parties concerned.

"By the way, Amelia," exclaimed the Hon. Charles, as he rose to go one afternoon after an unusually prolonged visit, "I am going round to Martin's place for my sister to put five pounds on 'Thistle' for the Drapers' Cup. I suppose you don't care to have a little flutter?"

Mrs. Snodgrass hesitated.

Gambling she held in abhorrence—horse-racing was a crime.

Once or twice when her husband had suggested "placing" a little money for her she had drawn herself up and dismissed the matter with scathing ridicule. She hesitated, wavered, and gave way. How could she refuse on principle to amuse herself in the same way as her admirer's sister, the Hon. Violet Charles.

The £5 which she intrusted to her dear boy "Freddie" brought back, to her astonishment, not unmingled with gratitude, a cheque for £100, signed by the famous bookmaker, Martin.

At first Mrs. S. could hardly believe her eyes. Then she grew excited. What an easy way of making money! This was certainly better than investing it in her husband's business. The horrid man! He should never touch a penny of her fortune.

The next day she increased her stakes; and won again. The gambling fever took possession of her. Her winnings mounted up. She had never known what it was to live before. How exhilarating! How exciting!

The Hon. Charles was in his element. His knowledge of racing matters was inexhaustible. He could not afford to invest much himself, but all his knowledge was at my lady's disposal. There were losses, of course, sometimes. The gambling fever coursed through her veins. She must win back every penny that has gone.

A month passed. The losses out-balanced the gains!

Mrs. S. dipped deeply into her banking account.

And lost.

She doubled her stakes.

And lost.

The Hon. Charles advised her earnestly to stop.

She would not listen to him. Her luck must change.

Two months passed.

Only a few hundreds of her fortune remained.

Mrs. S. grew desperate. She could not depend on the newspapers. The reporters knew nothing about the matter. With the Hon. Charles in attendance she went from race meeting to race meeting, and sometimes only reached home a moment before her husband returned from business.

It was on the occasion of one of these expeditions that the Hon. Charles and Mrs. S. sat side by side in a first-class carriage of a racing special, with their heads very close together, comparing the entries in their betting-books.

As usual, luck had been against them. Neither of them, however, had lost much. In fact, the Hon. Charles always insisted on doing the greater part of Mrs. Snodgrass's transactions through the celebrated firm of Martin.

Just as the train was leaving the station the door was thrown open, and Mr. Snodgrass in a white top hat, grey frock coat, and field-glasses under his arm jumped in, and threw himself down on the opposite seat of the carriage.

The guilty couple sprang apart.

The Hon. Charles turned white to the lips. His jaw fell. His knees knocked together. As for Mrs. Snodgrass, she shrank back on the cushions, staring at the new-comer with terrified eyes.

"Amelia!"

"Phillipus!"

"What are you doing here. By Heaven——"

Mrs. S. raised her hands with a supplicating gesture, while the Hon. Charles moved a little further towards the other end of the carriage.

"What are you doing here with that scoundrel? Do you know, madam, the character of the man with whom you appear to be on such intimate terms?" A sudden stoppage of the train checked the torrent of his wrath.

The Hon. Charles sprang to his feet and threw open the carriage door. Divining his intention, Mr. Snodgrass made a grab at his coat tails, and missed them, as he jumped out on to the line and disappeared.

"If I ever see your face again, you blackguard," he screamed, "I'll horsewhip you to within an inch of your life."

Then he turned on his wife, who, finding herself deserted, uttered a cry of despair, smiting her hands to her face.

"So, madam," he said, "this is how you have been amusing yourself while I have been at my profession."

"You deserted me," sobbed Mrs. S.

"I did nothing of the sort," retorted Mr. S.

"You did," reiterated Mrs. S. "If you had treated me properly I should never have had to turn to anyone else," and she burst into a flood of tears.

"I admire your choice of a substitute," sneered Mr. S.

"At all events, he loves me, which is more than you do, you heartless wretch," sobbed the wife.

There was a moment's silence.

"You are aware, of course," observed Mr. S., maliciously, "that I shall apply for a divorce?"

For an instant the poor woman seemed stunned by his words. Then she raised her head with some show of spirit.

"Then I shall be at liberty to marry the man I love," she cried, and broke off with another sob.

"Don't flatter yourself. You will never see the Hon. Charles again."

"You don't know what a noble man he is," said Mrs. S., with a defiant glance.

"Don't I!" and Mr. S. laughed cruelly. "Perhaps you don't know that I bribed him to make love to you. Perhaps you don't know that I saved him from ruin to teach you to gamble away your fortune. Perhaps you don't know that *I am Martin, the bookmaker*, and I thank you, madam, for the fortune of which I was never to touch a penny!"

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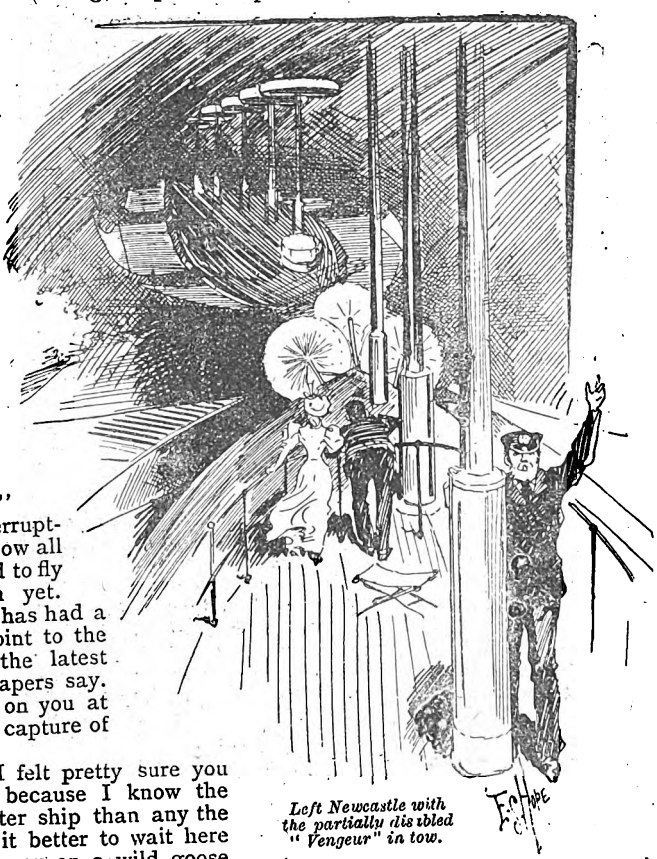
CHAPTER XLV.

VENDETTA.

IT will be necessary now, in order to preserve the continuity of the narrative, to leave Max Renault, and the followers who, in his estimation, were bidding fair to become conspirators, to await the development of events, which might, perhaps, be pregnant with the future fate of civilised society, and rejoin the *War-Hawk* and her crew, as she left Newcastle with the partially disabled *Vengeur* in tow.

Three of her men were sent on board the captured vessel to get the engines into order as far as possible, and to keep up the supply of power to the lifting fans, so that the *War-Hawk* might not have any downward drag upon her, and could so tow her through the air at the highest possible speed. She was able to travel a little over seventy-five miles an hour under these conditions, and an hour or two before dawn on the following morning she and her prize of war dropped through the darkness upon Lundy Island, and found that the *Volante* was still there waiting, although she was quite twelve hours late for the appointed rendezvous.



Left Newcastle with the partially disabled "Vengeur" in tow.

"This is altogether unexpected good luck," said Sir Harry, as he shook hands with Adams. "We were afraid you would have got tired of waiting for us, and thought that something had happened to us, and so have gone off on a relief expedition to find us. In fact, as matters turned out we did almost want a relief, because we'd hardly got into the air——"

"Oh, yes," said Adams, interrupting him with a laugh. "I know all about that. We haven't learned to fly quite as fast as the telegraph yet. You forget that the Syndicate has had a private wire laid from Bull Point to the island, so that we could get the latest intelligence, as the evening papers say. We know all about the attack on you at Farne Island, and your brilliant capture of the *Vengeur* and her crew.

"That's why we waited. I felt pretty sure you could take care of yourselves, because I know the *War-Hawk* is a good deal better ship than any the Anarchists have, so I thought it better to wait here till you came than go off after you on a wild goose chase—I don't mean anything rude, you know—and perhaps miss you after all, and then make you miss us here at the rendezvous."

"Oh, but we've done more than that," said Sir Harry. "We sent one of the Anarchists' ships into perdition with a well-aimed shell, and terrible things those shells are, I can tell you, when they hit squarely. It was like a charge of shot from a choke-bore gun under the wing of a partridge. She stopped dead and went down like a stone, and when she struck the ground she went off like a shell full of dynamite. But I am sorry to say we let the other one go. We had to, and what made it all the more exasperating was the fact that we learnt from the prisoners we took that that blackguard Renault was in command of her."

"Oh, yes, we know all about that too," laughed Adams, again interrupting him. "By to-morrow morning that news will be all over England, and, perhaps, Europe, and if the Anarchists have got anything like a fleet together I'm afraid there'll be something like disaster come of that. However, that's not our business. If the authorities are silly enough to make this sort of thing public property they must, of course, run the risk of telling the Anarchists what has happened. You did all you could without taking the law into your own hands. For my own part I think I should have shot the brutes on sight, but then I haven't got quite orthodox ideas about law and order, and the authority and dignity of the powers that be."

"It's quite possible that that might have been the wisest course," said Mr. Austen, who had joined the pair just at this moment. "But somehow we couldn't bring ourselves to send the wretches into eternity in cold blood, although it might have been wiser from the point of view of public safety."

"Oh, well, that doesn't matter now," said Adams. "If the authorities can't take care of their prisoners when they have them delivered into their hands, that's their business. But there was another reason why I waited for you—something a good deal more important I fancy than even the capture of the *Vengeur* and her crew."

"Oh, indeed," said Sir Harry, lifting his eyebrows. "And what might that be?"

"Well, come into the farmhouse and have a drop of whiskey and a smoke in comfort, and I'll tell you all about it," said Adams, leading the way to the homestead which the Syndicate had purchased with the island.

Sir Harry and Mr. Austen followed him, after sending a messenger back to the *War-Hawk* to tell Violet and Dora not to expect them for the present, and when they had established themselves in the sitting-room of the farmhouse Adams went on with his story.

"About an hour before sunset last night the steam launch came off from Ilfracombe flying our private signal, and landed at the jetty, and Markham, who has been running her since we came down here, brought up a man who had a letter for me from Mr. Maxim. This letter introduced him as a Corsican, named René Berthauld, who had satisfied him that he had important information to give us, and asked me to cross-examine him about it.

"He also told me that the man had been given distinctly to understand that if I was not satisfied with what he had to say he would not be allowed to leave the island alive. So you see the man, as it were, brought his life in his hand—about the best pledge that a man could bring; so I heard his story, and I was satisfied with it. At the same time, guessing that you would be here soon, I didn't care to do anything definite on my own responsibility, so I kept him here, and telegraphed

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back to the office that I would do nothing until you arrived. Now the man's here yet, and if you would like he shall come down and tell his story *in extenso* before us all; perhaps it will sound more interesting from his lips than from mine."

"Oh, by all means!" said Mr. Austen. "You have whetted our curiosity quite far enough to show that there is something interesting behind this."

"Yes, and something *very* interesting I can tell you," said Adams, "not only as regards the actual information, but also as showing how a man, doing what certainly appears to be exactly the right thing to do at a given juncture, makes the one fatal mistake of his life."

"Now you have sent our curiosity up to boiling point," said Sir Harry. "Let us have him in at once, and get our suspense relieved."

"Very well, you shall have him here in a moment," said Adams, getting up and leaving the room as he spoke.

In a couple of minutes he came back accompanied by a man of medium height and middle age, whose dark olive complexion, black hair, and somewhat deep-set black eyes betrayed his southern origin at a glance. His face showed a curious mixture of shrewdness and openness, but there was something about the square brow and the squarer jaw which gave Sir Harry and Mr. Austen the impression that he was the sort of man whom it would be better to have for a friend than an enemy.

"Now, M. Berthauld," said Adams politely, motioning him to a chair, "these are the two gentlemen of whom I spoke to you. Take a cigar and help yourself to whiskey, and then oblige us by telling your story over again in order that they may understand all the particulars better than they might understand them from me. This is Sir Harry Milton, and this is Mr. Frederick Austen."

The stranger bowed to Sir Harry and Mr. Austen in turn with that natural grace which, among the peoples of the south, seems to supply the place of aristocratic breeding, helped himself to a cigar from a box on the table, while Adams mixed him a glass of whiskey and water, and then, with the air of a man who has something important to say and doesn't want to waste any time in saying it, settled himself in the chair and began his story forthwith in French, after being assured that all his hearers would understand him:

"Gentlemen, I am a Corsican. My name, as you already know, is René Berthauld, and I was born thirty-four years ago at Porta Vecchio in Corsica. I had an elder brother named Victor, three years older than I, who, after the death of my father, became head of our family. Six years ago, or thereabouts, my brother, who I may say, without disrespect to his memory, was a man of more imagination than education, and a man, too, whom fate had not treated very kindly, became disgusted with the order of things as they are arranged in Europe, and I may say, too, without offence to you gentlemen, that that order of things presses somewhat hardly upon those who have nothing but a pair of hands at the end of fairly strong arms for their patrimony in life.

"My brother became a Socialist through listening to the lectures of those who find it easier to talk than to work, and from that he became a member of the Mala Vita, which, as you know, is an Italian secret society whose hand is against every man's. But this did not content him for long, and at last he joined the Anarchists. He was suspected of being concerned in the bomb outrage in the Liceo Theatre in Barcelona, which you gentlemen will, no doubt, remember, and from Spain he fled to London—the universal refuge of all Anarchists and criminals who have made their own countries too hot to hold them.

"I corresponded with him from Rome, where I had got employment in the municipal electric lighting works, and in all my letters I exhorted him to cut off his connection with the Anarchists and return to a decent way of life, for I am a practical man myself, and I have no faith in these theories for undoing the work of hundreds of years at a single stroke.

"At last my letters seemed to have some effect upon him. He told me that he had determined to forsake the Anarchists, but he said that he was, by this time, so far implicated in their doings that unless he could win the pardon of the authorities

"Gentlemen, I am a Corsican."

by some great stroke against the Anarchists it would be impossible for him to live except in constant fear for his life or liberty. Then, after that, he hinted at some great blow that was to be delivered by the members of the Group that he belonged to.

"It was Autonomie Group No. 7, which had its headquarters somewhere in London, though, of course, he would never tell me where, and he said that he would foil this great design and save Europe from such a shock as it had never had before. In this letter he mentioned one name as that of the leading spirit of the Group. It was a name that you gentlemen and all the world now know too well—Max Renault."

The Corsican paused for a moment, and Sir Harry and Mr. Austen said in a breath:

"Ah now, that's getting interesting. Go on, please. We are listening with all our ears."

"It is even so," said Berthauld. "But it shall be more interesting before I have done. That was the last letter that I ever had from my brother. I wrote to him at his lodgings, and the letter came back marked 'Gone Away' through the English post office. Victor had never failed to answer a letter of mine before, but before my letter came back to me all Europe was ringing with the assassination of President Carnot by Caserio Santo.

"Now I knew Santo slightly, and he knew that I had a brother who was Anarchist, and it was from him I learnt that, although these people profess to act entirely as their own minds prompt them, they are really under the direction of a governing Group, and that Group is always in London, because that is the only place where they can be safe.

"As soon as I learnt this I put two and two together, as you say. My brother had told me of the great blow that was to fall on Europe, and said that he would prevent it, but the blow had fallen, and my brother had disappeared. From that it did not take much reasoning for me to convince myself that Victor had betrayed himself, or had been betrayed in some way, and that the Anarchists had killed him as a traitor.

"I gave notice at the works and drew what wages were due to me, and with these and my savings I went to London, but not before I had become a member of the Cette Group of Anarchists, to which Santo himself belonged. I gave my name as Gabriel Malato, and under that name I travelled to London with credentials from the Cette Group. I can tell you I was not in London very long before I made the acquaintance of several of the London Anarchists, and not very much longer

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before I met one Rolland, who introduced me to Max Renault himself as a candidate for membership of the Group No. 7.

"You may be sure that I was put through a pretty searching examination, but my brother's letters had told me so much about the Anarchist organisation that what I had learned from them, together with my passports from the Cette Group, satisfied even Renault himself at last, and so I was admitted. On the night of my admission Renault told me that in the very room in which I took the oath he had with his own hand shot a traitor named Victor Berthauld, who had almost betrayed the plans for the assassination of President Carnot.

"Gentlemen, what better proof did I want than that? The Fates had led me to London, and had placed me face to face with my brother's murderer, and, more than that, the murderer had confessed to me with his own lips. But Max Renault, clever as he is, made a mistake when he confessed that to me in his boasting way to warn me of the doom that would be mine if I turned traitor.

"He thought that Victor Berthauld was a Frenchman, and that Gabriel Malato was an Italian. He did not know that Victor Berthauld and Gabriel Malato were brothers and Corsicans. Now, gentlemen, you will understand why I became an Anarchist in profession, and joined the Group No. 7. You have heard of the Vendetta. Look you, look at this!" and as he spoke the Corsican bared his right arm to the elbow and showed on his forearm a livid scar in the form of a cross.

"That is the sign of the Vendetta. You know what it means. Blood for blood. The night that Renault confessed that my brother had died by his hand, I went home and cut that cross with my dagger, and as the blood came out I kissed the sign and swore that his life and those of his companions should pay for Victor's, and so they shall.

"Without betraying my name, I gave information to the police in London which led, as perhaps you know, to the club being raided—the club with which they used to cover their meetings—and four of them were arrested. Max Renault himself and Franz Hartog, the German who commanded the *Destroyer*, and Rolland, and an Italian named Cassano were captured. You know what happened. This stupid English justice let them go again because they had a clever advocate, and because they could not prove for the satisfaction of a stupid jury that they had made bombs or actually stabbed the President, and so for that time my vengeance was defeated.

"That is the sign of the Vendetta."

"But I was not discouraged. The group broke up, and Renault went away to your island of Utopia, where he got the air-ship, and Hartog went to Germany to build the boat which he stole, and Lea Cassilis, Renault's sweetheart, disappeared, and afterwards came out in Paris as Madame Cora Dail——"

"Good heavens! you don't mean to say that that pretty little woman was really his sweetheart?" broke in Sir Harry. "Oh, Lord, what fools she made of us at the theatre that night, and of me in particular! Well, never mind; go on please, it can't be helped now."

"There is not much more to tell," continued the Corsican. "I kept friends with Rolland, and when Renault returned I was able to learn all that was going on. Now I know the agents of these Anarchists and their plans; and more than that, I know where their hiding-place is; and if you will take me on board one of your air-ships I will lead you to it, up near the summit of Mount Pietra in the Cantabrian Mountains, and you shall destroy it.

"Mind, gentlemen, I am not an Anarchist, nor am I a spy or a traitor. I am a Corsican, and Max Renault killed my brother. I will have blood for blood, according to the creed of my race, so help me God, and the Holy Virgin, by this sign!"

And so saying he pressed his lips once more to the sign on his arm, and looked up at them with hungry eyes waiting for them to speak.

CHAPTER XLVI.

TURNING THE TABLES.

THERE was a pause of silence for some moments after the Corsican had done speaking. His three hearers looked at him as they might have looked at some half-wild animal endowed with speech, for it was the first time that any of them had been brought face to face with the personified passion of revenge, which is the concrete form of all that is implied by the terrible word Vendetta.

There was no possibility of mistaking the absolute sincerity of Berthauld for any skilfully simulated pretence for gaining their confidence with a view to betraying their plans to the enemy. The man's whole frame seemed vibrating with the passionate frenzy into which he had worked himself during the telling of his story. Hate and blood-hunger blazed out of his eyes, and his lips were drawn back from his long white teeth like those of an animal ready to spring at the throat of its prey, and then on his arm, which he still kept bared before them, was the livid cross scored in the flesh, the visible sign-manual of his oath and his resolve.

By tacit consent, the other two waited for the oldest man to speak first, and at length Mr. Austen said in a cold, almost judicial tone:

"Mr. Adams has told us that you have already satisfied him of the truth of your story and the sincerity of your intention, and for myself I may also say that I am satisfied. Sir Harry Milton will speak for himself."

Sir Harry nodded, and said briefly:

"You may speak for me too, Mr. Austen. If you are satisfied, I am."

"Very well, then," continued Mr. Austen, turning again to Berthauld. "I may cut matters short by saying that under the extraordinary circumstances of the case we will accept your assistance. You will, of course, understand that we have nothing whatever to do with your private enmity to Renault, or with the motives which lead you to desire revenge upon him, and I must also tell you, in order to avoid any misunderstanding, that if Renault is not killed in battle, and if, as I think very unlikely, we capture him alive, we shall hand him over to the proper authorities for execution, of course taking proper precautions to prevent a second escape."

"I have sworn to kill him with my own hand if I can," said Berthauld, with the hungry gleam still in his eyes, "and if the opportunity offers I shall do so. But if you take him prisoner I will forego that, and only ask that you will make me one of his guards until he is handed over to the hangman, for if you take him he will be yours, not mine, but if I take him I will kill him as I have sworn to do. Does that content you?"

"Yes," replied Mr. Austen. "There can be no fault found with that, though I think the point is hardly worth discussing,

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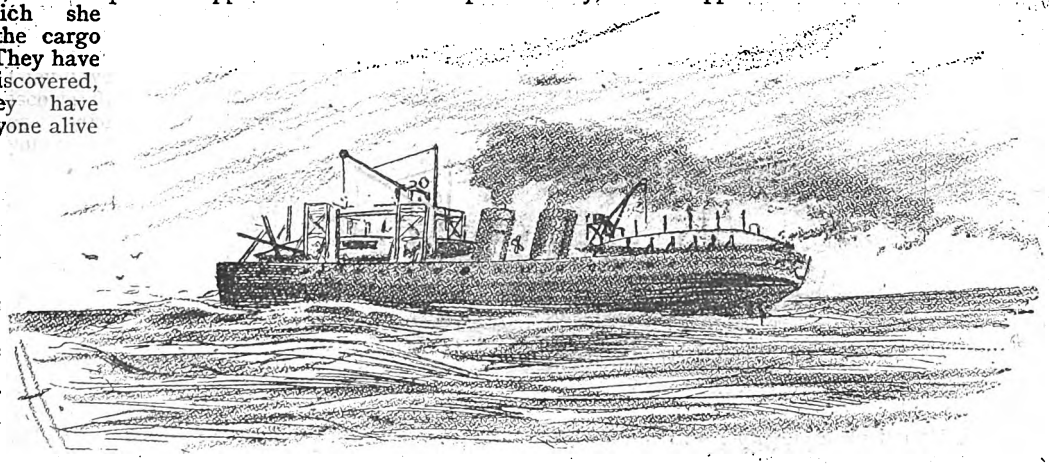
for I cannot believe that he will ever allow himself to be taken alive. He will blow his ship to atoms first with his own hands. But now as regards yourself. You understand, I suppose, that you give yourself as a hostage for your own sincerity."

"Yes," said the Corsican, rising to his feet, and stretching out his arm with the gesture of a man who voluntarily surrenders his liberty. "Until this is accomplished I am yours, body and soul. Do with me as you please. I have no arms, not even a knife, and I want none. You may search me and see. You may guard me night and day on board your air-ship, and shoot me if you even suspect me. I ask nothing but that you will let me help you to hunt this Renault down, and when he is dead, set me free to go about my business."

"That is enough," said Mr. Austen. "You will go on board Mr. Adams' ship as soon as we have decided what is to be done first; and now tell us, if you know, how Renault and his accomplices managed to get their air-ships built."

"Yes, I can do that," said the Corsican. "The North German Lloyd liner, *Bremen*, which they captured, Renault and Hartog transformed into a floating dockyard. They kept her in the South Atlantic, cruising constantly east and west a few degrees south of the Tropic of Capricorn and between the tenth and thirtieth meridians. This, as you no doubt know, is mid-way between the two great steamship tracks to South America on the one side, and the Cape of Good Hope and Australia on the other. The *Destroyer* acts as a sort of tender to her, and keeps her supplied with coals and provisions, which she takes from the cargo steamers. They have never been discovered, because they have never left anyone alive to tell tales. When they have got all they want out of a steamer they send her to the bottom with all hands on board."



Transformed into a floating dockyard.

"The scoundrels!" exclaimed Sir Harry and Mr. Austen in a breath; and Sir Harry, bringing his open hand down with a slap upon his knee, said angrily, "Ordinary justice has no punishment for crimes like that. I begin to see now the reason for the Vendetta."

"It is more just than your justice," said the Corsican quietly. "Think of the friends and kindred, the mothers and the wives and the lovers of those poor fellows whose bones have been picked by the fish in the South Atlantic, and you will see why I want my revenge on Renault.

"But I must go on with my story. The last air-ship that is built on board the *Bremen* always remains by her till the next one is finished, to guard against the accident of being discovered by a war-ship, then the other takes her place, and she goes to the camp at Mount Pietra to join the fleet. More than this, they have establishments for stores and depots for treasure and arms and ammunition at an inlet on the African coast, south of Cape Bojador; another on one of the keys of the Bahamas; another in one of the bayous of Florida; another in the Island of Trinidad, in the Atlantic; and another at your Island of Utopia, which I suppose you know they have taken possession of."

"We didn't know it, but we expected it," said Adams. "But we can very soon turn them out of there. And now, M. Berthauld, we can get to work, I think. I propose that the *War-Hawk* and the *Volante* shall go in company first to Trinidad, destroy the depot there, then you will guide us to the *Bremen* and the *Destroyer*, and we will sink them; and after that——. But stop a minute, there is something else. How do the Anarchists get their materials for building the air-ships, and their ammunition and guns, to the *Bremen*?"

In answer to this question the Corsican described the *Pilgrim* and her work, and added with a laugh: "This gentleman's yacht, as everyone believes her to be, was lying quietly in Plymouth while the attack of the French and Russians was being defeated only a few days ago."

"And where is she now?" asked Sir Harry.

"She had then a full cargo on board, and I believe it was intended for the *Bremen*. If that is so she would sail for the South Atlantic, probably for Trinidad first, as soon as the Channel was clear of French and Russian ships, and so we may overtake her on the way. May I ask, gentlemen, how many ships you will take with you on the expedition?"

"Only the two that are here," replied Adams. "They can fly nearly two hundred miles an hour, and their armaments are much more powerful than anything the Anarchists have, if what we saw in the north last night is any guide."

"Yes, they will be quite enough," said Berthauld. "Renault has about twenty-five ships altogether now, but none of them are as fast as yours. With those two you could fight the whole fleet, and beat it. And now, may I ask when you propose to start, gentlemen?"

"There is nothing to stop us starting at once," said Adams. "And the sooner we are off the better. The *Volante* is quite ready, and I suppose the *War-Hawk* will have filled up her fuel magazines by this time."

"Oh, yes, she'll be quite ready, and we ought to get afloat as soon as possible, so as to be well out of the way before the light gets too strong."

In less than half an hour the two air-ships were afloat again, and flying at sixty miles an hour on a course a little to the west of south. An elevation of four thousand feet was kept, and as the light increased a bright look out was kept for steamers corresponding to the description which Berthauld had given of the *Pilgrim*. As far as they had been able to calculate she ought by this time to be about a thousand miles on her way, supposing she had taken the route to the South Atlantic, and was steering, as in that case she would do, a direct course for the island of Trinidad.

The whole ocean, however, seemed deserted, except far away to the northward, where a few faint smoke hazes betokened the presence of the Atlantic liners and their convoys. The speed was therefore increased, first to a hundred and then to a hundred and fifty miles an hour, and at length, towards four o'clock in the afternoon, Adams, who was scanning the ocean through his glasses from the conning-tower, made out a faint wreath of smoke coming from some solitary steamer far away on the southern horizon.

The two air-ships were flying side by side about a hundred yards apart, and Adams, seeing Mr. Austen in the conning-tower of the *War-Hawk*, attracted his attention by running the *Volante* up closer, and then told him in the deaf and dumb language on his fingers that he had sighted a steamer and wanted to slow down and speak to him. The two air-ships rapidly decreased their speed until they were flying close together at thirty miles an hour, then the slides in the conning-towers were drawn back, and they arranged that if the solitary

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vessel by good fortune proved to be the *Pilgrim* the *Volante* would go down and speak her while the *War-Hawk* remained a thousand feet above her so as to put any idea of resistance out of the question. Then the speed was increased again and twenty minutes later the *Volante* took a downward sweep and stopped a hundred feet from the surface of the water and some half-mile ahead of the steamer.

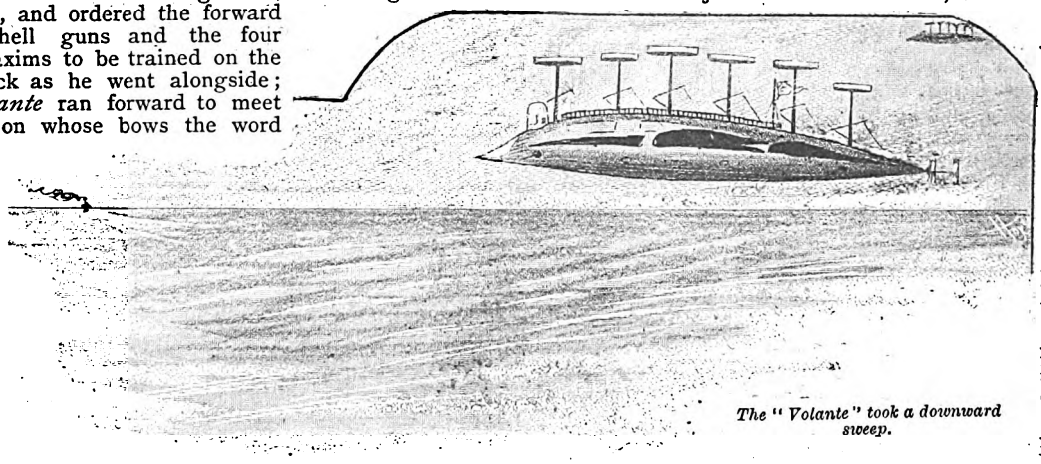
"We are in fortune!" said Berthauld, whom Adams had called into the conning-tower. "That is the *Pilgrim*. I thought it would be, from what they told me about her having to make another voyage soon to the *Bremen*. May I ask what you will do with her now that you have caught her?"

"As soon as I am satisfied that she is the vessel you describe, and is really in the employment of the Anarchists, I shall sink her just as I would sink the *Destroyer* if we were fortunate enough to meet with her," replied Adams. "I will serve her crew as they have served the crews of the steamers they have robbed and sunk. You had better keep out of sight now. I am going to hail her."

"Very good," said Berthauld. "But let me caution you to be careful, for they are just as likely as not to reply to your hail with a volley."

"I will see to that," said Adams shortly. "Now you had better go to the gun-room."

As the Corsican left the conning-tower, Adams signalled to the gun-room, and ordered the forward and after shell guns and the four broadside Maxims to be trained on the steamer's deck as he went alongside; then the *Volante* ran forward to meet the steamer on whose bows the word *Pilgrim* could be distinctly seen. But just as she was slowing down, Adams, who had never taken his eyes off the *Pilgrim's* deck, saw half a dozen men tear the covering off a large boat which she carried on deck amidships, and in this boat he saw a short, mortar-like gun of large calibre mounted on what looked like a swivel-stand.



The "Volante" took a downward sweep.

There could be no mistaking the purpose of this weapon. The *Volante* was well within range, and the obvious object was to send a shell into her as she slowed down. Just as a couple of men jumped into the boat he sent the signal, "Full speed ahead," to the engine room, and the *Volante* sprang forward on an upward leap of a thousand feet as a puff of smoke rose from the boat and a heavy shell went whistling harmlessly away astern of her.

The next instant a couple of shells from the *War-Hawk* struck the water and exploded on either side of the steamer, deluging her decks with water. Then came two from the *Volante*, both of which struck the deck and exploded, tearing two great ragged holes in the planking. Two more from the *War-Hawk* followed in rapid succession. The Anarchists replied as well as they could with their one gun, but the air-ships were far beyond its range, and the fate of Leo Marcel and his crew was soon sealed.

Shell after shell burst on the torn-up deck of the *Pilgrim*, or else in her interior, and before the bombardment had continued a quarter of an hour two of the projectiles exploded together in her stoke-hole, and the next moment, in the midst of a vast cloud of steam and smoke, the *Pilgrim* broke in two and disappeared, taking with her Leo Marcel and sixty Anarchists to the fate to which they had consigned so many of their fellow creatures.

"Like cures like!" laughed Sir Harry grimly to Mr. Austen, who was standing with him in the conning-tower as the *Pilgrim* vanished. "That's the only sort of physic that's any good for the disease of Anarchy."

"Yes," said Mr. Austen, "it's a rather heroic remedy, as Dr. Roberts would say, but I don't think the disease would yield to any other. If she only had the materials for constructing a couple of air-ships on board we haven't done a very bad morning's work. Well, now I suppose it is a case of full speed ahead to the southward."

On the morning of the third day after the sinking of the *Pilgrim* the crews of the two air-ships saw the bare, gaunt rocks of Trinidad rising out of the water. The *War-Hawk* remained aloft as before, and the *Volante* descended to investigate. She found some huts on the desert shores of a bleak hidden bay, but, save for the huge land crabs crawling about them, the whole island appeared to be deserted. A shot was fired to call the attention of any inhabitants that might be there, but there was no response, and Adams decided that it was not worth while wasting time examining the place; so he rose and rejoined the *War-Hawk*, and the two air-ships resumed their journey, flying now in a south-eastward direction, so as to cross the Tropic of Capricorn into the unfrequented regions of the ocean in which they expected to find the *Bremen* and her consort.

When they reached what Berthauld had described as the Anarchists' cruising ground they separated, the *War-Hawk* going to the east and the *Volante* to the west, both flying in a zigzag course at an elevation of five thousand feet, so as to command the largest possible range of vision. It had been settled that whichever of them sighted the *Bremen* first was to return to the spot from which they had started, the latitude and longitude of which had been carefully noted, and then the two were to proceed to the scene of attack together.

It fell to the good fortune of the *War Hawk* to catch the first glimpse of her quarry, and the first eyes which saw her were the pretty brown orbs of Miss Dora. She was standing in the conning-tower—not an infrequent amusement with her now—with Sir Harry, soon after sunrise on the third day of the search, looking down at the water through his glasses, when he saw a quick flush rise to her cheeks, and she leant slightly forward, as though something had caught her attention. Then she took the glasses from her eyes, and handed them to him, saying as she did so:

"Sir Harry! I think I can see something that looks like a little cloud of thin smoke with a dark spot in the middle of it, far away down yonder. Will you have a look, please. Who knows but it might be the *Bremen* or the *Destroyer*."

(To be continued.)

READ MR. GRIFFITH'S NEW SERIAL, just started in PEARSON'S WEEKLY.

ONE PENNY. EVERY SATURDAY.

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"UNCLE CLAUDE, YOU'RE CRYING!"

A WILD and gusty night in March, with the sobbing, moaning wind rushing round corners and darting into dark entries and tearing madly out again, like some remorseful spirit searching blindly and restlessly for something it could not find. Overhead a sullen sky, with driving clouds; under foot the rain-splashed pavement, echoing now and then to a hurrying footfall.

Dr. Barton turned into the long and sombre street in which his house was situated, and bent his tall figure to the wind. The street was deserted, and he paused for a moment and glanced round, with a musing smile upon his lips.

"Just such a night—four years ago—I found the boy under my porch. Let me see, what is the date? The 15th—March 15. The very day! Strange that I should think of it now. I was coming home from old Lady Waller's—dead now, poor soul! Of course I was. Just such a night!"

He passed on, and into his own warmly lit hall.

As he removed his wraps a trim maidservant came into view.

"Has Master Jack—ah—retired yet, Mary?"

"Not yet, sir. He got Miss Ward to hear his lessons all over again to-night, purposely to stop up, sir. Master Jack said as he would stay up to-night, sir, to see you."

The ghost of a smile flitted over the grave face of the doctor, and he turned to the dining-room. The lamps on the table were turned very low, but a cheerful fire burned on the broad hearth, and threw flickering shadows over the old-fashioned furniture and on the long, full-length portraits which hung on the walls.

On the great bearskin before the fire lay a child—a boy of some seven years, with thick, fair hair tossed about his face. He was clad in a loosely fitting sailor suit of brown velvet. His cheek rested on one small hand, and the soft, childish face was turned towards the fire.

The doctor paused for a moment, with his hands clasped behind his back, his head bent, looking down at the child, with a smile on his face.

"Four years ago," he muttered. "If I had turned him into the streets then—had sent him to the workhouse, as my friends charitably suggested—how different it would all have been. He has made this dull old place a home, and life a purpose, not a mere striving, and striving, and ending in nothing, as some one says. And so the little chap has waited up for me—on his birthday night, too. I ought not to have forgotten it. I must get that pony to-morrow. I expect the young rascal will ride as well as he does everything else."

He dropped softly into a chair, still looking at the sleeping child.

The opening of the door and the entrance of a servant to turn up the lights woke the boy. He opened his eyes, and lay for a moment looking solemnly at the blazing fire before him.

The doctor spoke softly, almost caressingly.

"Well, Jack?"

The child started up and sprang towards him. The little firmly-knit figure slipped between the man's knees, and drew one velvet-covered arm round the doctor's black coat collar, turning up his smiling face towards the grave one above him.

"I didn't see you, Uncle Claude. Have you been here long? Miss Ward wanted me to go to bed, but I couldn't, you know, on my birthday without wishing you good-night."

"And so you fell asleep here instead, eh, Jack? Suppose I had gone off again and left you, what then?"

"But you wouldn't, you know," said the child softly, nestling more closely to him.

"Of course not," said the doctor, banteringly, in a tone which would have surprised some of his patients who only heard the professional voice. "And this is your birthday, is it, Jack? Seven years old, eh? Stand up here, sir, and let me look at you. Up straight, sir."

In truth it was a goodly little figure that stood before the doctor and looked laughingly and fearlessly into his face. The small, delicately and yet strongly modelled limbs, the refined face, with its touch of graceful pride, and the poise of the little curly head carried satisfaction to the heart of the man, who, while he passionately loved the child, viewed these things with a certain feeling of anatomical pride.

He sat quietly for a long time with his arm round the little figure, gazing at a portrait that hung over the mantelpiece—the portrait of a young girl. A fair, bright face, with a strange gravity in the dark, great eyes.

He drew the boy more closely to him with a sudden movement of his arm, and bent his head so that it touched the child's curls.

"If she had lived!" he murmured. "If she had lived! Perchance it's better as it is, and the child fills my life."

. . . . . .

"Mr. Kennedy, sir."

Dr. Barton roused himself from a brown study, into which he had fallen before the fire, and rose to greet his friend.

"Very good of you, Kennedy, to come in. You lawyers are not like the kill-or-cure gentry. We must always be at our posts; you can close your office at a certain time, and say 'good-bye' to it all for a few hours."

"And dream of coming litigations and obstinate clients, my friend," said the visitor, stepping forward and shaking the doctor's outstretched hand. "Well, every man to his trade, you know, Barton. I might throw in a little Latin, but I reserve that also for the office. What a night, to be sure! Thought I'd just step round and have a chat. The women folk have a musical evening, I think they call it, and I escaped. Amateur music is like injudicious flattery: it grates upon one's nerves. And we have nerves, even in the law."

Mr. Kennedy laughed cheerfully and passed his hand over his clean-shaven face.

They were seated by this time, with the cigars and a spirit stand between them.

"I've just sent that boy of mine off to bed," said the doctor, yawning; "it's his birthday, and the young rascal must, of course, wait up to see me."

"Ah, I know! They always remember their birthdays. I've five of them, and they never allow me to forget."

"Oh, the little chap didn't wait up for that. He knew I shouldn't forget him."

Mr. Kennedy winked solemnly, puffing at his cigar, and said nothing.

"Yes, time flies," went on the doctor, with a half sigh. "The boy's seven years old to-day."

"Counting from——?" said the lawyer, interrogatively.

"From the time he came—to me. That is, supposing him to have been about three years of age at the time. Speaking professionally, that was his age, as nearly as could be guessed."

"Ah! Well, he's a fine little chap—although you wouldn't take my advice about him, Barton."

"What, to send him to the workhouse?"

"Either that, or to endeavour to find out his people. You did neither."

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"I tell you now, as I told you then, Kennedy, that he is no ordinary child—comes of no common stock. The people who placed him there did it with a purpose. The matter had, I should imagine, been carefully considered, and they knew to whom they were confiding him. I knew at once that he had gentle blood in his veins, and—and I was content to leave the rest. That boy, Kennedy, will turn out well, and I shall be proud of him. As proud of his manhood as I am of his present childhood."

"If he does," said the other, with a short laugh, "he'll have your training to thank for it. Place any child in such surroundings as these—in a refined home, with trained servants to anticipate his wants, and no discordant note to jar on his life—and he must be of very poor stuff indeed if he doesn't shape well. The little beggar couldn't help himself."

"That has little to do with it, Kennedy. My experience has been a large one, and young as he was when he first entered this house I know at once that he had been well and carefully trained, and from the very formation of his childish limbs—the very contour of his skull—that he had good blood in his veins. You know, Kennedy," pursued the doctor, more eagerly, leaning forward in his chair, with his hands on his knees, "I am a believer in these things—in—in fact—in heredity. I have good old blood in my veins, my father was a man whose ancestors had held their place—the place the old fellow was obliged to sell at last—for hundreds of years."

"Well, what of that? Is it any good to you? Has it been of any use to you? Are you in any way a better man for it?"

"Yes, I hope so. There is an indefinable something in—in a man of breeding, which necessarily is of material assistance to him in his intercourse with his fellows—to say nothing of his natural pride in his family name."

"You know that you and I never agree on that, doctor. You have no acres to be proud of, and your birth was a question of fate—the kindly fate which led your father to cast sheep's eyes at his future wife. The blood which tells in this world of ours is the blood which runs in the veins of a genius—that grander species of creature that rises superior to birth and circumstances, and cares nothing for the conventional fluid which flows within him, be it as 'old' as William the Conqueror, or as 'new' as the equally necessary fluid which animates the heavy carcase of a Chicago millionaire. Blood is nothing to him, he knows what he is, and he sings his songs, or otherwise makes his fiery mark on the roll of fame, and goes out again in some erratic fashion not usually approved by the aristocracy. You ought to be prouder of the fact that your ancestors played fast and loose with this country during the Wars of the Roses."

Dr. Barton shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

"It's useless to try and convince you, Kennedy. So far as the boy is concerned, I am well satisfied in regard to my first judgment. As you know, we could make nothing of his name when he first came to us—some pet name apparently—and I gave him my old father's name, John—John Barton. It is an old and honoured name, Kennedy, and my boy will be worthy of it. He has the right stuff in him. Mark you this, Kennedy. So certain am I—and so jealous am I of the name my ancestors bore, that I would cast the child off to-morrow, hard blow though it would be—if I discovered that his parentage had not—not been what I believe it to be. But I have no fear in regard to that."

"That would be a frightful injustice to the child!" exclaimed the lawyer, hotly.

"Well, well," said the doctor, waving his hand and smiling gravely, "it is a matter we need not discuss. The possibility is so very remote."

Both men were silent for a time, and the driving rain sounded distinctly on the windows, and the wind still sobbed round the houses like a lost thing.

"Four years ago, is it?" said the lawyer at last, musingly. "And just such a night. Do you remember? I came in and found you here with the child, and a bonny little chap he certainly looked. Ah! Barton," he added, laughingly, shaking his head at the other, "why the dickens don't you marry, as you ought to have done, and take these sort of responsibilities in a legitimate fashion? You've had enough of them, probably."

"Thanks, this is about as much as I desire in that way," said Barton, quietly, with a glance on the portrait.

"By the way, you found something on the child, didn't you—an amulet, or something of the kind?"

"Yes," said the doctor, slowly: "the half of a ring of peculiar pattern, such as I sometimes remember to have seen in Eastern bazaars during my wanderings in earlier days. They are generally in the form of a rope, of a peculiar dark metal, and of two or three strands, the strands laid side by side. This had evidently been a two-strand ring (they are rarely seen in Europe—considered almost valueless, you know) and the metal between the strands being thin and soft the two halves had evidently been separated, leaving two perfect rings. One was hung, by a ribbon, round the baby's neck."

"Queer!" ejaculated Mr. Kennedy. "However, he's a fine little chap and talks like a young prince. That ought to be enough for any one." He pulled out his watch and glanced at it. "I must be going, Barton. Even musical evenings don't last for ever, and I dare say the worst of the business is over now. Don't you trouble to come out."

"I shall walk with you as far as the end of the street," said the doctor, as they passed into the hall.

"But, my dear fellow, it's raining like———"

"That doesn't matter," interrupted the doctor, "I'm used to it. Besides I feel restless to-night, and a stroll—even in the rain—is the very thing I want."

They put on their overcoats and passed out. The rain had almost ceased, but the wind howled mournfully. At the end of the street the lawyer paused and held out his hand.

"Good-night, Barton. This is my way, you know. I suppose you'll turn back now."

"Y—yes—I think so."

"Good-night!"

"Good-night!"

Dr. Barton stood alone at the corner of the street, watching his friend's retreating figure, but he did not turn back. He paused irresolutely for a moment, and then slowly crossed the road and turned out towards the busier, more fully lighted streets. A little crowd of people brushing hurriedly in front of him caused him to stop for a moment with his hands thrust into his pockets, looking after them. They were following a woman—a jeering, staggering creature, dressed in tawdry finery. Even as he looked there was a warning shout from the crowd, a shriek from the woman, a hansom cabman standing up in his "dickey," with the reins drawn tightly up against his breast and the horse almost on its haunches, and the woman under the horse's feet, silent enough now. They pulled her out, and Dr. Barton pushed his way to the front.

"Stand back, there; I'm a doctor. Stand back, I say."

He looked at her closely. Blood was trickling from an ugly wound in her head. By his directions a dozen willing hands raised her up and lifted her into the cab, and the doctor directed the driver to go to the nearest hospital, getting in himself with her.

"They'll know me there, although I don't think I've brought in a case myself before," he muttered, with a smile.

"Here, get these things off, nurse," said Dr. Barton, as the woman lay, still unconscious, on a table. "You didn't expect to see me here again to-night, eh? Stumbled across a patient for you. Ah, that's better! Now we can see what the damage is. Ah," he said, after a longer pause, "ribs. Thought so, and some concussion. What an awful state the creature's in, to be sure. Been drinking for weeks, I should think. Get these things off and get her to bed, and——"

Dr. Barton had stopped like one shot. In passing his hand over the unconscious form he had touched a frayed and soiled piece of ribbon fastened round the neck and threaded through the half of an Eastern ring of peculiar dark metal.

. . . . . .

The cold dawn was breaking over the still deserted streets when Dr. Barton passed through the hall of his house, and walked slowly, like one in a dream, up the broad staircase. He entered his study and closed and locked the door. He turned up the gas and walked across the room to a little

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cabinet which stood in a corner, unlocked it with a key from the bunch he took from his pocket, and threw open the doors. Within, on two shelves, lay some childish garments, thrown in carelessly, it was easy to see, by a man's hand.

The doctor thrust his hand among the garments and drew out a little wash-leather bag. With this in his hand he turned to his writing-table and seated himself, and laid the little bag before him. For a long time he sat, his hand grasping his chin, lost in a reverie. At last he roused himself with a start, pulled the string that held the bag closed, and shook out its contents on the blotting paper before him. Then he took from his waistcoat a piece of soiled and faded ribbon. with a narrow ring attached.

"I need not have troubled to compare them," he murmured at last, huskily. "Exactly alike. The halves joined after all. Were not her raving, blasphemous words enough, before she died? His mother! My God!"

The doctor's head fell forward on his clasped hands.

He raised his head at last and gazed straight before him, with his hard, set face white and haggard.

"I might have known. I might have known. No high-born child would be left on a doorstep to the mercy of another's varying charity. Kennedy was right. A pretty babe, reared in such refinement, would look well enough and pass muster. But afterwards"—he shuddered—"when he mixes with his fellows—when his evil blood tells—when he bears my father's honoured name and drags it in the dust. What a blind fool I have been! I will end it. The name is not his. He shall not keep it. I will not send him to the workhouse, but he shall be put to some good middle-class school, and later on I—I will apprentice him to some useful trade."

All the weary hours, until the household was astir, Dr. Barton paced the floor of his study. All the weary hours of the next day he carefully avoided the child and came home at night so very late that the little fellow was in bed.

When seated before the fire in the dining-room—perchance with a wistful recollection of the little velvet-clad figure of the evening before—a sudden thought struck him and he rang the bell.

"Send me the nurse."

The nurse entered. She was a kindly-faced substantial-looking woman.

The doctor did not look at her, but kept his eyes fixed upon the fire.

"How—how is—Master Jack, nurse?"

"He seems very well, sir, but I told him as you were busy, sir. To-night he wanted to wait up again, but I said as I was sure you wouldn't like it, sir, and Miss Ward said so, too, sir."

"Quite right, nurse, quite right."

"He's a dear little man, sir, that he is. There ain't a boy like him in the three kingdoms—I'm sure there ain't, sir."

"Yes—yes—nurse, that'll do, thank you."

The woman retired from the room and the doctor resumed his musing attitude before the fire.

"Four years ago. And he is a fine boy, as she says. But that woman! No, no! he can be nothing to me."

. . . . . .

Dr. Barton was seated at breakfast, and was gazing down a long expanse of white tablecloth at Master Jack.

The doctor had not yet summoned up courage to give the order as he had intended, that Master Jack should be separated entirely from him, and should take his meals in the nursery. The little figure had become so much a part of his life—he seemed to watch so eagerly, even now, for its coming. But he had tried to infuse a certain coldness into his tones, and the child had looked at him more than once with a wondering reproach that had gone to the grave man's heart.

In truth, the little figure looked so lonely now and its eyes were so pathetic, that the doctor said quickly:

"Come up here, Jack. I want to talk to you."

The boy slipped from his chair with a flushed face, and climbed into a seat beside the doctor. For all his stern resolutions the man could not help putting his arm round the child.

The little face cleared in an instant and nestled close to the doctor.

"Jack—did—did—" the doctor paused and coughed. "Do you remember anything about anybody—before you remember me and nurse?"

"I remember sometimes at night," began the child, softly, "when I am nearly asleep. It comes back—a little at a time."

"What comes back?" asked the doctor, hoarsely, without looking at him, and speaking almost in a whisper.

"A big figure, in a very bright dress, who used to hold me on his shoulder. I know I used to play with the bright buttons on his coat. And he had a moustache—I know it must have been a moustache—it used to tickle me when he kissed me."

"And your mother? Do you remember her?"

"No, Uncle Claude. I can't remember any one else. Did you know her? But, of course, you must have done. How silly I am. Was she pretty?"

Still with his arm round the little figure the doctor said, quietly:

"Very pretty, when she knew you, my boy. She is dead, you know. I was with her when—when she died."

"How good you are. I had a dream last night, Uncle Claude," went on the child, in his soft, low tones. "I dreamt that I was away, far away somewhere in the cold—and the dark, and—and you were gone. And when I stopped and cried out, I heard some one say, quite a long way off, out of sight, that text of mine the nurse gave me the other morning and I mixed up so. You remember that one about 'visiteth the sins of the fathers on the'—why, Uncle Claude, you're crying——"

But the doctor, with a passionate gesture, had caught the little figure to his breast, and covered the childish mouth with his hand.

. . . . . .

"Barton's not a bad sort of fellow, you know, but he's very illogical at times, and even rude," said Lawyer Kennedy to a mutual friend the other day. "I was talking to him the other night and happened to touch on heredity—always a strong point with him. What do you think he said?"

"Don't know, I'm sure."

"He was awfully abrupt. Snapped me up in a moment. Simply said:

"'Heredity be hanged!'"

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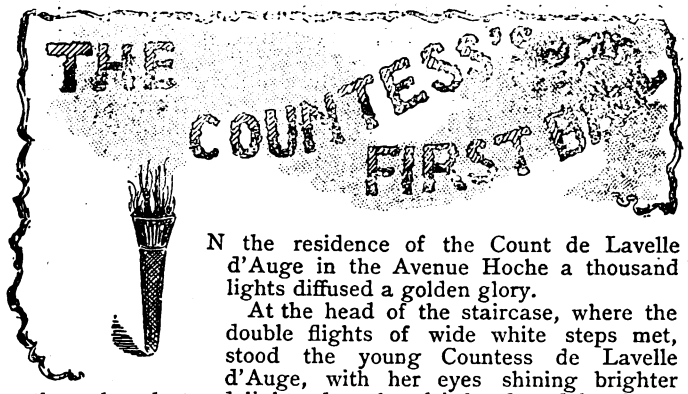

N the residence of the Count de Lavelle d'Auge in the Avenue Hoche a thousand lights diffused a golden glory.

At the head of the staircase, where the double flights of wide white steps met, stood the young Countess de Lavelle d'Auge, with her eyes shining brighter than the clustered lights above her fair head, and her heart beating high with gratified ambition beneath the load of jewels which literally covered her bosom and pale blue bodice.

Her ball, the first she had given since her marriage, was quite a success. No rival hostess would be able to point to such a list of guests as would appear in to-morrow's papers—an English Prince, a score of German barons, a crowned head from Asia, and three Russian grand dukes, the entire Cabinet, and every intellectual celebrity of the day. And, to crown all, her only brother's engagement to Miss Caroline Westchester, the richest and prettiest English girl who ever visited Paris, had been announced that afternoon, so that the little Countess was in the seventh heaven of delight.

"Dear Countess, you look radiant—and no wonder, your party is charming."

It was a new arrival who spoke, as she held out a slim ungloved hand, and smiling down the while from her grand height to her hostess.

The Countess smiled up into the great slumbrous eyes of the Princess Katinka Vladoff.

"How good of you to come, Princess. Are you any better to-night? You look lovely, you know, in those big rubies."

Tall, and pale as a fading lily, Princess Katinka passed among the throng. Her soft white gown was swathed about a form that was too thin for perfect beauty; but the faulty lines of throat and arms were veiled in priceless laces, and made a fitting background to the huge gleaming rubies.

Standing beneath the broad fan-leaves of a palm she listened, with her grave smile, to the gossip, which a few days of illness rendered fresh to her ears.

"Have you seen the Countess's sister-in-law-elect?"

To all the tittle-tattle around her Princess Katinka had replied with her slow smile. Only the last question roused her a little.

"I didn't know the Countess had a brother to be married," she said in her low voice.

"Oh, yes, she has. He's a good-looking fellow, but quite poor. I expect it's only his connection by marriage with the Count de Lavelle d'Auge that has given him a chance with Caroline Westchester, who is quite pretty and nice."

It was the Princess Caquet-Boubec who spoke, while her little grey eyes wandered over the crowd.

"There's Noel Chantry and Miss Westchester. I really must go and congratulate them."

"Noel Chantry!" "Noel Chantry!" The words surged and roared in the Princess's ears like the rolling waters of an everlasting sea.

For a moment—an hour—she did not know which, a mighty blackness blotted out the sparkle of jewels and the flash of light.

Then the veil lifted, and amid the ever-moving faces one fair *insouciant*, with laughing blue eyes and a full red mouth that a golden moustache scarcely hid, stood out. He was standing in a *loggia* of rose-coloured marble which overhung the white staircase and hall. His head was bent down to a girl, pretty and slight, with the fragile clear beauty of English women.

Some force within her took her to the Countess's side and spoke, with her voice:

"Dear Countess, I have just heard that you are owed a double congratulation. Your brother——"

"Ah! Noel, you mean!" cried the Countess in sparkling tones. "We're delighted. She's quite the catch of the season, and such a sweet girl, too. May I introduce them both to you?"

"Noel! I want to present you to Princess Katinka Vladoff. My brother has travelled in Poland, Princess, and may know your part of the world."

"Will you come?" said Noel, offering his arm to the tall, pale woman at his side.

"No, I want to talk to you."

"I have been hoping to see you for years, Monsieur Chantry. Now I've found you I cannot release you so soon."

"Yes, it's quite ages since we met. But I've never forgotten my delightful visit to your most interesting country," he said, airily.

"Neither have I," was her grave reply.

"And I suppose the dear old castle is just the same, and the quaint village——. But won't you really have supper?"

"The old castle is there and the quaint village, Noel Chantry. Why don't you ask about the ruined mill where we first met? Would you like to hear news of the inn parlour where, on the day of the great snowstorm, you took my hand and swore you loved me—and where I gave you my first maiden's kiss?"

"Have you finished?" he muttered.

"Finished! Would that you had finished there! Can you not picture the winding stair on which we kissed 'Good-bye,' or recall that weather-worn mountain at the foot of which you struck my brother down——."

"For mercy's sake, be silent!"

"Surely you remember!" Involuntarily he turned his eyes from the poor thin figure, wasted and ravaged by consumption.

His action infuriated her, and she sprang at him, striking him across the mouth with her heavily-jewelled hands.

"Murderer! You think you are going to rise to honour through your sister—to wealth through your bride; but I am your wife, Noel Chantry. Before God you married me. And I will tell the world what you are."

Suddenly Katinka caught sight of Caroline Westchester. The pretty English girl was smiling and curtseying to some Royalties who were congratulating her upon her engagement.

Above, in the rose marble *loggia*, Katinka rushed forward to the low balustrade, but Noel was at her heels.

Those below and on the staircase saw as in a flash a white-faced woman lean out over the hall. Then the great house of Newlands was rent with an awful cry—the cry of a woman gone untimely to a fearful death.

Quickly they covered it up, as it lay a crushed and shapeless mass upon the snowy marble floor. Men and women fled from the house, and the brilliant lights faded into darkness.

But it was grey dawn when the Countess crept up the wide marble stair, and slipped ghost-like along the gallery till she reached the *loggia* of rose marble.

A dark figure was huddled on the low seat. She could not repress a low cry at the sight of the livid face raised to hers.

"How did you know I was here? Does anyone——" came from the drawn lips.

"Hush! I saw your face for one moment behind her shoulder. Tell me, Noel, was it an accident—or—suicide?"

"It was—suicide," he said, presently, after careful thought.

"I thought so," she said, slowly and incisively. "You tried, did you not, Noel, to prevent the awful deed?"

He bowed in answer.

"I thought so. Now go and get some rest. You must go early in the morning to inquire after Miss Westchester. She was a great deal upset by the occurrence."

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A

POSITIVE REMEDY

FOR

CORPULENCE

Any remedy that can be suggested as a cure or alleviation for stoutness will be heartily welcomed. We have recently received a well-written book, the author of which seems to know what he is talking about. It is entitled "Corpulency and the Cure," 256 pages, and is a cheap issue (only 4d.) published by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. Our space will not do justice to this book; send for it yourself. It appears that Mr. Russell has submitted all kinds of proofs to the English Press. The editor of the *Tablet*, the Catholic organ, writes:—"Mr. Russell does not give us the slightest loophole for a doubt as to the value of his cure, for, in the most straightforward and matter-of-fact manner, he submitted some hundreds of original and unsolicited testimonial letters for our perusal, and offered us plenty more, if required. To assist him to make this remedy known, we think we cannot do better than publish quotations from some of the letters submitted. The first one, a marchioness, writes from Madrid:—'My son, Count ——, has reduced his weight in twenty-two days 16 kilos—*i.e.*, 34 lbs.' Another writes:—'So far (six weeks from commencement of following your system) I have lost fully two stone in weight.' The next (a lady) writes:—'I am just half the size.' A fourth:—'I find it is successful in my case. I have lost 8 lbs. in weight since I commenced (two weeks).' Another writes: 'A reduction of 18 lbs. in a month is a great success.' A lady from Bournemouth writes:—'I feel much better, have less difficulty in breathing, and can walk about.' Again a lady says:—'It reduced me considerably, not only in the body, but all over.' The author is very positive. He says:—'Step on a weighing machine on Monday morning and and again on Tuesday, and I guarantee you have lost 2 lbs. in weight without the slightest harm, and vast improvement in health through ridding the system of unhealthy accumulations.'"—*Cork Herald.*

Should Stout Persons STARVE THEMSELVES?

We are afraid that semi-starvation as a cure for corpulency prevails very much to a dangerous degree. Mr. Archer, the late well-known prominent jockey, was in the habit of going without food for a long stretch in order that he could ride a certain horse at its weight, and there is not much doubt that the debility resulting from this habit of abstemiousness was certainly not conducive to combating the dire attack of fever, which was, perhaps, indirectly responsible for the untimely end, in the zenith of his fame, of this unfortunate but accomplished horseman. Even Mary Jane in the kitchen will eat sparingly of the food allowed her, while she will seek to reduce her fat by copious draughts from the vinegar cruet, and succeed only in injuring the coats of her stomach—the forerunner of dyspeptic troubles which will be difficult to overcome.

The Continental medicos seem to advocate this great reduction of ordinary foods, but one of these savants suggests that the stout person should eat considerably of fatty meats, in order that the appetite is appeased, and consequently less food required, so that practically this is indirectly advocating semi-starvation. On the other hand, Mr. Russell, the British specialist, take a different course. He says, "Eat as much as you like," and as it is an acknowledged fact that under his treatment persons lose from 2 lb. to 12 lb. per week, it beyond doubt stands out pre-eminent against those so-called starvation cures "made in Germany." Some claim that Mr. Russell has to insist upon his patients drinking hot water every morning, but on the contrary he avers that it is dangerous to do so, and has, of course, never advised it. No; the success of Mr. Russell's treatment is incomparably beyond other specialists, for he resorts to no stringent dietary, and simply prescribes a harmless vegetable tonic combination which is the outcome of years of study and botanical research. We advise all those interested in this question to get his book, the price of which is only 4d. It is entitled, "Corpulency and the Cure," 256 pp., and is published by him at Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square London, W.C. It can be had direct, or through any bookseller.—Extract from *The Million.*

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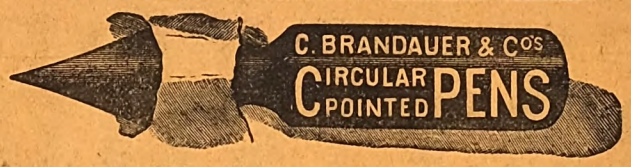

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 321.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING FEBRUARY 23, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

A Beautiful Anarchist

THE damp, mouldy atmosphere of the place was due to its being partly under the river. It was a long, narrow apartment, with a low ceiling, whose rafters were black with age and glistening with moisture. Some half a dozen cheap lamps, set in niches in the wall, shed forth a dim, rather ghastly light, by which the twelve or fourteen men that were seated about a long table of rough pine boards were enabled to gaze into one another's faces as they conducted their deliberations.

The men were of various ages, and their faces depicted different degrees of determination and ferocity. And yet, for men in the habit of meeting here and calmly condemning this or that personage or official to death, none of them looked so very terrible. This was due, possibly, to the one common motive by which all were actuated—that, as one might say, of a patriotism run mad, and in which cruelty had no part. To decide upon the death of a fellow-creature by the knife, the pistol, or the bomb was considered by them a solemn, if disagreeable, duty; and if none flinched in its performance it was because of the fidelity of every member of the group to his conscience and his oath.

A venerable-looking old man, in coarse fustian garments, and with a long white beard flowing over his broad chest, sat at one end of the long table, and appeared to act in the capacity of a sort of chairman or president. "Fédor," he said, slowly, addressing a slender young man with a face of extraordinary, though somewhat effeminate, beauty, "we have not yet had your report upon the movements of the Prince."

"It is brief," said the young man, simply. "Prince Miristoff is totally unaware of the danger that menaces him. I have secured employment in his house as an assistant to his butler, and he makes no movement that escapes me. I have skeleton keys that give me access to all his private papers. I could have struck him down a dozen times within the week, but preferred to await your orders. Next Friday the Prince goes to the ball at the Italian Embassy. It might be arranged that night."

There were murmurs of approval from the others. Presently a man of superb proportions, with jet black hair and eyes, and great eloquence of dress and manner, spoke. "I do not quite like the idea of these sudden removals," he said, simply, "unless there is very *strong* reason for them. Besides, Prince Miristoff happens to be a very warm personal friend of mine. May I ask if there is no hope for him?"

The patriarchal chairman bestowed a cold glance on the speaker. "Prince Escolaivitch," he said, sarcastically, "friendship is hardly a word to use when speaking of a

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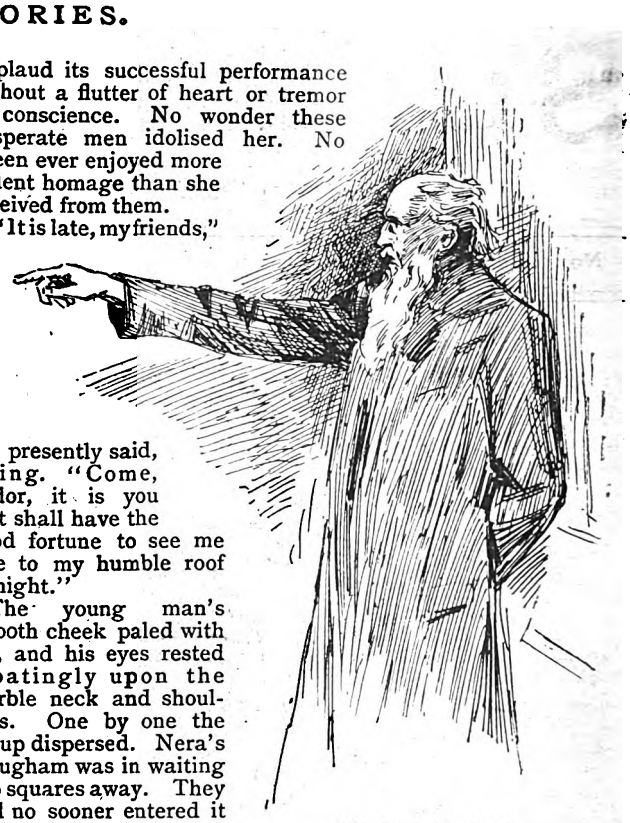
common enemy. Permit me to say that you should learn to disguise your feelings. Prince Miristoff has already been sentenced. The date of his removal has been left over for the present, that is all."

The broad, white brow of Prince Nicolas Escolaivitch, who presented the astonishing example of a nobleman of almost Royal descent figuring as the sworn foe of his own class, clouded for a moment, and then brightened as the sound of a peculiar knock was heard at the door. "It is she—Nera!" he exclaimed, and as he rushed to open it every man present rose to his feet, and stood in an attitude of deferential expectancy as Nera Norisdorff, the most beautiful woman in Russia, walked into the room, and smilingly greeted her fellow-anarchists.

She had come straight from some gorgeous *fête*, and her superb costume of pale blue silk heightened the glories of her magnificent figure. She was very tall, with broad shoulders. Her hair was a bright bronze, that matched the clear topaz of her great, tigress eyes; the mouth was somewhat large, but ripe and dewy as a cleft rose. In every line of the pure white face and of the delicately-veined hands and wrists there was evidence of race. In the firm, open glance of the eyes there was latent passion, but no cruelty, only inflexible resolution and loyalty to the cause to which she was devoting her life.

It was easy to see that these men worshipped her. She was given the seat of honour, and for an hour presided over their deliberations, listening to reports and making new assignments to duty. When she talked, the beautiful but womanish face of the young man that had been addressed as Fédor was a study. He devoured her with his eyes, and the lines about his rather sensual mouth curled themselves into a satisfied and proprietary smile. Prince Nicolas Escolaivitch also gazed at her as though he would have liked to devour her piecemeal. Occasionally, too, he exchanged glances with Fédor, and these glances were not pleasant to see.

This woman, by whom these men swore as by a deity, was one of the strange products of modern civilisation, or of the lack of it. She had no religion save that of the cause to which she was consecrating her fortune and her life. Assassination was to her a just and holy means of working towards a desired political end. She would connive at a murder and applaud its successful performance without a flutter of heart or tremor of conscience. No wonder these desperate men idolised her. No queen ever enjoyed more ardent homage than she received from them.



"*Traitor! Traitor!*"

"It is late, my friends," she presently said, rising. "Come, Fédor, it is you that shall have the good fortune to see me safe to my humble roof to-night."

The young man's smooth cheek paled with joy, and his eyes rested gloatingly upon the marble neck and shoulders. One by one the group dispersed. Nera's brougham was in waiting two squares away. They had no sooner entered it than she gave a sort of queer little bark of delight, and, seizing the young man in an embrace that almost hurt him, so heartily and healthily athletic was it, poured passionate kisses upon his face, murmuring swift, broken expressions of tenderness the while.

"*I adore you! I adore you!*"

"I adore you! I adore you!" she whispered. "Why it is I know not, but I love you better than life or death, Fédor. Dearest, since I gave myself to you life hasn't been the same. Even the grand cause itself seems a little and puny thing beside my love for you. Ah!" and she commenced her kisses afresh, going even so far as to take large, swift bites at the youth's effeminate cheeks and throat.

As for him, he smiled to himself in the darkness, a satisfied smile of one that is quite confident he is beloved, and is rather proud of it.

The ball at the Italian Embassy was no less brilliant than such affairs usually are. Nera Norisdorff was a dream of loveliness that enchanted nobles and commoners alike, irrespective of age, race, or anything else. She was resting in a corner of the conservatory after a dance when Prince Nicolas Escolaivitch, looking superbly handsome in his uniform, approached her. He was very pale. She motioned him to a seat beside her, and murmured, "I am tired; tell me something that is interesting."

"I know nothing," he answered, sullenly, "except that I would die for you."

"So would they all, if one were to believe them," she answered merrily. "Come, be original; say that you do not love me."

"You mock me," he whispered, hoarsely. "Listen, Nera. I love you so that I am sick with the thought of the peril you run. For myself I care nothing; but the thought of your constant danger is madness."

She smiled a little contemptuously, and replied, "Do I seem like a coward?"

"It is not that," he went on; "but I cannot live without you. Come away with me for a while to France—to England. You are pale and ill. It will do you good. Come with me as my sister, if you wish it. Nera, dearest, will you not come?"

His pleadings, and the sight of his dark masculine beauty, touched her, although she had not the faintest idea of listen-

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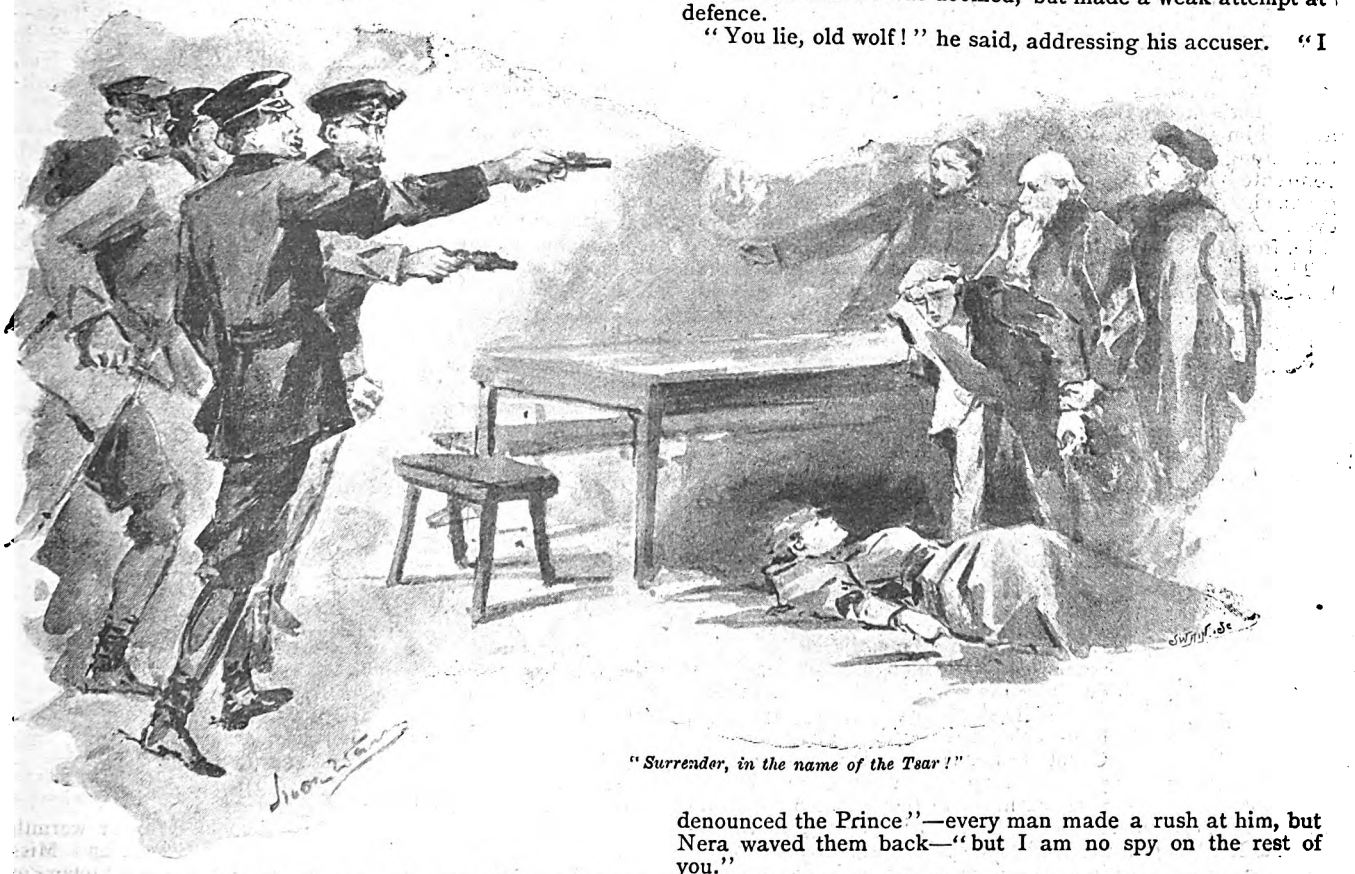
ing to his suggestions seriously. She leaned forward and placed her two hands in his. Intoxicated by his passion, the Prince bent towards her, and, before she could prevent him, had seized her in his arms and kissed her.

Fédor Ispanoff had known that Nera and the Prince were going to the ball. He decided to go himself, and he did so—in the capacity of a waiter. He was passing through the conservatory, bearing a tray of little punch goblets at the moment of the embrace and the kiss. He was not perceived, and he kept his own counsel.

. . . . . .

During the week that followed Nera abandoned herself wholly and utterly to her passion for Fédor Ispanoff. It was a curious attraction that existed between these two—the woman so big and splendid and the man so slender and effeminate. Seeing the two together, one could easily imagine Nera crushing the object of her attachment to powder if she chose. Yet that she loved him a good deal better than her own life was perfectly easy to discover.



"Surrender, in the name of the Tsar!"

So they were together morning, noon, and night, and were presumably very happy until the day upon which it became known that Prince Nicolas Escolaivitch, on the day after the ball at the Italian Embassy, had been arrested, and, on the strength of private papers discovered in his house, sent promptly to Siberia, whither he was even now on his way.

In the usual mysterious manner notices were sent out, and that evening the council met again in the queer little den-like place, where the darkness could be felt, and the moisture trickled from the rafters. There was gloom in that little circle; yes, and mighty wrath, too, for the Prince had been a popular fellow, spending his money like water, and just as earnest and sincere in his devotion to the cause of Nihilism as any penniless moujik. The talk was all of vengeance and reprisal. Even the beautiful Nera frowned and bit her lip as she sat in her place at the head of the table. Soon they fell to discussing the possible means by which the police had been led to suspect the Prince.

There was a sudden tumult at the door, and in rushed the white-haired old man that had presided at the last meeting until Nera came. His face was livid with excitement and rage, and his eyes rolled. As he entered he gave one furious glance at Ispanoff, who half rose to his feet. But the old man had fastened the door like a flash, and stood with his back against it, pointing one bony, trembling finger at him, and shrieking "Traitor! traitor!"

Every man was on his feet in an instant. Nera, ghastly white, demanded of the furious old man an explanation of his charge. Fédor Ispanoff, livid and trembling, essayed to speak. "You lie!" he managed to stammer.

"Lie? I lie, do I, pig and descendant of a thousand generation of pigs? Who sent that notification to the police that resulted in the Prince's capture? Who stands ready at this minute to deliver us all up? I believe that that is all you joined our circle for—a professional spy!"

Hoarse mutterings of direct rage arose. Ispanoff in an instant saw that he was doomed, but made a weak attempt at defence.

"You lie, old wolf!" he said, addressing his accuser. "I denounced the Prince"—every man made a rush at him, but Nera waved them back—"but I am no spy on the rest of you."

All this time Nera's face remained frozen and transfixed in the first expression of horror that had come there at the moment of the fatal accusation. In her breast a fearful war was raging. Her love seemed to be rending her asunder. On the other hand, her patriotism, her faith, her honour cried out against this man's perfidy, and demanded his instant punishment. "Can I be true to myself?" her heart was saying, "or am I nothing, after all, but a woman and a fool?"

She commanded silence with a wave of one of her slender hands. She gazed straight into the beautiful, delicate face of the traitor with a long, hopeless stare. Ispanoff returned the look feverishly. He knew that in this woman lay his only chance of life, and for an instant, as he saw the great tears well into her eyes and her lips tremble, he flattered himself with a hope. When she spoke, her voice sounded soft and far away.

"Did you denounce Prince Escolaivitch?" she asked, dully.

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"Yes!" muttered the doomed man.

"Why?" The question sounded almost childish.

He gazed at her long and steadfastly, but he had sufficient manhood to spare her the recital of the cause that led to his act. "For private reasons," he said. "I hated him. But what does it all matter? I have forfeited my life. I am ready to pay it."

An ashen pallor swept over the face of the miserable woman. How gladly she would have died in his place to have seen the shameful accusation disproved. And yet, so strong was her fidelity to her chosen cause, that, amid all her horror and grief, she actually found herself desiring the man's life with the rest, so bitterly did she loathe his crime.

The men were already fingering the knives and pistols concealed about their persons, and discussing the propriety of casting lots for an executioner. Ispanoff instinctively recognised these grim preparations, and a fearful terror swept across his soul. With a bound he was at Nera's side, whispering frantically, "I love you! Save me!"

A mighty scorn came into the great eyes. "You might have spared me that, coward!" she hissed, and then added, softly, "you must die, and I wish I could die for you!"

Ispanoff's face was ashen now, and he glanced hopelessly about him in search of a friendly face. In vain. Nothing but strong glances of contempt and murderous intention confronted him. He covered his face with his hands and groaned. Two great tears stole into Nera Norisdorff's topaz eyes. And the moisture from the river above went drip, drip, drip, from the slimy rafters.

The old man that had accused Ispanoff advanced, and handed him a dagger. "It is a rule of our order," he said, "that a man condemned to die as you, you beast, are about to die, may choose his own manner of death. You may choose your executioner, or else become your own."

Ispanoff took the knife and glanced about him. His eyes fell on the blanched, averted face of Nera. He smiled grimly, and then walked over to where she stood and handed her the weapon. "I will die by her hand," he said firmly, "or none."

There was a roar of dissent, but the bewildered old man checked it. "He has that right," he said; "the coward doubtless hopes to escape so. But you must be brave, my daughter," addressing Nera. "Remember your duty and your oath. I will hold the wretch for you. Strike!"

He grasped Ispanoff's arms and held them to his sides in a grip of iron. The young man made no struggle. He was watching the face of the woman. A glare of wrath had come over it as the traitor had placed this unjust ordeal upon her. But she did not flinch. She advanced with the weapon uplifted, and Ispanoff closed his eyes.

The instant he did so he felt kisses—one, two, three—swiftly on his lips, and then a spurt of warm blood in his very face. Nera Norisdorff, self-slain, lay at his feet, murmuring his name and caressing his feet in her death-throes.

Shrieks of rage rang through the room. "Tear him to pieces," was the cry. A rush was made for the traitor with the beautiful delicate face, and he again closed his eyes to await a death-blow.

It was not given. The door burst open with a crash, and a score of men in uniform covered the inmates with their pistols, as the hoarse voice of their captain cried: "Surrender, in the Name of the Tsar!"

A SYLVAN GODDESS

HE was born in Rome, the city of grand memories. The daughter of the Duke de Somenita, she had been an orphan from earliest infancy. Her education had been delegated by her guardians, the Count de Sestri and his wife—who were prominent figures in the gay world, and received much in their Roman palace in winter, and in summer at their villa at Quisisana—to Miss Smithson, her English governess, who chose the best professors to give her an education worthy of the future queen of Roman society.

For Donna Stefana was a very beautiful girl. Though only sixteen, she already had a dignity beyond her years; her large eyes, like those of the Isis in the Vatican, were frank and brilliant; her cameo-like profile, her scarlet lips, the shape and poise of her head, her lithe figure, suggested an antique statue. By constant association with the masterpieces of art one takes on, in some measure, their characteristics; and Donna Stefana preferred to worldly distractions long walks in the Vatican galleries, moonlit evenings in the Colosseum, and excursions to Tivoli and Frascati.

While Donna Stefana was still a young girl she was allowed to devote herself to her artistic tastes. She painted, she sang, she recited, and her professors were delighted with her talents. But when she attained her eighteenth year she was obliged to appear at the countess's drawing-rooms. "Donna Stefana," as the countess's intimates called her, had to maintain her share in fashionable chatter, to dress, to confer with milliners, to pass her nights at balls dancing with the young men, who seemed to her either importunate or wearisome. She was like a goddess strayed among mortals.

One evening at Quisisana Miss Smithson and her pupil were lingering in that delightful forest, whose beauties are too little known to strangers. The great jet of the fountain fell in silvery spray under the moon's beams and lent a refreshing coolness to the warmth of an Italian July night. The air was delicious, and Miss Smithson did not, as was her custom, urge Donna Stefana to hasten back to the villa and dress for the countess's reception.

The nightingales were singing in the midst of the green forest, when suddenly they stopped, interrupted by a stronger song, accompanied by a guitar swept by a practised hand. It was the song of Rhadames from the first act of "Aida." Then several voices intoned the chorus of the priests of Osiris, but as there were only male voices the song of the priests was, perforce, taken by the guitar. Moved by the artist's impulse, Donna Stefana, when it came to the song again, took it up with a fulness of voice made only the greater by the sonorousness of the forest; then the singers continued, and Rhadames ended the scene.

After a moment of silence, Donna Stefana and Miss Smithson saw a group of singers, dressed as tourists, emerge from the forest, evidently in search of the fair singer. At their head walked a dark young man, who wore a Tyrolean hat, such as the Milanese wear when they travel. He was dark, with an aquiline profile, a pointed beard, his moustaches turning up, and deep-set black eyes.

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Donna Stefana, not yet recovered from her emotion, stood erect near the basin, dressed as usual in white.

"It is Isis herself," exclaimed the singer. "Goddess or mortal, tell me, I conjure you," he continued, uncovering and sinking on one knee before her, "who you are?"

"I am Donna Stefana," involuntarily replied the fascinated girl.

"Duchess de Somenita," added Miss Smithson. "Pray do not forget that, sir, and let us pass."

The singer rose, gave a signal at which his suite opened to give free passage to the ladies, and bowed gracefully before them.

"I am Don Enrique de Britta, known on the stage as 'Juanito,'" he said. "It is to be regretted that the signora is a duchess. What an Aida she would make at the Teatro San Carlo!"

Donna Stefana did not reply. Miss Smithson murmured a dry "Thank you, sir," and, taking her pupil's arm, drew her to the drive, where a carriage awaited them. A moment later the mysterious Isis disappeared from the dazzled eyes of Juanito and his companions.

"What an adventure!" cried one of the young fellows, who were French artists from the Medicis Villa, in Rome, now on their summer vacation.

"She is the Duchess de Somenita, the great heiress," murmured Juanito, "and the Count de Sestri is her guardian."

"You are dreaming, Juanito," laughed Sartige, a Parisian painter and a great friend of the tenor. "Has the Goddess Isis fascinated you? Take care, she is only a young girl. She is not the Countess X. or the Princess Z. She will not send you a little note with a thousand sweet nothings in it."

"No, she will not write to me, but——"

"But——" repeated Sartige. "Come, confess your thoughts."

"I think she already loves me," Juanito said, in a low tone, "and quite as much as I love her."

"Indeed!" Sartige replied; but he said nothing more, for, knowing Juanito's romantic life, he knew that he was of the race of charmers.

"Come, Juanito," said one of the band, "let us continue our stroll. We should make the most of such a night."

"Let us serenade Count Sestri's villa," said Juanito. "There is a reception there this evening, and they will be delighted with the surprise; each signora will imagine it is in her especial honour," and the young fellows slung their guitars over their shoulders and set forth with springing tread.

They soon emerged from the forest, and finally stood before the high wall, surmounted by a terraced walk, that belonged to the Sestri Villa.

After a brief prelude on the guitars, they intoned the serenade of Flotow's "Indra," and then Juanito sang the inimitable and classic serenade of Almaviva in "Il Barbiere."

At the first notes the guests in the villa streamed out upon the terrace. Donna Stefana, with a light veil thrown over her head, seated herself on the parapet just opposite to Juanito, who devoured her with his eyes as he sang. At the end of the serenade she let fall a spray of jessamine, which Juanito caught up and pressed to his lips.

The ladies took the cue, and covered the ground with flowers, the men applauding madly.

"Come in, gentlemen," said the Count de Sestri; "you are welcome to my house."

Juanito, followed by the delighted French artists, ascended the marble steps that gave access to the gardens of the villa. The count and his guests came to meet the merry troupe, and conducted them to the other side of the villa, on that famous lawn whence one sees Vesuvius and Naples framed, as it were, by the immense trees of the garden. Juanito sang untiringly, stopping only to let his friends sing the choruses of the most famous operas.

Meanwhile, footmen spread a table on the lawn, and the company supped there under the stars, laughing and singing. The ladies were delighted to meet thus intimately artists who were such good company, so full of wit and jollity.

Juanito managed to be placed at table near Donna Stefana, who, under the influence of his glances, fell more and more under his charm. She looked only at him, and with a depth of emotion entirely foreign to her usual character. She wished that the whole universe might disappear from her sight, and that she might be left to adore her idol, like a heathen kneeling before her god.

At the end of the supper young Prince Andreo Benito, an enthusiastic lover of music, proposed the health of Juanito: "To Don Juanito, king of tenors," he said; "to his glory and his triumph!"

Juanito thanked him with a graceful gesture, "I drink to our Amphitryon," he said: "and to the goddess of the forests of Quisisana, who directed my steps, hither," he added, looking fixedly at Donna Stefana, "to the goddess whom I adore, and who is ever in my thoughts."

Donna Stefana paled under this bold declaration, which was comprehensible to her alone.

Dawn was breaking over the Apennines when the party broke up, tinting the snow-clad peaks with a rosy glow. Juanito and his friends descended to Castellamare di Stabia, where they took lodgings at the hotel. The next day it was arranged they were to visit Salerno and Amalfi, but Juanito made pretext of business at Naples to let his companions leave without him.

"You are staying at Quisisana," declared Sartige, who knew him of old, "to see that young girl, and I assure you you are making a mistake. She is not one of the whimsical and passionate creatures you are used to greeting. Believe me, you will do well to let her forget you."

"Forget me!" said Juanito. "Do you think her capable of it? If I thought she could I would not take the trouble to see her again."

"True," sighed Sartige, "you are unforgetable. Fate has given you the form of a hero of romance, with a voice more than seductive. You combine with Mephisto's adroitness the gentleness of a Romeo. Poor Goddess Isis. Poor Donna Stefana! I pity her."

"And why—since I love her?" replied Juanito, with such naïve simplicity that Sartige made no reply, but shrugged his shoulders and followed his companions.

That very evening, Juanito, guided by that instinct innate in the born gallant, posted himself near the fountain in the forest. He was sure that Donna Stefana would go there, involuntarily attracted by the remembrance of the night before. And, in fact, scarcely had he thrown himself on the moss at the foot of a grand old oak when he saw the young girl appear alone, followed by a great Russian hound, her favourite dog. She passed round the basin, and, stopping at the very place where she had stood on the previous evening, heaved a deep sigh. Juanito rose, and, approaching her, stepped into the path of light thrown by the moon. She saw him, and seemed petrified with surprise. He profited by this to approach, and sank down on one knee beside her.

"Do not be frightened," he said; "I have stayed here because I love you." The man seemed to grant a favour in declaring that he deigned to love her, and he was disingenuously frank.

In her innocence Donna Stefana did not comprehend this trick. She let her hand slip into his, and sunk in inexpressible ecstasy, drank in the sweet words he murmured in her ear. It was he—he, the man who had so completely fascinated her being—who was there on his knees before her. Seeing her trembling with emotion Juanito slipped his arm about her waist.

Many young men had held their arms about her in dancing, and Donna Stefana had felt no emotion. Juanito's arm seemed to be a circle of flame that burned her. Frightened, she gently pushed him from her.

At that moment Miss Smithson, who had been detained at the villa, rejoined her pupil.

"Sir," she cried, "what are you doing? Do not touch Donna Stefana!"

"Donna Stefana felt ill," Juanito replied, "and I was supporting her. Moreover, my intentions are perfectly honourable; if Donna Stefana will deign to give me her hand I will accept it on my knees."

"You should make such a request of Count Sestri," Miss Smithson replied. "Permit us to retire," and the governess led Donna Stefana away, with a gesture forbidding Juanito to follow them.

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The next day Count Sestri received a letter from Juanito. On reading it he burst out laughing, and went to the Countess's apartments to share his hilarity with her. There he found Donna Stefana and Miss Smithson.

He gave Juanito's letter to the Countess, and then turned to Donna Stefana.

"My dear child," he said, "you have made a conquest. This fool of a Juanito wants to abandon his career of conquests and triumphs in two continents to marry you. What can have got into his head? The idea of his marrying the daughter of a noble house and dragging her from city to city, living such a Bohemian existence as his! He is a rich Bohemian, to be sure, but he is a singer, a mountebank, look at it as you will. It is such preposterous folly that I shall not take the trouble to reply to his ridiculous proposal."

The Countess disdainfully tossed the letter into a basket.

"He is mad!" she commented, calmly. "But it is luncheon time. Give me your arm, and forget his impertinence. And do not tell any one of it; such an adventure cannot fail to tarnish the reputation of a young girl of our world."

Donna Stefana said nothing, but in a flash she measured the gulf that the world put between her and the tenor.

After luncheon she went down to Castellamare and took the train. She knew that Juanito was staying with Sartige, whose studio was well known in Chiatamonte. She inquired her way thither, and, leaving Miss Smithson in the carriage, mounted the stairs alone. As a milliner also lived in the house she gave as a pretext certain directions about trimming a hat that she must give personally. She entered the studio, softly opening the door, and found herself confronted by a curtain that served as a screen before the door. Frightened at her own audacity she stopped, and then she heard her name spoken.

"Donna Stefana," Sartige was saying, "is a well-born young girl, and the count would never give her to you willingly. And what would you do with her in your nomadic life!—she would only be a drag on you. I cannot picture you as a staid father, in slippers and dressing gown? And then you know that, once married, a tenor loses all prestige in the eyes of the public. You will be irritated by it, you will want to prove that you are still the hero of all your romances. Poor Donna Stefana, I pity her," and Sartige continued, as he spoke, to paint from his model, a pretty Transteverine girl disguised for the nonce as Summer. "Don't move, Bianca, you are posed perfectly," he said to the girl; "that is unless you want to go and kiss my friend Juanito, to make him forget his matrimonial projects."

"That's a suggestion not to be refused," laughed Bianca, and she bounded on Juanito's knees, pressing her lips to his—an attention to which Juanito did not fail to respond in kind.

At that moment there was a knock at the door at the further end of the room, and a servant entered and handed a letter to Juanito. As the tenor tore open the envelope, several thousand franc bank notes fluttered to the floor.

"Twenty-five thousand francs!" exclaimed Sartige, as he gathered them up. "Where does such a windfall drop from?"

"Read for yourself," replied Juanito, and he handed the letter to Sartige and impressed a kiss on Bianca's dimpled cheek.

Sartige read the letter:—

"Dear Signor Juanito:—Enclosed please find twenty-five thousand francs, which I beg you will accept for the delightful serenade you were good enough to give us the other evening. Believe me, the Countess and I am greatly obliged to you. Pray accept my excuses for the trifling amount of the inclosure, and permit me to sign myself always your grateful

"SESTRI."

"Bravo!" cried Sartige. "A pretty reply truly, and from a true *grand seigneur!* Well, what are you going to do now?"

"Oh, well, I shall skip off to Rome and Paris. I shall be able to have a good time now before I sail for America."

Donna Stefana descended the stairs with tottering steps, and fell into the arms of the astonished and terrified Miss Smithson. Arrived at Quisisana she was carried to her room, and it was two months before she rose from her bed, very pale, but more beautiful than ever. She had acquired that sphinx-like beauty that is possessed only by women who have been torn by suffering.

Two years later she married the young Duke de Welzio, Prince de Bertini. Proud and calm, covered with diamonds, her little duchess crown upon the rare lace that had veiled her beautiful head, she stepped forth on her husband's arm from the basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore, where the ceremony had just taken place.

In the midst of the crowd before her she saw Juanito, his eyes fixed on her as if in mute supplication. Not a muscle, not a fibre moved; she did not even turn away to avoid his look, which shone upon her as a ray of sunshine might rest on an icicle without melting it.

THE ROMANCE OF FIR TOP.

UP a long, rock-walled, Colorado mountain road crept a swaying, yellow-painted stage-coach. On the box with the driver sat a youthful person, with an oldish face, surmounted by a pocket hat. Something in his manner denoted an acquaintance with the vicissitudes of life in all its aspects. The driver looked at him curiously and cracked his whip.

"Ever in a hold-up, pardner?"

"Yes."

"Tho't so. Ever helt up by a woman?"

"No."

"Tho't not. I wuz onct. Want ter hear 'bout it?"

The passenger looked sharply up, and said:

"Pitch in, if it's a true story."

"'Tis. See that bend up thar whar th' road slips 'round behin' th' mount'n?"

"Yes."

"That ar's th' place."

"What were the circumstances?"

"They wuz a pile 'r circumstances. Dick Brand was a wunner. Kep' th' hotel 'n Fir Top. Could drink mo' whiskey than any other man in th' county. Well, Dick gambled an' drunk, drunk an' gambled his time away. Never los' much stuff by it, tho', 'tel Doc Martin came ter town, fer th' boys all liked Linda an' Bet, so whenever Dick wuz losing, they'd make the squeezes run his way a while.

"When Doc Martin struck th' diggin's he put on lots of side 'ith his stove-pipe hat an' yaller gloves. First time 'e seen Linda 'e smirked a lot, and purty soon 'twuz going' th' roun's that th' Doc wuz loving Brand's gal. Linda wanted none 'r his love, an' she tole 'im so. Bin a white man, he'd 'r let her be then. But 'e wa'nt. He got playin' poker 'ith Dick Brand. Martin wuz a dandy 'ith th' cards, an' won all 'r pore fool's dust.

"Dick wuz wild ter git 'is money back, of co'se, an ast Martin ter wait tel 'e could go out an' borry some stuff from somer th' boys. Martin then up an' smiled a Chinee smile

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an' pulled a roll 'r bills outen 'is inside coat pocket. Jest a roun' thousan' dollars. Well, Dick jumped like a wild mule when he seen th' pile. More money 'n he'd laid eyes on sense th' railroad wuz built up ter Sunset. Martin tole 'm ef he'd make out a morgedge on th' hotel fer one thousan' dollars, payable in a year's time, 'ith intrest at eight per cent., he'd stack th' col' thousan' th' dockyment.

"Brand done it like th' loon that 'e wuz. Martin knowed a lot 'r lawyer doin's, an' 'he drawed up th' paper, an' a couple of his cronies from down th' valley that wuz thar signed fer witness.

"Then th' cards wuz dealt. Martin discarded three, Dick jest tuck one. An', by gum, pardner, I'll eat th' off leader ef Dick didn't lose. Soon as Doc Martin had pore Dick floored, 'e showed what 'e was leadin' fer. Plunked th' cash down an' th' morgedge an' offered Dick both fer his gal Linda. In case Brand refused, 'e wuz ter be sol outen house an' home.

"Dick wus clean white an' true ter his gals, even 'f 'e did play fool at gamblin'. Tole Martin ter go somers down 'bout Mexico—that ain't th' place he said, but it's in th' neighbourhood. Shuck 'is fist in th' schemey doctor's face, an' tole 'm he'd rather see Linda marry a Hong Kong washerwoman than pair off 'ith him. Martin jest turned chalky 'roun' th' gills an' went out 'thout sayin' a word. Tuck mitey good keer ter pocket th' morgedge an' cash, tho', befo' 'e went. An' 'e didn't stop 'tel 'e wuz outer the Rockies, nother.

"By gum, sir, that ar feller never showed 'is face in Fir Top agen fer a year. Yes, 'twuz mor'n a year. Brand knowed 'e'd come back tho', an' th' pore feller tried ever' way under th' sun ter git up that morgedge money. 'Twa'n't no use tho', an' th' mis'ry of thinkin' on it turned 'im sick.

"Jest befo' his time run out, 'e called Linda an' Bet ter 'is bunk, an' tole 'em th' whole story 'bout that ar poker game an' th' morgedge.

"'Bout thirteen months later on—Brand had bin buried ten months, an' wuz mitey nigh forgot—I carried in th' mail-bag one day, an' ole man Jinks, th' postmaster, went ter work sortin' out th' mail. Arter while 'e hefted one letter ter th' light, an' looked at it kinder grim through 'is specs. I wuz zettin' on a sugar bar'l, eaten crackers an' cheese. Th' ole man spoke up an' sed:

"'Yere's a letter fer Dick Brand. I d'no whuther or no ter sen' it back or give it ter Linda.' (In speakin' 'r th' gals, folks allers used Linda's name, 'cause she kinder helt th' lines.)

"Jest then Linda came in. She pushed back 'er gingham bonnet, an' sed: 'Is thar ennything fer me, Mister Jinks?'

"'Well, Miss Linda, I jest got a letter yere fer yer paw, but bein' as he ain't present ter receive it, mebbe I'd better give it ter you, seein' as how you air his darter.'

"'Yes, lemme take it,' sed Linda. The ole man poked it out, an' Linda tuck it. She turned th' envelope over ever' which a way, jest as if she could read it 'thout openin' it, like th' trick feller in th' circus. Then she tore it open an' begun ter read. I watched, an' seed her growin' pale an' skeered like. Then she give a sort of quick gasp an' tore th' letter all ter pieces. At that time I didn't know th' ins an' outs of th' game, but I had a glimmerin'. Linda turned ter me an' sed, in a sorter jerky tone of voice:

"'Phil, what 'ud you do if a man wuz goin' ter sell yer outer house an' home?'

"'I'd kill th' skunk, Miss Linda,' sed I, short off.

"'Well, looky yere now, Phil,' put in ole man Jinks, speakin' slow an' lookin' wise, 'don't yer think that ar 'ud be agoin' contrary ter th' statoots?'

"'Spec' it would,' sed I, lookin' in Linda's purty eyes; 'but when th' statoots makes a sweet little gal look like she wuz pluggin' up th' weeps, I sez consarn th' statoots.'

"Linda looked at me 'ith a soft little creepin' outer th' mist in her eyes, and went out.

"Now, who d'ye s'pose I tuck over ter Fir Top second trip arter Linda got th' letter? Don't know, eh? Well, yer oughter. 'Twuz Doc Martin. Yes, sir, when I pulled up 'longside 'r th' train, down thar at Sunset, the Doc come walkin' out, big as Ike, an' got in 'thout so much as sayin' 'howdy.' Two other fellers got in likewise. One wuz a miner an' t'other wuz some sorter science crank—minrologist, I think they called 'im.

"'Twuz th' middle of th' month, and skacely enny express money goin' over.

"Well, ter come down ter fine p'ints, as we nighed that ar bend in th' road that I showed you, th' hosses got skeered at somethin' they smelt in the wind. I give 'm th' lash, an' away they went. Jest as we rounded th' turn—me holdin' 'em in then, you know—I hear'd a shrill, boyish-soundin' voice yell out, 'Halt!' an' halt I did.

"Gosh, how well I knowed them tones! Rite in front of th' leaders stood a slim young feller, 'ith a mask over 'is eyes. Ther' wa'n't no whiskers or mistash on 'is face, nuther. Stickin' outer th' firs, 'longside 'r th' road, wuz four or five gunbar'ls. Mor'n likely th' wa'n't no men behind 'em, tho'. Jest then, out steps another slim-dandy kid, 'ith 'is forty-four cocked.

"'My fr'en's,' said he ter th' folks in th' coach, ''tain't no use fer you ter show fight. Them thickets is full of my men. Step out, an' cash up, please.'

"They got out, an' he went through 'em. Lef' the'r watches, but tuck the'r cash. Tuck all the'r papers, too, an' was specially keerful in 'is 'tentions ter Doc Martin. When ther play wuz over, th' robbers 'loped back inter th' firs, an' I druv on. Th' miner 'lowed as how they must be green stock, fer they never looked at the express box.

"Purty soon arter that, we got ter th' hotel. Them fellers didn't know whuther or not ter go in bein' as they had no cash, but I 'spicioned how things 'ud turn out, an' tole 'em I'd stan fer th' gang. They went in at that, an' Sally Jinks fixed things fer 'em, bein' as th' gals wa'n't at home. 'Bout a nour arter that they come in, tho', an' th' dinner bell rung. Th' strangers' lookin' purty doleful, walked out ter dinner, an' set down. Before they got through eatin', Big Wallace—him that runs th' faro bank—came hustlin' in an' sed:

"'Is them ar gents that come in th' stage here?'

"'Yes,' they all hollered at onct.

"'Well, ther vig'lunce c'mitty's done tuck them fellers that robbed th' stage, an' strung 'em up. Yere's all th' plunder. You gent's just name th' 'mounts you had in stuff, an' if th' totul fits, you kin divide up 'mong ye. These yere dockyments, I'spose, kin be 'dentified.'

"Linda an Bet wuz a-settin' rite thar all th' time. Bet spoke up an' sed: 'Mister Wallace, wuz them robbers enny folks we knowed?'

"'No, Miss Bet; I guess they wuz new han's, jest struck th' trail. Boys' novel cranks, mebbe.'

"Twa'n't no time before them fellers had the'r stuff fixed proper, an' they wuz mighty jubilant, you kin bet, exceptin' ther Doc, who kep' touslin' his papers about, like he wuz huntin' fer somethin'.

"'What's th' matter, Doc,' sed I; 'ennything wrong?'

"'Why, yes,' sed he; 'they's a valubul paper yere that's missin'. It's morgedge fer a thousan' dollars, an' overdue, too.'

"He kep' lookin' an' lookin', but twa'n't thar. Then he kinder sighed, an' said, gentle-like: 'It don't make no difference, nohow, fer th' morgedge is recorded in New York.'

"Yer oughter jest seed them gals. Th'r faces looked as if the'r fr'en' had sent 'em an invite ter 'is fun'rull. Big Wallace wuz that sheepish he couldn't show 'is eyes, an' I felt sorter slack myself."

"Did he sell them out?"

"He woulder, but, you see, th' morgedge wuz paid. Linda wuz engaged ter th' foreman of th' Royal Flush, but she never had tole 'im 'bout th' poker game. When she foun' 'er road scheme wa'n't no go, she let down an' tole 'im th' whole story. Cried doing it, too, I surmise. Her feller had some stuff saved up, an' 'e jest paid Mister Doc, an' then kicked 'im outer camp. Linda named the day then, an' she lives 'ith her husband in a snug little shack up by th' Royal Flush Mill, an' Bet runs th' ole house. Thar she is now, stan'in' on th' po'ch an' peekin' out from under her bonnet at th' stage."

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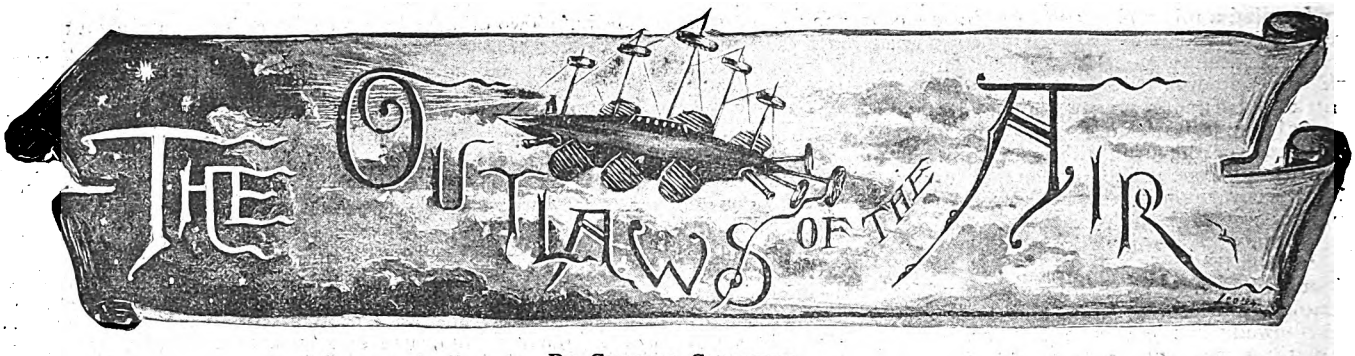

By George Griffith,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," &c.

CHAPTER XLVII.

The End of the "Bremen."

"We won't tell any of them yet," said Sir Harry, after he had taken a long look through the glasses at the distant tinge of brown haze that blurred the western horizon. "I think we had better make sure first so as not to spoil the honour of the first discovery for you, if it turns out really to be the *Bremen*."

"Oh, I don't see any particular honour in it," said Dora, with just a perceptible shudder. "This is horrible, all this fighting and destruction. If you promise not to tell, I'll confess that I fainted right off when you sunk the yacht the other day. It seemed so awful to think of, these two ships flying up in the clouds out of reach, and blowing that unfortunate steamer to pieces, and sending her and everyone on board her to the bottom of the sea. I sometimes think the world must have gone half mad for such dreadful things to be possible—to say nothing about their being necessary, as I suppose that was."

"I quite agree with you," said Sir Harry. "The world is really much more of a mad-house than the conceit of humanity would care to admit. As a matter of fact, with all our boasted religion and civilisation, we are very little removed in some respects from mere beasts of prey. Indeed, where the predatory instincts are concerned we are rather below them than otherwise. They kill because they must kill, or else die of starvation; we kill when we have ample. No tiger ever killed an antelope or an ox just to show that he was the stronger beast of the two or to prove his exclusive right to a certain piece of jungle."

"I like to hear you say that, Sir Harry, because——"

"Now look here, Miss Dora, I have no doubt you were going to say something that it would be pleasant for me to hear," he said interrupting her; "but before you say it I wish you would explain how it is that a good Socialist like yourself can persist—well, I had almost said so obstinately—in using that most unsocialistic prefix to my name? You know what I mean."

"Yes," she said, with a faint flush on her cheek and just the suspicion of a roguish twinkle in her eyes, "I think I can quite understand what you mean, and perhaps I can answer you by reminding you that we Utopians don't call each other Miss and Mr. in our conversation."

"Oh, but then you know——. Hullo! yes, that must be the *Bremen*. A big steamer with no masts and two funnels, apparently going nowhere, just as Berthauld described her. If you'll pardon me, Dora—I mean, of course, Miss Dora—I'm afraid I shall have to postpone what bade fair to be a very interesting conversation, at any rate for me. If all goes well, we shall be back at Utopia in a few days, and then——"

"And then," said Dora, who meanwhile had opened the door of the conning-tower, "you will have had time to think out a suitably conventional apology for leaving out the 'Miss' just now. Good morning! I am going to see if Violet is awake."

"Yes, I think I can quite understand."

And with that she vanished and shut the door behind her, leaving Sir Harry with his attention for the moment perplexingly divided between thoughts of love and war.

The latter, however, imperatively demanded all his energies, for while they had been talking, the *War-Hawk* had been flying swiftly, and had brought him within plain view of the object which had attracted Dora's attention. A second look through his glasses convinced him that the object lying on the waters far below him was nothing else than the craft of which they were in search. He took its bearing carefully, and dotted its position down on a chart on which the latitude and longitude of the *War-Hawk* had already been marked at sunrise. Then he spun the steering wheel round until the dot lay dead astern of the air-ship, sent the signal for full speed to the engine-room, and the *War-Hawk* darted away westward in search of her consort.

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The *Volante*, returning by arrangement to the rendezvous, was picked up after four hours' flight, and as soon as the plan of attack had been arranged between them, the two returned to the eastward, and a little before mid-day they were soaring at a height of eight thousand feet above a calm sea, on which was floating the mastless *Bremen*, steaming to the eastward at a leisurely speed of about ten knots. To their intense disappointment there was no sign of the *Destroyer* to be seen, and so they were forced to conclude that she was away on one of her raiding expeditions for coal and stores.

Great as was the height at which they were floating, their glasses enabled them to make out the shape of an air-ship lying upon the *Bremen's* decks. Unfortunately, too, for their hopes of a surprise, the sky was absolutely cloudless and so they would be visible from the *Bremen's* decks, if only as a couple of tiny specks drifting across the background of the intense blue above them.

"Confound it, they have seen us!" said Sir Harry to Mr. Austen, who had now come to take his accustomed place in the conning-tower. "Look, the air-ship is rising. I wish we could have got a shell into them before they spotted us."

"We couldn't have done that in this clear atmosphere, and I don't think it very much matters, because, as the Yankees would say, we have decidedly got the drop on them, and I don't think there is much chance of escape. There goes Adams down to cut him off. He'll keep the air-ship busy, and we'll sink the steamer and then go and help him if it's necessary."

"Yes, that's the plan," said Sir Harry. "So I'll leave you to your manœuvring and go and take a turn at the guns. Good-bye for the present."

"Good-bye. Shoot straight!" said Mr. Austen as he turned to leave the conning-tower.

"As straight as I can, you may depend upon it," laughed Sir Harry as he closed the door and went down to the gun-room.

According to the arrangements already made, the *Volante* dropped about four thousand feet in a slanting direction towards the steamer from whose deck the Anarchist air-ship had now risen about fifteen hundred feet. She was evidently managed by an experienced hand, for she shot away to the southward at full speed and on an upward course so as to gain the advantage of being pursued. But Adams had learned a good deal from the story of the *War-Hawk's* fight with the three vessels over Northumberland and lost no time in frustrating this manœuvre.

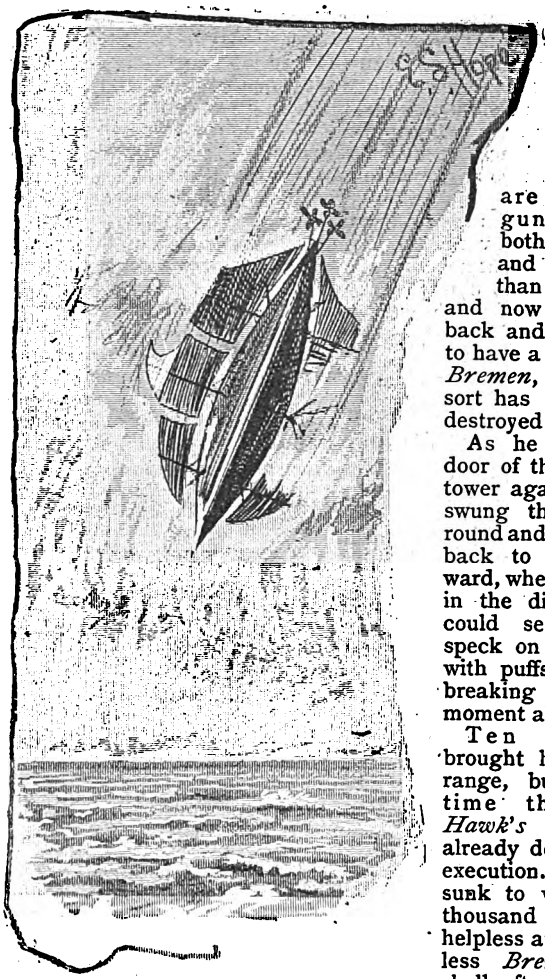
The Anarchist had about a mile start of him, but she had the worst of the elevation and the *Volante*, putting on full speed, rushed away after her, soaring two feet for her one, until the positions were reversed and Adams was able to give the order for the stern guns to open fire on him. He slowed down until the two ships were almost relatively stationary, and presently a couple of shells burst together about fifty feet above the red flag that was flying at the Anarchist's stern.

He saw her stop for an instant, and, as it were, shiver in the shaken atmosphere. Then she dropped two or three hundred feet, came to equilibrium, and swung round to fly northward again.

The moment that she wasted in turning was fatal, for one of the gunners had his gun loaded again, and just as she stopped for a second on the turn sent a lucky shell, which passed through one of her broad air-planes and exploded underneath it, blowing it into ribbons. The next instant she turned over like a winged bird, and with one awful plunge dropped like a stone into the sea four thousand feet below. They saw a little splash far away in the calm water, and that was all.

"That settled her affair," said Berthauld a few moments after, as he opened the door of the conning-tower and looked in. "I had the honour of firing that shot, Mr. Adams. I learnt my gunnery under Max Renault, on board the *Vengeur*. I hope now that if you had any doubts of my sincerity——"

"I never had any, M. Berthauld," replied Adams. "If I had had you would not be here now, but that was a splendid shot and I congratulate you, wherever you learnt to shoot. In future, if you care to take it, you shall have charge of one of the *Volante's* guns."



Dropped like a stone into the sea.

"It is an honour that I shall prize highly," said the Corsican.

"Yours are splendid guns, better both for range and accuracy than Renault's, and now I will go back and get ready to have a shot at the *Bremen*, if your consort has not already destroyed her."

As he closed the door of the conning-tower again, Adams swung the *Volante* round and headed her back to the northward, where, far away in the distance, he could see a dark speck on the water, with puffs of smoke breaking out every moment about it.

Ten minutes brought him within range, but by this time the *War-Hawk's* guns had already done terrible execution. She had sunk to within two thousand feet of the helpless and defenceless *Bremen*, and shell after shell was bursting upon the quondam liner's decks. As the *Volante* slowed up, her two bow guns came into action, and so well were they served that a perfect rain of shells was hurled upon the terrified and now despairing Anarchists.

The return of the *Volante* alone told them that their air-ship had been destroyed, and that they had now nothing to look for but swift and certain destruction. So far as they were concerned their reign of terror was over. The tables had been turned on them with a vengeance, and, maddened by panic and despair, dozens of them leapt overboard as though preferring death by drowning to being mangled and torn to pieces by the shells from the sky.

"Rats leaving a sinking ship!" said Sir Harry with a short savage laugh, as he trained his gun afresh upon the *Bremen* and sent another shell to its mark. "It is fearful work this fighting, but there is a horrible fascination about it that makes one absolutely enjoy it while you're at it."

"Especially when you are shooting at such vermin as these," said Markham, who was at the other gun, as he sent another shell on its errand of destruction. "Those fellows seem to have very little taste for their own kind of physic, but, after all, it is quite as good as the hanging they could only expect, if we were able to take them prisoners. There goes the last of the funnels. Now I think Mr. Austen might let us try a few bombs."

He had hardly spoken the words before a message came down the tube from the conning-tower telling them to cease firing and man the bomb-tubes.

"I thought so," said Markham, as he left his gun. "She is not much better than a wreck now, and a few minutes with the bombs will finish her."

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The *War-Hawk* now forged ahead a little until she came to a standstill exactly over the doomed *Brèmen*. Meanwhile, the six bomb tubes had been charged, and at the signal, "Let go," the six bombs, each filled with twenty pounds of dynamite, were released simultaneously. A blaze of light flashed out almost from stem to stern of the *Bremen;* then came the roar of the combined explosions, and they saw the great ship literally split from end to end. A vast cloud of smoke and steam rolled up, and when this had drifted away under the light breeze from the northward, the floating dockyard of the Anarchists had vanished beneath the waters of the Atlantic.

"Horrible, but necessary!" said Sir Harry drily, as he saw the bomb tubes closed, and went to his sister's cabin to tell her and Dora that it was all over.

"It is a frightful fate, even for those wretches," said Violet, half pityingly, when he had told her the news. "But I suppose it had to be done, if the world was to be saved from them. And where are we going to now?"

"Utopia is the next port of call, I believe," replied Sir Harry. "You know I told you that some of the scoundrels had taken possession of it, and so we shall have to go and clear them out. In fact, from what Berthauld tells me, we are going to do exactly what Renault intended to do to us, if it hadn't been for that lucky shot of Peter Jackson's which laid him up for a month, and so gave us time to get out with whole skins.

"That's the irony of fate, you see. 'The mills of God grind slowly, but they grind exceeding small,' as the Spanish proverb says. It seems a strange thing, and yet, as a matter of sober fact, the fate of the world probably turned on that one lucky, but entirely unjustifiable, shot which Peter Jackson fired. If it hadn't been for that, I don't suppose one of us would have got out of Utopia alive, and so Renault would have been the sole possessor of the secret, and would have had the world at his mercy."

"But fancy bloodshed in our beautiful Utopia!" said Dora, with a shudder. "Who of us would ever have thought that our paradise was going to be turned into a battlefield, or a slaughter-house, for I suppose it will be more like that than anything else? I won't see it. Violet, you and I will shut ourselves up here until it's over. I could never think Utopia the same again if I saw people being killed on it."

"Well, sweetheart."

"Yes, we will do that," said Violet. "I think I love Utopia now quite as much as you do, and I couldn't bear to see it desecrated by bloodshed any more than you could."

So it came to pass four days later that the two girls sat hand in hand silent and trembling in their darkened cabin listening to the crash of exploding shells and the fearful thudding roar of the machine guns which told them that the extermination of the Anarchists who had taken possession of Utopia was being carried out with pitiless thoroughness.

They felt the air-ship rising and sinking, shooting forward and stopping, and every now and then swinging swiftly round, and this went on for six hours incessantly. Then at last they felt her gently touch the ground and come to a standstill. As she did so the door of their cabin opened and Sir Harry came in in his shirt-sleeves, and with the perspiration running down his face.

"It is all over!" he said huskily. "You can come out now, for there isn't one of the scoundrels left alive on Utopia. It's been hot work, but we've done it. Look—doesn't it seem like being at home again?"

As he spoke he pulled the window-slide back and when Dora and Violet looked out they saw that the *War-Hawk* was resting on the plateau on which they had held their memorable New Year's Day picnic, and far away below them the lovely familiar landscape stretched away down to the bay and on from the white coral beach across the emerald water of the lagoon to the long white line of breakers tossing and foaming on the reef.

"How delightful it is to be able to breathe this glorious air again!" exclaimed Violet as her brother and Markham carried her chair out into the open. "If only poor Bertie were here now instead of being cooped up in a ship under water, I think I could get well altogether in a week. Why—what is the matter?" she continued, glancing anxiously from one to another of the little group about her chair. "What are you looking at each other like that for—has anything happened to Bertie? Tell me at once, please. Don't be afraid even if he is—if he is dead, for if he is I know that he will have died at his duty like a sailor and a gentleman."

There was silence for a moment and then Dr. Roberts, passing a slip of tissue paper to Sir Harry said:

"Tell her, Milton, you can do it better than I."

"What is it? Never mind telling me. Give it to me!" exclaimed Violet almost snatching the paper out of her brother's hand. She opened it with trembling fingers and read through a gathering mist of tears:

"Bull Point Station,
"July 17th, midnight.

"News just received that *Nautilus* was surprised and torpedoed by unknown vessel off Scillies soon after nightfall. Wyndham in command. None saved. "GARDNER."

"It is God's will and the fortune of war," murmured Violet in a weak, broken voice. "Oh, my poor brave Bertie, to think of you dying like that! Take me back, I——"

Then her head fell forward on her breast, and her hands dropped limply on her lap.

"It has killed her! I thought it would," cried Sir Harry, springing forward and taking hold of her hand. "Roberts how could you——"

"Dead—nonsense—she has only fainted. I'll have her round in three minutes," said the doctor, bustling off to the ship for his restoratives. "There's no harm done, don't be afraid."

CHAPTER XLVIII.

PLOT AND COUNTERPLOT.

"WELL, sweetheart, I think that danger is past for the present. I thought at one time they were going to break into open revolt, but I managed to convince them in the end of my good faith and devotion to the sacred cause of Anarchy. That compromise was not at all a bad idea. I am to take

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Hartog into my confidence, tell him the secret of the composition of the fuel, and whenever I go away from the camp, leave the formula for its preparation in a place known to him, so that if anything happens to me he can come back, find it and prepare the fuel as it's wanted. Very pretty, isn't it?"

"And are you going to do it?" asked Lea, looking up at Max with a smile of incredulity. They were alone together in their sitting-room in the bungalow on the afternoon of the day on which the Council of War had been held at the camp of Mount Pietra. Lea for some reason of her own, which she declined to give, had not been present, and Max had been explaining to her what had taken place.

"Do it?" he said with a short laugh at her question. "No, I see you don't take me seriously. You know me too well for that. I have been expecting this trouble ever since I brought the *Vengeur* away from Utopia. The command of the air is a magnificent thing; but, like every other priceless possession, it entails endless difficulties and dangers. You see, we are above and beyond all human laws now, and that cuts both ways. I am the master of these fellows just as long as I can keep them in hand by moral force, and remain the only possessor of the secret. Now they want the secret, and they mean to have it.

"If I don't find some means of outwitting them they will take it by force, or, anyhow, I don't suppose one of them would scruple to use the methods of the Holy Inquisition and torture me till they either killed me or wrung it out of me. Yet, on the other hand, if I tell them, every one of them is equal to me, all command is at an end, and therefore all concerted action. Then every one would be plotting against every body else to kill him, so as to remain the sole possessor of the command of the air.

"They might work together until we have smashed up those two or three ships that the Syndicate seems to have, but after that it would simply be a matter of mutual extermination until only one man was left in command of one ship, and he would be able to do as he pleased until one of his crew killed him or forced him to share the secret with him, and so on. That is Anarchy in command of the air, worked out to its logical conclusion. These idiots don't see how our conditions have changed since we left the earth for the air; and, as they won't submit to reasonable and necessary control, they shall pay for their folly and their want of confidence in a way that will considerably astonish them.

"What I mean to do is this, and I shall want your help in doing it. The only really dangerous man among them is Hartog, and he will have to be disposed of. He is coming with us in the *Revanche* to-morrow, because none of the other fellows will give up the command of their ship, and so he will have to wait for the new one that should be coming from the Atlantic in a few days now. Ostensibly, we are going out to meet her and hand her over to Franz. I shall write out the formula to-night, show it to Franz, and then hide it. I'll take care you know where it's hidden and you must manage to get hold of it, and destroy it before we start.

"Then, when once we get Franz on board the *Revanche*, over the Bay of Biscay, I'll denounce him as a traitor to the crew, who, I really believe, are devoted body and soul to me, and then I'll put a bullet through his ugly head and drop him into the Bay. When that's done we'll just get right out of the way and lie low for a month or two. Meanwhile, the other fellows will have used up their supply of fuel, and the air-ships will be lying waiting, useless and helpless, in the camp, and some fine morning we'll come back and wipe the lot out. Now, what do you think of that?"

"Excellent," replied Lea, with an admiring smile. "It couldn't be better, as far as it goes; but haven't you forgotten the Syndicate and its fleet? What are you going to do about them?"

"Mein Gott, it is gone."

"Oh, for that I shall have to trust, to a certain extent, to the chapter of accidents; but that danger is not by any means as great as it seems at first sight. When we have disappeared for a bit the odds are they'll think we've quarrelled among ourselves and wiped each other out, or something of that sort. They'll never find the fleet up here, and we can keep out of sight, and, whenever we get a chance, drop unexpectedly on one or two of their air-ships and blow them up until we've got rid of the lot in detail.

"It won't matter if it takes a year or two to do it. There'll be no hurry when these other fellows are disposed of; and then, when the *Revanche* is the only air-ship in existence, and we've killed, as we probably shall have done, Austen and Adams and the rest of them, we can begin a nice, pleasant little reign of terror on our own account."

"I see, I see!" said Lea. "That will be famous, if we can only do it; and, after all, I really don't see why we shouldn't. I suppose you won't mind Sophie Vronsky coming on board with us, will you, if only for Taxil's sake and mine? She is really the only girl in the world I can make a companion of, and I feel pretty certain that there would be difficulties with Raoul when he knew she was to be abandoned with the rest."

"Oh, yes; of course, she can come!" laughed Max in reply. "I've always thought she would make a capital sweetheart for Raoul, and I am quite glad to hear that they

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are likely to make a bargain of it. Now I must be off and see the *Revanche* got ready for her cruise to-morrow. It may be a rather long one; it would not do to have anything left out. Meanwhile, you and Sophie use your eyes and your ears, and learn everything you can that may be of use to us."

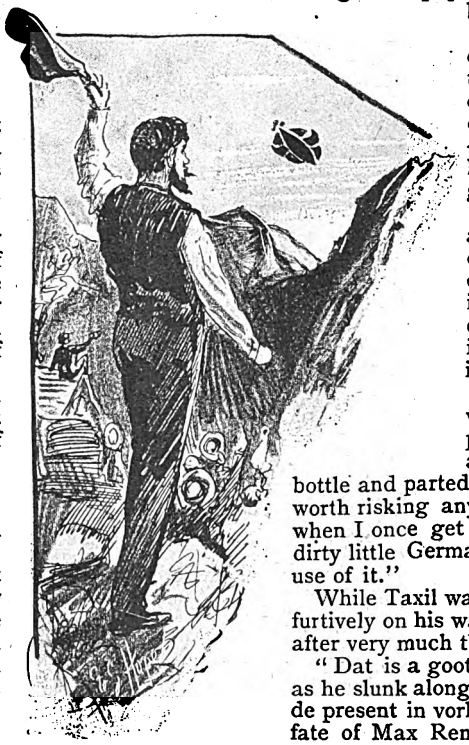
Later on that afternoon Max fulfilled his part of the bargain he had made with the captains of the fleet by writing out the formula, showing it to Hartog, and arranging with him where it was to be buried by them as soon as it was dark enough for them to do so unobserved by the others in the camp.

Of course, Max did not forget to tell Lea the spot fixed upon, and how he would mark it for her; and so adroitly did she follow his directions, that the priceless paper had not been lying underground, in the bottle in which they had inclosed it, for more than an hour before she had dug it up again with her own hands, taken it out of the bottle, and replaced it almost exactly as she had found it.

But nearly six hours later—that is to say, about a little before four o'clock in the morning—another visit was paid to the spot, this time by two men who had stolen out of the sleeping camp by different ways and met there, obviously not by accident.

"Now, my tear Taxil," said one of them in a hoarse, guttural whisper, "dis is de spot, and ve vill have it out in tree minutes. It is not buried fery deep. I did not tink it vas vorth vile, as I should vant it again so soon. You haf got your trowel, now dig avay. If ve only vorks our plans out right, dot little piece of paper vill mean de empire of de vorld to us; and you shall reign ofer it, mit de beautiful Lea, and I vill be your prime minister and chief engineer.

"Ve vill share de secret between us, and take tundering goot care dat no von else gets it so soon as ve haf got dat fool Renault out of de vay. Dat vas very lucky dat Sophie believes you so much in love mit her, and so faithful to Max, dat she told you vat a dangerous person I am, and how dey vas going to put me out of de vay. Now, if dey only knew dat it vas not Sophie at all, but the incomparable Lea, dat you haf been consuming your heart mit love for all de time in secret, I tinks de game vould haf been blayed a little differently, eh?"



Hats were waved.

"I suppose so," said Taxil, who meanwhile had been digging away with his trowel. "But, after all, it's Renault's own fault. He shouldn't have brought a girl like Lea into the Camp, or on board his ship. He must have queer ideas of Anarchy, after all, if he expected we should leave her to him, to say nothing of giving him the supreme command as well. Fancy us—Anarchists and enemies of all laws—setting up a king over us, and giving him absolute power of life and death, for that is what the possession of the secret means, after all's said and done! Ah, here we are; this is the bottle I suppose," he said, as the blade of his trowel struck with a clink on the glass.

"Jah, dot vill be it," whispered Franz, pulling a corkscrew out of his pocket as Taxil drew the bottle from the hole. "Gif it to me, and I vill open it."

Taxil handed him the bottle and he gently drew the cork, and then inverted the bottle over his hand and shook it. Of course nothing came out, for the tiny roll of paper had long ago been consumed to ashes in Lea's bedroom fire.

"Mein Gott, it is gone!" said Hartog in an agitated whisper. "By tam, dere are traitors in de camp! Now, vat is dat for a foul, dirty piece of treachery! No, dere is noding dere," he continued, shaking the bottle still more vigorously. "Now dot vill show you vat a scoundrel dat Renault is. No von else knew of de place but him, and he has come and stolen it avay. Taxil, my poy, dis is serious. Ve vill have to act sharp and prompt to-morrow or you vill never get your Lea, and I shall haf a bullet trough mine head. Are you sure you can trust de men?"

"Every one of them!" replied Taxil. "They can't stand Renault's discipline, and they hate him for it, especially since he shot Gaston that day for grumbling at the strictness of the rules. They say they might as well be sailor-slaves on board a man-of-war instead of free Anarchists, as they ought to be.

"No, there won't be any difficulty with them, especially as I've promised them plenty of plunder, and at least a village a week to sack and amuse themselves in. That's the sort of life they want. They're sick of just stopping up in the air and up here, and having all fighting and no fun. But we shall have to polish Renault off pretty quickly in the morning, now that he's got the paper back. By the way, I hope you've remembered what there was on it."

"Dere vas no fear of dat, my poy. You don't vant to show me figures twice for me to remember dem; and, besides, I wrote it out again—not completely, 'cause I had no chance, but enough to help me remember it—immediately after ve had buried it. Anyhow, it is impossible for dose oder fellows to get it, and dat is all ve vanted to take it for.

"Now, you had better bury de bottle again so dat some von else can find de choke out for demselves, for ven ve are gone dose chaps vill be hunting all ofer de valley for it. It is fery sad, but dere is not von of dem dat can keep faith mit de oder. Dat is de vorst of dese common sort of Anarchists.'

"And I don't suppose you'll keep faith with me much longer than it suits your purpose, you little pig," said Taxil to himself a few minutes later, when he had buried the bottle and parted from his fellow-conspirator. "Well, Lea is worth risking anything, even life itself for, and I'll do it; but when I once get hold of the secret I'll take care that that dirty little German doesn't have the chance to make much use of it."

While Taxil was indulging in this soliloquy Hartog, stealing furtively on his way back to bed, was communing with himself after very much the same style.

"Dat is a goot useful boy," he muttered under his breath as he slunk along. "And he vill be serviceable to me just for de present in vorking out vat de vorld vill soon call de tragic fate of Max Renault, de Anarchist. By tam, what a grim sort of joke dat vill be! I vill teach him to svindle me and lay plots for my life, to shoot me and sling me into de sea as if I vas von of dem Utopians instead of a goot Anarchist who got all de money for him and made his engines and air-ships.

"Ach Himmel, vat is dat for ingratitude! De man has no soul at all who could do dat to his friendt. But I vill show him who has de longest head in de long run. Ven he buys me for a fool he vill just lose his money. Dere is not going to be any king of de air but Franz Hartog, I can tell him. Dot vas a very nice little scheme vot he had to put me out of de vay so conveniently, but ve shall see, Monsieur Max, ve shall see!"

Despite the plots and counter-plots which were thus working underneath the surface of every-day life in the Anarchists' camp, so cunningly were all the parts played, that the company of the *Revanche* took their places as quietly, with just the same appearance of friendliness as ever; and as she rose into the air, shortly before daybreak, hats were waved and cheers followed her just as though, instead of a cargo of hate, and jealousy, and murderous designs, she carried the hearty goodwill of the whole Anarchist community.

(To be continued.)

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A GREAT ACHIEVEMENT.

WHEN I went into the club the other night, I found Lightly turning over the pages of the Christmas number of *The New World*. His face would have afforded a fine study for a picture of contentment, and my first thought was that he must have an article or story in the magazine. For Lightly is something of a writer, and whenever he gets anything published—which is not very often—he bores us all for weeks afterwards telling how it happened.

As soon as he caught sight of me, he beckoned me to his table, and I thought that I was in for at least a half-hour's punishment. But it turned out for once that I was interested in his talk.

"Have you seen it?" he asked, tapping the cover of the magazine, and giving a little eager laugh as he spoke, which confirmed my impression that he must be in luck.

"No," I answered; "have you anything in it?"

"Anything?" he almost shouted—"why, man, I wrote the whole number."

At this I began to wonder if his brain—never too strong—had not suddenly given way. As you well know, *The New World* is one of the most conservative periodicals—as I will admit that I have found to my own sorrow in the past—and it was preposterous that it should make up a whole number, and a Christmas number at that, from the work of one man. And it was clear to my mind that Lightly would not have been that one man in any event.

While trying to think of something quieting to say, I took the magazine and glanced over the table of contents. It was one of Lightly's fancies—which did him no good in a literary way—to have a dozen or more pen names. He used these indiscriminately, as the humour moved him, and it happened that I knew most of them. So you may imagine my surprise when I tell you that every poem, story, article, and essay in the entire magazine was signed by some one of the many names that I knew he used.

The first was a Christmas poem, signed "G. O. Lightly." Then a Christmas story, signed "T. S. Weaver" (this, he had once explained to me, stood for The Story Weaver). Then an article on "Jerusalem, Nineteen Hundred Years Ago;" "Christmas Past and Present;" and the usual run of such material as editors have fallen into the habit of serving up for the holiday issue. None of the topics were new, nor, so far as I could discover in a hasty glance, were they treated with much brilliancy. The signatures were all composed upon the same puerile plan.

Poor as much of the stuff probably was, I still could not believe that Lightly had written it all, much less secured its publication in a single number of *The New World*. I turned to him for explanation.

"Draw up a chair," he said, with what I thought an air of some condescension. "I can afford to fly high to-night, so let us have a bird and a bottle quietly in this corner while I tell you all about it."

"Of course," he said, as soon as we were fairly settled, "this is all on the quiet. I should not tell even you if you were not one of my best friends, and if I did not mean presently to ask a great favour of you. You know," he continued, "how people have been talking about the science of hypnotism for months past?"

I nodded my assent, and he went on with an uninterrupted flow of words:

"Well," he said, "I chanced some time ago to be thrown in contact with an adept in this art, or science, or whatever you are minded to call it. I recognised at once the value that a knowledge of it might be to me in making fiction, and I asked the fellow to give me some insight into it. This he did, for a consideration, and to such good purpose that I was soon able to practise the science to some extent. I presently found that it was not difficult for me to gain a hypnotic influence over any man of less robust physique than myself; but I rarely attempted to use the power.

"When I finally did it was wholly without premeditation, and it happened in this way. A few weeks ago—in fact, just as they were making up the Christmas number—I strayed into the office of *The New World*, and while there offered Aldeson this poem." Lightly put his finger on the printed page as he spoke, but went on without pause:

"Aldeson put me off with some stock remark about being full of material, of having more than he could handle, and did not even look at the poem. This nettled me considerably, and it suddenly occurred to me that Aldeson was a smaller man than myself, and that I ought to give him a good thrashing for his impudence. Then it came to me all at once that I could hypnotise him and make him accept my poem. I asked him to send his assistant away, as I wanted to speak to him privately. When we were alone, I at once began the effort to make him subject to my will. In less time than I am telling you, I had him completely under my influence, and he had accepted the poem and promised it the initial place in the number.

"Then the thought came to me to try my power a little further. Calling a messenger, I sent to my rooms for a bundle of manuscript, and sorted out from it everything that would do for a Christmas number. You know," he added parenthetically, "that I always keep a stock of material on hand, ready for all needs and seasons. I took these Christmas things up; one by one, and brought them to his attention, and he accepted each one and made a place for it in this holiday number. Then he called his assistant in and gave instructions for making up the copy—and I took him away with me and gave him a royal good time for a week. When he got back to the office it was too late to make any changes, and so you see the number has come out, with nothing but my work. And a very good number it is, too," he concluded, complacently.

"But what do you expect to gain by it?" I asked; "the story will surely come out, and it will do you no good, but quite the reverse."

"You are all wrong," replied Lightly quietly; "the story will not come out. You can see that Aldeson must be the last man to tell it. And he could have no object in doing so, especially as the number has already made such a good impression."

With that he took from his pocket copies of half-a-dozen leading papers and reviews, and showed me comments that were not only favourable, but flattering in the extreme.

"Paid for?" said I, not a little disgusted with the whole business, and particularly at being made a confidant of.

"Yes," he laughed. "And now," he added, with a slight show of hesitancy, "for the other matter."

"Go ahead," I answered, not very graciously, considering that I was dining with him; "I might as well hear it all now."

"You asked me what I expected to gain by it. You know Lettie Underwood"—I started at the name, but nodded with what composure I could command. "That dear girl," said Lightly, "has promised to marry me as soon as I have won a place in literature; in fact, as soon as I have an established standing with any of the leading magazines. This settles that point." To emphasise his meaning, he tapped *The New World* triumphantly.

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"But surely," said I, "you would not consider this fair? You would not be willing that she should know—— "

"All's fair in love, my boy. And I want you to be my best man."

I managed to get off with some half promise, and then, pleading an engagement, I got out of the club as quickly as possible and into a cab, and gave the driver the number of Lettie Underwood's house.

The dear girl—I could have choked Lightly for using the words; they were in my heart whenever I thought of her, which was all the time—was at home and received me with her usual welcome. But I held her at arm's length, and, with all the sternness that I could command, exclaimed:

"Letitia, you are a wretched trifler. Give me back my heart."

"What is the matter with the poor boy now?" she cooed softly.

"Matter enough. You have promised to marry Lightly."

"Yes," she laughed; "I remember. He proposed to me six months ago. I told him I would when he had made a success——"

"Your exact words," I said severely, were—"'when you have a standing with any of the leading magazines.'"

"Same thing," she answered airily; "he will never achieve either. It was my way of letting him down easily!"

"Letitia, listen to me," I said; "Lightly has written the entire Christmas number of *The New World*."

At this Letty looked at me reproachfully.

"Dick," she said, "where have you been dining?"

"No, it is not that," I protested; "I dined at the club, and Lightly told me himself, and he showed me the magazine and asked me to be his best man, and we only had one bottle between us."

"Well, this is a scrape!" she exclaimed ruefully; "I suppose I will have to keep my promise and marry him."

"And what about your promise to me?" I asked sarcastically.

"That was indefinite," she answered thoughtfully; "there was never any time set for that. So I shall have to marry him now; and if he should die, or anything happen, I could marry you afterwards."

"Thanks," I replied drily; "but that programme does not suit me. Now let me plan a little. You have been a wilful creature, never ready to name the day; but see the trouble you have got into. I suppose Lightly will be here early to-morrow to marry you. Now, I propose to marry you myself to-morrow at noon."

At this her eyes opened in wide protest.

"Yes," I continued, "I shall send a note to Lightly, telling him of your change, and asking him to be my best man."

"But, Dick, this is too sudden. What shall we live on?"

"Love, you practical girl," I cried, catching her in my arms; "besides, the publishers of *The New World* to-day offered me the editorship of the magazine, *vice* Aldeson, resigned. I suppose his resignation has some connection with this business of Lightly's. I am sorry for him, but I might as well have the place as another."

"And then you can print anything of your own that you want to, can't you, dear? I'm so glad you won't have to be rejected any more."

"Not even by you, sweetheart?"

"Not even by me—any more."

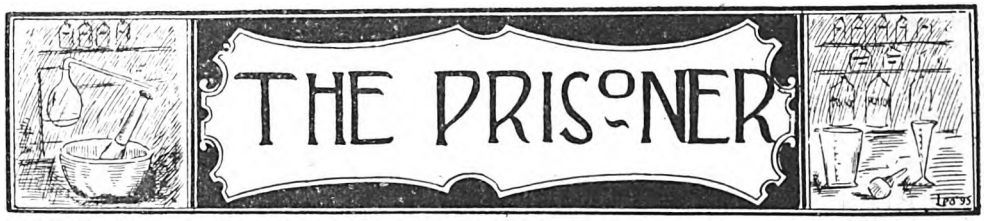
. . . . . .

Do you want the *finis*?

We were married on the morrow, and Lettie was as pretty a bride as ever was seen—as pretty as though she had been given months, instead of hours, for making ready. But on second thoughts, I am not sure that she had not been making ready all the time that I had been vainly asking her to name the day. I confess that I do not understand the sex.

There was but one thing to cloud our happiness. Lightly refused to be best man, or even to come to the wedding. And he has never offered any further contributions to *The New World*.

Perhaps this is because I am not like Aldeson, "of a less robust physique" than himself.



I HAD visited him on several occasions in my capacity of prison chaplain, and had endeavoured to entice him into conversation, but my efforts had not been attended by any success. This might perhaps have been due to a certain shrinking on my own part, for the man was awaiting his trial for murder, and the circumstances were particularly revolting.

He was a duly qualified medical practitioner whose name appeared on the register, and was, according to report, popular in the neighbourhood in which he resided. Yet he was charged with the deliberate and cold-blooded murder of his most intimate friend, and had achieved his end by the coward's resource—poison, administered, if suspicion proved correct, in the execution of his duty.

That a man whose mission was to heal, and in whom entire confidence was placed, should take advantage of his position, and, striking in the dark, destroy, appeared to me almost beyond credence. Yet the facts lay in a nutshell, and all London rang with them.

It was, therefore, not without doing violence to my feelings that I again sought the presence of the accused, and met the cold glance shot from beneath a pair of half-closed lids. He was a man of middle height, with a face from which the fresh colour had ebbed away, and keen, clear grey eyes—eyes that might have lent themselves willingly enough to the emphasising of some smart joke or epigram, but which now glittered strangely. As they rested upon me there lingered in their depths an expression of half-concealed disdain that caused my own to flash in involuntary self-defence.

"A parson, bound down by Thirty-nine Articles—a parson, set and sealed, but a man for all that," he said, smiling.

The smile, lighting up his face like sunshine, acted as a disguise; he looked another being. Or had he, perchance, thrown off a disfiguring mask to show himself in his true colours?

"Well," he continued, in a pleasant voice, "this is the fourth time you have come to inspect the caged animal. What is your opinion of me?"

Moved by a sudden impulse, I took the hand that lay so close to mine and grasped it. He returned the pressure warmly.

"You are no murderer," I said. "Of that I am certain."

The clasp of his fingers relaxed, and he allowed my hand to drop.

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"Thanks," he said simply.

The monosyllable had a true ring, but his voice faltered. He rose, paced his cell, then, halting at my side, touched my shoulder.

"No, I am no murderer," he continued slowly, "but, for all that, *I killed my friend;* the best of friends; the noblest of men. Bah! What a fool I am!"

He brushed his hand across his eyes with an impatient gesture, and resumed his seat.

"If I am not trespassing on your time," he said courteously, "I should like to tell you how it happened."

"No, no," I interrupted hurriedly; "consider."

He laughed mockingly.

"You would bid me reserve my defence. Friend, I have none to make. Man is not my judge. Before my God I stand or fall. Listen."

I clasped my hands together, and, bending forward, fixed my eyes upon his face, losing neither glance nor word.

"The deceased and I were close friends," said he, "and had been so from boyhood, for we went to school together. What a bright little chap he was, to be sure. We boys used to call him 'Quicksilver'; and there never was such a fellow to run or leap, never. But what of that?"

He broke off suddenly, as if to recall his wandering spirit to the matter in hand, and continued with forced calmness.

"He was two years younger than I, and we were not at all of the same nature. He was of an intensely sensitive temperament in spite of all his cheerfulness—something of a poet folks said, though I don't know much of poets myself, so that I am but a poor judge. *I* chose to be a doctor, because I thought then, as I think now, that there is no finer profession on God's earth. *Dick* chose to be a doctor because he liked to be what I was. No better reason, upon my life! You see he was uncommonly fond of me."

Another pause, broken only by the buzzing of some flies and the quick sharp drawing of the speaker's breath. His face was flushed, his eyes soft and humid.

"Well, we were together as students, he and I. Where *I* went *he* went; *my* favourite study was his favourite study; *my* work his work, though in the dissecting room *he* would turn sick and faint, while *I*, for the love of science, conquered distaste. We are none of us born alike. Have you realised that, reverend sir?"

I nodded my head by way of answer to the sharp, cutting interrogation, and made a sign that he should continue.

"In spite of physical drawbacks, Dick got through his exams., and we two settled down as partners."

"I was not aware that the deceased was a medical man," I interrupted.

"Probably not. He did not long continue in the profession. That is the point I was just about to reach. It happened in this way. After we had been working together for about a year he was called upon to attend a serious case. A poor fellow in the next street was attacked by cancer. It was in his face. I will give you some of the details."

He did so in a dry, even professional manner, sparing no particular. Sickened by the account I laid my hand on his sleeve and bade him desist.

"No," he answered quietly, "it is necessary that you should hear this. It affects the *dénoûment*."

Yet his face was paler ere he had completed his narrative.

"Horrible!" I gasped. "Most horrible!"

"So my friend considered. He came home late one night, and as we two sat smoking together he looked into my eyes and said, 'Jack, I'm not fit to be a doctor.'

"'No, dear boy,' said I; 'I think not.' For he was as white as a sheet, and trembled like a woman. I talked to him a bit, and tried to make him look at things in a matter-of-fact way, but he could not.

"'I have known for so long that I am the wrong man in the wrong place,' said he; 'but this is the climax. You will have to get another partner, Jack.'

"He lit his candle thoughtfully, then blew it out again in an absent fashion.

"'Old man,' said he, 'I want you to make me a promise.'

"'Supposing,' he observed, in an odd, mechanical way, 'that this most frightful of all frightful diseases were to visit me, you must give me your word that you will put me out of my misery. You must promise that you will not stand by and see me die as that man is dying now.'

"The picture of the scene we two had witnessed a few hours since rose before me, and something of the horror that overcame him communicated itself to me.

"'Yes, I will promise,' I replied unhesitatingly; 'and you will do me the same good turn if——'

"'Hush!' he cried, lifting his troubled face. 'Swear!'

"So we swore; he still pale to the lips, I half-mocking, half-solemn. But I did not know. God help me, I did not know!"

The prisoner's head dropped upon his breast; the feverish light died out of his eyes; his lips worked convulsively. Gazing at him, I feared he would not find strength to finish his narrative, but suddenly, and by a strong effort, he gathered himself together, and went on speaking:

"That was five years ago; five years all told. Throughout that period our friendship deepened, and the ties that bound us together grew closer and closer. At last one day my friend sent for me. He had been looking out of sorts for some time past, and I had felt a little anxious about him, though, when we met, he had always appeared to be in excellent spirits. On this occasion, however, he made no attempt at cheerfulness, but told me his fears. Alas! they were only too true; the disease he had so dreaded was already far advanced. At first he hoped against hope, and I abetted him in his self-delusion, but the day came when even to *his* buoyant nature hope was no longer possible. It was when he lay in utter helplessness and direst agony that he reminded me of my promise.

"'When I exacted it from you,' he said, 'it was because I knew that this was a family complaint with us. And I can't stand it, that is all.'

"It was not all. Day by day he grew rapidly worse, and I was his sole medical attendant; day by day, racked by such pangs as you can scarcely conceive, he turned his piteous eyes on me, and bade me be true to my vow. I turned a deaf ear to his intreaties; I refused to listen. The words of the old commandment, '*Thou shalt do no murder*,' stayed the hand of mercy—until one awful night when I sat beside him and could no longer bear to watch his torments. Then strength gave way, or came to me, I know not which, and—you know the rest."

I looked into his ashen face, my own pale as death.

"Now for your sermon, sir," he said abruptly. But I could not speak.

"Silent!" cried the prisoner; "and small blame to you. It is a hard enough riddle, but as for me I have no misgivings. The world and the world's opinion, your sapient judge and jury, what are they to me? I hear no voice save my friend's, with its feeble cry, '*God bless you, Jack.*' I see no face save my friend's, no longer distorted by pain, but calm and peaceful, as that of a little child. For the rest what have I to fear? God alone shall be my judge."

The prisoner spoke truly. It was not given to him to stand arraigned before any human tribunal—that very night his troubled spirit passed away. They found him in the early morning lying dead, his hands crossed, and the faint rose hue of dawn colouring his marble face.

A NAP HAND.

(1.) PEARSON'S WEEKLY. 1d. Every Saturday.
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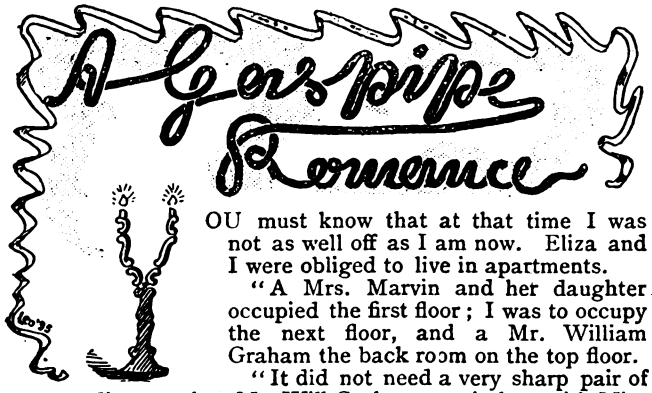

"YOU must know that at that time I was not as well off as I am now. Eliza and I were obliged to live in apartments.

"A Mrs. Marvin and her daughter occupied the first floor; I was to occupy the next floor, and a Mr. William Graham the back room on the top floor.

"It did not need a very sharp pair of eyes to discover that Mr. Will Graham was in love with Miss Emily Marvin. Eliza and I both understood it before many days.

"One day when I came home a little earlier than usual, Eliza said to me, 'Ted, I think there is something very mysterious about Miss Emily. I was going past their room to-day, and I happened to look in, and there sat Miss Emily at her writing desk. The tears were streaming down her cheeks, and her pen was going like wild-fire. She was talking to herself. When I got upstairs I lay down for a nap. Presently I heard a queer noise. First I couldn't think what it was, but it seemed to come from the gaspipe. I listened again, and then I made up my mind that somebody was playing on the bracket below as if it were a piano. I've always said her actions were very strange, and Mrs. Smith says so too. I tell you, Edward, that that beautiful young girl is crazy—stark, staring crazy!'

"As a matter of course I paid no further attention to what I felt certain was Eliza's nonsense about Miss Emily's mind being out of order. But one evening I went hurriedly up to my room. The moment I got into our room I heard a most peculiar noise. It sounded like 'Tick, tick, tick—tick, tick, tick,' and it came from the gaspipe.

"Now, I must tell you that among my earlier experiences in this life I was once a telegraph operator. I knew all the dots and dashes, just the horrid tick, and succession of ticks, and spaces between the ticks that are equivalent to the letters of the alphabet. And here I heard them again. I saw through the whole business at once, and as I did so I just lay down on the bed and laughed until I was afraid I'd have every button off my waistcoat.

"Someone had told me once that Will Graham was a telegraph operator. He had evidently taught Miss Emily the art, and here they were communicating with each other in the most satisfactory fashion, while everybody imagined that they were conducting themselves like perfect strangers. Then I waited patiently to hear what was being said. The conversation I had happened upon ran as follows:

"'How are you this evening?' 'Awfully tired. And you?' 'Tired too. Mamma has been particularly exasperating.' 'Has she? Am I never to have a talk with you again?' 'I don't know. Keep up your spirits.' 'I will, but it's dreadfully trying.' 'I think somebody's coming.' 'Oh, dear!'

"I heard a door open and shut, and I knew that somebody entered the room below.

"Well, matters were going along in this fashion when one day I began to think that the lovers were giving a new turn to their conversations. One day I heard Emily say to Will:

"'There's no use, I've got to do it.' 'What?' 'Kill her.' 'All right.' 'But I hate to; and I can't think how.' 'Shoot her.' 'Nonsense.'

"At this point Eliza came into the room, and she made such a noise that I couldn't hear anything more. But not long afterwards there were more serious communications:

"'Dear, dear Will?' 'What is it?' 'I won't love you if you won't help me.' 'I will help you—with all my might.' 'Then tell me what is a good way to kill an old woman.' 'Arsenic.' 'That won't do at all.' 'Blow her up with gunpowder.' 'Nonsense! You can't help me one bit.' 'I'll die for you.' 'I don't want you to die. I want her to die, and I don't know how to kill her.' 'Well, kill her somehow, or she'll be the death of both of us.'

"How could these two innocent-looking young people be depraved enough to plot the murder of a fellow-being in such a heartless manner? And who could the fellow-being be? Who but the poor old lady to whom Miss Emily owed her being?

"Well, at last matters came to a crisis. It was one summer's night. As I lay in bed I heard a noise.

"I listened intently. Whether it was a presentiment or not, I don't know, but I felt sure at once that something dreadful was coming. It did.

"'I've made up my mind, Will,' from below.

"'Well, to do what?'

"'Just as you said. Shooting's the best. She'll die instantly, you know, and I won't have any morbid farewells to go through. I don't feel up to such a thing—have never had any practice in just that line.'

"'Horrible!' I thought. 'People don't generally get any practice at murdering their mothers.'

"'I'm going to do it now, too. I've dallied over it a dreadful while, and I'm going to have it over by midnight. Then I'll breathe more freely. There'll be nothing left but the marriage, and after that I can rest.'

"'All right; go at it.' This from above. 'Do it up brown. I'll help you spend the money.'

"I could stand it no longer. 'Eliza!' I shrieked, 'there's murder going on in this house. Get up!'

"I simply flew up. In two seconds I had on a pair of trousers and a coat. Eliza tried to hold me, but I flung her off. I expected the sound of a pistol shot before I could get downstairs.

"I went down three steps at a time. On my way I met a party of people coming from the front room, where they had been playing whist.

"'Mr. Jones!' shrieked our landlady, seeing my excited face.

"'Madam,' I cried, 'there is murder going on in your house. Come at once—come! To the rescue, I command you!'

"With the whole house following, I rushed to the door of Miss Marvin's room. I flung my whole strength against the wood. A series of shrieks came from within.

"'It's locked! It's locked! It's locked!' I cried.

"By this time I had succeeded in convincing somebody that some foul deed was under way, for the servants came rushing up. One had the fire-tongs, the other had seized a decanter, which she evidently meant to use as a bludgeon.

"Bent on saving that poor old lady from a dreadful death at her daughter's hands, I threw my whole strength against that door. There was a straining of the wood, a bursting of the latch, the door gave way, and there we stood in the midst of the room. I gave one spring towards the murderess, and pinioned her in my arms.

"What happened next? Why, that miserable wretch, Will Graham, actually threatened to have me arrested for assaulting his promised wife. Think of it—when I knew I was stopping a terrible crime.

"The murder wasn't anything. Miss Emily was one of your precious literary people—writing a story with a murder in it. She and Will Graham had been engaged for three years. He usually helped her out with her plots. Just now there was a family row because Will wouldn't take the old lady's money to go into business with. Will said he would not risk impoverishing her. The old lady got provoked She was tired of seeing Will nothing but a telegraph clerk, so she said they shouldn't speak to each other until he came to his senses and went into something for himself."

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FOR ALL

BILIOUS & NERVOUS DISORDERS,

SUCH AS

Sick Headache, Constipation,
Weak Stomach, Impaired Digestion,
Disordered Liver, & Female Ailments.

ANNUAL SALE SIX MILLION BOXES.

In Boxes, 9½d., 1s. 1½d., and 2s. 9d. each, with full directions.

Prepared only by the Proprietor,

THOMAS BEECHAM, St. Helens, Lancashire.

Sold by all Druggists and Patent Medicine Dealers everywhere.

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AND

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(Highest Award, Paris Exhibition), for

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In Lead Packets and 3 lb. and 5 lb. Tins only.

THE QUEEN says:

"Dulcemona Tea is EXCELLENT, MOST DELICATE in FLAVOUR, and REFRESHING to a degree."

AGENTS EVERYWHERE—FIRST-CLASS GROCERS. WHOLESALE ONLY: 11 & 11a, UPPER THAMES STREET, LONDON, E.C.

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If your children have failing health from any cause, no matter whether they are healthy children but out of health, or are naturally pale, delicate, and thin, do not hesitate, but procure them a Tonic at once, for no time should be lost in improving the general health of delicate children.

The period of childhood calls loudly for strengthening remedies; remember nature is at work building up tissues, developing nerve sensibilities as well as hardening bony structures. It is, therefore, the only rational treatment; in fact, it is a complete waste of time to give them anything else. Children's ailments when treated tonically yield at once, showing how urgently and terribly needed strengthening remedies are.

Infantina's Syrup is a simple, harmless, pleasant remedy, prepared from pure ingredients of a well-known curative and corrective character. The Hypophosphites of Iron and Lime are delicately united with other tonic and strengthening restoratives. These invaluable Iron and Lime Salts are absolutely essential for the growing tissues, and often health cannot be maintained without them.

Infantina's Syrup forms pure, rich, red blood, and strengthens bony, muscular, and nervous tissues, thus attacking the very root of the delicacy. By its use the appetite increases, flesh is gained, general health augmented, and the whole functions of the body are more energetically performed. Do not forget that consumption, scrofula, anæmia, fits, bow-legs, knock-knees, pigeon-breast, and rickets, as well as other stunted and distorted growths, are entirely due to neglected delicacy in childhood.

There is no better remedy for the ills and ailments of children from two to fifteen years of age than Infantina's Strengthening Syrup, which changes peevish, pale, delicate children into healthy, happy boys and girls.

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Mrs. Hendry, writing from South Shields, states: "Infantina's Syrup has done my children a world of good; in fact, I should not like to be without it."

"Gentlemen,—I consider Infantina's Syrup a most satisfactory medicine for children. Mine are so fond of it that I have to lock the bottle away from them. There certainly is no trouble in getting them to take it. I have given it to three children—three, seven, and twelve years of age—and I can truthfully say it has made new children of them.—Yours sincerely, Caroline Cross."

"Gentlemen,—I can speak most highly of Infantina's Syrup for delicate children. My daughter, I fear, inherited a delicate chest from her grandfather, who died of Consumption. Your Syrup has quite stopped her cough, and she has really commenced to get fat. No other medicine seemed to do her any lasting good. She finds it so pleasant to take that she looks forward to each dose.—Faithfully yours, Mary Knight."

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STORIES OF ALL SORTS FOR ALL PEOPLE.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 322. FOR WEEK ENDING MARCH 2, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

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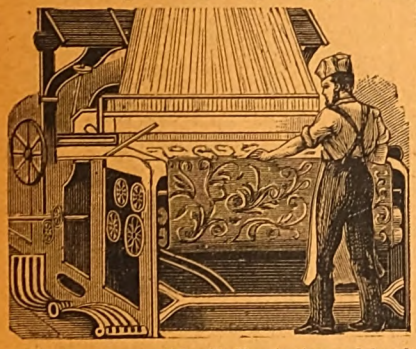
Buy New Carpets at the Price of Old.

It would be ridiculous to buy old carpets, old designs, shop-worn, out-of-date goods, when you can purchase a stylish GENUINE, WOVEN, REVERSIBLE TRIUMPH CARPET suitable for Drawing-room, Dining-room, Bedroom, etc., for

4/- Each. 4s. Postal Order or 50 Stamps, **4/- Each.**

handsomely bordered and woven in fifty different patterns and colourings, to suit all requirements, and LARGE ENOUGH TO COVER ANY ORDINARY-SIZED ROOM. These Carpets will be sold as an advertisement for the goods of the British Carpet Weaving Company, below the actual cost of production. Thousands have already been sold at almost double above prices.



With every carpet we shall supply a very handsome Rug to match, for 1s. 3d. extra.

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Hundreds of unsolicited testimonials are being received from delighted purchasers who have had these carpets in use for years.

Stafford Road Post Office, Wolverhampton. M. A. Dudley, writes:—"Having purchased two of your Carpets between three and four years ago, I am thoroughly satisfied, and have recommended them to several people, who I know have tried them, and are equally satisfied."

65, Abbey Street, Nuneaton, Warwickshire. "Mrs. Bostock will thank the British Carpet Weaving Co. to send her one of their Carpets, for which she encloses postal order. She has had one of these Carpets in constant wear for some years now, and finds it the best wearing and cheapest carpet she can get."

Do not miss this opportunity, it may not occur again.

CARPET ORDER FORM.
On receipt of this order form, and Postal Order or stamps, we guarantee to send any goods, as above, to your address in any part of the United Kingdom. Money returned if not approved.
(Signed) THE BRITISH CARPET WEAVING CO.

All orders despatched in rotation same day as received. Cheques and Postal orders to be made payable to J. HARGREAVES, Secretary, and crossed "UNION BANK." Address—

The British Carpet Weaving Company,
31, OLD STREET, ALDERSGATE, LONDON, E.C.

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(Highest Award, Paris Exhibition), for

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KNITS STOCKINGS (ribbed or plain) GLOVES and CLOTHING in WOOL, SILK, or COTTON. INSTRUCTIONS FREE. Lists free per post. TRIUMPHANT AWARD at PARIS. The only WINNER in the WORLD of 7 GOLD MEDALS and 19 other Honours.

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Works: 48, Upper Brook St., Manchester.

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IF you require a reliable remedy for the relief of Superfluous Fat, send for a box of my "H.D." Pills. No starvation required. You may eat and drink what you like yet I guarantee to either sex a permanent reduction of 5 to 7 lbs. weekly. They are agreeable to take and harmless, being entirely of a vegetable preparation, are successful in the most stubborn cases, and never fail to improve both health and figure. Their action is rapid, certain, safe, and entirely free from inconvenience. They are pearl-coated and tasteless and highly recommended by the Medical Profession. Price 2s. 9d., 4s. 6d. and 11s. Prof. F. A. HOLT, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London

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The LONDON TOILET COMPANY'
190, Acre Lane, London, S.W.
Warranted perfectly harmless.

IMPORTANT TO LADIES

Valuable and never failing remedies for all irregularities and obstructions, however obstinate or long standing, and never fails to bring about the desired result. These really wonderful medicines are without parallel in medical science: they preserve health, and have saved thousands trouble, illness, and expense; heaps of unsolicited testimonials. Send at once stamped envelope for most invaluable particulars. (The only effectual remedy on earth.)

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52, LANGDALE, WALTHAMSTOW.
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will produce the most lovely complexion that the imagination could desire. Clear, Fresh, freed from Blotch, Blemish, Coarseness, Redness, Freckles, or Pimples. Sent post free 4s. 6d.
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1s. per tablet, 3 for 2s. 6d. Postage, 3d.
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Please mention this paper.

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BOILING WATER OR MILK.

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TO LADIES
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NEVER FAILS TO AFFORD
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GENERALLY IN A FEW HOURS.

No case hopeless, failure is simply impossible, as Mrs. Snow, of Denmark Hill, Camberwell, writes:—

"By adopting your treatment my anxiety and misery was over within twenty-four hours, although I had been daily taking pills and other things in vain. Half the quantity you sent proved effective, to my intense joy and surprise."

A sworn guarantee is enclosed with all testimonials and medicine, which is inexpensive, as one bottle at 4s. 6d. (by post, 4s. 9d.) is usually sufficient for any case.

Full particulars will be gladly forwarded to any lady on receipt of addressed envelope.

Write privately to—
Mrs. P. S. S.,
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QUICKLY CORRECT ALL IRREGULARITIES, REMOVE ALL OBSTRUCTIONS and RELIEVE the distressing SYMPTOMS so prevalent with the sex. Boxes 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. (the latter size contains three times the quantity), of all Chemists, or will be sent anywhere on receipt of 15 or 34 stamps, by the maker,

E. T. TOWLE, Chemist, NOTTINGHAM.
Beware of Imitations injurious and worthless.

A BOON TO LADIES

Collins' Marvellous Female Remedy.

Mr. COLLINS (who was 30 years a member of the Royal College of Surgeons of England), will forward free of Charge, full PARTICULARS of a REMEDY, which during an extensive practice both at home and in the Colonies he has never known to fail in the most OBSTINATE CASES of OBSTRUCTION and IRREGULARITIES. Send addressed envelope for full particulars, and waste no more time and money on useless Pills and so-called Remedies, &c., which, in the majority of cases, are nothing but FUGATIVES, and cause SICKNESS, PROSTRATION, and PAIN, without having the desired effect.

Letters to be addressed—
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MADAME FRAIN'S FAMOUS FEMALE MIXTURE.

The most powerful and effective on earth.

For the most obstinate cases. Will not injure the most delicate. Price 7s. 6d. (Strongest, 11s. per bottle); post free, 6d. extra. HERBAL INSTITUTE, 1a, Hackney Road (opposite Shoreditch Church), London, N.E. Send at once stamped directed envelope for particulars and proofs. I will forfeit £100 for every testimonial that is not genuine, and they can be seen at any time.

Sold also by all Chemists.

TO WOMEN. IRREGULARITIES OBSTRUCTIONS, &c., removed by an ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN Method WITHOUT MEDICINE. No Pills, Mixtures, or Useless Injections. *Greatest Discovery of Modern Medical Science.* Send stamped envelope for particulars, testimonials, &c., to Mrs. SHAFFER-BENNYON, 328, High Holborn, London, W.C.

BALDNESS CURED in all its forms. Send stamped addressed envelope for Testimonials Press Criticism, and valuable Pamphlet, containing Chapters on Baldness, Loss of Hair, Greyness, Superfluous Hair, &c., with Advice Form for Treatment, to Dr. HORN, Hair Specialist, Newport, Isle of Wight.

All communications respecting Advertisements should be sent to the Advertisement Department, 167, FLEET STREET, LONDON, E.C.

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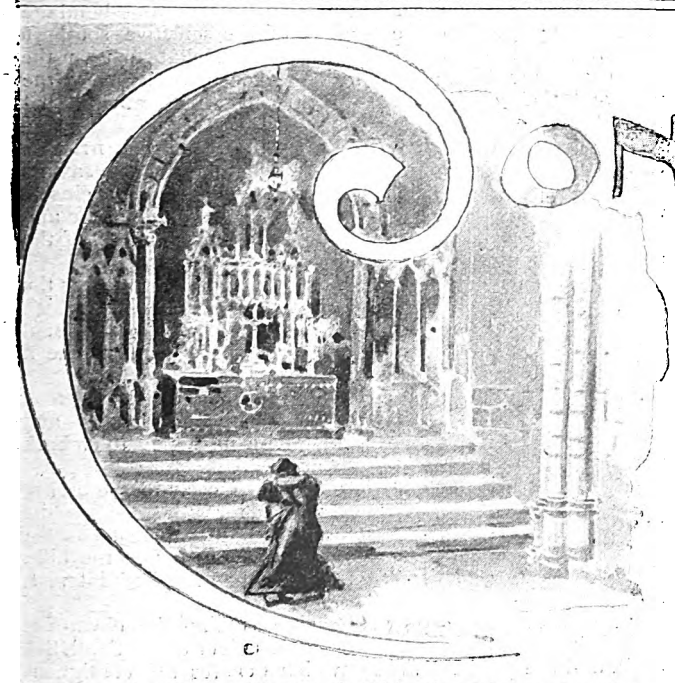
SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 322.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING MARCH 2, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.



CONSECRATED TO LOVE

THAT quaint little edifice half hidden in the over-hanging elms? It is a chapel, monsieur. Ah, it is indeed a strange place for a house of worship; but no one has knelt there these many, many years, and, in fact, only one person ever worshipped within the gloomy pile, and that one, stranger still, but once.

Yet, my friend, that person had most excellent reasons for building that little temple upon that very spot, of the sombre grey brick of the valley-kilns, even from the little that I know. Some there are who build chapels, actuated by a spirit of religious sentiment; some to expiate a crime; some to satisfy a species of egotism, perhaps; but never was temple consecrated in the manner of this one—no, not in all the chronicles of ages. It perpetuates the thrilling history of a most strange and tragic love.

I was a lad of sixteen when I entered the service of General Count de Barde, of the Third Battalion, on his vast estates which, in 1809, included almost the whole of the north valley of the Seine from the suburbs of Paris to the pretty Gothic village of Meaux yonder.

My father was a Corsican and a patriot, a worshipper of his countryman, the great Bonaparte, who had rendered the General life-long aid in his accumulation of power; and when, in 1807, he was killed by the falling of a tree, after having saved the General's life only to lose his own, it was understood that I was to be trained to assume control of at least a part of this perfect provincial system, and to manage exclusively the mammoth brick kiln which stood in the identical spot where now stands the consecrated chapel yonder, surrounded by the same hand-clasped and patriarchal trees.

Over the tree-tops beyond, monsieur, you notice the grand old ruin on the summit of the hill. It was the château of the General, and a marvel of beauty it was in those days to the thousands who came even from Paris to admire it, and to partake of sumptuous hospitality which ever resembled a sort of all-year fête. Ah, what stirring times were those, my friend! From that grand old ruin down to this solitary little chapel in the valley an invisible chain of history hangs, every link of which incloses a human passion, a deep and varied experience.

What an imposing figure to all this pageant of reminiscence. The Emperor admired, and the valley folk adored him. Perhaps it was the sterling integrity of his nature, and the deep sense of justice that actuated his deeds, and gave nobility to his patriotism.

Long and multiplying prosperity, too, gave the General courage, his great good heart instinct with the chivalry of a true soldier. Of his vast army of valley-folk workers, either in his vineyards, pottery works, or about the great brick kilns, not one but enjoyed his personal interest.

The firing of these kilns was a tri-yearly event of moment, and in this open clearing about the kilns the General would have his twenty long tables brought down from the château, loading them with viands, and every man, woman, or child that had the least hand in his enterprises was bidden to the feast. A cask of choice vintage was offered up in pleasant sacrifice, and at the July fête an ox was roasted whole. What a vivid memory of the valley monarch, we who knew him, retained!

I can see him yonder now—that tall, dark, human thunder-bolt, with heart as tender as a child's, with a voice that made women quaver, and children cry with fear, yet capable of softest modulation—stalking down the narrow aisles between the broad, laden and garlanded tables, lighted by a hundred torches, scanning the faces that not one of his great family be missing, not an impostor thrust into their midst.

It was in the late spring of 1808 that the General, returning from his annual visit to the home of his childhood, in the Hautes Pyrénées, brought back with him his young wife, some twenty years his junior, to rule with him the fortunes of "Halloc," the château yonder.

The valley went wild with joy, and for many days there was open feasting in the great halls of the mansion, and scenes of festivity followed, rivalling the splendours of the court of Hadrian. Paris was drunken with the success of her idol, over whom the Fates seemed to hover, showering bounty upon bounty and victory upon victory upon him

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Like a child did she follow her mountain lord.

The General's young wife was like a wild gazelle brought from the forests to be the ruling spirit of this palace of luxury. She was the most perfect example of what the pure southern soils and clear mountain atmosphere, as well as the surroundings of tradition and romance, produce after generations of development.

She was not beautiful; she was more. One forgot mere beauty in the strange spell which her mere presence inspired in the northern heart; small of figure, yet so straight and commanding, that she gave the illusion of stature, with a cheek that shone with a mellow light like ripe fruit of the tropics, shoulders of classic modelling in the Oriental luxuriousness of the Empire gown, with a seeming transparency in their dimpled roundness, she bore the elegance of high birth and breeding, yet that eloquent simplicity of the peasant to whom tradition is more than history, poetry and song more than philosophy and fact.

The General adored her—as did all those who knew her. But, victim ever of that indomitable conceit which had hitherto conquered all, he had led himself into the belief that she in turn loved him, which, my friend, I deplore as a deep and deadly blunder into which snare no younger doting lover could have fallen. What sweet but fatal illusions will not possess the minds of men of five-and-fifty when they themselves are the captives of an all-encompassing passion?

It did not require the wisdom of prophets to perceive that though present in the flesh the soul was absent upon hourly long journeys back to the Franco-Spanish province, lighted by southern stars and swept by the soft perfumed winds of the semi-tropic land of rich dreams and rapturous love. As she sat before the spinet it would not take a spirit of magic to divine that those dreamful eyes looked quite over the head of the great General and found repose in the embrace of a wild dark spirit of some Spanish hero, the complement of her inner life.

But soon came matters of national moment requiring the General's presence in the ranks. Until the departure of the great valley-monarch we were inclined to treat the glories of Napoleon as affairs of an abstract nature which lay far beyond our orbit, as it were. But when the big soldier mounted his bay gelding, and, attended by his saluting aides, passed down the valley of the Seine towards Paris, followed by shouting hundreds on foot and on horse, the national strife was brought to our own doorsteps.

I remember well the parting between the General and his young wife on that memorable May evening, after they had watched the twilight fading from the terrace, promenading up and down in deepest consultation.

Ah, she was beautiful then in the flush of fear and the wonder of parting! A soft Persian shawl fell back from her white shoulders, and her head was crowned with a sort of classic garland—simplicity regaining favour again after the barbarian prodigality of the Creole queen had exhausted all human caprices.

And like a child did she follow her mounted lord down the hillside, clinging to the sword presented to him by the Emperor, and endeavouring loyally to cheer her chief; and between yonder crumbling monoliths, which were then the side-posts of an imperial gateway, the big soldier bent down and kissed her twice upon the forehead, whereupon in speechless eloquence of emotion the little sibyl turned and fled back to the terrace again.

With the General's going it seemed that a glory had passed from the earth leaving a sense of oppression and bondage behind. Driven into the fortress of the sensitive southern temperament, the beautiful mistress of the château upon the hill became a creature of sensations once more, living in the past and the dream-life of the present, which was all but perfect, all but happiness.

For days a melancholy possessed her, and her irritable temper brought us all into humble subjection; but the savage came to the surface, and solitude, that, following so closely upon these unremittent festivities, was once burdensome and *ennuyeuse*, now became a joy, and she felt the liberty of the solitary mountain bird, a creature of the upper air.

It was three months to a day that, as I was arranging the final preliminaries for lighting the great kiln—which momentous event was to follow the night after with the usual fête, a young man entered the open space yonder, like a wayfarer who had lost his way.

Alone, and not a little genial with the thought of the morrow, I hailed him. He said that he had come a long distance, and was making his way to the north, where he hoped to embark for America in search of new fortunes.

A forlorn blue coat was buttoned up closely to the bronze neck, and his trousers were tied about him with thongs, while his slime-oozing boots left a footprint like that of a panther upon the polished clay floor of the clearing before the kiln. But there was somewhat in the face that inspired interest, almost awe.

"You are from the south," said I, noting the clean-cut, mobile features, like a cameo of a troubadour cut in South Sea shell, and the peculiar accent which denotes the contiguous provinces to Spain.

"You are clever," said he, dropping his eyes; then recovering, "is yonder the château of Madame la Comtesse de Barde?"

"Yes. I am her aide during the absence of the General."

"Indeed!" The word was spoken almost with agitation. "You will take a message to her from me?" He was drawing forth a twisted handkerchief, which spilled out one or two pieces of gold as he untied it with trembling fingers.

"You insult me, monsieur," I said. "If Madame la Comtesse knows you I will take a message without hire, for I see that you are in need."

The stranger nodded as if the need were indeed more than matters of hunger and thirst; then wrote a few lines, intrusting them to me. "I will wait here till you return," he said.

As I reached the grand terrace Madame la Comtesse was just alighting from her black charger, and was rifling her pocket for a bon-bon to reward her faithful animal after her evening jaunt down the valley.

The reading of that simple message.

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With the reading of that simple message—once, twice, thrice—and with a tumult of misgivings in her heart, the beautiful woman turned upon me, venturing a question which only broke into a faint choking cry.

For a moment the fluttering heart seemed solving a great problem; and turning her eyes in the direction of the sun that left great trains of gorgeous cloud right over the most favoured capital of the civilised world, as if to gather light into the darkness of a doubting, hesitating soul, a sort of prayer escaped the quivering lips; and then without a spoken word she remounted the black horse, and spurred him down the arch of overhanging lindens, in the direction of the kilns.

I stood still a moment in amazement, a feeling of guilt entered my heart, though my crime had been but the prompting of a pure thought. At last I perceived the hidden significance of that silent living drama acted with such tragic earnestness by one who was her sole audience all these weeks.

Suddenly a light touch at my side, and I looked up. The groom was standing with eyes fixed upon the distance, his hand pointing down the valley road beside the gleaming Seine, which threaded the dark green vale like a ribbon of silver through an altar-cloth. Three mounted figures were approaching, the sight of the forward one starting the blood to my temples. It was he General.

Instantly I turned, and fled down the narrow defile which was a short path to the kilns, so familiar to me. It seemed that some calamity impended, though I could not guess more than to realise the General's disappointment, on his sudden coming, at not finding the Countess to greet him.

As I neared the kilns I slackened my pace from mere exhaustion. I had crept close to the kiln-clearing on the opposite side from the road entrance, when the noise of the ponderous trappings, and the tread of the heavy charger coming down the hill, drove me to quick action. But the shadows deepened, and my way became more difficult; and as I stealthily approached the clearing I saw that I was too late.

Pausing an instant, there, I heard a whisper in the stillness, and, strange to say, the iron door of the great kiln close and latch, followed by the shuffle of feet, as of some one dancing on one foot with hasty mounting. Then I crept even to the edge just as the silhouette of the tall soldier appeared in the open space, and there met the wife seated imperiously, like an apparition in grey, against the sombre shadows.

With a faint cry of forced surprise, the little woman reined up, and greeted her lord; but with a kiss and a wave of the hand he sped past her, silencing her with a gleaming look. Then the warrior stopped, dismounted, drew his sword, and advanced towards the great kiln-door.

"Stop!" The cry was like the scream of a wounded animal.

The General turned: "You have someone locked in there," he said.

"How dare you?" A cut of the whip and the black charger dashed up broadside to the great door. The tall warrior stood still, folding his arms. There was a smile upon his lips as he said: "Dare you look me in the eyes and tell me that you did not just now conceal someone in there from me?"

"I dare!"

"Then——you lie! I will prove that you lie——"

"One moment!" The soldier halted.

"What are you going to do?"

"To prove that you have lied, and then kill the proof!" The utterance was calm—tragically calm.

"One moment!" and the little woman waved a glistening weapon into the air. Then, holding the weapon above her, she said calmly, "If you open that door and find no one there, before God, I shall plunge this into my heart—choose, Monsieur!"

Whether held by the fascination of those low-spoken words, or stopped by the realisation that be there a lover within or no lover, the fate of his happiness were the same, I can only wonder. But, acknowledging his defeat, the General drew his helmet and advanced to his conqueror. "My love," he said, "my life is yours. As I love you, so do I believe in you. Lay your hand upon this sword and swear that you are faithful to me!" The slender hand shot out, grasping the sword-hilt, while he clasped his palms around it. "Before God,

"You have someone locked in there."

I am true!" the voice betrayed no tremour of fear.

Then the great soldier reached forward, clasping his loved one to him with a thousand prayers for forgiveness, and a thousand pledges of confidence. "How could I have been so mad as to doubt you—you who are the light, the joy, the heaven of a soldier's life, for whom I hope, fight, and pray God to endure?"

But, alas, my friend, the sword went not back into the sheath as the dagger had done, nor in his ravings did once those restless eyes leave that iron door. "Ho! ho! my lads," he bellowed with wild laughter. "Mecklin! Burse! de Freynet! The firing was for to-morrow night; no—it shall be to-night in my honour. Halloo!"

Halloo! Halloo! rolled the echo down the valley, and at sound of that familiar call, like the trump of doom,

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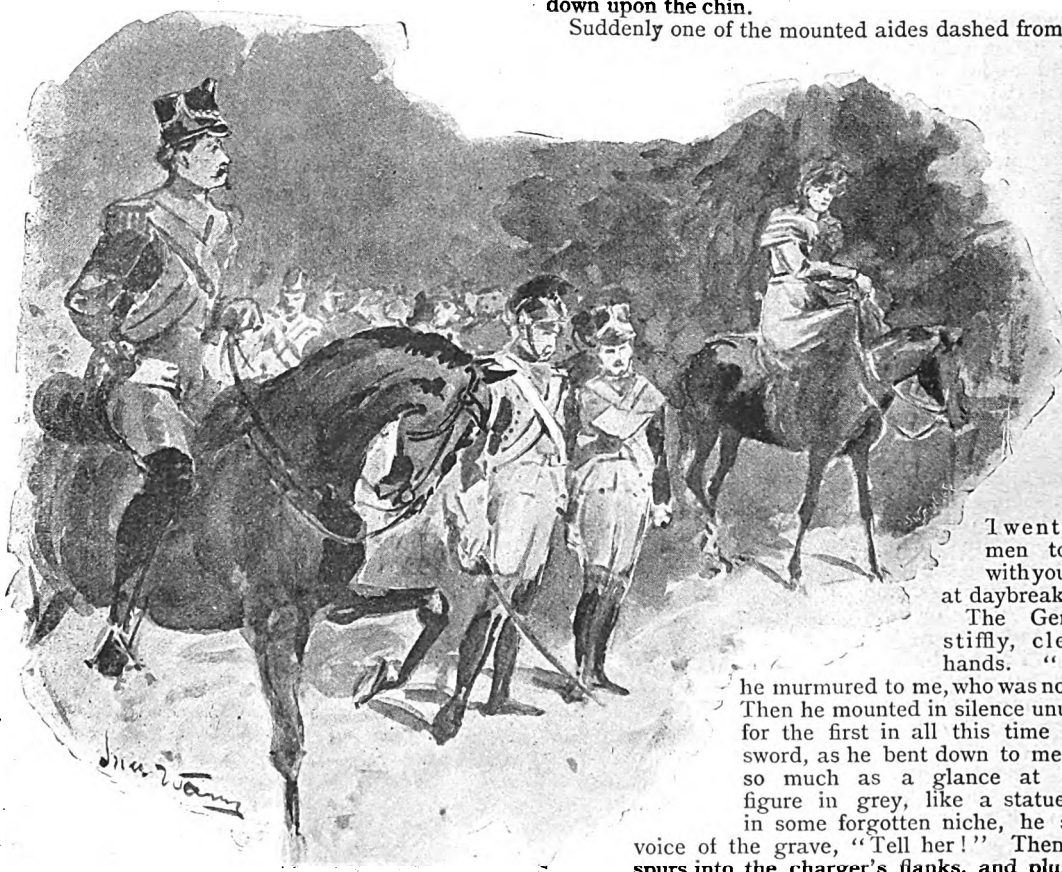
came the tramp of feet from all directions, and a dozen astonished faces burst into the now moonlit space. "It is I—the General! go; call the men—their wives—their children. We shall have the crown fête of the year in honour of Napoleon and his braves! Quick—you, D'Acre! Go to the château, and tell them to bring the wine, the supper, the tables, the torches! Go! And you to the valley-folk, Martin! and let not one disappoint me, for I have but till daybreak when I am off for the Alps!"

Then, leaping like a school-boy up to the silent figure upon the coal-black charger, "Mon Dieu! This is the happiest day of my life, my love! What a fool—a criminal, was I to suspect her whom I so love! But I repent—ah, I will prove to you how loyally I repent. Napoleon has taken Ratisbon, Vienna is bombarded, Rome is seized, the Archduke Charles a prisoner at Essling, Beauharnais and Marmont on the way to join the victor, themselves triumphant, to share the spoils of war, and we follow.

"You shall see how I prove my repentance, my love, you shall be the wife of one of the crowned pillars of the Empire. But first let us make merry. Halloo! Work, sluggards, work! I must be off at daybreak!"

It seemed less than a minute before the valley was alive with people. The rumble of laden waggons, the shouts of the heralds, the roll-beat of drums, seemed to madden the great commander, and his heavy raillery became unintelligible. Now it was a command to his regiment; now a wild camp-song; now an insane jargon trembling with pathos, but that sword—ah, monsieur, never once went it back for an instant at his side, nor those eyes for an instant wandering from that great kiln-door.



Only once did he forget himself, and in that sudden interval a hand darted forward from the watchful woman's bosom, and into the little peep-hole of the kiln the sheathed dagger sped, and then like one who leaves a place of martyrdom she spurred to the edge of the clearing, turned about and waited.

For the next half-hour poured in from every direction whole families, crowds of shouting boys and girls, bands of music, and the General leaped about like a clumsy bear drunken on grapes.

For an hour it seemed, though it was not so long, the tumult of the fête ran riot; the children had made wreaths of oak and beech, and taking advantage of the monarch's unbending, had climbed to his shoulders, crowning him with garlands of green. Then suddenly, in the midst of these shoutings and commands, these songs drowned in a roar of merriment, the shrill pipe of peasant flutes and the roar of drums, the crowned symposiarch ordered oil to be poured into the fuel of the kiln, and snatching a firebrand, he advanced.

A wild shout went up, and every one stood on tiptoe. Without even a glance at the marble statue upon her living pedestal of sleek black, with his sword in his right and the torch in his left hand lighting up his face with a halo of demonry, he thrust the brand into the fuel and drew back with his hands raised to heaven.

A white tongue of flame shot into the air, lighting the furrowed faces of the peasant toilers with a ghastly pallor, throwing into hard relief against the shadows that mounted apparition at the clearing's edge, poised like a lioness at bay, from whose bitten lips two little drops of blood had trickled down upon the chin.

Suddenly one of the mounted aides dashed from the thicket, his horse rearing, blinded, with the sudden light. With a salute, he thrust a message into his chief's hand. "The rumour was not sustained," he said. "Napoleon was routed at Aspern, and is driven to the Isle of Loban. Twenty thousand men to the front, with you in command, at daybreak!"

The General turned stiffly, clenching his hands. "My horse!" he murmured to me, who was now at his side. Then he mounted in silence unutterable, and for the first in all this time sheathed his sword, as he bent down to me, and without so much as a glance at the imperial figure in grey, like a statue of a saint in some forgotten niche, he spoke in the voice of the grave, "Tell her!" Then he dug the spurs into the charger's flanks, and plunged into the darkness.

I turned to her. That head, so long up-poised like the heroic martyr, had fallen slightly forward, and the hands were lifting heavenward; then, ere I could reach her side, the white figure toppled headlong to the ground with a strange sound. Twenty-one days from that eventful night, my friend, General Comte de Barde, lay upon the field of Wagram, with a bullet in his heart!

It was quite a month after the fall of my hero that I saw his widow again, and then it was here in this very spot. As she dismounted from the same faithful gelding, I noticed that her raven hair was streaked with grey; but there was that same calm, impenetrable glance, that firm mouth, and the chin of a tigress, with eyes so eloquent of that nameless power which we know not whether to ascribe to angels or demons. An architect was at her side, obsequious in his deference. "You will build it of these bricks," she said calmly, "neither adding nor taking away a single one; and, moreover, build it upon the identical spot where the kiln now stands."

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And so, day after day, she watched the building of this chapel dedicated to a poet's God, and, with the help of a priest from a distant city, as if she feared any nearer, knelt within and blessed it. A lamp was hung over the altar, and for thirty years it has been replenished by the church, for when the troublous times came for the little Corsican, monsieur, my lady gave her all to the faith, entered a convent, where she died a year after Waterloo, and was brought here for rest.

Ah, a strange history, monsieur. But a stranger fact has yet to be told; for in 1818, having saved from the wreck enough for my little tavern, where you tasted my red wine and cheese to-day, a dapper little stranger saluted me in my arbour. There was a frivolous smirk upon his countenance, and he was dressed in the fashion of the foreign parvenue whom we plain men hate.

"You do not know me," he said. I nearly reeled from my chair, "It is you? Mon Dieu! We have a chapel dedicated to you down the valley here." The conceited creature laughed in a vain, empty chuckle, and said, "Bring me some of your best wine, and then tell me about it!" After recovering from the shock, I told him. "But you, monsieur," I cried, "how did you escape?"

He drank deeply, then said: "When she threw me that dagger I realised that hope was gone; and to save her I must play the martyr. I looked up through the chimney of that hell and saw two stars. They gave me courage. I was younger then. We Pyrénése climb mountains where every unfeathered beast fails. It was a choice between a dagger for me or dishonour for her, with this slight hope.

"V'la! though nearer dead than alive, I watched my funeral-pyre from yonder hill-top, then fled to the coast, and thence to America. Drink again, monsieur. Ah, what fools we are when we are young! What risks we run to be sentimental."

And this, my friend, from the man who had blotted out two noble lives, and had brought our little kingdom here to the dust! Well, I suppose that is what the little Corsican would call "making history," but it seems to me sad travail for the living historians. Is it not true?

Go and look, monsieur. You will find the altar lamp still burning. The slab which marks her sleep you will know by the rude image of an arrowed heart upon it. She carved it there with her own hand.

In the summer of 1869 I had occasion to visit a well-known asylum for the insane. The institution is, I believe, reckoned among the best of its kind in this country. The distinguishing feature in this system of treatment is that of according to patients all reasonable freedom—a system, I am informed, which has been followed with the most encouraging results. So far as practicable, the inmates of the asylum are treated like sane men and women; instead of being constantly reminded of their infirmity, they are led to forget it, if the power to forget it remains.

On the day of my visit I had purchased a case of medicines for one of the assistant physicians, who was an intimate friend. This I had done at his request, and it was to deliver these medicines that I made the journey to the asylum.

Ascending the massive stone steps, I was conducted by one of the attendants into the reception-room. Here I was left to wait until my presence could be announced to my friend, Dr. Balcom. It so happened that I was the only occupant of the room, and to engage my mind while I waited, I picked up a copy of De Quincey's "Confessions" and began to read. While thus occupied a voice accosted me, saying, "Did you wish to see anyone, sir?"

Looking up, I saw the speaker was a small, neatly dressed man, who had entered unobserved, and who had evidently addressed me in order to make his presence known.

"I was waiting," I replied, "to see Dr. Balcom."

"The doctor is engaged just at present on a very important case. Would you like to make a tour of the building?"

I answered that I should be pleased to do so, and thereupon my friend conducted me out into the hall. I discovered that he was one of the attendants in the asylum; and he also informed me that he studied insanity for a number of years, with a view to fitting himself for a physician.

Under so excellent a guide I was conducted through the building, and shown the numerous points of interest. Those patients whose cases possessed particular interest were also pointed out to me, and their idiosyncrasies fully explained.

"The man whom we just passed," said my companion, referring to a large, fresh-faced, mild-eyed patient, "is one of the most dangerous patients we ever had."

"Indeed!" I replied; "one would not think so from looking at him."

"No; but the appearance of all insane people is deceptive. There was a woman here some time ago—a pale, sweet-faced, delicate creature—whom we all thought a saint, and who acted as one until she succeeded in getting hold of a carving knife, and then she cut the throats of two of her fellow patients."

"Is there not danger," I asked, "in granting so much liberty to the inmates?"

"Well, it is our peculiar system. We find in some instances, of course, that the freedom is abused, but in the majority of cases it works well."

This and much more conversation took place between the attendant and myself as we passed through the halls.

"I observe," he said, "that you carry a medicine chest, and I infer that you are a physician."

"No," I rejoined; "although I have the equipments of a doctor, I should make but sorry work at using them. They belong to Dr. Balcom, and I called to deliver them." Then, looking at my watch, I added, "I fear that I am keeping the doctor waiting by my long absence."

"I think he is not yet disengaged," returned my companion; "we shall have time to go out on the roof of the building, from which the views are really magnificent."

Accordingly my guide led the way up the spiral staircase, which connected the topmost storey with the roof, I following at his heels. As we emerged through the broad skylight the scene which presented itself to the eye was really magnificent. To the right lay the river, winding like a silver thread through the pleasant valley; in front could be seen the distant spires of the neighbouring town glistening like the sunlight; and afar off rose the hills, their summits lost in the blue of the heavens. The carefully kept grounds of the asylum beneath us looked like a map, gorgeous with its many hues of flowers.

"This certainly is a splendid view," I said.

"It is still better from the opposite side of the building," returned my guide. "Let us go over there."

Accordingly we walked along the flat roof, the attendant taking the precaution to close the skylight behind us, lest any

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of the patients should be tempted to follow us. The asylum is some two hundred and fifty feet in length, and as we emerged from the westerly end of the roof we had this considerable distance to walk.

Suddenly, when we had reached a point midway in the building, my companion stopped and turning upon me abruptly, said: "Have you a large brain?"

I looked at him a little wonderingly, and then laughed as I replied: "Well, if I have, the world has not discovered it."

"Don't jest, sir," he said petulantly, and with a seriousness that flashed an unpleasant suspicion across my mind. "I wish to know, distinctly, whether or not you have a large brain?"

He was looking me full in the face, with a peculiar expression in his dark eyes which I had not before observed. There was not the slightest betrayal of levity in his manner. He was terribly in earnest. His thin white fingers worked convulsively, and there was a twitching about the muscles of the mouth, such as I have seen in persons suffering intense pain. The horrible truth flashed upon me as I returned his steadfast gaze. This man was a maniac.

I am possessed, I fancy, of an average amount of courage, but at that moment I felt it oozing out of the very pores of my skin. I know I turned deathly pale, and for a moment was utterly unable to think. Then I grew calmer. Doubtless this man had brought me on the roof of the building with the idea of pushing me off. As I have already said, he was a small man. Physically, I was his superior. But I was without weapon of defence. Suppose that he was armed!

"My good sir," I said, endeavouring to speak in a natural tone, "I can assure you that my brain is not a large one, and as my time is limited I think we had better go down now."

I made a movement as if to retrace my steps to the skylight. Quick as thought the madman sprang in front of me, and, with his eyes glaring wildly, albeit he spoke in a low, unexcited voice, he said:

"I think your brain is large enough for my purpose, sir. You must understand that I have a great mission in this world to fulfil—a mission which I have not as yet begun. The strain upon my own mental faculties will be too great. I therefore intend to take your brain and insert it in my own head."

Here he drew from the breast pocket of his coat a large-sized clasp dagger, which he opened, and began to run the blade up and down the palm of his hand.

"I have given years of thought to this subject," he continued, "and I am convinced that I shall succeed. With a double brain power I shall be enabled to accomplish a double amount of brain work. I have been waiting a long time for a subject, but not until I saw you did I find one suited to my purpose. You are the man—the brain for which I have been watching."

"I fear, sir," I said, "that you are sadly mistaken. Your idea is a grand one—an original one. But I am not fit to aid you in carrying it out. You should select a strong, active healthy brain. Mine, on the contrary, is weak and diseased. Why, sir, up to the age of fourteen I was considered an idiot. Since then my friends do not permit me to have control of my own affairs. I am actually little better than a lunatic. I can neither read nor write, I——"

"Nevertheless," he interrupted, "you will answer my purpose, and I am about to take out your brain with this dagger, and insert it in my own head. I have brought you out on the roof that we may be free from interruptions. You will oblige me by now lying down."

If my mind had been stunned by the first discovery of the man's madness it was active enough now. A thousand schemes rushed through my mind; I took in the situation fully. I was alone with a madman armed with an ugly weapon, and he bent upon my destruction. To cry out would be useless; nobody could hear me. The chances of any aid from those within the asylum were small indeed. I could not run away. If I attempted to gain the skylight I should certainly be killed. The medicine case in my hand suggested the thought which saved my life.

"If you are determined to make use of such an unworthy subject as I," I said, "well and good: I shall offer no further resistance. But I ask that you will grant me five minutes while I address a brief farewell to all my friends. I will give it to you to deliver to them,"

"Very well," he replied, "if you know how to write, proceed. I will not wait five minutes."

He took up his position a foot from me, watching every movement I made with a horrible eagerness. I knelt down with my back towards him, took from the medicine case a bottle of chloroform (which I knew it contained), and saturated my handkerchief with the liquid. This I succeeded in doing without his knowledge. Then, rising to my feet, I scribbled some unintelligible words upon the back of an envelope, and said:

"You will do me the honour of reading what I have written here."

He came towards me, and while I held the envelope in my hand, stood by my side and looked at the writing. I had the handkerchief in my right hand and the envelope in the left. As he bent forward to decipher the words, I suddenly clutched his hand which held the dagger, and at the same instant clapped the handkerchief over his mouth and face. He struggled fiercely for a moment or two, and then the fumes of the drug began to tell upon him. His efforts to release himself grew weaker, and he finally fell to the floor insensible.

With all haste I made my way to the skylight, down the spiral staircase, and into the hall below. There I recounted what had happened, and two of the assistants were sent to bring down the murderous maniac. He recovered from the effects of the chloroform, and when last I heard of him he was still looking for a subject to furnish him with an extra brain.

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A DIAMOND TIARA

SHE stood before a water-colour of Ranger's, and wished with all her heart she were far up in the deep quiet of the shade by the river; then she turned her queenly face to her aunt. She held her head high in such proud fashion, did this rare beauty, Madeline.

"If I seem impatient with you," said the elder lady, half pettishly, "it is because you are never impressed. You were always a puzzle to me. Last night at dinner you were more splendid than any beauty there, and that diamond tiara burned like fire in your hair, but you remained the same passive girl you always are. I often wonder, dear, whether anything ever could stir you!

"Don't think for a moment I am so entirely devoid of my senses as to fancy you are going to marry that antiquated millionaire for love. But I often wonder if you could have cared for any man as women sometimes do to the end of their lives. I am going to tell you about one——. That bell means that the carriage is ready."

"Oh, there they are now, just as I speak of them, riding by in that glistening equipage! How darkly he smiles upon me, and he's staring almost rudely at you! He was ill yesterday at the dinner, became faint at the drawing-room door. Wrap the furs well about you, my dear, these December days are nowhere so chill as here in this bleak country.

"Yes, that sad-eyed young girl by his side is his wife. We shall meet them again on the Boulevard up at the fountain, for there is a circular curve there, and everybody drives round it and comes back. You could hardly have seen her, they passed so quickly, and yesterday she was obliged to leave us without having met you, on account of her husband, you know.

"She came from Ireland, dear, damp Ireland, and brought with her a heart full of freshness and hope; and her face, oh, one rarely meets such a face in the wise, thoughtful girls of to-day!

"It was in London he met her, at her first ball, and he led her through the dance and made love to her, and all the time his thoughts were given to another woman—yes, Madeline, so faithless are the hearts of men.

"Then, later on, he offered her his heart—his traitor heart—marred by a longing for that other sweet face. And yet he wrote to his mother that he had found the rarest of jewels, deep in an old-fashioned setting.

"Soon he claimed her dear, noble heart for his own. He told her bright love-tales, and pictured their future with joy and contentment, and never a shadow of care. They would dwell in a modern fairyland where love reigned supreme—long, sweet, happy days.

"And he brought her over here to his Parisian home of broad, echoing halls, and stately, carved pillars, and great winding staircases going up under huge, massive arches. And so, for one short, happy year, she reigned queen of his home and his heart.

"But a day, heavy laden with sorrow, came upon her life, and darkened for ever the sweetness and glow of the future. It happened on the day of some election. An important paper which was in his possession was missing, and she helped him to hunt for it. Somehow, in her searching, a secret drawer in his desk suddenly opened, in consequence of a spring she had unconsciously touched.

"It disclosed to her wondering eyes an exquisite miniature, carved in ivory enamel, and on it was the face of a beautiful girl; but, Madeline, dear, you are cold! Are even these furs insufficient? And I really believe you are not listening to me. Well, then, to return to my poor hurt dove. She quieted the beating of her doubting heart, and looked to her husband for protection against the dreadful doubts, which would present themselves to her. And she was sadly in need of that protection promised in their solemn marriage vow, and of the life-long love that had seemed to be stretching out before her.

"But, Madeline, he could not tell her an untruth; he told her all; and his tone and his words chanted the requiem of a young heart that was dying, and only revived when he said that not a spark of affection remained in his heart for the cold, proud girl of the picture, and that his wife was his love.

"That miniature, he told her, had been wrought by himself, even the silky gold waves, and the star of the diamond tiara that crowned her fair brow.

"Madeline, dear, I fear for you in this climate; you are actually shivering! Raise your collarette. There! that will be warmer. But the picture, as she held it up, lo! a tiny card dropped out on the rug where she stood, and, Madeline, to be quick with my story, for we are nearly at home, and you are as white as the snow—on that card, in a few words, was written the story of that other woman's love. My poor Norma read it aloud to her husband—the love of that cold, proud girl's life.

"And there, if you will believe me, he, strong man that he is, actually fainted away when he heard it! Just think of it, Madeline, swooned like a woman at her feet—at the feet of his bride, the sweet, lovely girl he had won for his wife—fainted for the love of another woman.

"But she did not swoon, though, God help her! Far better had she died then, for the heart that was tender before turned to stone at the sight of him there, and the knowledge of his sorrow and remorse.

"Afterwards, he told her the story of how he had received the picture as a final answer to his letter, when he sought to win her for his wife. The card had slipped through the opening at the back of the miniature, and, until that fatal moment, he never knew it meant acceptance. Madeline, dear, your cheeks are pale, and your eyes so sad! I will burden your light heart with no more such stories.

"Ah! here they are now! Don't draw down your veil so! Not that side, right here at the turn! Quick! Pshaw! They have passed us and you have not seen them. But, to-night she is hostess, and you may dwell on her beauty and his nobleness, and remark, as society does, upon the excellence of the match.

"No, dear, I have never looked upon that miniature. I never shall, but sometimes I feel a world of pity for that beautiful girl who believes her lover to be false.

"Here we are at home, dear; I fear you are not well. Your cheeks have lost their colour, but a week here will do you a world of good."

. . . . . .

"My niece was unable to come, dear, this evening," said Madeline's aunt to her young hostess. "She received word to-day to return home at once. She would not think of remaining, although I urged her as much as I dared. I regret you two did not meet her. She is really like you, dear, except that her hair is deep gold, and she is taller; but her eyes are the saddest eyes in the world, although her life is the brightest."

Before the dance had begun that evening, Madeline was flying back to England, away from her aunt and this story to which she had listened that day. Stowed away in a corner of her huge portmanteau was a jewel case and glistening and colouring, deep in its bed of soft crimson velvet, reposed the star of that diamond tiara.

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THE OUTLAWS OF THE AIR.

By George Griffith,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," etc.

CHAPTER XLIX.

Mutiny.

The deceptive peace that reigned on board the *Revanche* was maintained unbroken, as though by common consent, until a couple of hours after sun-rise, when the air-ship was flying northwards at a speed of eighty miles an hour, some three thousand feet over the Bay of Biscay.

Renault, Hartog, Taxil, and the two girls had breakfasted together in perfect apparent cordiality, discussing the plans of the immediate future, as though they honestly meant to act together for the rest of their lives, instead of being resolved each upon the other's destruction, or captivity and wholesale treachery to their followers. Anarchy, as Renault had said to Lea, was about to produce its logical and only possible result. Armed with the means, if not of conquering, at least of terrorising the whole earth, the inherent viciousness of their principles, by making it impossible for the Anarchists to trust each other with authority and confidence, was about to turn their weapons against each other and save society by their mutual destruction.

The dream which the Arch-Anarchist had dreamt while crossing the Pacific in the stolen *Vengeur* had been fulfilled almost to the letter. His name was a word of terror from one end of Europe to the other, and also, in a lesser degree, over those other areas of civilisation which had learned of his exploits and waited in fear and trembling to see which of them he would attack first. And now, at the very flood-tide of his power and success, he saw himself confronted, as he had foreseen, by treachery and mutiny in his own camp, and on board his own flag-ship.

The desperate resolve that he had taken was really the only reply that he could make to the threat. To save himself and the crew that he believed faithful to his fortunes it was necessary to sacrifice every one else in the camp, and perhaps to destroy with his own guns, the fleet on which so much labour and so much treasure, bought with the blood of thousands of ruthlessly slaughtered victims, had been spent. But to all this he scarcely gave a thought. He had decided on his course of action, and he was one of those men who never make two decisions. Characteristically, too, he depended solely upon himself to execute his own unspoken sentence upon Hartog. As he rose from the breakfast table in the saloon, he said:

"Taxil, will you go and relieve François in the conning-tower and leave Duprez in charge of the engines; then come back and bring the other fellows with you? I want to tell them something that I think it will interest them to hear. I believe there have been some complaints lately about our not taking our comrades sufficiently into our confidence, and it won't do to have any misunderstandings of that sort in work like ours. We'd better get this one cleared up as soon as possible."

"Very well," said Taxil. "I'll have them here in a minute." And with that he left the saloon.

"I tink dat is a very wise measure on your part, Monsieur Max," said Hartog, beaming at him through his spectacles with an expression of the most absolutely unsuspecting innocence. "Dere is noding so dangerous as misunderstandings among people like us, aldough I really can't see vy dese fellows cannot follow mit perfect confidence—especially ven dey haf been led as perfectly as you haf led dem."

"With your very able assistance, friend Franz," interrupted Renault with a smile as Taxil re-entered the saloon, followed by six of the crew.

Whipped a silk handkerchief round Renault's throat.

Taxil and a stalwart Frenchman named Louis André, who acted as second officer, came and stood beside Renault, while the others remained in a group behind Hartog's chair. Then Renault continued, still with a smile on his lips:

"As you say, however, to people engaged in the desperate work that we have got to do there is nothing so dangerous as misunderstandings, and it was to clear up one of them which might have had very serious consequences that I have thought fit to call this informal little meeting, and, to begin with, I am going to accuse you, Franz Hartog, before the officers and crew of the *Revanche*, of treachery to the cause of Anarchy and attempted mutiny in the camp. If it had not been for the very great, and, indeed, indispensable services that you rendered to us at the beginning, I tell you frankly I would have shot you as I shot Berthauld—on suspicion. As it is, you shall have the opportunity of defending yourself, and if you can clear yourself, why——."

Renault's speech was never finished, for it ended in a choking, gurgling gasp, and the sound of his body falling heavily to the floor of the saloon. Hartog had heard his indictment without moving a muscle of his face, until he saw Renault's hand moving toward the hilt of a pistol that rested in an open case at his belt. Then he had nodded to Taxil and André.

Quick as thought André, with all the skill of a practised garotter, had whipped a silk handkerchief round Renault's throat, drawn it tight, and then, forcing his knee into the small of his back, flung him to the floor.

Taxil was on him in an instant, turned him over on his face, and tied his elbows behind his back before André loosed the suffocating pressure upon his windpipe. Meanwhile, Franz had pulled out a pistol, and covered the two girls, saying as he did so:

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"Sit still, my tear young ladies, dere is no von vants to hurt you; but it might be dangerous for you to move just now. Here, Leon, Mascoll, come and take care of Madame Lea and Miss Sophie, but don't hurt dem unless it is necessary. Now friendts, Taxil and André, if you have got our late captain safely secured you may let him up to hear me finish his speech for him."

Everything had happened with such paralysing rapidity that Max had not been able to make a single movement in self-defence, and the two girls were sitting motionless with fear, each with the barrel of a pistol against the back of her head, before either of them had very well realised what had happened.

As for Max, even after he had regained his breath, he still seemed too stupefied by the utterly unexpected attack to grasp the astounding fact that the crew, upon whose fidelity he would have staked his existence had, without the slightest warning, turned traitors to a man, and that the little German had so completely outwitted him that, instead of being his victim, he was now his master.

Hartog sat quietly grinning and enjoying his bewilderment; but by the time he found his voice again he had recovered both his senses and his courage, and casting a glance of unutterable contempt about him—under which more than one of the crew lowered his eyes in something like shame—he said as quietly as if he had been issuing an order in working the ship:

"You miserable curs! And so it's for this that I made you masters of the air, and put the world at your mercy? And it was for this," he went on, with a glance of scornful hate at Hartog, "that I rescued you and your crew from the bourgeois at Newcastle when I might have left you to be hanged like the dogs that you are. Well, I suppose I might have expected that from a German, but I didn't think it of you, Taxil. Did you rescue me from Newgate only to turn traitor just when we had the world at our mercy? You might just as well have left me to hang as that."

"You had better hear what Hartog has to say before I answer that," said Taxil, in a somewhat forced tone, and with a faint flush as if of shame on his face.

"Jah, I vill do de talking," said Hartog, folding his arms on the table in front of him and blinking angrily at Max through his spectacles. "Treachery, my late friendt Renault, seems to pe a game dat two can play at, and it is because you haf turned twice and trice traitor to der cause of Anarchy and your own comrades dat dis little accident has happened to you. You had nodings but your own suspicions of me, but I haf proofs against you.

"First you stole de paper mit der formula of der fuel vich you had agreed to leave so dat if you got killed I could make more fuel for de oder ships. You did dat so as to leave all de rest mit no fuel ven dey haf used up vat dey haf, so den dey vould be helpless vile you took de *Revanche* away, and left dem to be captured and killed by our enemies.

"After dat you invited me to come mit you on board dis ship, so dat you could trow me overboard and keep de secret in your possession. Is not dat de case, Taxil, and did not Sophie Vronsky tell you dat? And did ve not tell de oder captains, and did ve not all resolve dat Max Renault had ceased to be a goot Anarchist, and had become a traitor and a tyrant?"

"Yes," said Taxil, who by this time had recovered his self-possession. "Sophie told me of the plot against you, and I warned you because I would not be a party to such treachery for anyone's sake. Then I went with you to secure the paper, and we found it stolen. We agreed with the other captains that this was plain proof of treachery, and we decided that, as Max Renault had always treated traitors, so he should be treated himself."

"And are you all agreed to dat?" said Hartog, looking round at the others. "Vill you haf freedom of action according to de goot principles of Anarchy, or vill you haf a tyrant for your master who has already turned traitor?"

The men glanced at each other for a moment and then at Max, who still stood defiantly facing them between Taxil and André. Then one of them stepped forward and spoke for the rest.

"We will have neither tyrants nor traitors," he said, with a scowl at Max. "Comrade Renault has led us well, but we are satisfied that he has used his ability to make us his servants instead of his free and equal comrades. That is contrary to the principles of Anarchy, and we will not have it."

The rest nodded, and then Max broke out, with a short, bitter laugh:

"Just so! You are too simple and too greedy to see that in work like ours one must lead and the rest follow. Well, do as you like. I am not going to ask my life of a lot of curs like you. The game's up, I suppose, as far as I'm concerned, and it serves me right because I trusted a woman with my secret, and she, of course, trusted another.

"*Cherchez la femme*, as usual," he continued, with a half-scornful, half-reproachful glance at Lea and Sophie, who sat and heard him with downcast heads and burning cheeks. "I am not the first man who has trusted a woman to his ruin, and I don't suppose I shall be the last. Well, you others, what are you going to do with me? You may as well get it over quickly, and then go to perdition your own way."

"Dere vill be blenty of time for us to get dere ven ve haf decided vich road to take, Monsieur Max, and dere is no particular hurry about disposing of you. Dere are a great many people in London who vill be glad to see you again, and I haf been tinking dat you shall pay dem a visit to-night, out of consideration for all you haf done—as you vere goot enough to say of me just before you meant to pitch me into de Bay of Biscay. Ve vill not kill you ourselves; you shall haf von chance for your life, and if you do not make de best of it, vell den dat is your look out. Now you vill go to your cabin and be taken goot care of. Take dose two girls avay too, and see dat dey don't get up to any mischief. Keep dem in separate cabins for de present."

Neither Max nor either of the girls made the slightest resistance to what they saw was inevitable. For the present, at any rate, they were entirely at the mercy of Hartog and Taxil, and to resist now would merely be to subject themselves to violence.

When Max was taken to his cabin, he was tied hand and foot, and then tied again into the hammock in which he always slept while on board the *Revanche*. André remained on guard over him, and at his first attempt to begin a conversation curtly told him to hold his tongue if he didn't want to be gagged, so forced him to content himself with silence and his own bitter reflections on the fearfully sudden change in his fortune, and the unknown fate that was awaiting him in London. Lea and Sophie were simply locked in their cabins, and there left—likewise to their reflections, while Hartog, Taxil, and the rest arranged their plans for the immediate present.

Strange as it may seem, neither of the girls had difficulty

"*Cherchez la femme*, as usual."

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in recovering their equanimity, in spite of the shock that the scene in the saloon had been to both of them. Mentally and morally they were not women in the best and commonly-accepted sense of the word. To begin with, they were criminals pitiless and unscrupulous, and, therefore, necessarily of a low moral caste, and this was especially true of Lea.

Despite her extraordinary physical charms and a highly developed intellect, she was little better than a beautiful animal, who used her beauty and the power it gave her as the means of attainment to the given ends of the moment. Of heart in the womanly sense of the word she had literally none. She had not, and never had had, any real love for Max such as a true woman gives to her lover or her husband. She had given herself to him simply because she admired him physically and mentally, and because she saw, or believed she saw, in him a man who would enable her to satisfy at once her ambition and her genuine hatred of organised society.

But now she saw him defeated in his aims and helpless at the mercy of his enemies with very much the same feelings that a tigress might have seen her lord and master lying mangled and dying under the claws of a stronger than he. She would realise him if she could, but more for the sake of continuing to reign with him and of placing him under an obligation to her than of doing him a purely personal service, and in one event and one only would she avenge him if he was killed.

She had firmly resolved that any attempt to make her the slave or plaything of any of the others whom he had ruled, and she had ruled through him, should be fatal to the *Revanche* and her crew if she could make it so. Taxil she believed to be in love with Sophie, so she feared nothing from him. Hartog she looked upon with utter contempt, now not unmixed with dread and loathing, and as for André and the rest of the crew she regarded them as animals who might make good servants when held properly in control. As masters any one of them would have been unendurable, and if the worst came to the worst she was quite prepared to kill herself rather than be made the sport of their brutal passions.

She was still deep in such thoughts as these, and still vainly seeking for some possible path out of the miserable position in which the last sudden turn of fickle fortune had placed her, when she heard the bolt of the lock shoot back. She looked up as the door opened, and saw Taxil come into the cabin and shut the door behind him.

CHAPTER L.

HARTOG'S REVENGE.

"WELL, M. Taxil, so you have at last deigned to visit one of your captives," she said with just a suspicion of mockery in her tone, but still smiling not unpleasantly as he entered. "May I ask to what I am indebted for the honour—for I suppose I am to consider it an honour—of your visit? Have you come to tell me what decision the victors have come to with regard to the disposition of the spoils?"

She looked up as the door opened.

She was perfectly cool and collected now. Like all women of ready wit and self-confidence she had seen in his entrance a call to arms, to a battle of wits, in which the victory would be not to physical strength or the advantage of position, but rather to the arts of subtlety and persuasion. Taxil looked at her as she spoke, flushed slightly, and hesitated for a moment before he replied.

In that moment Lea saw that she had gained half the victory already. Taxil was a younger man than Renault and infinitely less skilled in those wiles of her sex of which she was such a perfect mistress. He might be master of the air-ship and Renault's fate, but in her eyes he was a boy, and at a glance she saw that as such she could humour him. She waited for his answer, leaning back on the sofa on which she was seated, and toying with a little bunch of trinkets that hung from the watch chain fastened to her belt.

As for Taxil all his courage and the assurance of triumph seemed to have deserted him the instant that he found himself alone with her. He had come prepared if necessary to use threats and even to proceed to violent measures to reduce her to submission in case she objected to the change of command in which the mutiny had resulted. He had been quite prepared, should she prove refractory, to try the effects of imprisonment, if necessary accompanied by short commons, to bring her to look favourably upon his suit; but now that he actually stood in her presence he felt that in some mysterious fashion their positions had been reversed—that he had become the suitor and she the mistress to accept or reject as seemed best to her.

There was no time for him to argue with himself in order to convince himself of the absurdity of this view. She sat there placidly waiting his reply to her question just as though he had been paying an afternoon call at her house in Paris, rather than visiting one who was virtually his prisoner of war. He had to say something, and that with the best grace he could.

"I have not come to tell you anything," he said at last in an awkward, constrained voice. "But rather to ask something of you."

"And that is?" She lifted her eyebrows for a moment, looked at him inquiringly, and then dropped them again.

"That is—well, that is, of course, you must understand, Ma'm'zelle Lea, that matters are now altogether changed on board the *Revanche*, and I at present have the honour to stand where Max Renault stood before the discovery of his treachery——"

"Through the treachery of others and those whom he trusted most!" she interrupted with the mocking note in her voice a little more pronounced. "That is what you were going on to say, I presume. Well, granted that, and what then?"

"What then? Why this," he exclaimed taking a couple of quick strides across the cabin and throwing himself on one knee beside the sofa. "There was no treachery on my part, whatever it may have seemed to you. It was only fidelity to the Cause, for we had proved him traitor first; but, even if there had been treachery, surely you do not need to be told what would have made me turn traitor if that had been possible."

"I?" she said, half lifting her eye-lids and looking steadily at him from under the dark long lashes. "I? What have I to understand? I should have thought that that was a question you should have addressed to Sophie rather than to me. Didn't you know that Max was perfectly agreeable to your making a match of it?"

"Sophie! Bah!" he exclaimed, taking hold of her hand and pressing it passionately to his lips. "Do you think I would have done this for Sophie's sake? No, Lea, whatever you may think of my temerity I have been flying at higher game than her. It is you that I want, that I have always wanted, and loved and hungered for ever since my eyes were first blessed with the vision of your loveliness. It is you that I would ask to share with me the empire which, for your sake, I would dare anything and do anything to conquer. Grant me my prayer, and there is nothing on earth that you shall desire and not obtain if I can give it you. Give me yourself and, in exchange, I will give you the empire of the world."

She had heard him to the end in silence. She had not even taken her hand away, but suffered him to hold it and kiss it,

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as he had done, between his passionately uttered sentences. Instinctively she contrasted this boyish courtship of his with Max's masterful wooing in her boudoir in the Rue Vernet. She saw at a glance how, if at all, she would be able to save herself from becoming the victim of the violence which he certainly could use if he chose, and possibly also of saving Max, who had by no means suffered by the momentary comparison she had made between them.

"Ah, I see!" she said with a lazy, indulgent smile. "It is a case of *le roi est mort, vive le roi*, is it? You have dethroned Max and you wish me to share the throne with you as I did with him. But that is very cruel to poor Sophie, you know, and not altogether flattering to me. You come to woo me as a conqueror to a captive, and I may as well tell you that in such a guise your suit is hopeless.

"Of course, I know that you have strength on your side, but I also know that I have it in my power to put myself far beyond your reach if I even thought you were going to use it. You see that ring on the hand you have been kissing with such fervour? Well, that is such a ring as Lucrezia Borgia used to wear. Ah, so you let go already, do you! Perhaps you are wise, but I could have killed you with it some time ago if I had wanted to, and you must understand that I can kill myself with it at any moment that I choose, and further that I will do so the instant that you attempt to take any unfair advantage.

"No, don't say anything now, please, let me finish, and let us understand one another clearly. I am not to be taken by assault, understand that once for all. To what you have said I reply neither 'yes' nor 'no' for the present, because I will give no answer except in perfect freedom. There is no reason that I can see why I should not like you as well as Max, unless, of course, you take deliberate steps to make me dislike you, but before you can expect any answer you must give me my freedom back—perfect freedom, mind, so far as the ship is concerned. I must be free to come and go as I like, unwatched and uncontrolled, and you must set Sophie free too, so that I may be with her if I choose."

"It is you that I want—that I have always wanted."

"But, Max," he objected, rising to his feet again; "you do not mean——"

"No," she said. "I see what you are going to say. I will promise not to interfere with him. I see that it would be useless even if he did not deserve to be treated as a traitor. And, for the matter of that, I don't mind confessing that he won me rather by force than persuasion, for I believe he would have killed me if I had refused to come with him to the Camp. Perhaps you may win me more worthily; who knows? If you can, why, then you will, and there's an end of it; but you will never do it while you are the master and I am the captive."

"And I will never try to do so," he said, stepping backwards to the door and throwing it open. "There, your door is open and you are free, and here is the key of Sophie's cabin. Now I have accepted your terms. You will keep faith with me, won't you?"

"Yes, I will," she said, getting up from the sofa and holding out her hand to him. He took it as a courtier might have taken the hand of a queen, and, as he bent over it and kissed it, she said: "As you keep faith with me, so will I keep it with you. As for the future—well, you know what the English say in their proverb, 'Faint heart ne'er won fair lady yet.' And now, before you go, I have a favour to ask you."

"It is granted before you ask it," he replied, looking up at her with a light in his eyes and an expression on his face which told her how complete her victory over him had been.

"Well, it is only this," she said, "I want you to put Max somewhere else and let me share his cabin with Sophie. It is the biggest in the ship, you know, and we shall be more comfortable there. You see, she is the only other woman on board, and you can understand that I should like to be with her."

"Of course," he said. "There can be no objection to that. I will have him moved at once, and in a few moments you can take possession. *Au revoir!*" And with that he bowed himself out of the cabin, leaving the door open behind him.

The first use she made of her freedom was to go to Sophie's room and lock herself in there. A quarter of an hour later Taxil knocked at the door and told her that Max's cabin was ready for them. She unlocked the door and went out followed by Sophie, who seemed to be crying bitterly, and went straight to her new quarters.

"Now," she said to Sophie, as she locked the door behind her. "I will show you how we can turn the tables on these traitors, and how you shall have all the revenge that even a woman scorned can want. I am afraid there is no chance of saving Max, for they will watch him closely, and the first attempt we made they would kill him, but we can avenge him and ourselves too. They won't watch us, for that fool Taxil—I suppose you won't mind me calling him that now?—has been pleased to fall in love with me, and when a man's in love a woman can do what she likes with him. He has promised me perfect freedom on board the ship, and this is the first use I am going to make of it."

As she spoke she took a little key from the bunch of trinkets at her belt and knelt down before a little triangular cabinet fixed to the wall in one corner of the cabin. She opened it, pulled out a drawer, and took a small bunch of keys from it. Then she pulled up the thick rug which covered the floor of the cabin and disclosed half-a-dozen slides in the floor, each of which had a key-hole at the end. She unlocked one and pulled the slide back, disclosing a cavity filled with a light reddish-grey powder.

"That," she said, "is one of the reservoirs for the reserve of the motor fuel, and this is the fuel itself. Now watch."

She thrust her hand down through the powder at the end of the compartment at which she had unlocked it, groped about for a moment, and then took hold of something and pulled. "The powder immediately began to flow down through a hole, and as it disappeared she raked more and more of it over the hole with her hand until at last the compartment was empty.

"There goes a thousand miles of travelling power," she said. "Scattered uselessly in the air! Now you must help me, Sophie, and we will get rid of the lot before they suspect

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anything. I'll unlock the slides and you open them. We'll have them all empty in ten minutes."

"I see," said Sophie, with a savage snap of her teeth, "you mean that if they do give Max up to the English, as I suppose they mean to do, they shan't be able to fly very far afterwards, and so they'll be in just the same plight as the ships they have left behind at the Camp."

"Exactly," said Lea, as she went on unlocking the slides and pulling them open. "Max intrusted this secret to me so that I could do this if anything ever happened to him. Hartog can't make any more of the fuel without getting fresh materials, and to get them he must either meet with the *Pilgrim* or go back to the Camp, and I don't think he'll dare to do that, for he has turned traitor to both parties. Besides, he knows there's a large reserve on board somewhere, though I don't think either he or Taxil knows that it's here, and if they did they'll come to look for it too late now."

"*This is the fuel itself. Now watch.*"

While they talked both girls worked hard shovelling the priceless powder out through the holes at the bottoms of the reservoirs. At the speed at which the air-ship was flying it was drawn out by the strong draught and scattered instantly and invisibly astern, and in less than half-an-hour all the six reservoirs had been emptied, and the *Revanche* had been deprived of motive power which would have carried her over a voyage of six thousand miles.

Then the slides were drawn over and locked again, and everything in the cabin replaced in order. At mid-day their lunch was brought to them by the man whose turn it was to act for the day as steward, and just as they had finished there came a knock at the door. It opened, and Hartog came in smiling and bowing, with a ludicrous attempt at mock politeness.

"My tear young ladies," he said, stopping just inside the cabin and rubbing his hands together with an air of intense satisfaction, "if you vill look out of de vindow you vill see dat ve are just coming ofer London, and if you vant to see de last of our late captain, Max, you had better come up on deck, and you shall see him. Dis vay, please, and don't loose any time, because ve are in a hurry."

"Thanks, M. Hartog; but, if it is all the same to you, we would rather stop here, I think," said Lea. "I suppose you mean to throw the poor fellow overboard, and neither of us——"

"Oh, no; I can assure you ve shall do noding of de kind," replied the German, bowing again, and still rubbing his hands together. "Ve could not tink of asking young ladies to look upon such a painful spectacle as dat. Ve are only going to put him in a place of safety and say 'goot-bye' to him politely. I can assure you you shall not see one hair of his head hurt, and I vould much rader you come dan dat I should haf to send an escort for you."

"That means, I suppose," said Lea, "that if we don't come you will fetch us by force in spite of what Taxil promised me?"

"Jah, dat is even so," said Hartog shortly, as he turned away and walked out of the door.

"I suppose we must go, Sophie," said Lea. "It will be better than being dragged out by that little brute and his men. Poor Max, I wonder what they are going to do with him! It will be a miserable end for him, whatever it is, and I'd give ten years of my life now to save him if I could; for, at any rate, he is a man, and these others are only fools or brutes."

Her voice broke as she ceased speaking, her face was ashy pale, and her limbs were trembling with apprehension and excitement now that the supreme moment in the fate of the man who had been her lover had come. Sophie, as pale and trembling as she was, nodded in reply, and put her arm through hers, and together the two girls went on deck.

Their first glance round showed them that they were floating over Trafalgar Square at a height of about eight hundred feet, the second showed them Max standing bound, gagged, and blindfolded, and with a noose of a rope round his body under his arm-pits, by the low rail that ran round the deck. Two men stood on either side of him and two others stood behind him holding the rope, and Hartog was close beside him with an open knife in his hand. As they reached the deck Lea had made a sudden motion as though to run to Max, but Taxil stopped her, whispering:—

"No, for heaven's sake don't go near him! If you do you'll only get hurt and do him no good. You'd have known nothing about it if it hadn't have been for that brute Hartog, but he would have you up to see what he is going to do. If you don't want to look shut your eyes and trust to me to settle with him afterwards."

But do what they would there was a horrible fascination about the scene which forced them to look whether they would or no. The air-ship sank slowly down towards the Square, from which they could see the people hurrying as fast as their legs could carry them, evidently in dread of a repetition of what had happened after Max's rescue from Newgate. When she reached the level of the capital of Nelson's column she stopped and swung slowly towards it, then she rose a little, and hung exactly over it.

Hartog now cut the cords which bound Renault's hands and feet, saying as he did so:

"Now, M. Max, it is time to say 'goot-bye.' Ven you touch ground holdt on in case you fall. You vill find yourself in a nice airy situation mit a goot extensive view. Here are some cigars and a box of matches vich I vill put into your pocket in case you vant to smoke ven you haf got dat gag out of your mouf. Now over mit him boys, and if he kicks knock him on de head to keep him quiet, or else he might fall and hurt himself."

As he gave the word Max was lifted bodily from the deck and the next moment hung suspended just over the flat surface of the capital of the column. In an agony and fear and horror Lea leant over the side and saw him lowered until his feet touched the stone and his outspread arms caught the base of the figure. Then the rope was cut. Hartog threw a piece of iron rod, round which was tied a piece of paper, down into the square and shouted once more:

"Goot-bye, M. Max. Take care of yourself and give our compliments to the goot people of London. Goot-bye!"

Then he stamped on the deck, and as the air-ship rose into the air and darted away to the eastward a mist floated before Lea's eyes, and with a faint cry of "Max! Max!" she fell fainting into Taxil's arms.

(To be continued.)

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A PROTESTED VERDICT.

"DEAR JACK,—I am so sorry about last night. I know I said hateful things to you, and I am so very, very sorry. Please forgive me, Jack. And please let our friendship stand as it used to. We have been such good friends for so long.

"It never can be changed as you wish it to be, so please let it go on in the old way.

'Write and tell me what day you want me to keep for you.

"Yours sincerely,

"EDITH."

He read the letter over, and then he read it again. His face flushed as he bit his lips. Forgive her? If there had been anything to forgive, of course he would. But there wasn't. It was his own fault; and yet she hadn't been—— She simply had refused him any hope of gaining from her more than friendship. Like a fool he had begged at least for the reason of her refusal. He had got it, and still he was dissatisfied. She had said that her ideal man was stronger than he.

She said it haltingly, but he could not change her views. He had asked her why she thought him weak, but she had not been able to quote any particular evidence of such characteristic. He had compared himself to other friends without suffering by the comparison; he had reminded her of instances where he had shown strength of character; his unswerving devotion to her was not a weak man's love.

Finally, she had been driven to bay, and had cried out, "Oh, I know you are! You're so careless and all. Why, Jack, it's your face, Not a strong line in it. Oh, dear——" and then she had cried.

There was an oath in his throat as he thought it all over, and it felt like a lump that he couldn't swallow, and that made his eyes smart. "Why should she have an idea like that? I suppose I've been sloppy about some things, but I didn't deserve that.

"Well, nobody will be able to accuse me of being weakly, good-natured in the future, that's all. And I won't let people do as they want with me now. But it wasn't fair to judge me like that. Oh, I'm not good enough for her! She was right. Dear Edith, I don't know how I can get on without you!"

For several days he stayed by himself. He answered her letter and appointed an afternoon a week later. He longed to see her again, but he knew how it would hurt. The old friendship could not come back, for a long time at least, and love was denied him. Neither one thing nor the other. If he went probably other men would be there, other men with whom he would always have to divide her, until one day one of them would take away even his little share.

After a few days of this moody, desolate idling he made an effort to get back into the old rut.

The old rut would generally have been considered to run through pleasant places. He had inherited an estate that left him free to follow his own inclinations in disposing of his time; and, as his tendencies leaned strongly towards painting, he had favoured them, and met with considerable success.

But that morning nothing in his studio could hold his attention. Presently he decided to abandon his endeavours in the direction of art and to try the more engrossing interest of business. An old lawyer, a bosom friend of his late father's, and who had been trustee, also, of Jack's estate before he attained his majority, looked after the management of his affairs, and him Jack decided to visit.

After a little genial talk the old gentleman said: "Now, in regard to that plot of ground that is leased to the St. Simon Mission Room, Jack; the lease expires shortly."

"Well?"

"An agent estate man said the other day that he could offer five times as much as that property is paying. It's a good charity, though, and I presume you would not wish to make a change?"

"Well—please see what the chap would offer. I think I'll let him have it."

"Why, my dear boy, you spend only a third of your income, and really those people——"

"Oh, I daresay. But please see him again."

The old lawyer looked curiously at him. Well, that sort of thing was in the air nowadays, and yet this was very unlike the boy.

After a little further talk Jack left the office. He had made resolves of which this was the first fruit. No; he couldn't have people riding over him continually. He got no credit for the good things he did, and unlimited credit for the bad things he never did. He was going to live better. And he was going out of his way no more than did his neighbours.

This new rôle irritated him, however; and so, too, did the few acquaintances he encountered.

He decided to go away for a few days—to go to some place where he could have a horse and a boat. Then for a while, at least, he could keep too tired to think. Why, that morning he had sincerely congratulated himself on discovering that five consecutive minutes had elapsed during which he had not been brooding on the old subject.

He went away, and without even his pipe. The trifling comforts of past days were of little satisfaction to him now. But he smiled bitterly as he thought of the absurdity of a weak man thus throwing off that most autocratic of habits.

He spent a miserable half-week according to his programme; then he returned to town.

One week gone, but he thought of all the other weeks that were to come. There was no reason why he should wish time to hurry, for it had nothing to bring him. Thus he reflected over his pipe. To-morrow he was to call on her. He told himself that if it were not for fear of hurting her a little he would never see her again; and then he heard the postman's knock, and trembled lest a letter should come from her postponing the engagement.

The morrow had brought no letter, and the time for his ordeal had come. He pressed the bell nervously. It was odd that everything in the drawing-room should be the same as when he had seen it before. There were some roses somebody had sent—she was coming. He heard the faint rustle of her skirt on the staircase.

"My dear Jack, I am glad to see you! But you're not looking well at all, Jack." His heart leaped. How sweetly pretty she was! But why in the world did she want to talk to him like that.

"I'm not? I'm sorry. I thought these clothes were so nice." But his tones were not as blithe as his words.

Then she asked some more questions, and he returned her gentleness by little speeches for which he blushed. She was forbearing, and presently she burst out with "Oh, Jack, I've just heard of the most heartless, contemptible thing?"

"Yes. Somebody jilted a man?"

"Lately I've been trying to do a little for some people in the East End. They're all so poor and miserable, you know. One of them has just written that the mission room in Addition Street, that does so much for them, is to be torn down to make

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room for horrid tenements. Oh, it's cruel! Just think of anybody doing that, Jack!"

Several expressions had flitted over his face as she spoke, but he did not answer her speech until she again asked his opinion of the landlord; then he blushed and said:

"Oh, I suppose he had too much strength of character to be a public purse."

She looked at him in surprise as she said: "Why, Jack, how nasty you are!"

"Well, it does require strength to resist their appeals and all that, doesn't it?"

"Perhaps it may, but——"

Jack leaned suddenly forward, and his eyes sparkled. "Look here, Edith! Do you want me to help you?"

"Oh, I'd give anything——"

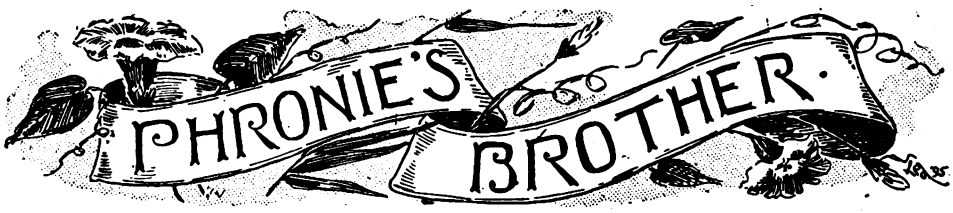
"Nothing is anything to me except—you know what. You remember what you said the other night. Well, I know that man. Now, if I show strength enough to win that miserly skinflint from his plans, will you reconsider? No threats; no money; upon my honour. Just my will against his. Please give me just that chance. Edith, you know how much I love you. Edith, please. Speed! Then I'll write to-night," and he caught her hand and kissed it and rushed away.

All that night he argued with the other man, and he praised him and patted him on the back, and smiled upon him. And he talked to his pipe and his pictures, and smiled on them too.

Then he wrote to the lawyer and told him to kick the agent, and to renew the old lease.

"MY DARLING GIRL,—I have seen the dog of a miser and won you both. I told him a good deal about you, and he was so interested in you that he gave me his picture to send. Here it is. I am coming to-morrow. God bless you, dearest.

"JACK."



THE Rev. Dr. Britton and myself sat in a cosy room in the Bachelors' Club. He was an ecclesiastic of the century end, a man whose ministrations had endeared him to many a household, but not averse to the gifts of the gods. So, as the last flame of the cognac died away, and we lighted our first cigars, he pointed out of the window to an unpretentious row of flats diagonally across the street.

"Notice the middle flat of the third house from the corner," he said.

I saw that it was just like the others, rather plain and unassuming, but with a suggestion of cosy curtains at the windows, said cosy appearance enhanced by the firelight that shone from within. "I don't see anything remarkable about it," I answered.

"Well, I dined there last Christmas under the most peculiar circumstances."

The minister smiled a little sadly as he said this, and resumed:

"Among my charges was a little blind boy who lives in that flat over there. He was wonderfully precocious. The blindness was not congenital, and he had learned to read and write like other boys until the great affliction had come upon him. Then he had mastered the language of the blind, and had read all that has been translated into those wonderful raised letters.

"They called him 'Phronie's brother.' Phronie was his sister, his constant companion and helper. So he had announced himself as Phronie's brother, in curious self-abnegation, and the name had clung to him.

"He was little, and pale, and thin, and his hair was as red as sunset. He knew all the neighbours and the neighbours' wives and children, but no one had ever heard him utter a word that was harsh, or not all good and pure. Then the history of the blind. He knew Milton's sonnet on his blindness by heart. He knew the stories of Homer's lack of sight. He knew all about the sad history of the sightless from the time the world began. And he had the words for blind in every language looked up, and stored up in his memory.

"But, thus shrouded in everlasting and impenetrable darkness, across his vision flashed many a glorious spectacle, and the dreams he had would astonish you or me. Often he used to come to me with his fancies, and I encouraged him in them, for I saw what pleasure they gave him.

"So he was not unhappy until, as he grew to be fourteen or fifteen years old, the boys of his acquaintance began to leave school and go to work to help in the support of their respective households. This made him miserable. Not that there was any real need of his assistance; his mother had a little property which was sufficient for their maintenance, with economy. But the thought that he could not do anything useful worried the poor little fellow. Of course his condition aggravated this, until finally it came to be the passion of his life to find something that he could do for his own support.

"One day he came to me in tears, telling me that one of the boys in the neighbourhood, who had just gone to work in a shop, had taunted him with his helpless condition, and had contrasted his strength with the blind lad's weakness. I was rather surprised at this, for every one was usually kind enough to the poor boy.

"But seeing his abject misery, and wishing to give him employment of some kind, I suggested that he should try to put some of his fancies into verse. He caught at the suggestion eagerly.

"'But will it bring me in any money?' he asked.

"I was unwilling to encourage him with any hopes that were likely to be dashed to the ground, but I reflected that his precocity was such that he might be able to produce something that would sell. So, improbable as it seemed, I answered:

"'Papers and magazines sometimes pay for such works. Of course, you will have to try very hard, and not be easily satisfied with your own efforts. And even if you fail many times you must not be discouraged.'

"It was not long before I perceived that I had made a great mistake. He threw his whole soul into the labour of composition. In spite of the protestations, and even direct commands, of his mother and sister, he would work all day sometimes, and far into the night. As I have said, he had learned to write, but, of course, his sister copied it all for him with loving pains.

"It happened that I was away for nearly a month at this time, and about the first visitors I had upon my return were Phronie and Phronie's brother. The boy was positively

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aglow with happiness, but there was a curious sadness in the girl's face that I did not comprehend. The poor little fellow said he had come to leave his manuscript with me for my criticism.

"It was a very long poem, some 8,000 words, I think. It was a sort of romance, or legend, having its scene in South America. Where in the world he got the idea of it I am sure I cannot think. Some of the verses were smooth, but no more, and there were several pleasant fancies in it, but I plainly saw that it would stand no chance in the world of ever getting into print.

"It was in the evening of the following day, while I was deliberating whether or not I should tell the poor boy that his work could not be used, that Phronie was announced. She was shown into my study, and her first question was about the poem. I told her what I thought.

"'It is just what I was sure of,' she replied sadly. 'I have felt as I copied it for him that it would never do. But how can I tell him? I am sure it will be the death of the poor boy. He has put his whole life into it, and he talks and thinks of nothing else.'

"'There is no use,' I replied, 'of sending it to any publication, for it is certain to be rejected.'

"'I have been thinking,' the girl replied, 'that it might be possible to make him think it had been published.'

"I did not comprehend at first all that she meant by this, nor did I understand the look of strange agony with which the words were accompanied.

"'I don't see how you are going to do that,' I answered. 'Would you tell him a deliberate falsehood?'

"A look as though of physical suffering passed over her face. She raised one hand to her forehead and lowered her eyes.

"'I would do that even,' she said, 'to save him such suffering. I have thought over it a long time, and I must do it. I will tell him that it has been printed.'

"'But do you understand what this means?' I cried. 'You will have to live up to the lie you have told. He will demand the paper, and will make you read it to him. He will ask how much he has been paid for it. Do you not realise that one such falsehood will involve you in a tissue of lies?'

"'I realise all that,' she replied, calmly now, and even smiling a little. 'I have thought of all the method of procedure, and I think I can live up to it.'

"After she was gone I sat in wonder and amazement for some time. I knew—who better than I, her pastor?—how much she loved truth, and hated even the appearance of a lie. And thus to voluntarily enter into a series of falsehoods for the sake of saving her brother pain was a sacrifice I could scarcely imagine. I suppose it was my duty to advise her to tell him the truth, but for the life of me I could not.

"It was four or five weeks before I saw either of them again. One day I stopped at the house. The sister was away from home, but the blind boy rushed to meet me with an expression of most perfect joy on his face.

"'You know my poem has been accepted,' he cried. 'We received the letter this morning. Phronie read it to me. They are going to pay me 30s. for it. That isn't much, but you know Milton only got £30 for "Paradise Lost."'

"My heart was very sad at the little fellow's eagerness, and even more as I thought what the falsehood must have cost his sister. Yet I pretended to be glad at his good fortune, and asked him what he would do with the money.

"'Oh, if it is published before Christmas I am going to spend some for a present for Phronie, and the rest shall go for a great Christmas dinner, and you must come and eat it with us.'

"I assured him that I would be present, and hurried away. About two weeks later he came to my rooms, accompanied by his devoted sister. He held a copy of a well-known weekly paper in his hand, which he flourished triumphantly.

"'It's published!' he almost shrieked. 'Here it is! Look at it! But no, you shall not see it. Phronie shall read it to you.'

"Then the martyr sister took the paper. She cast an appealing glance at me, and commenced in a voice that did not tremble or falter in the least, to read, or pretend to read, that long poem. I stared at her in amazement. Was it possible that she had induced a publisher to accept that childish poem? Not at all. She had learned it by heart and was pretending to read it aloud.

"To see the eager attention with which Phronie's brother drank in every word was touching in the extreme. He sat well forward in the chair, keeping time with his little body to the measure of the voice, and every now and then nodding his head as some familiar and beloved passage fell from the lips of his sister. Then as she finished he cried:

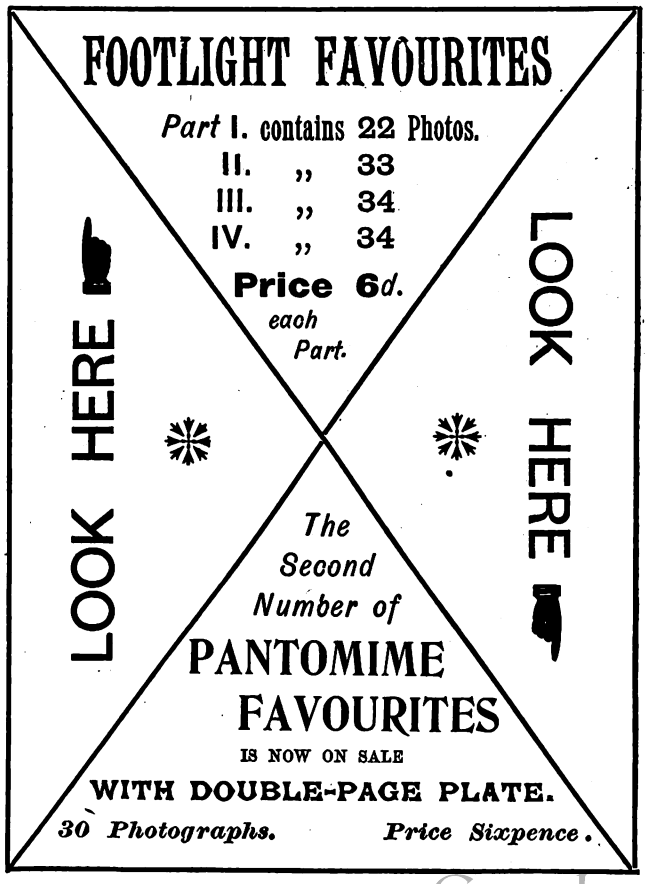
"'Only one thing is lacking to my happiness now. Oh, if I could only see how it looks in print.'

"At these words the overwrought feelings of the sister could stand it no longer, and she burst into a passion of tears.

"'Phronie, dear Phronie,' the boy said, going to her and putting his arms about her neck. 'Do not cry for me. I did not mean to complain, indeed I did not. I am perfectly happy as it is.'

"Little by little she controlled herself, and as they went away I gave them my promise to be present at their Christmas dinner. On the afternoon of that day I went to the middle flat of the third house from the corner. There were wreaths of evergreen and holly berries in the windows, and the bright fire shone merrily in the little front parlour. The blind boy was almost deliriously happy, and even the sister's face reflected some of his joy. I believe she had become so used to the deception that she had almost begun to believe in it herself. Then when we went to the table! 'Do you see the big turkey?' Phronie's brother cried. 'Isn't he a monster, and doesn't he smell appetising, though! And to think that I bought him with the money that I earned! Could I do more, even if I could see to work in the iron foundry?'

"I looked at the sister's face. It was calm, serene, even happy. I thought then, and think now, that there are lies and lies."



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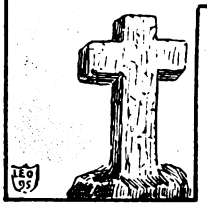
THE STONECUTTER



HERE was once in Japan—at a time so remote that wise men hardly dare to speak of it—a poor little stonebreaker, who was employed upon the highways.

"Oh, how I would thank heaven," said he, "if I could one day be but rich enough to sleep the whole morning through and eat and drink my fill. It is said there exist people, blessed by fortune, who thus live in ease and comfort. Stretched upon thick mats before my door, my back covered with soft vestments of silk, I would make a siesta to be broken every quarter of an hour by a servitor, who should continually remind me that I had nothing to do, and that I could sleep without remorse."

An angel, passing, heard these words and smiled. "Thy prayer be granted, poor man," said he.

And suddenly the stonebreaker, enveloped in sumptuous vestments of silk, found himself stretched upon some thick mats, before the door of a splendid dwelling. He was no longer hungry or thirsty, no longer tired, and all this appeared to him as agreeable as it was surprising.

He tasted during a half hour unknown happiness, when the Mikado chanced to pass. The Mikado! That was no small matter—no! The Mikado is the Emperor of Japan, and the Emperor of Japan was, at that time above all, the most powerful of the emperors of the Orient.

The Mikado reposed upon eider-down in a palanquin of fine gold, studded with precious stones. His prime minister had the unparalleled honour of holding above his head a great tinkling parasol all fringed with little bells.

The enriched stonebreaker followed with an envious eye the imperial *cortège*.

"I haven't gained much," he said to himself. "I am not much happier for the few paltry pleasures I am enabled to give myself. Oh, that I were the Mikado! I would travel in grand state, lolling in a golden palanquin blazing with precious stones, attended by my prime minister holding a great glittering parasol over me, while my second minister would cool my face with a fan made of peacock's feathers. Oh, that I could be the Mikado!"

"Thy wish is granted," said the angel.

And immediately he saw himself stretched in the palanquin of fine gold, starred with precious stones, and surrounded by his ministers, his warriors, his women, and his slaves, who said to him:

"Mikado, thou art superior to the sun; thou art eternal; thou art invincible. All that the spirit of man can conceive thou canst execute. Justice itself is subordinate to thy will; and the gods, trembling, await thy counsels."

And the stonebreaker said to himself, "Ah! happy day! now here are people who know my value."

The sun, which had been very fierce for some days, had parched the country. The route was dusty, and his glare fatigued the eyes of the newly made Mikado.

Addressing his minister who carried the parasol, he said:

"Make known to the sun that he troubles me. His familiarities displease me. Say to him that the grand Emperor of Japan commands him to retire. Go!"

The prime minister confided to a chamberlain the honour of carrying the tinkling parasol and went away.

He returned presently with the greatest consternation written in his face.

"Great Emperor! sovereign of the gods and of men! It is past comprehension—the sun pretends not to hear, and continues to shine on the road."

"Let him be punished."

"Certainly! His insolence merits it—but how shall I get at him to administer the punishment?"

"I am the equal of the gods—is it not so?"

"Assuredly, great Mikado—the equal to say the least."

"You told me but a moment since that nothing was impossible to me. You have lied to me—you have disobeyed me, or you have badly executed my orders. I give you five minutes in which to put out the sun. Go!"

The prime minister went away, but did not return.

The imperial stonebreaker was purple with rage.

"Upon my word! This is a fine position—this of emperor, when one is obliged to submit to the familiarities, the caprices, the brutalities of a moving planet. It is no use to deny it, the sun is more powerful than I. I would like to be the sun."

"Thou art the sun," said the angel.

And the little stonebreaker shone in the high heavens, all radiant, all flaming. He took pleasure in scorching up the trees, in drying up the rivers and the springs, and in covering with sweat the august visages of emperors, no less than the dusty noses of the stonebreakers, his colleagues of the morning.

But a cloud came between the earth and him, and said:

"Halt there, my dear. No one can pass."

"By the moon! this is a little too much. A cloud, a poor little cloud without form, calls me 'my dear,' and bars the way! Clouds are more powerful than I. I will be a cloud or I shall burst with jealousy."

"Do not burst for so little," said the angel, always in attendance, "be a cloud, since thou wishest it." And the new cloud rested proudly, in his turn, between the earth and the resplendent sun.

Never in the memory of man had there fallen such showers. The transformed stonebreaker took pleasure in pouring hail and rain upon the earth in a fashion so terrible that trees fell down, finding only mud in which to fasten their roots.

A rock meanwhile held up his head in the storm. In face of all he remained impassive.

"I am at my wits' end!" said the cloud. "This rock ignores my power. He resists me and I envy him."

Said the angel, "Take his place, and let us see if thou wilt at last be satisfied."

The transformed cloud at length felt at ease. Impervious, inaccessible, impassive, under the burning caresses of the sun and under the fury of the thunder he believed himself master of the world.

But, lo! at his feet a little soft hammering drew his attention. He leaned over, and saw a poor creature covered with rags—thin and pale as he himself had been in the time of his greatest misery—who, with a mallet in hand, chipped the granite into pieces to repair the neighbouring roadway.

"What is this?" said the superb rock. "A poor wretch—miserable among the most miserable—mutilates me, and I cannot defend myself! I am profoundly humiliated. I am reduced to envying the state of this creature."

"Take his place," said the angel smiling.

And the insatiable personage became that which he was before—a poor little breaker of stones.

He was always half dead from hunger, and three quarters dead from fatigue—all of which did not hinder him from being perfectly contented with his lot.

We regret to say that the story which appeared in the issue of this paper dated January 26th, entitled "The Blue Letter," appeared originally in the "Family Herald," and is the copyright property of the proprietors of that paper. Had we been aware of this, it would not have been inserted.

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Should Stout Persons STARVE THEMSELVES?

We are afraid that semi-starvation as a cure for corpulency prevails very much to a dangerous degree. Mr. Archer, the late well-known prominent jockey, was in the habit of going without food for a long stretch in order that he could ride a certain horse at its weight, and there is not much doubt that the debility resulting from this habit of abstemiousness was certainly not conducive to combating the dire attack of fever, which was, perhaps, indirectly responsible for the untimely end, in the zenith of his fame, of this unfortunate but accomplished horseman. Even Mary Jane in the kitchen will eat sparingly of the food allowed her, while she will seek to reduce her fat by copious draughts from the vinegar cruet, and succeed only in injuring the coats of her stomach—the forerunner of dyspeptic troubles which will be difficult to overcome.

The Continental medicos seem to advocate this great reduction of ordinary foods, but one of these savants suggests that the stout person should eat considerably of fatty meats, in order that the appetite is appeased, and consequently less food required, so that practically this is indirectly advocating semi-starvation. On the other hand, Mr. Russell, the British specialist, take a different course. He says, "Eat as much as you like," and as it is an acknowledged fact that under his treatment persons lose from 2 lb. to 12 lb. per week, it beyond doubt stands out pre-eminent against those so-called starvation cures "made in Germany." Some claim that Mr. Russell has to insist upon his patients drinking hot water every morning, but on the contrary he avers that it is dangerous to do so, and has, of course, never advised it. No; the success of Mr. Russell's treatment is incomparably beyond other specialists, for he resorts to no stringent dietary, and simply prescribes a harmless vegetable tonic combination which is the outcome of years of study and botanical research. We advise all those interested in this question to get his book, the price of which is only 4d. It is entitled, "Corpulency and the Cure," 256 pp., and is published by him at Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square London, W.C. It can be had direct, or through any bookseller.—Extract from *The Million*.

A

POSITIVE REMEDY

FOR

CORPULENCE

Any remedy that can be suggested as a cure or alleviation for stoutness will be heartily welcomed. We have recently received a well-written book, the author of which seems to know what he is talking about. It is entitled "Corpulency and the Cure," 256 pages, and is a cheap issue (only 4d.) published by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. Our space will not do justice to this book; send for it yourself. It appears that Mr. Russell has submitted all kinds of proofs to the English Press. The editor of the *Tablet*, the Catholic organ, writes:—"Mr. Russell does not give us the slightest loophole for a doubt as to the value of his cure, for, in the most straightforward and matter-of-fact manner, he submitted some hundreds of original and unsolicited testimonial letters for our perusal, and offered us plenty more, if required. To assist him to make this remedy known, we think we cannot do better than publish quotations from some of the letters submitted. The first one, a marchioness, writes from Madrid:—'My son, Count ——, has reduced his weight in twenty-two days 16 kilos—*i.e.*, 34 lbs.' Another writes:—'So far (six weeks from commencement of following your system) I have lost fully two stone in weight.' The next (a lady) writes:—'I am just half the size.' A fourth:—'I find it is successful in my case. I have lost 8 lbs. in weight since I commenced (two weeks).' Another writes: 'A reduction of 18 lbs. in a month is a great success.' A lady from Bournemouth writes:—'I feel much better, have less difficulty in breathing, and can walk about.' Again a lady says:—'It reduced me considerably, not only in the body, but all over.' The author is very positive. He says:—'Step on a weighing machine on Monday morning and and again on Tuesday, and I guarantee you have lost 2 lbs. in weight without the slightest harm, and vast improvement in health through ridding the system of unhealthy accumulations.'"—*Cork Herald*.

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"PUT YOUR SPARE TIME IN THE BANK."

DID you ever hear of the Australian Time Bank (Limited)? No? Well, then, you must know about it, and right away, too.

Mr. Anstey describes it. The idea is this. You don't use all your time to advantage. Most of it in fact runs to waste. You often have the time, but no chance to invest it profitably. So the time slides out of your possession just as spilled water soaks into the ground and is lost. Suppose you could put your useless time into a bank, as you do money, and draw it out on cheques as you want it. Do you see? Wouldn't that be what the Americans call "A big thing"?

"Bosh! Stuff! Humbug!" you say. "It is impossible. If we could do that we might bank time enough to turn us into boys and girls again."

True, so we might, but as you say, it can't be done. Yet, isn't there a moral in the idea? Open your eyes and read. The moral is plain as the trunk on an elephant. *If you can't get back your waste time, then don't waste it.*

Now, isn't a man wasting time when he gets ill? "Oh," you say, "but he can't help it." That's worse nonsense than the Time Bank. Yes, he can help it, nine times out of ten.

Look, for a second. Here's a man who goes on to talk like this: "There was never," he says, "a stronger man in England than I was up to December, 1884. I am a game-keeper, and about this time we had a deal of trouble with a gang of poachers. I had to keep watch all night long, and was scarcely ever in bed, *and often slept in my damp clothes.* At last we nabbed the poachers and landed them in jail. Shortly after this I was taken bad. At first I merely felt tired and dull, I had a bad taste in the mouth with slime covering my tongue and teeth. I could eat little or nothing, and what I did eat gave me great pain. I felt as if held in a vice; my breathing was laboured and short, and I spat up a great deal of phlegm. I had a dreadful hacking cough, and could get no sleep at night; for after ten minutes' sleep I would wake up and cough for two or three hours at a spell. Night after night I heard the clock strike every hour.

"When the bad attacks came on I felt as if I should suffocate, and had to be bolstered up in bed. I was coughing and spitting up matter and phlegm all night long. Finally I got so weak I couldn't walk across the floor, and if I ventured out my breathing was so bad that I had to stop and rest every few yards. Of course I was obliged to give up my work, and for eight months I did nothing. I was under the doctor all this time, and from the first he said my case was a bad one. After a while he said to my wife, '*Your husband is in a consumption, and will never get better.*'

"I thought it was all over with me, and every one who saw me thought I would die. About this time I read in a Liverpool paper of a medicine called Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup, and fancied I should like to try it. So my son, who lives in Liverpool, got me two bottles, and before I had used up the second one my cough was all gone, my breathing was easy, and I could eat anything. I soon got back to my work, and have enjoyed good sound health ever since. When I began taking the Syrup I was so low I don't believe I could have held out much longer. I have lived all my life in this district, and in my present house forty years.

(Signed) "THOMAS BATEMAN,
"Marbury Locks,
"Near Whitchurch, Salop.
"March 23rd, 1891."

What are we to learn from Mr. Bateman's experience? First, that he had no real consumption. His cough and the spitting up of matter were symptoms of a thoroughly disordered condition of the digestive organs, brought on by exposure, loss of rest, and the breaking up of all his regular habits of life. This resulted from his outlying for the poachers and his foolish sleeping in his damp clothes. Acute indigestion and dyspepsia followed, of course, with all the suffering which he details so well. But was the illness his fault? We do not say it was his fault, for maybe his occupation compelled him to take such risks, but where there is one case of this kind there are a hundred in which the evil might have been averted.

We conclude then that prevention is better than cure, but when a cure must be sought, the successful and trustworthy remedy is Mother Seigel's Syrup.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

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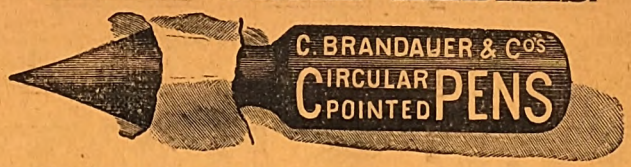

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 323.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING MARCH 9, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

A NORTH COUNTRY THOROUGHBRED

PEOPLE were saying in the club house that Audrey looked like a fairy princess. They did not know that the girl was telling herself over and over again, how like it all was to a fairy tale. Barely a year back she had been a slim, shy, sun-burned creature, whose sole companions were books, horses, men.

Her home was in the grass country, among the hills of Cumberland. A rambling house set fair in the middle of three thousand undulating acres. It had sheltered only Peytons since the first of them came out of London to this northern world. A fine gentleman he, in powder, lace, ruffles, small clothes, and silk stockings. A horse, a woman, he swore, were the two things in life worth loving. As between them he was nobly impartial. His descendants for the most gave preference to the horse.

Necessarily, they loved also their land, and took pride in the knowledge that no Peyton had ever parted with an acre of the original property. Of course, it went always to the male heir. Audrey had known since she knew anything that, some day, her cousin Jack would reign in her father's stead.

But the knowledge gave her no concern. She was happy as the birds, the flowers are, in life and sunshine. Motherless from birth, if she missed the mother's tenderness, she missed also the brooding prescience in whose agony mothers often shadow lives far dearer than their own. Audrey did not like the ladies in the neighbourhood—their eyes were not kind, she decided. Besides, more than once she had caught whispers of "tomboy," "little wildcat," "burnt black as a nigger almost" as she walked with her stateliest step, and head in air up the long church aisle. Possibly that was why she refused utterly to be sent to school.

"We've got a whole roomful of books. I can learn more at home than they will teach me," she said to her father, when the matter came up.

"But will you?" he asked. "Remember, it's word of honour."

"Indeed I will—word of honour," Audrey said,—and there it ended.

No doubt it was a hazardous experiment—this giving a girl-child free range of books chosen strictly for masculine taste. But it wrought good only. In her white innocence Audrey took to her soul only what was wholesome and uplifting. She had inborn a fibre of heroism that made her as responsible to the impulse of great deeds, great thoughts, as is a summer lake to ruffling winds of June. Besides, she lived so in the open—had long gallops with the dawn-wind in her face,—through a world-steeping dew; walks over mile-long grass-fields to bathe in the creek's still pools; hours of sunny loitering with the birds, the bees, the butterflies; more than all, whole days in the pastures, where mother and foal alike knew and answered to her call.

Beyond all that, good comradeship with men—her father, Jack, the friends who dropped in to dine or sup—now and again in the autumn some stranger, who stayed in for a week of quail shooting. To a man they were fond of the bright-faced creature who sat at table in her mother's place, saying little, hearing much, with a fine small dignity of her own that forced them always to speak of her as "Miss Audrey Peyton" rather than "Peyton's little girl."

So the girl came to sixteen. Something happened then.

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"I was never so delighted in my life."

She was told—what all her world had long known—that Jack loved her—and asked would she marry him? Not at once, of course, but in a year or two—when she was eighteen, perhaps—unless—unless—well! unless she could, may be, be willing to say seventeen.

Audrey looked at him, breathing hard. He was tall, handsome, the truest soul alive. And she had loved him all her life—but not in this way. Dimly, faintly, she felt the lack—but how refuse what his heart was set on? What she knew now had been for years her father's cherished hope. It was a cold, small hand that she laid within his palm. When he made as if to kiss her, she drew away with a little shiver—but Jack was well content. It soothed and suited his pride to have her stand at guard even against the man who was her promised husband.

Then for a year life went on in quite the old groove, save that now and then Jack lingered at Audrey's side ten minutes longer than was his wont. But he rarely spoke of his love, of their united future. So rarely, indeed, that but for the ring upon her finger, Audrey might almost have fancied the betrothal scene a dream. Now and again her father said, looking away from her as he spoke, "You are fortunate, singularly fortunate, Audrey, in—in your prospects of future happiness. The man who has chosen you is one of a thousand. Never forget that, whatever happens."

Certainly, Jack showed himself a friend as well as a lover. Particularly when the letter came that began the fairy tale. It was from her mother's rich sister, wife of a London millionaire, who, having married off her own two daughters early and brilliantly, suddenly bethought her that she "really must do something for that girl of poor Lucy's"—a creature towards whom her sense of kinship had hitherto been expressed wholly in Christmas cards.

Major Peyton resented them so much that he was for keeping silence when the lady, Mrs. Archibald Wayre, wrote, begging that her niece might come to her for a year's visit. Jack had a different mind. "Let her go," he said. "A Peyton can be trusted anywhere. She needs to see the world. Besides——" Only to himself would he say that he wished her to see other men—listen, it might be, to other lovers—since only thus could he be honourably quit of the charge his conscience had so often keenly preferred against him—namely, that he had taken advantage of his position—given her no liberty of choice.

So it came about that Mrs. Wayre, uneasily expectant of a gauche, red-cheeked, bouncing lass, found herself, upon a bright autumn morning, facing a lithe creature half a head higher than herself, who looked about her with a pretty rural bewilderment at London sights and sounds, but was no whit abashed by her magnificent kinswoman or the long, searching glance that swept her from head to foot. She even smiled a little, saying at last:

"Aunt Flora, Jack bade me tell you I was sure to be a certain disappointment. He knew I was not more than half as awkward as you would expect to find me."

"Jack was impertinent," Mrs. Wayre said, knitting her brows. "I remember him—a horrid boy—you know I came down when your mother died—but you! my dear! I was never so delighted in my life. Where did you get that air?—that turn of the head; that lift of arm as though a branch swayed by the wind. You are a princess masquerading in tan and freckles. Luckily, they are the fashion now. When I think what a career of conquest lies before you I really tremble at my responsibility."

Mrs. Wayre was wise in her generation. She did not overestimate the charm of wholesome girlish beauty with a white soul shining through. The winter was one long triumph. Audrey was a positive rage with the very best people, particularly the best parties. If the girl had been eager for conquest a score of hearts would have been laid at her feet before Lent brought quiet. As it was, she had but three refusals upon her conscience. Over each her aunt had smiled approval, though each meant a settlement in life such as, before her niece came, she could not have hoped to have her make.

But then she did not dream—as indeed how should she—? that the Hon. Arthur Cecil was not wholly invulnerable. Ten years or more he had been the hopeful despair of all that segment of society which had upon its conscience the establishment of a marriageable young woman.

For he had great possessions, as became the bearer of a fine old Sussex name, and was, besides, the soul of honour and of manly simplicity. A fellow of infinite nerve as well, else how could he calmly smile to naught the dainty lines, the pretty wiles spread all beside his path, especially without ever betraying the faintest consciousness of their existence?

Audrey had "made friends" with him upon the instant.

"My life against one word from your lips."

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There was a fibre of sincerity in each soul that called at once to the other. To her aunt she had said, frankly "I like him better—a hundred times—than all the rest." And the good aunt had but smiled and looked wise, too wise to taint by a worldly word the talisman of unconsciousness by which she felt her niece must win a way into this so-long guarded heart.

It was such a triumph—one she had never dreamed of. She sighed almost at the thought that the victor was not her own child. A niece, though, was very near—and to think at first she had been so absurdly uneasy about Jack—Jack, who seldom wrote, and said hardly more than "Cheque inclosed; be sure you let us know before you need more money."

No doubt Jack was a good fellow enough—valuable squire, picturesque even—in Westmoreland. So long as he stayed there, a good many hundred miles away, Mrs. Wayre could think of him with a truly amiable complaisance. If her niece's mind strayed ever in the same direction nobody was the wiser for it—least of all the Hon. Cecil, albeit he flattered himself that to him her heart was as an open book, on each page whereof he read some fresh and delightful thing.

Thinking of Jack, Audrey had told herself that his love could not be deep—always she had had a sort of haunting fear that the betrothal was only a convenient family arrangement in which his heart was no more seriously engaged than hers. So long as the Hon. Cecil kept silence she could do nothing but be happy. If—if ever there was need, Jack should know all the truth. She knew he would bid her choose whatever was for her best happiness. Dear old Jack! It might be for his happiness as well.

But upon this white-hot August day, Audrey throned in the secretary's box in the grand stand, was drawn away from thought of what lay behind, before her, by vivid joy in the present. A figure of delicate stateliness, with everywhere a faint suggestion of roses, what wonder that she held a little laughing court, wherein distinctly the best men of the assemblage bent reverently to do her homage. Besides, it was all so new—her first vista into the ultimate destiny of the brave creatures she loved so well. They had driven the dozen miles betwixt the course and Belpré, the Wayre's country house, and Cecil, who was a member of the Jockey Club, had now taken command. The Quorn Plate, which was worth £5,000, was the principal event of the day. Of course, the entries had been phenomenally numerous. Equally, of course, the tragic march of time and training had left just two-year-olds to face the starting flag.

"Ten too many, at the very least," the Secretary said in Audrey's ear, as far down the course the grand parade began to form. Audrey looked away from him over the club-house lawn, with its brave show of turf and blossoms, the magnificent wide-sweeping course, to the trees outside, whereon ragged, adventurous lads sat thick as blackbirds, then back to the rank upon rank of heads in the big, breezy stand, and said reflectively:

"I don't know about that. Most of them have no ghost of a chance to win—but only a few here know that. If there were but three or four creatures to carry the hopes, fears, fortunes of this multitude, do you not think the feeling would be too tense for enjoyment?"

"Perhaps," the grey beard admitted. "But, see—there they come."

Audrey gave a low, delighted cry. They were coming—those young racers, finer than silk, stepping slow and stately, yet with motion so supple as to show their feet could spurn the wind. Four or five were chestnut coats, as many bay and sorrel—two brown, two greys; a single shining black made up the tale of fire and muscle, passing slow in review under the eyes of the massed throng.

"Let me introduce you to my cousin."

The black colt rider wore a thin gold sash across the chest. The pair came almost last, and were evidently unknown and friendless. Other steeds, other riders, had got hand-clappings, plenty—joyous shouts of welcome. These two passed along in a waft of heavy silence.

"Pick the winner, Miss Peyton. I hear you know all that is to be known about horses," the Secretary said, smiling down at Audrey. As she bent her glass critically on the vanishing paraders, he added:

"I will tell you, though, the race lies between three—Northman, the bay colt, who came first, and is the rankest outsider in the betting; Raveloe, the chestnut, an odds-on favourite; and Victor, the sorrel with white stockings."

Audrey shook her head. "It will be none of them, if the best horse wins; for the best of all is the black who came last. Let's see his name—Chance! Who ever heard such a one? He moves as if he were made of lightning and velvet. With anything like fair play he must surely win."

"You must back your judgment," Cecil said, very low. "And let me name the wager: my life against one word from your lips."

Audrey did not answer him in words, but as she turned from him there were damask roses a-blossom in her sweet face. All eyes were now bent on the farther end of the straight course, where twenty impatient creatures, each bearing a rider whose face was hard-set almost to wolfishness, were plunging, rearing, lashing out wildly with the heel, nipping savagely one at the other, yet each one wildly eager to dash foremost across the three-quarters of a mile now betwixt his owner and fortune.

Once, twice, thrice they formed, broke away, with still some laggard to make the effort vain. A breathless hush fell on the waiting throng; half-words died upon the lip; hands were arrested in mid-air. As the roar of the sea, but tensely human, at last came the shout, "They're off—off!" Before

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it could die away the rataplan of flying hoofs swelled electrically upon thrilled, expectant ears. As one soul, the crowd caught its breath, then got to its feet, bent forward, as though to draw, by the might of its burning desire, the racers yet the swifter to their golden goal.

It was an even start. For the first hundred yards the young things kept the order of troop horses. Then Victor's white stockings flashed out of the rank. Northman was at his shoulder, Raveloe's nose at the crupper. A wink of the eyelash, and he came abreast. Stride for stride, with glaring eyeballs, with nostrils wide and red, ears laid close along the neck, the brave creatures came over the sunlit space, swifter than the swallow's flight.

"Raveloe! Raveloe! Northman! No! Victor! Victor! Raveloe! Raveloe wins!" came up from the throng over a babel of shouting. They were close—so close now. With a glass it was easy to note the lined, hollow faces of the jockeys, bent so low, so fiercely over their horses' necks. Audrey's hand closed hard upon Arthur Cecil's arm.

"Look! look! The black horse!" she cried. "See! They have him pocketed! Oh, it is cruel—cruel! Why will the rest not give him room? I know he could win. Ah! there he comes at last!"

He came—like the whirlwind—the tempest's driving wrath. Only an eighth remained—the flying leaders, running neck and neck, had a hundred and fifty yards to the post. The noise sank—shouts died in the throat—with bated breath, the throng watched the electric speed, the wide space-devouring bounds that brought the black nearer, ever nearer to his more fortunate foes. Nearer, ever nearer.

Fifty yards from the post the dust of the leaders swallowed him—his nose came through it—his head, his shoulders. Locked with the first flight, running as a team, the face went past the post, the black muzzle a bare six inches behind Victor's white face, which, in turn, just showed in front of Raveloe and Northman.

"You are a witch for guessing—or a marvellous judge of horseflesh," the Secretary said, as bedlam broke loose about them. "On my soul, though, I'm sorry for the fellow who owns that black. He must have won had the run been five yards longer. It's years since I saw a beast of such quality. I must find out all about him and his owner."

"I can tell you the whole story," said an aristocratic-looking man in the next box. "As you say, it's a beastly shame. The boy rode to perfection—but he's new to the business, and did not know how to look out for himself. The whole outfit—owner, horse, and jockey—came from the North. The man, it seems, is a breeder with a big place there—but somehow he has run behind, so far as to have a big mortgage on his hands. In addition, he's engaged to marry a pretty girl for whom he thinks nothing is quite fine or good enough. So a year ago, instead of selling this black wonder, who is royally bred, and would have fetched a tidy sum, he decided to keep and train him, hoping to pull off the Horn of Plenty and live happy ever after. As you see, he has just missed it; and so confident was he of winning that he wagered the horse on the result of the race."

A tall man, wedging himself out of the throng behind them, caught Audrey's eye, as he moved away. Instantly she sprang to his side, crying aloud, "Jack! Jack! You must not go away and leave me."

As with the illumination of a lightning flash she comprehended—he was the man who had risked and lost for love. After one glance at his working face, she put both hands fast over his arm, and turned to face the Hon. Arthur Cecil, saying, with a touch of shy pride, "Mr. Cecil, let me introduce you to Mr. Peyton, who is my cousin, and is to be my husband as soon as I go home."

At her words a flame of joy lit Jack's face for a breath's space, then faded, leaving it hollowed in tenser new lines. He laid a caressing palm on the soft hands holding him, and said, looking full in Cecil's eyes:—"That was the—plan, sir—and—and you see a Peyton never goes back on—anybody in trouble. But I've known this face by heart for years and years—I—I saw it sitting back there when—when you made your wager—and knew before the race was run I was in the way of losing—to-day."

Speech was beyond the lovers. In silence Cecil took Audrey's hand that Jack laid tenderly within his own. Mrs. Wayre looked uncertain whether to scream or faint over such happenings in public. The Secretary of the Jockey Club came forward and caught Jack's hand. Wringing it hard, he said with suspicious huskiness: "Mr. Peyton, I thank you—you have widened my experience. It has been—a most unfortunate day for you—but in spite of all, I must thank you for showing me, and so many others, that in quality the North Country thoroughbred stands ahead of the world."

THE GOLDSMITH OF ANTWERP.

A BELGIAN STORY.

It was the beginning of the sixteenth century. A wonderfully fine Sunday morning in winter had dawned; the clear, cold sun was sparkling on the snow-covered roofs of Antwerp. The sunbeams climbed and glided merrily along the houses, gilding the stained glass window panes. Then they jumped gleefully over to the smooth fields of ice formed by the frozen canals which encircle the city.

At the north end of the town, a small, well-frozen lake had been formed by the outlets of the smaller canals. Church was just over; the last sounds of the bells were still trembling on the crisp air as they died away. A merry throng was on the lake; a delightful picture of youthful gaiety presented itself to the visitor. The slender forms of youths and maidens, with their glittering skates, seemed to skim along as if driven by the wind. Two by two the elder ones skated by, followed by boys and girls, forming long chains.

Every now and then a pretty girl swept by all the other skaters, who bowed to her respectfully and watched her with admiration. But, like a proud swan, she went on farther and farther. Her magnificent dress betrayed the wealthy patrician. A blue velvet gown, falling in rich folds, and trimmed with fine fur, enveloped her form; and under the turban which she wore, and which was trimmed with flowing red plumes, gleamed a mass of golden hair, which fell in two heavy braids to the edge of her gown. The wonderful, dreamy eyes in her beautiful, aristocratic face often looked searchingly among the young patricians, but only to turn away in disappointment and with intense longing

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Finally the form of a young man, coming rom the other end of the lake, came gliding towards the pretty skater. Her eyes sparkled with joy; he bowed to her reverently; but then he confidently grasped the little hands which she stretched towards him. They glided on in silence for some time.

"Why did you remain all alone, Antje?" he asked suddenly; "the young patricians will think it haughtiness on your part."

Antje drew up her rosy lips in scorn.

"That just suits me, cousin Adrian!" she laughed. "I wanted to wait for you undisturbed!"

"Oh, Antje, you must not do it! As grateful as your cousin is to you for your friendship, you must never forget what a deep, immeasurable abyss separates the wealthy Anna Der Solst from the poor goldsmith, Adrian Van Benschotten!" The handsome man spoke earnestly and mildly.

"Oh!" pouted Antje, "but suppose I do not like anyone else as well as poor Adrian?" and with a proud, loving look she scanned his noble, stalwart form in its plain brown doublet.

"Adrian! do you know whom you resemble—in comparison with the gaudy patricians? You are like the falcon among the bullfinches."

"Sweet child, it is well that you can jest; I feel as if I should like to die—for I come to you to-day for the last time—to bid you farewell—I am going to England."

"Go," she said icily. She pushed him from her, but only to draw herself up again, closer and more confidingly to him. It seemed as if they were made one for the other, for they were the most distinguished-looking couple among the crowd of young people.

"You see, Antje—I must go, hard as it is for me to do so. My honour demands it. It is my duty. Shall I notice, Antje, how my little cousin's affection grows stronger, day by day? And to know that we may never come together. It is better that I should go while my Antje is still young, so that she may more easily forget the poor goldsmith. You will know and love a better man, but I shall remain true to my first love."

"Adrian! I shall never love any one else but you!"

"Poor Antje! It is in vain; the proud Mynheer Van Solst will never give his only child to a poor apprentice in marriage——"

"You are an artist, Adrian," Antje answered vivaciously. "Even to-day I will be the wooer for you at my father's feet."

Adrian shook his head. "You don't understand Mynheer's patrician pride." He tore himself away violently. "Farewell, Antje."

"Soon I will send you good news!" Antje called after him.

He smiled sadly, waved one final farewell and disappeared.

. . . . . .

The finest house on the Schelde quay belonged to Mynheer Van Der Solst.

A stately repose reigned in the reception hall, covered with rugs and decorated with large chests, mirrors, weapons and shields, which led to a suite of richly furnished apartments. The last one was Antje's own, a charming and dainty room.

Rare tropical plants adorned it. Costly silver covered the toilet table. Heavy red silk draperies fell from the golden crown of the tester of her bed. Gobelin tapestries from Brabant showed scenes from the Bible. In the midst of this splendour Antje sat, in the cosy, upholstered bay window, and gazed sadly upon the dead winter landscape. Her eyes were red from weeping; now and then a soft sob escaped her half-opened lips. There had been a terrible scene. Mynheer—her father, who had always been so kind and lenient—now swore high and low that only a wealthy merchant should become the husband of his only daughter. "I will never give you to that poor beggar!" were his last words.

It was not on account of the difference in rank, for the goldsmith's art was greatly honoured in the sixteenth century, but Mynheer considered Adrian an idle dreamer.

"Profession has no golden bottom with that fellow!" grumbled the excited man. "I shall never intrust my greatest blessing to a man who will never be prosperous!"

Time crept on slowly and weighed heavily on Antje; finally she found some diversion in her embroidery frame. The beautiful lace collar upon which she was at work had been intended for a bridal gift for Adrian.

"Now the collar shall ornament my shroud!" thought Antje, and gave way to sombre thoughts. She did not even notice that she had pricked her middle finger, until the drops of blood from it already made a large spot. The fine Brussels cambric was spoiled. Antje angrily threw the frame into a corner. Just then Greta, her maid, entered, and handed Antje a small package bearing Adrian's handwriting.

Quickly Antje opened the seal; a small silver article, set with a blue stone, fell out and rolled down at Antje's feet. Inquisitively Antje picked it up, and looked at the strange trinket in astonishment; then put it down indifferently, took up the parchment, and read:

"MY DEAR, SWEET ANTJE,—I know very well that you would not send me a good message. Now I am on my way to England. Believe me, I act only from motives of pure, disinterested love. But you, my dear child, must obey your noble father, who is anxious for your welfare only.

"Farewell, my darling! Be happy, and try to forget,

"Ever your loving,

"ADRIAN.

"P.S.—Perhaps I may give you just a little souvenir! The silver trinket is a little cap which I thought of for the protection of your delicate finger, when I noticed how often you pricked it at your embroidery."

Then Antje alternately pressed the letter and the little finger-cap to her lips, and held up her hand as she made the vow: "Adrian, I will wait until you return to take your Antje with you!"

. . . . . .

Three years have passed; a long magnificent wedding procession is moving to the grand Jacob's Cathedral, at Antwerp.

The pretty bride, who smiles so happily under her veil, is Antje Van Der Solst. She has not lost any of the freshness of youth, but has blossomed out even more beautiful and queenly, a full-blown, fragrant rose. The bridegroom is a wealthy, stately-looking man from Sheffield. He looks his best in his costly velvet waistcoat, decorated with a wide golden necklace of honour—altogether a distinguished figure among the patricians following the bridal pair.

Antje is following the man from Sheffield to the altar, with her father's blessing—and still she has kept her vow, for the bridegroom is Adrian Van Benschotten the inventor of the thimble.

The practical Englishmen had soon appreciated the value of the invention, and through it Adrian had attained riches and honours.

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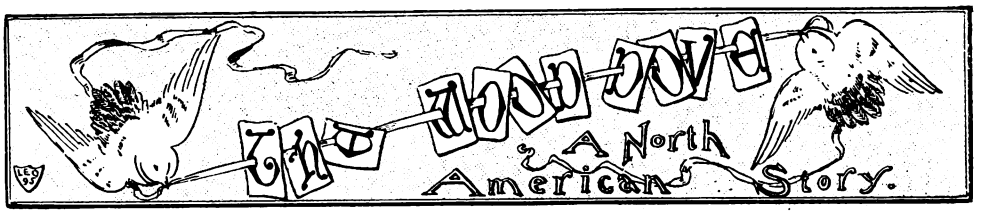

My friend Max, Mr. R. Max of New York, was a capital story-teller. He had been on the stage at one time, which accounted for the gift. One night we had gone to the Empire together, and sitting there in the stalls he began like this, for all the world as if he were reading from the programme in his hand:—

General court-martial had been proclaimed at Fort Marcy. It had convened. Private Thomas Wilkins of Company D, —th infantry, had been tried for being off duty without leave; the papers had been signed and sent to Washington by the afternoon mail, and Colonel John Brierly, who had acted as judge-advocate, and Major Thompson, the surgeon, who had appeared as a witness against Wilkins, were striding along the broad walk towards the colonel's quarters when I met them, and was invited to have a glass of something hot.

After the something hot had been declared excellent by all the persons interested, the talk naturally was of the court-martial.

"By the way, colonel," said Major Thompson, "if you will pardon my saying so, I thought you were very lenient towards Wilkins in your examination."

"Yes," said the colonel, "I generally am in such cases. You know," he said, turning to me, "Wilkins left his quarters to go and see his sweetheart. He is engaged to the girl."

"But it was a clear case of neglect of duty," remarked the surgeon.

"I know it," replied the colonel, "but—well, I sympathise with him."

The major said nothing more. The colonel regarded his glass for a few moments, tested the punch, and then, looking up suddenly, he said:

"I'll tell you what I'll do. If you men will give me your word of honour never to reveal to a soul what I have to tell until I am dead and gone, I will give you my reasons for sympathising with this man."

We gave him our word of honour, and we kept our word. The colonel has now been dead for many years; the major, I believe, is on the retired list, and living somewhere up in Maine; and I do not feel that I am wronging any man in repeating the story told to us that winter afternoon some ten or twelve years ago.

"In the little old churchyard on the outskirts of the Mexican village of San Felipe in Arizona," the colonel said, "is a grave standing by itself in one corner. On the modest head-stone is the inscription, 'Sacred to the memory of the Wood Dove, received into the Church as Mercedes Brierly, wife of Colonel John Brierly, U.S.A., died on March 10th, 187—, aged 26 years.'"

The colonel was silent for some moments, and then, in a grave voice, he continued:

"Mercedes Brierly was my wife. I am the John Brierly referred to. She was an Apache Indian, and when you have heard what I did to win her hand, knowing her heart was mine, you will understand why I did not put many severe questions to that poor young man to-day.

"I first met the girl who was destined to be my wife in the year 186—, when I was stationed on the frontier. The civil war, in which I had won my colonel's commission, was but over, and the Apache and other Indians were constantly on the warpath. I was at that time in command of the —th of cavalry, and I had about 400 men with me.

"We were encamped near a little Mexican village, San something or other, in the north-western part of New Mexico.

"We had no work to do for about a month, but the air of my tent was heavy with the reports brought to me of a large body of Apaches said to be on the war-path, and rapidly approaching our neighbourhood.

"One afternoon—I remember the day well—the reports were verified by the capture of an Apache girl by some of the men. The girl was brought to my tent by her captors. They had found her riding by herself in the hills, and had only succeeded in making her a prisoner after she had severely wounded one of them.

"I will not attempt to describe the beauty of this girl. She was then about nineteen years of age, of sublime figure, with the most wonderfully beautiful eyes. I will only say that I fell in love with her the very moment I saw her.

"We held the girl a prisoner. She refused to tell us anything about herself or to betray the whereabouts of her people. That they were near we knew, however; and daily and nightly we expected an attack. But for one month they remained under cover. We did not go out and look for them, as it was my policy always to let them fire the first shot.

"That month was, in many respects, the happiest month of my life. Love was new to me, and I loved this girl with all my heart. What was sweeter, she soon grew to love me in return.

"One day I told her of my love, and I asked her to marry me. I left her, and that night the Apaches attacked us. Their victory was complete. They found us unprepared. Our loss was something fearful, and my loss was greater still, for when the morning came the girl was missing. Her people had recaptured her.

"The morning found us in a desperate mood. The men were mad and I was mad. We were all in a humour for a first class massacre, and I laid my plans accordingly. Our scouts discovered where the enemy's forces lay, and that afternoon we penned them in and had them at our mercy. Our numbers were about even, but our men were all old soldiers, thoroughly disciplined, and so they fell easy victims to our superiority.

"At about five o'clock, when the fighting was at its worst, I showed a flag of truce, and a few moments later an Indian of commanding stature rode out from the little fort they had built on top of the hill and advanced to the centre of the diminutive plain which stretched between the two armies. I rode out alone to meet him, for I could see that he was the chief of the tribe.

"We saluted.

"'I offer you peace,' I said to him, 'on two conditions; first, that you lay down your arms and surrender; second, that the girl you stole from us last night be returned to me.'

"'She is my daughter,' said the Indian haughtily.

"'Then there is so much more reason why you should surrender, for I love her; I would marry her, and I do not wish to be at war with her people.'

"'You are good,' replied the Indian, with a sneer; the first and only time I have ever seen a sneer on the face of an Indian. 'You offer me peace for honour. Go back to your tents.'

"I felt as though he had kicked me, and, flaming up with wrath, I returned to my men and the Indian to his. But there was very little more work done that day. I determined to wait until the morning, and then to charge upon the enemy and kill every man of them, to capture my sweetheart and marry her, whether her father liked it or not. By that time, I considered, it wouldn't make much difference whether he liked it or not, for dead men rarely interfere in matters of love.

"I had no fear of their escaping during the night, for we

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had them pretty well penned in, and I had no fear of their attacking us until morning. After sunset I called my officers together and gave them their orders.

"'At eight o'clock,' I told them, 'we will charge upon them and finish them up.'

"The officers left me in my tent to my own reflections, and a few minutes later I heard a slight cheer from the men. I knew then that they had heard the order, for all the afternoon they had been itching for a good charge. The command had not been given, for the simple reason that I feared in the charge upon the Indians the girl I loved might be either killed or wounded.

"I sat for a long time thinking how I might capture her, and, seeing no way clear, I was about to turn in in despair, when I heard a cry for the corporal of the guard from one of our outposts. There was a hurrying of men, and then, in a few moments, the corporal came into my tent, saluted, and said that an Indian girl wished to speak with me. My heart beat violently, and I ordered the men to show her in.

"But it was not my love, my Wood Dove, as she had told me her name was among her people. The girl who stood before me was small and wizened, with weak eyes and in rags.

"'What do you want?' I asked her.

"'The Wood Dove could not fly to you,' she replied, 'so she sent me. They are guarding her, but she will escape from them. She tells me to say to you that my people will charge upon you to-morrow morning, and that to deceive you all of our women will be mounted and held in the rear as if they were men waiting for their turn to fight. She tells me to say to you that she will be mounted on a black horse, with a star in its forehead, and with two white forelegs. She will be in the front line when the charge is made, and at the first fire will fall from her horse as though she were wounded. You must then manage to pick her body up before our people do so. Her father is the chief of our people; he was the chief with whom you spoke to-day, and he was very angry with her when he came back to us.

"'She has persuaded him that she does not love you, but hates you, and, though she is well guarded to-night, it is because of the fear of an attack from you. In the morning she will ride forth and take her place at the head of all the women. In the excitement of the moment she will be able to mix with the men, and you know what to do then.'

"The girl left me and returned, as she had come, to the tents of her people.

"I was naturally excited over this story. I could not help realising the real danger the Wood Dove would run of being killed, and I was puzzled for some while what I should do. Then an idea occurred to me, and, smiling to myself, I went to sleep and rested peacefully until the morning.

"In the morning I called my officers about me again.

"'I have learned,' I said, 'that the enemy intend to charge upon us. I have decided that it will be best to wait until they are halfway across the plain, and then to sally forth. The chief in command of them is the famous Deer Head, and my orders are to capture him alive, if possible. For this reason, I think it would be advisable to supply the men with one round of blank cartridges.

"'When the enemy is halfway across the plain I will give the order, and at the sound of the bugle we will sally forth. When within one hundred yards of the enemy the blank cartridges are to be fired. Then charge into them and take as many prisoners as possible. Only one round of blank cartridges is to be supplied, and no man is to fire after that until the bugler repeats the charge. I myself will take the centre. Captain Howard will take the left, and Captain Watkins the right. Now, gentlemen, to your posts.'

"I chuckled to myself, as, with astonishment depicted upon their faces, the young gentlemen left me, and then to complete my plans I summoned my body-guard. In those days a colonel on the frontier had as many in his body-guard as he wanted. My men were all good, loyal, brave fellows, and I knew that I could depend upon them.

"'My men,' I said to them, 'I am going to lead the centre this morning, and I'm going to put you all immediately behind me, in the front rank. I want you all to watch me closely, and I want you also to look out for a black horse, with white forelegs, and a white star in its forehead. If the rider of that horse falls at the first fire, or the second fire, or at all, I want you to be careful and follow me, and get to the body before it is picked up by any of the Indians.'

"My plans now complete, I had but to wait. I had not long to wait either, for within an hour the warriors came forth from under cover, and behind them came what looked like a second regiment, but what I knew to be the women. It is not often that the Indians, I should say here, take their women with them when they go on the warpath, but the Apaches, being a wandering tribe, generally had no safe place to leave them, and so were obliged to be hampered with their presence.

"The Indians advanced, and the bugle sounded the order to mount. I rode out to my place, and stationed my six body-guardsmen immediately behind me in the rank. For some time I could not make out the horse I looked for, but at last I saw it in the rearguard, and then, as the Indians galloped their horses, I saw it come out from among the women and take a place in the ranks of the men.

"The enemy came on now towards us at a brisk gallop, its line as straight as an arrow, and as I tightened my waistband I caught sight again of the horse with the white forelegs. It was in the very middle of the line. My joy was almost complete.

"The enemy was now in the middle of the plain, and the time had come for action. The bugle sounded and we were off, slowly and quietly loping over the ground at first; then, as the enemy came nearer, thundering over the parched earth. Within gunshot we came, and the Indians opened on us. A few of our men dropped, but we did not reply. On we thundered, and then a line of insipid, useless fire burst from our lines.

"I heard a cry. I saw a figure—the figure of the girl I loved. There was a rushing and a growling and a thundering of hoofs. We were among them, cutting to the right and left. We cut our way through them. I dashed forward to where my love lay waiting for me.

"I leaned forward over my horse, seized her in one hand, and lifted her, with a strength I knew not I possessed, and placed her in the saddle behind me. My bodyguard placed themselves in a circle round me, the bugle sounded the charge again, the signal to commence firing, and then, wheeling, we opened on them with sabre and carbine.

"Through their lines we went again, my guardsmen about me mowing a lane for me through the red men. And then, safe in our own territory once more, I gave my love into the safe keeping of my six faithful fellows, and they returned to our camp with her.

"You know the result of that battle. The fight lasted for only a few minutes, and then, beaten, half of their number dead, the great Deer Head killed, the enemy retreated in disorder.

"Without much ado my Indian girl and I were married at the little Mexican church in the village. For some few short years we were very happy, and then she was taken from me.

"Now that you know how great risks I took with the lives of my men for the sake of the woman I loved, do you blame me for sympathising with poor Wilkins? I was fortunate—he was unfortunate; that's the only difference. And, poor man, he really did nothing. He did not leave us at the mercy of a cruel foe. More than likely at the time we were comfortably drinking hot punch and telling stories. And I'll tell you what I am going to do, gentlemen. I am going to write to Washington to-night and give the man a first-rate character, and take the liberty of advising the department merely to reprimand him. What do you think?"

The major and I filled our glasses, and, raising them to our lips, exclaimed, in a voice, as we quaffed the cheerful beverage:

"Colonel, here's your very good health!"

Mr. R. Max of New York had finished. The call bell rang and the curtain rose on the latest London ballet.

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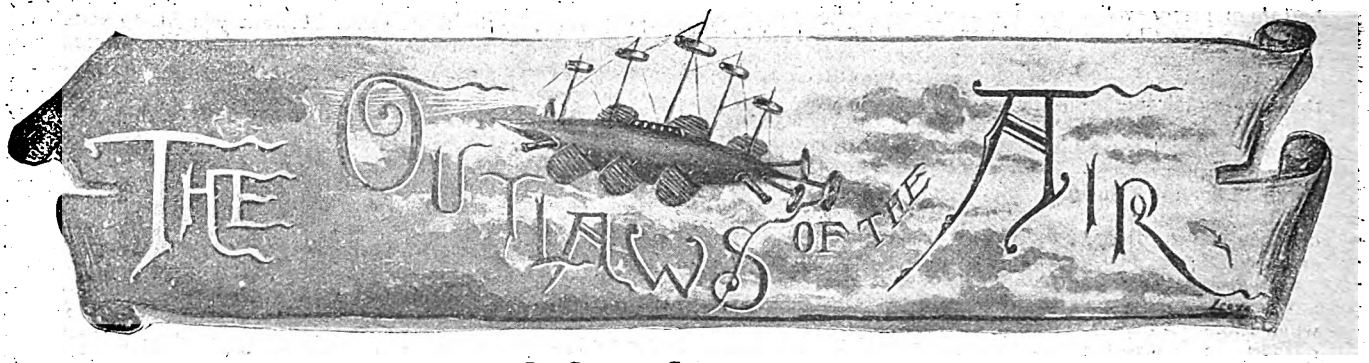


By George Griffith,

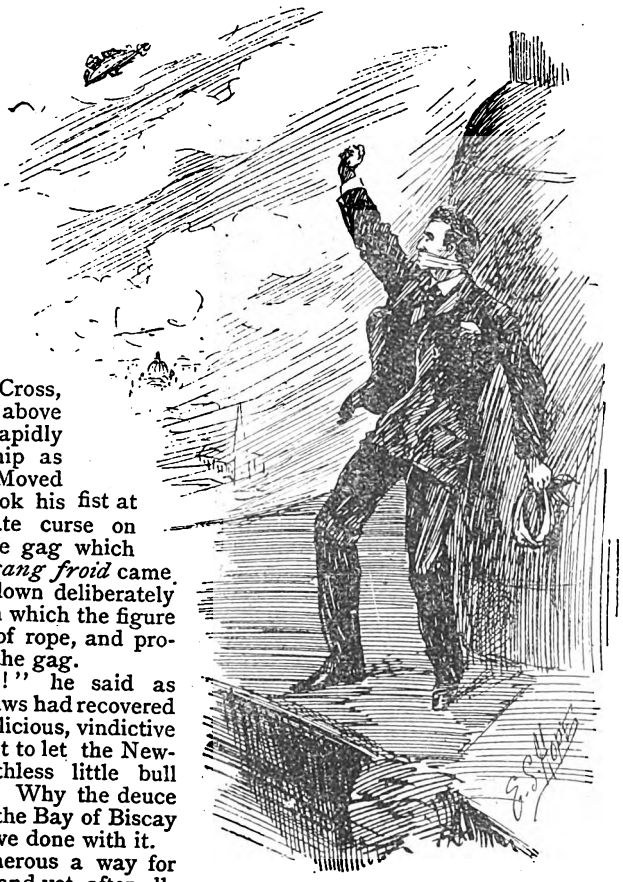
Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," &c.

CHAPTER LI.

Game to the Last.

Renault's first action as soon as he had satisfied himself that his feet were resting on a solid foundation was to take the bandage from his eyes. Although he felt certain that such an enemy as Hartog would have taken very good care to leave him in a position from which no escape was possible without the intervention of a miracle, still, with that elementary instinct of self-preservation which, in such supreme moments rises superior to, and independent of, all reasoning, he lifted the bandage very slowly from his eyes for fear of being dazzled and dazed, and so losing his footing by some involuntary movement.

He looked out under it as he raised it, and the first glimpse showed him where he was. He was on the east-side of the capital, and therefore, facing Morley's Hotel and Charing Cross, and far away over the roofs above which he stood he could see the rapidly diminishing shape of the air-ship as she sped away into the clouds. Moved by an irresistible impulse, he shook his fist at it and mumbled an inarticulate curse on Hartog and her crew behind the gag which filled his mouth. Then his old *sang froid* came back to him, and he sat himself down deliberately with his back against the base on which the figure of Nelson stands beside the coil of rope, and proceeded to untie the fastenings of the gag.



He shook his fist.

"You treacherous little beast!" he said as soon as his stiffened tongue and jaws had recovered the faculty of speech. "You malicious, vindictive little cur! What an ass I was not to let the Newcastle people stretch that worthless little bull neck of yours as they wanted to! Why the deuce didn't you pitch me overboard in the Bay of Biscay as I intended to pitch you and have done with it.

"That would have been too generous a way for you to treat an enemy, I suppose, and yet, after all, I don't know—I must confess there's a sort of what the old dramatists used to call, 'poetic justice' about it. As you said, the good people of London had very good reason for wishing to see me again, and you've certainly put me in a fairly conspicuous position.

"Oh yes, I thought so; the audience is beginning to collect for the spectacle. Curious how times change and men change with them! The last time I was in this neighbourhood the people couldn't get out of the way fast enough. They seemed to look upon me as a sort of destroying pestilence, as I possibly was, and—curse that treacherous, sausage-eating little pig, and the curs that turned on me at the last moment!—if it hadn't been for them I should be that still, instead of playing an entirely new version of St. Simon Stylites on the top of Nelson's Column.

"Still, it is no use growling; the game is up, and if, as Byron says, the wolf dies in silence, a good Anarchist can meet his end with no less dignity I suppose. At any rate when the end does come I shall have the satisfaction of knowing that I have sent a good few thousands of my enemies to perdition before me. Yes, that was a glorious night when I left the heart of London burning behind me, and they won't have repaired those ruins down yonder at Westminster until a good time after they have settled accounts with me.

"Well now, I wonder how they are going to get me down. Obviously they must either fetch me down or shoot me up here unless I oblige them by jumping down. I don't see how they could fetch me, because I wouldn't go. There isn't a man in England plucky enough to climb up and fetch me down. I suppose they'd do that by flying a kite over the Column like they do over mill chimneys, and then hauling ropes and ladders up. Or perhaps they might build a scaffolding, only that would be too much trouble, I should think, especially as I might disappoint them by jumping off just as it was finished. It looks a nasty fall, and those stones look most uncompromisingly hard; but still, I should never feel the smash. According to all accounts big falls are rather pleasant experiences than otherwise.

"Ah, what has that policeman picked up down there? Looks like a bit of paper tied to something. I daresay it's a message that that little pig Hartog threw over to tell them I am here. Yes, that is evidently it. See how they're pointing up. Ah! you brutes, you think you've got me now, don't

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you? And you are looking forward to another little scene in Newgate Yard which will not be interrupted by the appearance of an Anarchist air-ship; but I can promise you that that will never happen. You shall have something more tragic than that if you have anything.

"*Tonnerre!* what a crowd, and what a sea of stupid, gaping, up-turned faces! If I could only have command of the *Revanche* now for ten minutes they might burn me alive or break me on the wheel afterwards. Wouldn't I scatter them in fine style! And aren't they howling, too. It's a good job my aerial experiences have given me a steady head, or I might lose it and fall down. But, bah! what a fool I am! It will only be a few minutes or a few hours sooner, after all, and what would that matter?"

"Ah! a bullet. So you'd shoot me like a trapped wolf, would you, Messieurs? That was rather a bad shot. I think you have knocked a piece of Nelson's coat away. I don't care to be shot, because I might only be wounded; so I think I'll lie down for a bit. Yes, and I may as well have a smoke at the same time. There, that's better; now they can't see me, and I can have one more smoke in comfort, at any rate.

"I wonder what that little backguard Franz is going to do? And, *tonnerre de Dieu*, I never thought of that—I wonder whether poor Lea has remained faithful and remembered what I told her about the reserves of fuel? Yes, she must have done; she could never have joined those curs, and she's too clever and a good deal too spiteful not to have played that little trick upon them, and, if she has, what a gorgeous swindle it will be for Hartog and the rest!

"There isn't an ounce of the stuff in the Camp except what's on board the other ships—I took very good care of that; and the *Revanche* will only have about enough to travel a thousand miles with, and then—why, down she comes like a balloon with the gas let out; and when that happens I don't think I shall have very much cause to envy either Franz or any of them. They'll be drowned like so many rats in the sea, or, better still, they will have to drop on land, and then—if they don't get torn to pieces by wild animals—they'll give a little pleasant excitement to the whole of Europe, and then get strung up or shoved under the guillotine, to the applause of a most appreciative audience.

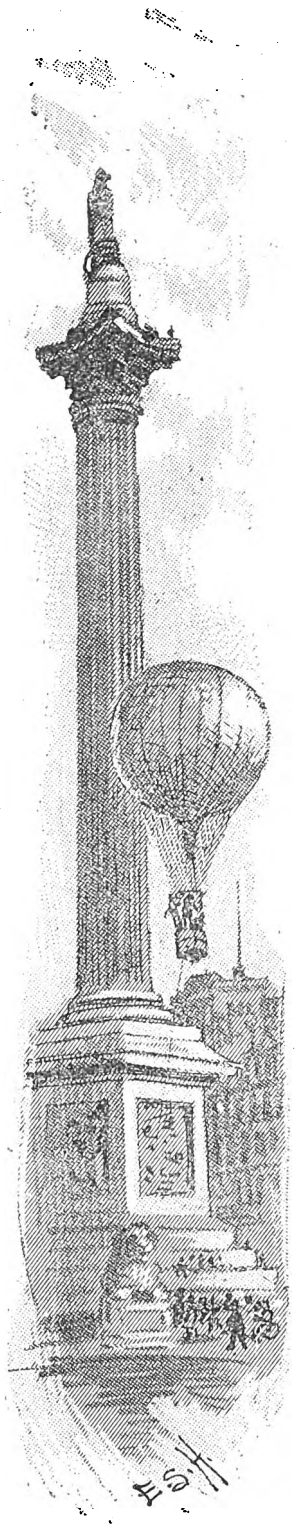
"Yes, that would be a very comforting thought in my present position if only poor Lea wasn't among them. It will be a miserable end for her to meet anyhow, and yet if I'd left her at the Camp it wouldn't have been much better, even if it hadn't been much worse. Ah, well! I can't save her now, though, if I could, and there was a ladder from here down into the middle of that gaping, yelling crowd, that's longing to tear me limb from limb, I'd willingly walk down if it would save her.

"Hullo! What's that they are bringing up Parliament Street from the Horse Guards? A captive military balloon, as I am still alive. So that is your little game is it, gentlemen? What a pity you haven't got one of the Syndicate's air-ships here to fetch me off. I think you'd find it rather more useful than that clumsy-looking thing.

"Yes, that's what it is; all right. There's the balloon, and there's the car and the cart with the windlass and rope. I suppose they've been practising with it in the Park. Really, that is quite a brilliant idea for the British War Office, but I'll give them something a bit more brilliant than that before they've finished the experiment.

"I wonder what sort of a fool they take me for. Let's see, have I got anything in the way of a weapon about me? Yes. I be hanged if they haven't left me my sheath knife. Good! Now, there won't be more than three men come up with it. I wonder if I could manage to despatch them and then cut the rope before they could wind it back to the earth. No! That won't do. They weave a couple of strands of wire now in those ropes. I couldn't cut it even if I could kill the fellows before they got it down, and even if I got clear away I should have to come down somewhere or else get blown out to sea and starve and go mad if I didn't get drowned.

"No; I've had my fun, and I'll end the game here, and now. I don't care very much for fame, but the world shall remember the way I went out of it as long as Anarchy itself is remembered. Yes, cheer away, my friends! You see they've got it into position and four brave men—volunteers no doubt—are getting into the car to come and pull a lonely and defenceless Anarchist off the top of Nelson's Column. A glorious exploit, but it will be more glorious before it's finished—for me if not for you. It's a good job there isn't a breath of wind stirring, even up here.



The balloon slowly rose in a vertical line.

"Yes, it is rising perfectly straight. It will come to within about ten feet of the capital and then I suppose they'll throw out grappling irons and haul it up close, and then they think there will be a bit of a fight. What a set of fools. Here it comes. It's only about fifty feet away now, so here goes. I wish to God I could live to see the end of the fun!"

The gigantic crowd which thronged, not only the Square but all the approaches to it, was staring upwards with strained fixed eyes all concentrated on the great mass of the balloon, which slowly rose in a vertical line from the waggon containing the windlass up towards the capital on which stood Max Renault, alone and forsaken, and really at bay at last.

The spectators expected to see him dragged off the capital and into the car and then brought down again. A strong guard of police and Dragoons from the Horse Guards kept a large open space round the waggon, and stood ready to protect the prisoner from the infuriated multitude that was longing to tear him limb from limb, but both mob and guard were destined to be disappointed in a fashion at once as terrible as it was unexpected. As the top of the balloon rose to within a dozen feet of the edge of the capital they saw the figure of their anticipated victim leap from where he stood down into the midst of the swelling mass of inflated silk.

In the instant that he did so they saw the sunlight flash upon something bright that he held in his hand. Instinctively everyone grasped at least a portion of his desperate intention, and a mighty roar of rage and horror rose up simultaneously from tens of thousands of throats. Then there came silence, a silence of speechless, breathless apprehension. Then those who thronged the upper windows of the buildings round saw the knife flash to and fro through the riven silk. The knife dropped and Max took something from his mouth and rubbed it on the breast of his coat. Then came a spark of fire, a mighty rush of pale blue flame, and then a frightful

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explosion. The balloon burst like a huge bubble in a momentary mist of flame, and car and rope crashed down on to the waggon, spattering it and all the pavement about it with the blood and mangled remains of the four would-be captors and the victim who had destroyed them with himself. And so, outwitting both the false friends who had betrayed him, and the foes who would have taken him alive, died Max Renault—game to the last.

. . . . . .

Twelve hours later the *Revanche*, far away over the North Sea a little to the northward of the Arctic Circle, was driving to the north-eastward before a furious gale blowing at a speed of over eighty miles an hour. For four hours she had been flying against it, with the whole power of her engines concentrated on the stern propellers, and at the end of that four hours Taxil went to Hartog, who was steering in the conning-tower, and said:

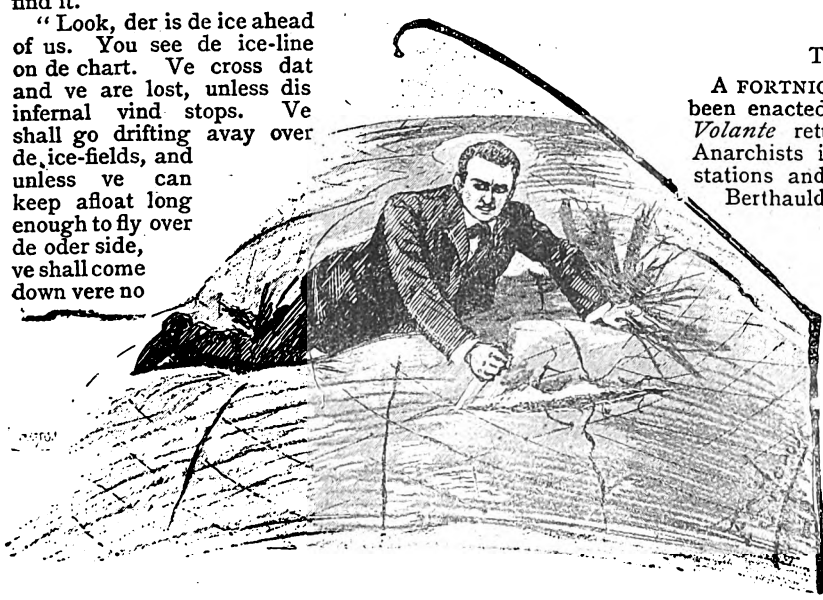
"We have only a couple of hundredweight of the fuel left, and I have just been to the reserve reservoirs in Max's cabin, and they're empty."

"Empty! Vat is dat you say? Mein Gott, den dere is treachery on board even now!" Hartog almost screamed, half in passion and half in fear. "Max vould never haf been such a fool as to come on a voyage like dis mit only fuel enough for about two tousand miles on board her. Some von has emptied dose reservoirs, and I believe it is dat defil of a girl who has done it. She is de only von who can have known of dem besides you."

"Don't call Lea 'devil' in my hearing, please," said Taxil curtly. "Or you and I will quarrel. I don't believe Max would have told her about them, and if she had known she couldn't have opened them, for I took the keys from Max myself, and they have never been out of my possession. It's no good shouting or calling names. The question is, what are we to do? We are using all our power now and not making forty miles an hour headway. In three hours all the fuel will be done, and then we shall just drop into the sea, for we are a good four hundred miles from land anywhere. We must turn the power on to the fans and keep her afloat at any risk."

"But, Gottsdonnerwetter, man, don't you see vat dat means?" shouted Franz, who was now almost in a frenzy of fear at the prospect he saw so clearly before him. "Look here at dis chart. Ve are very little south of de Arctic Circle, and dis infernal vind is blowing a hurricane. If ve stop de screws ve shall go north at someting like sixty miles an hour, and, by tam, if no von has found de Pole yet ve shall soon find it.

"Look, der is de ice ahead of us. You see de ice-line on de chart. Ve cross dat and ve are lost, unless dis infernal vind stops. Ve shall go drifting avay over de ice-fields, and unless ve can keep afloat long enough to fly over de oder side, ve shall come down vere no living man has ever been, and den you vill have reason to see how fondt you are of your Lea, for, by tam, you vill vant to eat her."



The knife flashed to and fro through the riven silk.

The words were hardly out of his mouth before Taxil's knife leapt out of its sheath, flashed for a moment before Franz's eyes, and then sank deep into his breast. Almost without a groan he dropped to the floor of the conning tower, and as he did so the fearful thought flashed across Taxil's mind that he had killed the only man now left among the Anarchists who possessed the secret of the motor-fuel.

Almost mechanically he locked the steering-wheel, went into the engine-room, turned the power of two engines on to the lifting fans, and slowed the centre propeller down to half speed. Then he went back to the conning-tower, set the air-ship's head across the storm, locked the wheel again, and went to Lea's cabin to tell her what had happened.

When morning came the *Revanche* was flying in the midst of a furious snow-storm across a white, desolate wilderness, which could be dimly seen through the thick flying flakes. The power of the engines was visibly failing. Only a few pounds of the precious fuel now remained. In a last despairing effort Taxil concentrated all the power left at his disposal upon the lifting fans, determined to keep afloat over the icy grave that lay beneath him as long as he could. But this was not for very long. The speed of the fans visibly slackened, and slowly the *Revanche* began to sink down through the snow to the awful silent wilderness in which her last voyage was to end.

"It's all over, I'm afraid, Lea," he said to her as they stood shivering side by side on deck. "We shan't be long before we meet the fate that I fear now we have deserved."

"Deserved!" she cried, in a voice that came brokenly from between her chattering teeth. "That *you* have deserved, you mean, you cowardly, treacherous hound. If it hadn't been for you and your treachery Max would still be in command, and the *Revanche* would still be floating in triumph through the air. You have given him over to his enemies, but, thank God, I've avenged him."

"You!" he gasped, clutching her arm in a savage grasp. "What do you mean?"

"I mean that I and Sophie emptied the reserve reservoirs. Do you think I was going to let a wretched little cur like you reign in Renault's place? Not I—not even to save myself from a fate like this. Now I have told you. Kill me if you like!"

And, as she spoke, the *Revanche* touched the snow-covered surface of the Polar ice.

CHAPTER LII.

THE SYNDICATE PREPARES TO ACT.

A FORTNIGHT after the last tragedy of Renault's life had been enacted in Trafalgar Square the *War-Hawk* and the *Volante* returned from their work of exterminating the Anarchists in the Southern hemisphere, and exploring their stations and treasure-stores, under the guidance of René Berthauld. They dropped to earth for a few minutes on Lundy Island to learn the news of what had happened in their absence, and to telegraph the hour of their arrival in London to Mr. Maxim at the offices of the Syndicate.

Of course, the first news that was told them was the story of Renault's fate, and as soon as Sir Harry heard it he turned to Mr. Austen and Adams, who was standing beside him, and said:

"Well, there's an end of that part of my undertaking, and I must confess that it is a more dramatic one than I think I could have brought about myself, for I must either have sent him into eternity out of a pitched battle or else, if I had caught him alive, I could only have handed him over to the law, to be hung prosaically, like any commonplace murderer. I must own, too, that the exit he made for himself was more worthy of him, for, wild beast as the

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fellow was, there was something about his cold-blooded pluck and pitiless thoroughness that even I can't help admiring."

"Yes," said Adams quietly. "If he had only been born five hundred years ago he would have probably been a shining light of chivalry, and one of the finest soldiers of his time; and even now, if it hadn't been for that twist in his intellect that made him an Anarchist, he would have made about the ablest dictator that a South American Republic could have wished for."

"If he hadn't devoted himself to politics," added Mr. Austen drily, "and risen to the same position in France. Still, whatever he was, or might have been, the world is very well rid of him. Now, I think we had better go on board again and get off to London. We can read up the rest of the news *en route* from the papers."

Three hours later, that is to say about ten o'clock at night, the two air-ships touched earth again in the middle of Hyde Park. Sir Harry, Mr. Austen, Adams, Dr. Roberts, Violet, and Dora at once disembarked, taking with them two of the *War-Hawk's* crew to carry Violet's invalid chair, and then the air-ships immediately rose again and vanished into the darkness.

The party went straight to Sir Harry's town house in Grosvenor Place, where they found the Chairman of the Syndicate already awaiting them. Then the directors forthwith shut themselves in the library to hold the meeting that had been arranged by telegraph, while the two girls betook themselves to Violet's sitting-room for a quiet chat until supper-time. Dr. Roberts not being a member of the Syndicate, and having, apparently, nothing particular to do, vanished mysteriously. About half an hour later there came a knock at the door of Violet's room, and as Dora cried "Come in," it opened, and the doctor entered.

The "Revanche" touched the snow-covered surface of the Polar ice.

"I have brought a visitor for you, Miss Violet—someone who has come on rather important business, so you must excuse the lateness of the hour." Then, before she could reply he threw the door wide open, and, without any further introduction, in walked Wyndham, not only alive, but as well and hearty as he had ever looked in his life. Dora controlled her astonishment with a success that was almost suspicious; but Violet sat for a moment transfixed and rigid, with wide-staring eyes and her hands clutching the arms of her chair convulsively. Just as Wyndham was running forward to her the doctor stopped him, and said, in a short, sharp tone:

"Wait—and you will see something!"

And so he did, for the next moment Violet's whole body seemed shaken by an overpowering emotion; then, raising herself on her arms, she struggled to her feet and with a glad cry of:

"Bertie! Bertie! Then you are not dead after all!" tottered half way across the room and fell fainting into his arms.

It had been a risky experiment, but it had succeeded as Doctor Roberts had been confident it would when he arranged the sending of the false telegram to Lundy which Violet had read in Utopia. The violent and unexpected emotional shock had overcome the remaining nervous weakness that had been day by day diminished by careful treatment and nursing, and under its stimulus the interrupted nerve-connections had been restored, and the muscles of her lower limbs once more placed under the control of her brain. Wyndham lifted her up and laid her on the sofa, and in a very few minutes the doctor had brought her back to consciousness.

"Now see if you can stand up again," he said to her when she had swallowed a fairly stiff glass of brandy and water.

"I think I can," she said, and then, giving one hand to him and another to Wyndham, she raised herself slowly, but steadily, from the sofa and stood once more erect upon her feet.

"That will do," said the doctor. "Now sit down again and don't over-exert yourself whatever you do. Come along, Miss Dora. You and I have nothing more to do here. The case is now one which demands strictly private treatment and we can leave her with perfect safety in Lieutenant Wyndham's hands. You can come back later on and bring her down to supper."

The meeting of the directors lasted an hour, and during that time Mr. Maxim told them that the building of the fleet has progressed very satisfactorily, and that within twenty-four hours a fleet of five-and-twenty vessels, not counting the *War-Hawk*, the *Volante*, and the now repaired *Vengeur*, would be ready to take the air, fully equipped for the assault on the Anarchists' stronghold at Mount Pietra.

"I quite agree with you, gentlemen," he said in concluding his report, "that it will be much better to dispose of these scoundrels before we commence our final undertaking. A fortnight ago—in fact on the very day that Renault put an end to himself—they abandoned their previous tactics and, instead of operating as a fleet and according to some definite plan of action, they scattered, and every one of the ships seems to have gone off on a raiding expedition of her own.

"For about a week they absolutely terrorised the Continent from end to end. They set fire to towns and villages, slaughtered people by hundreds, and then landed, armed to the teeth, and committed the most unheard of crimes under cover of their ships' guns. Then they suddenly disappeared, and for the last five or six days no one has heard anything about them. The whole world has been looking for them, for no one knew what country was to be attacked next, but so far not a single ship has made her appearance again.

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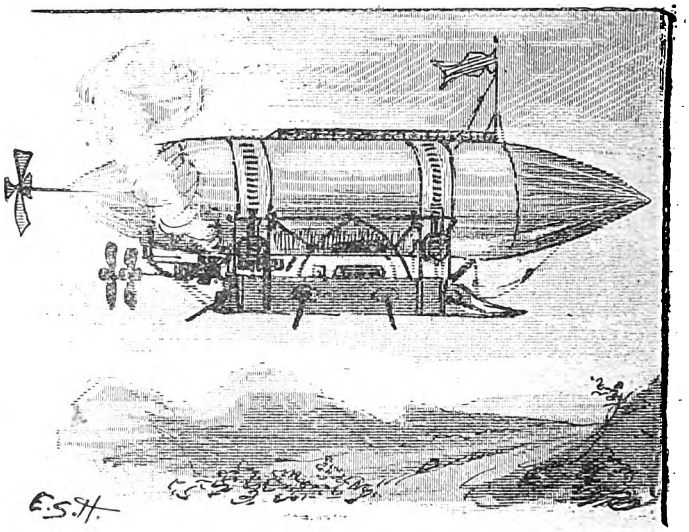
"Now, putting two and two together, it seems to me that there has been a mutiny in the Anarchist camp, the first result of which was the abandonment of Renault on the top of Nelson's Column. No doubt they fought about the secret of the fuel. Renault probably refused to give it up and so in revenge they gave *him* up to his enemies. Then with what fuel they had left they went on one last burst of wickedness and then retired to their camp, where I expect you will find they have left their air-ships and scattered back to their old haunts."

"That may be true of the majority of them," said Mr. Austen, "but I'm afraid it is too good to be true of that scoundrel Hartog and the *Revanche*. This man Berthauld has told us that he is an extremely clever chemist as well as engineer and, difficult and risky as the job would be, it is just possible that he has got possession of some of the fuel and analysed it. If he has done that one can easily see why he should stir up a revolt against Renault and insure his being killed or executed so as to be the only possessor of the secret himself. At the same time I confess that that doesn't square with the fact that the *Revanche* herself has not reappeared."

"Another probability," suggested Adams, "is that some one else has killed Hartog for just the same reason. I was quite sure that these scoundrels could never stick together as long as one of them had a secret like that. The proverbial apple of discord would be a mere nothing to it. However, I suppose we shall find all that out before long. And now with regard to the war, Mr. Maxim, how does that actually stand?"

"In this way," replied the Chairman. "Thanks chiefly to the really wonderful exploits of Lieutenant Wyndham in

Violet fell fainting into his arms.



An aerostat.

command of the *Nautilus*, and Renault's destruction of the French and Russian fleets in the Baltic, France and Russia have been thoroughly well thrashed at sea. England, of course, lost very heavily as well; but public opinion woke the Admiralty up so thoroughly that wonderful progress has been made in refitting damaged ships and getting others into commission that were nearly finished, so there is now an ample force to guard the coast and put any attempted invasion out of the question. As for the Russian squadron in the East, it is simply a thing of the past.

"On land, however, things seem to be going rather the other way. Germany is hemmed in between France and Russia, and is getting decidedly the worst of it. Italy has no money, and Austria seems afraid to begin; while, with the exception of the ten thousand men that England threw into Antwerp before the declaration of war—thanks also to the *Nautilus*—she is not able to do very much to help Germany. There is a scheme on foot, however, for her to finance Italy, which I believe is nearly completed, and if she does that the war will probably become general—that is to say, of course, if we allowed it, which I suppose," he added, with a smile, "you gentlemen of Utopia would not think of for a moment."

"Certainly not," said both Adams and Mr. Austen in a breath.

"I thought so," continued Mr. Maxim. "Well, we shall be in a position to send in the ultimatum the moment you come back from your expedition to Mount Pietra. You know of course that the Russians have a fleet of navigable aerostats similar to those which Renault destroyed over the Baltic, but I don't think they'll give you any trouble, for they are huge clumsy things and no use at all for aerial fighting.

"Still they've done a tremendous amount of execution on the land forces, and according to report it's quite impossible to keep the bravest troops steady when they once begin operations. We haven't had a visit from them over here yet, probably because the Russians have a wholesome anticipation of what would happen if either of the two air-ships that they know we possess happen to be on hand to receive them.

"Now I think that's everything except the terms of the ultimatum. I have got a draft of it here which I'll read to you, and then we can make any alterations that are necessary."

As he spoke the chairman took a sheet of foolscap from his pocket, opened it, and read as follows:—

Offices of the Aerial Navigation Syndicate,
Victoria Street,
Westminster, S.W.
(Date).

To His Imperial Majesty,
The Emperor of the Russias.

Sire,—I have been instructed by the Directors of this Syndicate to respectfully inform Your Majesty that unless all hostilities on sea and land on the part of Russia and France cease within forty-eight hours

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of the receipt of this ultimatum, and unless within a further period of forty-eight hours satisfactory undertakings are entered into on the part of the said two nations to pay into the Bank of England to the account of this Syndicate the sum of five hundred millions (English pounds sterling) as war indemnity, the capitals and principal cities of the two countries will be bombarded and destroyed and all troops remaining in the field will be dispersed by the aerial fleets of the Syndicate without further notice. A note identical with this has been sent to the President of the French Republic, and both have been despatched with the knowledge and consent of Her Britannic Majesty's Government, with which the forces at the disposal of the Syndicate will henceforth co-operate. In the hope that Your Majesty will appreciate the necessity of replying with as little delay as possible,

I have the honour to subscribe myself,

Your Majesty's obedient servant.

HIRAM S. MAXIM

(Chairman of the Aerial Navigation Syndicate).

"How do you think that meets the case?" he continued, laying the paper down on the blotting pad in front of him.

"Excellently, I should think," said Sir Harry. "Though I can imagine it won't be very pleasant reading for His Majesty and M. le President. Still, I don't think it contains anything unreasonable or over-stated. The indemnity from the two countries is only half what Germany exacted from France in '71; and, even if we have to proceed to extremities, there will still be an enormous saving of human life. Of course, they won't be able to hold out against it for a week, especially if we work with the Germans and bring the Italian troops into the field as well. I don't see that it wants any alteration as it stands, do you?" he said, looking round at the others.

Everyone agreed with him, and the proceedings were terminated by a knock at the door and the entrance of Violet, walking slowly, but steadily, with her right arm through Lieutenant Wyndham's and her left through Dora's.

"Good evening, gentlemen!" she said, with a low laugh, as they all sprang to their feet in sheer amazement. "We have come to tell you that supper is ready."

(To be continued.)

THE MYSTERY OF POST No. 3

THE moon was shining brightly, illuminating the sandy plain round the fort as only the moon in Arizona can illuminate. The officers, soldiers, and their families were peacefully sleeping. Not a sound was heard except the occasional cry of a coyote.

Three o'clock struck, and the sentinel on post No. 1 started the call:

"No. 1, three o'clock, and all's well."

A slight pause, and No. 2 responded:

"No. 2, three o'clock, and all's well."

Then came a long pause.

The sergeant of the guard stepped out of the guard-room and listened.

"The sentinel on No. 3 must be asleep," he remarked. "Bad business for a sentinel guarding the corral."

Turning to No. 1 he commanded:

"Start the call again."

No. 1 obeyed. No. 2 took it up. But there again it ended. The sergeant turned out a patrol, and marched to the corral.

As he approached the sentinel's post in the moonlight he saw the figure of No. 3 stretched out on the ground. The position did not look like that of a sleeping man.

"Double time!" commanded the sergeant.

And the patrol came down the post at a run. As the men came closer to the figure, a sight met their eyes that froze the blood in their veins. Lying face down on the sand, his hand still grasping his rifle, was their comrade, stiff and cold in death, an Apache arrow buried deep in his body.

Three sharp cracks of the rifle, the rattle of the long roll of the drum, soon brought out the startled garrison.

Scouts were instantly sent out and the plain thoroughly scoured, but no signs of Indians could be found.

The next day, with muffled drums, the members of the garrison followed the body of their comrade to its last resting-place. With uncovered heads, sorrowfully and reverently, they listened while the post-chaplain read the burial service. The military escort fired three rounds over the grave, and the bugler played the sweetest of all calls, "Taps—lights out—sleep." Naturally, a gloom was thrown over the whole post.

The soldiers gathered in small groups and discussed the perplexed question. "How could it have been done?" The moon had been shining brightly, and there was no cover behind which an Indian could hide.

The searching parties came in after fruitless hunts. Night came on. There would be no lack of vigilance on the part of the sentinel on post No. 3. The moon was even brighter than on the preceding night, and the objects on the plain could be seen almost as distinctly as in the daytime.

Each half hour the call of No. 1 was promptly answered by the other sentinels.

Few expected a repetition of the preceding night's cowardly attack. Gradually the garrison became silent, and one by one the lights went out. Morning came, and nothing had happened to disturb the peace of the fort.

Several days past and the post settled down into its old ways, and the memory of the dreadful event was beginning to fade.

The officer of the day was making the inspection of the sentinels after midnight, and was approaching No. 3, when the moon burst forth, revealing at the very feet of the officer the body of the sentinel as before, pierced through by an Indian arrow.

The alarm was quickly given, but, in spite of the most careful search, no trace of the assassin could be found. A horror settled over the post. No one dreaded an enemy they knew, and could fight openly, but against such ghostly attacks no one could defend himself.

At officers' call the next morning the affair was earnestly discussed. It was evidently wrong to require a sentinel to keep watch in such an exposed and dangerous place, and yet, with the corral where it was, no one could see how it could be avoided.

While discussing the problem, an orderly appeared and reported:

"Private Rogers would like to speak to the commanding officer."

The commanding officer went into his private office, and, after the interview, returned to the room where the officers were assembled.

"Young Rogers has asked permission to take charge of post No. 3 at night until he solves the mystery, and I have granted his request."

The faces of the officers showed plainly the anxiety they felt. Young Rogers was the son of a brother captain in their

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regiment, who at that time was stationed in an Eastern city on recruiting service.

The young man had enlisted six months previously, with the object of obtaining an officer's commission, which may be won by a worthy and capable man.

The young fellow had gained the esteem and respect of everyone by his manly qualities and strict obedience to orders. Many of the officers had known him from his childhood. He had been the playmate of their children, and a great favourite with all. Later on many tried to persuade him to withdraw his request.

"Take the post if it falls to your lot, but don't volunteer," they pleaded.

It was of no use. The young man had a theory, and if he proved it and discovered the assassin he knew that he would get his coveted commission.

He was excused from all duties during the day, and after nightfall assumed charge of the dreaded post, No. 3. Three nights passed without any event. The moon, though on the wane, was still bright enough to allow Rogers to see any moving object on the plain.

Seated on the ground, his back against the corral, his rifle on his knee, he was apparently asleep. Apparently only, for his sharp eyes keenly watched every point of the plain. He knew that he had a tricky, shrewd, but, at the same time, bold enemy in that wily Apache. He felt sure that the Indians, especially in the second case, had not crept upon his victim unobserved. He must have employed some disguise which had completely deceived the sentinel. What was this disguise?

"That Apache would be more apt to betray himself if he thought me asleep than he would if he saw I was watching him," was his sound argument.

Through the long hours of the night he sat motionless. It was two o'clock, when suddenly he caught sight of a moving object on the plain some distance away. Noiselessly he cocked his rifle. He was a dead shot, and woe to that object when he fired. Nearer and nearer it came, while he sat as if asleep.

"Why, it is Corporal!" he suddenly exclaimed.

Corporal was a fine, large Newfoundland dog, a pet of the garrison, which had mysteriously disappeared from the post some time before, and which every one supposed to have been stolen.

Rogers' first impulse was to call the dog, when he remembered his resolution—"shoot any moving object that comes within range." He therefore restrained his impulse, and no one would have guessed that the apparently sleeping sentinel was closely watching every movement as the dog approached.

It was a lucky idea of Rogers to feign sleep, for as the dog came nearer he thought he noticed something peculiar in its appearance, and its actions did not seem quite natural.

"Possibly Corporal may be exhausted from hunger, or it may be the deceptive light of the moon," thought Rogers. The dog was now within range, and he could hesitate no longer.

"It's a matter of life and death," he reflected, "and if I make a mistake every one, even Corporal himself, will forgive me."

Slowly and imperceptibly he brought his rifle to his shoulder, a short but true aim, a crack, and a yell—such as only an Apache who has received his death wound can give—startled the whole garrison.

As if by magic everyone collected on the spot, each, as he approached, evidently expecting to see a repetition of the tragedies.

The story was soon told. The skin of poor Corporal had been used as a disguise by the Apache, who, with a bow in hand, had been creeping up on his third intended victim. Deceived by the apparently sleeping sentinel, he had been led to betray himself, and had met a most merited death. Undoubtedly he had, by the same device, deceived the other sentinels, and had very nearly succeeded in securing another scalp.

Young Rogers was overwhelmed with congratulations. A special report was at once made to the War Department, and before long he received as a reward his much-coveted commission.

ARTHUR TURNER was tall, blonde, handsome, and twenty-eight. He was also the possessor of a long head, inherited from the maternal side of the house. He was likewise a dutiful son.

It was the two latter circumstances that had, on more than one occasion, saved him from making a triumphant ass of himself.

There was that dear little Miss Dixon, whom he had met at the seaside. It had been a glorious evening—that last. They were sitting on the verandah, where they might see and yet be unseen. The soft, dreamy strains of a Strauss waltz floated out from the ballroom. There was the pale silver light of the moon, the murmuring ripple of the waves on the beach—and all that sort of thing, which you have read about so many times that you have learned to skip it in the novels.

Well! Elsie was going away—too, too soon. They had talked in sighs and murmurs for half an hour; Arthur's left hand clasped Elsie's dimpled right one, his right arm was about her waist; both hearts beat vigorously, as hearts will on such occasions, and Arthur had just begun to tell Elsie what she had been waiting for two weeks to hear, when there was a step close at hand, and the cooing voice of the maternal Turner said:—

"I beg your pardon, but will you please excuse Arthur a few moments? There are those miserable business affairs that must be attended to in time for the late mail."

And thus was he saved providentially, for Elsie had not a cent, and neither had he—at least, not many of them. There were several other occasions when his own long head, or his mamma's had helped him out—for Arthur was somewhat susceptible. But it is not of these I have to tell.

His time had come. The in-every-way-desirable young person had presented herself. True, she was not so young as she had been: but, then, that was a mere trifle. She was just his own age, of as good a family as his own, and an heiress of considerable degree. She was not—well, not exactly handsome, and was *rather* inclined to what is politely called plumpness; but Arthur's mamma and Arthur's long head gave their approval—and Arthur did not care who she might be so long as she possessed the above qualifications, particularly the one involving a very neat fortune in her own right.

Besides, Arthur was getting a bit desperate. In fact, he had so far exceeded his own salary and the maternal allowance (which, by the way, was as large as Mrs. Turner could afford), that nothing short of a miracle, or a matrimonial alliance such as he had been so long seeking, could save him from getting into very deep water

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And thus it came to pass that this winter found him engaged to Miss Mildred Field, much to the satisfaction of his mother, who was visiting in Scotland, and to whom he, like the dutiful son he was, sent the gratifying news at once.

He was disappointed, however, on one point. He had pleaded artfully for an early wedding, but Miss Field had set her foot down with much firmness, and said he must go through a long probationary period—all of which Arthur failed to understand. He had always been noted for his persuasive powers, and had flattered himself that Mildred, with her gentle, clinging bud-like ways, would succumb at once.

Now, be it known, that Miss Mildred Field had not arrived at years of discretion for nothing. Neither had she, a not unprepossessing young person, with nearly half a million in her own right, passed through the experience of ten seasons without gathering unto herself much knowledge of the ways and wiles of wicked man. She had had, as might have been expected, offers to a high number; but, thus far, the gentlemen concerned had failed—by reason of their unanimous desire to touch her purse—to touch, in the first place, the all-important key to it, which was hidden away in her plump bosom. And Miss Mildred Field was worldly-wise in her day and generation.

She was certainly in love with Turner—there could be no doubt of that. It is quite as certain that she was very seriously in love with him; but, with the wisdom born of experience, she did not let him know one-half of what she felt for him.

If any one had told Turner that he was just now in a very shaky position he would have scoffed. His chum, Ted Cross, who was spending the winter at the house during Mrs. Turner's absence, had once suggested that "there's many a slip," but Arthur merely flung a shoe at him, and whistled serenely.

It was in this frame of mind that, one evening in February, he ran lightly up the steps of the Fields' house to call on her whom Cross unfeelingly referred to as his "little lady-love." It was warm, and the front-door stood ajar. The little footman was not in his accustomed place, so Turner, with the air of one who knew just where he was going, stepped inside. From the open door of Papa Field's study came the sound of voices in earnest discussion, and one of them spoke his name.

He halted, irresolute, as would any one else under like circumstances. Papa Field was speaking:

"Of course, my dear, you are your own mistress, and I can only advise you. It seems to me, however, that you have done a very foolish thing to engage yourself to this young Turner. True, he seems an exemplary young fellow, and he comes of an excellent family; but it is well-known that he has only a small allowance from the estate in addition to a beggarly five hundred pounds salary. How do you know it is you, and not your money, that he wants? It is a brutal question, I know, but it is one you have probably asked of yourself half-a-dozen times concerning other young men."

Arthur, out in the hall, standing in much the same attitude as a girl assumes, when speaking her first "piece" in school, winced, but waited for the answer. It came, in serious, thoughtful tones, which indicated plainly that Miss Mildred, also, had considered this very matter.

"N—no, I am sure you misjudge him. Of course, I understand how he is situated financially, and—and all that. But I am sure he is honest and honourable, and that he—he cares for me very much. There are a thousand ways by which I can learn much that you cannot, and——."

"Yes, yes; I understand. But suppose you should put him to the test. Do you think he would come through—ah—er—unscathed, as it were? Suppose you should tell him that I had lost all your money and mine in unfortunate speculation—that we were beggars, and had not a penny we could call our own? Are you afraid to try him?"

There was a brief silence. Then:

"I don't like to tell a falsehood, papa; but it would be only a 'white lie,' and perhaps for the best. Yes, I'll try him to-morrow night."

"That's my dutiful girl. Now run along and let me work."

There was the sound of a kiss, and the perspiring young man in the hall hastened to get out of the house. He wanted time to think, but the first thing that entered his head as he reached the pavement was a fanciful picture of the *petite* Miss Field, with her one hundred and sixty pounds avoirdupois, "running along," and he smiled broadly. Then he walked rapidly over to the next street to take a cab to his club, there to hold a pow-wow with Cross.

On the steps he hesitated for a moment.

"Had I better go back now?" he thought. "No; she won't have her little tale of woe ready, and might be put out if I call to-night. I might give myself away, too. Better have time to get my speech prepared." And this astute young man went in and proceeded to make himself comfortable.

The next evening, with his usual light heart and good spirits, he rang the door-bell of No. 1, Bellevue Square, the residence of the Fields. Yes, Miss Field was in, Peter said. Turner went into the drawing-room and sat down, running rapidly over in his mind the various tender speeches he had prepared for the emergency. Mildred was a long time coming, he thought, for one who expected him.

Presently she entered—slowly—heavily. Her head bent low over her ample bosom, and her breath came short and fast. Turner went forward to meet her, his arms oustretched. He was something of an actor himself, and he knew it.

"Mildred, darling. What is the trouble with my little girl?" (Another good stroke. Miss Field liked to be called "little.")

"Oh, Arthur, Arthur. I don't know how to tell you. It is too dreadful! Papa——"

"What! Has your father been——"

"Oh, no, not that, but—worse. Arthur, we are—beggars!"

And Miss Field, delivering these last words with wonderful impressiveness, hung her head and sobbed bitterly behind her lace handkerchief.

Then it was that Turner, like the young man of action that he was, put his arm as far round his tearful *fiancée* as possible, and, with some difficulty, led her to a seat and pulled her head down on his glossy shirt front.

He was very sorry, as she must know. But it was nothing. Her father would recoup himself—he had many influential friends. As for her, had she not him—her Arthur? He would not, he once interrupted her to say, permit her, through a sense of false pride, to cast him off now, when she most needed him. No, never.

He had six hundred a year. It wasn't much, he knew; but they could live on it. And did she suppose for one instant that he had expected to live on his wife's money? No, a thousand times, no!

"We will have a real quiet little wedding, dearest; and, after it is all over, we will go quietly to our own little cottage in the suburbs, which you and I will get ready in the meantime, and there we will be the happiest couple in the world. What! Mildred, am I to understand that you laugh at my cherished plans?"

For Mildred had leaped to her feet, and was laughing heartily.

"Why, you foolish boy, I was only teasing you a bit. Don't you think I'd make a good actress? Papa and I haven't lost a——"

Here was Mr. Turner's opportunity. She had doubted him; oh, cruel blow! If she could not trust him now, how could she have any faith in him when they were married? Perhaps, after all, it were best——

And he strode haughtily to the door.

But this was not part of Miss Field's programme, and she did what any very-much-in-love female would do under the circumstances; so that, in a very few seconds, two people were sitting on a divan in a very lover-like attitude indeed.

. . . . . .

An hour later a young man, walking briskly down the street, was reflecting on the vagaries of chance and his own good luck.

If Peter had been at the door—if he had been ten minutes later—if he had sneezed in the hall—if——

"It was an awfully close shave," he reflected, and he stopped and shook hands with himself, much to the amazement of the policeman at the corner.

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Bibber's Charity.

YOUNG Bibber broke one of his rules of life the other day and came to the City. This unusual journey into the marts of trade and finance was in response to a call from his lawyer, who wanted his signature to some papers. It was five years since Bibber had been anywhere in the city, except as a transient traveller from Liverpool Street, and as he walked through Cheapside he looked about him at the new buildings in the air and the bustle and confusion of the streets with as much interest as a lately arrived immigrant.

Bibber rather enjoyed the novelty of the situation, and after he had completed his business at the lawyer's office he tried to stroll along Threadneedle Street as he did in Piccadilly.

As he went through the crowded thoroughfares, a miserable-looking, dirty, and bloated object stood still in his track and begged Bibber for a few halfpence to buy food.

"I've come all the way from Birmingham," said the object, "and I haven't tasted food for twenty-four hours."

Bibber drew away as though the object had a contagious disease in his rags, and handed him a shilling without waiting to receive the man's blessing.

"Poor fellow," said Bibber. "Fancy going without eating all day."

He could not fancy this, though he tried, and the impossibility of it impressed him so much that he amiably determined to go back and hunt up the object and give him more money.

Bibber's ideas of a dinner were rather exalted. He did not know of places where a shilling was good for a square meal, including "one roast, three vegetables, and pastry." He hardly considered a shilling a sufficiently large tip for a waiter who served the dinner, and decidedly not enough for the dinner itself.

He did not see the man at first, and when he did the man did not see him. Bibber watched him stop three gentlemen, two of whom gave him some money, and then the object approached Bibber and repeated his sad tale in a monotone. He evidently did not recognise Bibber, and the club-man gave him half-a-crown and walked away, feeling that the man surely must have enough by this time with which to get something to eat, if only a luncheon instead of a dinner.

This retracing of his footsteps had confused Bibber, and he made a complete circuit of the block before he discovered that he had lost his bearings. He was standing just where he had started from, and gazing along the line of the road, looking for a cab, when the familiar accents of the object again saluted him.

When Bibber faced him, the beggar looked uneasy. He was not sure whether or not he had approached this particular gentleman before, but Bibber conceived an idea of much subtlety, and deceived the object by again putting his hand in his pocket.

"Nothing to eat for twenty-four hours? Dear me!" drawled the club-man. "Haven't you any money, either?"

"Not a penny," groaned the object; "an' I'm jest faint for food, s'help me. I hate to beg, sir. It isn't the money I want, it's jest food. I'm starvin', sure."

"Well," said Bibber suddenly, "if it is only something to eat you want, come in here and I'll give you your breakfast."

But the man held back, and began to whine and complain that they wouldn't let the likes of him in such a fine place.

"Oh, yes, they will," said Bibber, glancing at the bill of fare in front of the place. "It seems to be extremely cheap. Beefsteak, one shilling, for instance. Go in," he added, and there was something in his tone which made the object move ungraciously into the eating-house.

It was a very cheap place, Bibber thought, and the people stared very hard at him and his gloves and the gardenia in his coat and at the tramp accompanying him.

"You ain't going to eat two breakfasts, are yer?" asked one of the waiters of the object.

The object looked uneasy, and Bibber, who stood beside his chair, smiled in triumph.

"You're mistaken," he said to the waiter. "This gentleman is starving—he has not tasted food for twenty-four hours. Give him whatever he asks for."

The object scowled, and the waiter grinned behind his tin tray and had the impudence to wink at Bibber, who recovered from this in time to give the man a florin, and so to make him a friend for life. The object ordered milk, but Bibber protested and ordered two beefsteaks and fried potatoes, two omelettes, coffee, and ham with bacon.

"What cher think I am?" yelled the object in desperation.

"Hungry," said Bibber very gently, "or else an impostor. And, you know, if you should happen to be the latter, I should have to hand you over to the police."

Bibber leaned easily against the wall and read the signs about him, and kept one eye on a policeman across the street. The object was choking and cursing through his breakfast. It did not seem to agree with him. Whenever he stopped, Bibber would point with his stick to a still unfinished dish, and the object, after a husky protest, would attack it as though it were poison. The people sitting about were laughing, and the proprietor behind the desk smiled grimly.

"There, darn ye," said the object at last, "I've eat all I can eat for a year. You think you're mighty smart, don't ye? But if you choose to pay that high for your fun, I suppose ye can afford it. Only don't let me catch you about these streets after dark, that's all."

And the object started off, shaking his fist.

"Wait a minute," said Bibber; "you haven't paid the waiter for your breakfast."

"Haven't what?" shouted the object. "Paid him! How could I pay him? Youse asked me to come in here and eat. I didn't want no breakfast, did I? Youse'll have to pay for your fun yerself, or they'll trow yer out."

"I gave you," said Bibber slowly, "three and sixpence to buy a breakfast with. The bill comes to four shillings, and extremely cheap it is," he added, with a bow to the fat proprietor. "Several other gentlemen, on your representation that you were starving, gave you other sums to be expended on a breakfast. You have the money with you now, so pay what you owe at once or I'll call that constable across the street and tell him what I know, and have you put where you belong."

"I'll see you blowed first," gasped the object.

Bibber turned to the waiter.

"Kindly beckon to that officer," said he.

The waiter ran to the door, and the object ran too; but the waiter grabbed him by the back of his neck and held him.

"Lemme go!" yelled the object. "Lemme go and I'll pay!"

Everybody in the place came up now, and formed a circle round the group, and watched the object count out four shillings in the waiter's hand, which left him just one penny.

"You have forgotten the waiter who served you," said Bibber severely, pointing with his stick at the penny.

"No, you don't," groaned the object.

"Oh, yes," said Bibber, "do the decent thing now, or I'll——"

The object dropped the penny in the waiter's hand, and Bibber, smiling and easy, made his way through the admiring crowd and out into the street

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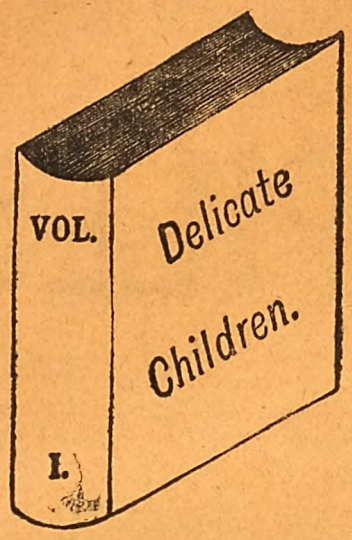

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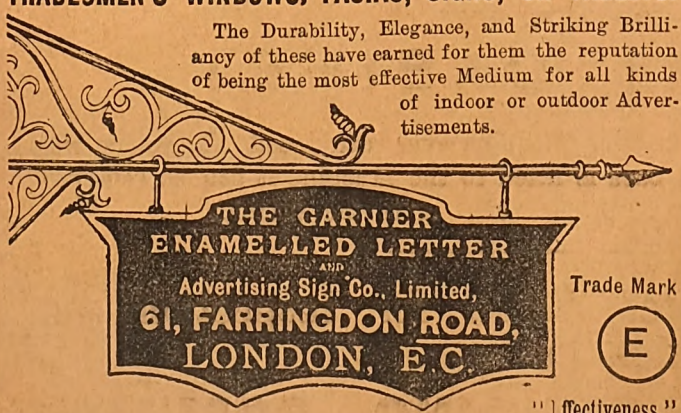

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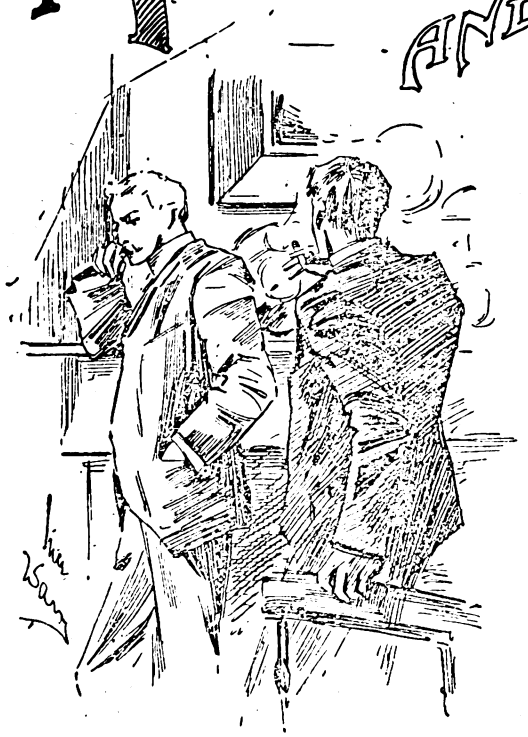
SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 324.] FOR THE WEEK ENDING MARCH 16, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

A Good Man — and True



"You understand, my dear fellow? To put it quite plainly, you know, a wife of this kind is a nuisance."

He stood tugging at his blonde moustache, his whole handsome face—boyish still, in some way, spite of his twenty-eight years—irritated and vengeful.

Reginald Mansfield regarded him attentively through the blue smoke of his cigarette.

"It strikes me," he observed, at last, "that you, to use an expression of our French neighbours, are complaining that the bride is too fair."

Herbert Latimer bit his lip.

"Well, that is just what I am doing! Lena is too fond, by George! Of course, she's the sweetest, best little girl in the world; but, hang it, a man can't be cried at every time he happens to come home a little late from the club! Lena is a perpetual fountain of salt tears. She thinks everything a sin, besides—cards, dances, all the rest of it. I did not mind it the first few months. No man does. But, frankly, Reg, it's beginning to pall. Hang it, I say! She should have married a youthful clerk, with lodgings in the suburbs, to which he would have returned by six or seven every evening! She could have waited on the doorway for him then, and she would have been happy."

Reginald Mansfield knocked the ashes from his cigarette.

"It is possible, as you say, that she would have been more happy under those circumstances. I have been told, I think, that she was a country girl herself? She did not belong to the swim—as you do."

"Oh, yes, she was a country girl," cried Herbert pettishly, "but her people have good blood, all the same; there have been men and women of the world among them; I don't see how Lena comes by her provinciality. She has had a chance recently to cure herself of it, too. As Mrs. Herbert Latimer, she has not been out enough, goodness knows. But there's the bother of it! You can't get her to care. Amusements, admiration, toilets, her own beauty—all that doesn't count for Lena."

"I see. She would prefer her husband's love and devotion."

"Bah!—love, devotion! Fiddlesticks! She knows, and you should know, Reg, that I'm as fond of her as a man can be, but when it comes to toeing the mark as Lena would like me to, why I'm not there, that's all! By George, I'm not a parson, you know."

"No, you're not."

Latimer gave a short laugh.

"Well, no more are you, Reg. You've made the pace pretty rapidly, you know."

"Ye—es," drawled Reginald Mansfield. "Still, I am not married."

Latimer laughed again. "I'd pity your wife if you were. Frankly, now, Reg, were you ever really in love with a woman? I don't mean was your blood ever stirred. By Jove, you've had love affairs in plenty, but I mean, did you really ever seriously care?"

As the other gave no answer, he ran on, reverting to his own concerns in the light way characteristic of his volatile nature. "'Pon honour, though, Reg, what do you advise me to do about Lena? I decided upon this three months' trip on the Continent with Benedict and the rest of that party—a sort of bachelor tour—just to teach Lena a salutary lesson, as it were; just to show her that a man, in our way of life, wants his liberty; that a wife can't draw him about in leading-strings. But the scene she made when she heard I was going—— "

"Scene?" Reginald broke in. "I cannot fancy Mrs. Latimer, from what I have heard of her, making a scene."

"Oh, I don't mean in the usual feminine way, of course; Lena's a lady to the finger-tips. But she looked tragic, you know; as if she could never smile again; as if I were deserting her. Now, I repeat, what do you advise me to do? You know women, if ever a man did."

"Go," said Reginald, shortly, after a brief pause.

"Go?" exclaimed the other, with a sigh of immense relief. "Well, old fellow, that's what I think too! It may do her good."

"It may," assented Mansfield.

. . . . .

It was a week later. Herbert Latimer had left for Paris.

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A slight, girlish figure in a straight, flowing dress advanced.

Reginald Mansfield was walking up from the club to Herbert Latimer's house to see Herbert Latimer's wife. It was his first visit. He had been in the North when Herbert had married; and he had returned but a few days prior to the conversation just reported. On the evening of his arrival he had gone to see a woman of a certain age, an old friend of Herbert Latimer, once the friend of Reginald's own mother. She was a woman of the world, who had kept the depth of her heart and feeling and who had looked on many of the chances and phases of life with her clear, steady eyes. The talk had turned on Herbert Latimer's wife.

"She is a simple country lassie, is she not?" asked Reginald.

"She has a rare and charming nature, strong and sweet—far too good for Herbert. But she adores him—as girls of that stamp adore men of his."

"Oh, Herbert is not bad."

"Not at all. But weak. A weak Adonis. Men of that order always have the best love lavished upon them." Mrs. Percy paused a moment. Then she raised her eyes to Reginald's. "She looks like Eleanor," she added in a gentle tone.

She saw that he changed colour. "How that memory lives with him!" she thought. She alone knew this man as he was. She alone had known closely the dead girl who had been the dream of his young manhood. When people spoke of Reginald as a Lothario she would remark quietly: "Let us not judge too much from the surface."

"She looks like Eleanor."

Those few words of Mrs. Percy had been persistently in Reginald Mansfield's mind as Herbert Latimer had come to him a few days later with his grievance. They were in his mind as he rang the bell of the young man's house.

Like Eleanor! Was it true? For an instant, as he waited in the wide, dim drawing-room, he wished that he had not come. Then a curtain was raised and dropped again. A slight, girlish figure in a straight, flowing dress advanced. Mrs. Latimer put out her hand.

"You are a good friend of my husband. I have heard of you often; I'm very glad to see you," she said.

But Reginald Mansfield stood for an instant as one bereft of sense. Mrs. Percy was right. Here was the same rare Madonna type of beauty, the same low, broad brow, the same pathetic mouth, the same expression of the violet eyes—his heart beat fast with the sudden ache that he had so often hoped was stilled.

"Are you not well?" asked Lena Latimer, startled. He had already recovered himself, with an effort.

"You will think me absurd," he said lightly. "But you look strangely like—someone I used to know."

. . . . . .

It was a hot, cloudy morning at the end of August. Herbert Latimer stood in the morning-room of Mrs. Percy's Mayfair house, and words, the enormity of which prevented him as it were from seizing their full import, words which made his brain reel, which had accompanied his arrival, fell upon his ringing ears.

"Reginald? Reginald Mansfield, Lena?" he repeated, twice, thrice, and his hand went up to his forehead.

Mrs. Percy tapped her fingers with her fan.

"Well, my dear boy—allow me to call you so, since I have known you always—what is so singular in what I tell you? I have known Reginald always, too, and I know there is no harm in your pretty wife. But, what would you have? You do not expect such a young beauty as that to remain always the unsophisticated rustic maiden that she was when you married her?

"Had you been an exceptionally devoted husband—mind, I don't blame you; you must be men, especially in what outsiders call our 'set'—you might have kept the same adoration that she gave you at first. But you must acknowledge that you went your way a little. Well, what is the result? Lena, too, has emancipated herself in your absence. She has become *fin de siècle*—like the other young married women with whom she is thrown in contact in our society."

The blood mounted to Herbert Latimer's forehead in a purple flush.

"Never, Mrs. Percy! I shall never believe——"

"I don't mean any harm. Did I not tell you that I believed Lena a perfectly good woman? But Reginald Mansfield is a fascinating man and Lena is a very lovely creature, and they have happened to be much thrown together this summer and a little flirtation has sprung up. Is that anything new for people in the swim?"

"A little flirtation?" Herbert said the words after her, with a short laugh, not pleasant to hear. The flush had died out of his face. Lines which had not been there a half-hour before had come about his mouth and eyes. Mrs. Percy's steady glances never left him. "Oh, of course, perfectly harmless," he went on. "And that Lena should go off on the yacht with the Wentworths, and that Reginald Mansfield should go with them also, and Mrs. Wentworth's reputation for strictness what it is—that is perfectly proper, too!"

"Hold! hold! Don't exaggerate. Mrs. Wentworth may be frivolous—again, my dear boy, is she not in the swim? and must not young married women amuse themselves? There! but she is a good woman, for all that. I see nothing shocking in this yachting party."

"No. And probably, Mrs. Percy, you see nothing shocking

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in Lena leaving London yesterday to 'amuse' herself, as you say, on the very afternoon that she knew I would arrive?"

Mrs. Percy shrugged her shoulders. Her visitor had turned towards the door.

"Where is the yacht likely to be now? I take it that you are informed, Mrs. Percy."

"I believe it is to be at Cowes to-morrow, or the day after. You are not going?"

But he had vanished.

One moment the old lady stood musing; and her teeth, white and fine still, showed in the peculiar smile that parted her lips.

"What will the outcome be?" she murmured. "And then—Alas, what fools, what astonishing fools, men can be, at times, to be sure!"

. . . . . .

A mist had come up and lay, an impenetrable veil, over the sea. The rocks were moist with it as if with spray. In the prevailing neutrality of the atmosphere's tints a woman's yachting dress of blue and red made a warm, picturesque spot, blurred and deep, in the foggy perspective. A man, stalking along with swift strides, caught a sudden vision of this dash of colour, and of the slender, well-known frame it clothed at an abrupt terminus of the rocky walk. It was Lena, and she was not alone. A man walked by her side too, whom he (Herbert) could have no difficulty in recognising. The tall, loosely built, nonchalant figure was that of Reginald Mansfield.

The two had stopped now. Their backs were turned. But, sharpened to abnormal acuteness, Herbert's senses could divine, as it were, their mental attitude at the moment, betrayed in the pose of their vague, dark silhouettes. Lena, her head bent away from her companion, seemed to be looking out to sea, and, as Herbert advanced rapidly nearer, something listless, dejected, became more clear in the droop of her shoulders. But Reginald Mansfield looked not at the sea, but at her. He stood near her, so near that his hand could touch her elbow. The blood surged up in Herbert's heart, and at that instant the two faced about to retrace their steps and saw him advancing.

"Herbert, dear You here?"

Lena was the first to speak. She had turned from white to red and back to white. A suppressed trembling had seized her. But her voice was clear and steady.

"Herbert, dear! You here? How did you know where the yacht would be to-day? I thought of you as being in London. Who told you where we were?"

Herbert's white, dry lips framed two words shortly:

"Mrs. Percy."

Reginald Mansfield raised his eyebrows.

"Ah, yes. To be sure, she would know. You had a jolly summer, I suppose, Latimer?" Calmly he met the glare of Herbert Latimer's eyes.

But Mrs. Latimer, laughing nervously, had touched her husband's sleeve. She turned her glance to Reginald Mansfield, and there was something like a wild repressed appeal in it. Did he read its meaning aright? He took off his hat.

"Will you permit me to withdraw, Mrs. Latimer? I am sure that after your separation your husband's companionship must be the only one acceptable."

He nodded to Herbert, but received no look from the latter in return.

The next instant husband and wife were alone, and then the floodgates of Herbert Latimer's jealous rage and indignation were opened. Lena stood silent, with downcast eyes, as the hot words poured over her. She was, then, he asked, like every other woman? The great trust he had had in her truth, believing it so perfect that not even the shadow of a frivolous flirtation could touch it, was, then, proved to be unfounded? He had, perhaps, not been a model husband himself. He acknowledged it.

He had been in the wrong. He had gone after his own pleasures. He had seemed to neglect her. He had, in fact, neglected her. He had the misfortune of having been bred among people who looked upon such things as legitimate. But, through all, he had always felt that, faulty as he might be, that she was unassailable. Mrs. Percy, however, had told him all that had been going on through the summer. And a flirtation with Reginald Mansfield, of all men! A flirtation with his own friend!

In intolerable despair he talked on. And then he stopped. What more was there to say? Sharply he turned from her.

Was he going from her? She raised her head, she watched him as he walked away, blindly, as one who is stunned.

"Herbert!" she suddenly cried out, with a rapturous note of joy and love. She ran after him, she clung to him, all her sweet Madonna face was covered with tears and smiles. "Herbert! Beloved! beloved! It was only to test you, only to teach you, by your own pain, what mine had been! Truly, truly, I have given no thought to Mr. Mansfield save such thought as one gives a good, good friend. He has seemed very 'attentive,' as the world speaks of such things, but he has been only kind, oh, so kind! You see I look like—like some one he loved once, and so he was my friend from the first. He saw how miserable I was, dear, about your going on the Continent, about your seeming indifference—for, indeed, I thought you cared nothing for me any more! Oh, was I not foolish? Do I not see now, in your eyes; do I not feel by the clasp of your arms, how much you loved me in truth?

"But I was wretched, and Mr. Mansfield discovered it, and because he felt as a friend to me he thought of this plan. He and Mrs. Percy. She, too, has been, oh, so good to me. Together they combined it all. She was to see you and tell you when you arrived, and I was to go off with the Wentworths.

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on the yacht, and with Mr. Mansfield. It was all to keep up the appearance of the comedy we were playing! And it was to have been kept up much longer; I was not to divulge the truth to you until you were well tried. But I cannot, cannot play this farce another moment when I love you so! I see and feel that you so love me!"

She was weeping, now, in his arms. Tightly clasped Herbert held her. When, at length, she looked up, his face was changed—graver, colder, firmer than she had seen it.

"Yes, dear Lena, the comedy was played long enough, child, long enough. The lesson has been well learned. It has been taken to heart."

. . . . . .

Two weeks later Reginald Mansfield returned to town. In the evening he went to Mrs. Percy's. The old lady greeted him with an exclamation:

"Where have you been all this time? In hiding? In every manner I have tried to get news of your whereabouts. And not only I, but Lena, and Herbert Latimer himself. I think the latter wants to thank you, honestly, for bringing him to his senses. He has already thanked me. Never was a conspiracy crowned with more admirable success. They are turtle doves now—turtle doves! Herbert will remain to the end, I believe, a model mate; and as for Lena, she is supremely, completely blissful. You have done a good work, my dear fellow."

She paused, and then something caused her to regard him more attentively.

"Turn your face to the lamp," she said, brusquely. Off his guard, he did so. Thereupon Mrs. Percy gave a low expostulatory cry.

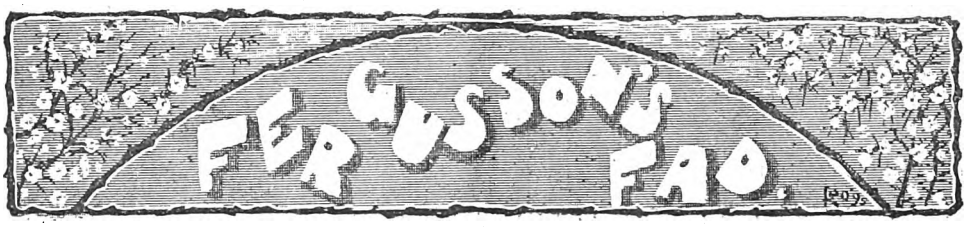
"Reginald!—that is not why you have been in hiding, is it?—not truly this, boy?"

At the tone of deep, interested sympathy Reginald covered his face with his hands. After an interval he raised his head.

"Yes," he said slowly. "I am afraid it is so. I care for her. She is another man's wife and it has an ugly sound. But the feeling I have for her could not stain a flower. I thought it was only friendly interest at first, because she was so like——. But she was too like! It was playing with fire. I have been suspecting my real feeling some time. I knew it when Herbert came back, and by the look in his eyes I realised how much he cared for her and that they would be reconciled." He got up. "Well, I shall have to live it down, as I did the other."

Mrs. Percy held his hand a moment. Her eyes were moist.

"My poor boy!" she said. "They are happy. But you——."



"AND this is what you call a 'kind criticism,'" cried Mrs. Flora Forester, with tears in her sweet blue eyes.

Linwood stared at the newspaper with a mortified frown. "It's too bad," he said. He liked Mrs. Forester, and pitied her; they were excellent friends. He thought her latest novel of London society a very breezy and artistic performance. He belonged to the staff of the *Daily Umpire*, and he had given the book to their "literary man," Fergusson, and asked him to write kindly about it. Fergusson, who was not more than three and thirty, and desired undisputed sway in his own limited realm of book reviewing, had sniffed a little at this request. But he had promised to look into the novel and see what he could do, and Linwood had expected of him something at least fairly civil.

"I hadn't seen to-day's book-column before," he said to Mrs. Forester, with ill-concealed disgust. "But one never knows what Fergusson will do with a book. Luckily this is only a small paragraph."

"Into which," sighed Mrs. Forester, "are condensed five distinct sneers."

"The truth is, that Fergusson belongs to that class of critics who despise the society novel, or English novels at all. The French, and the Spanish, and the Russians—especially the Russians—are their delight. Fergusson has lately been bitten by that craze. Upon my word," pursued Linwood, laughing a little, "he's at heart the nicest young fellow in the world. But he has somehow got himself into the queerest condition. If he sees Mayfair or Piccadilly in a book, he always feels like either shutting it up or reviling it."

Mrs. Forester bit her lip musingly. "M—yes. I understand," she replied. And then she smiled a little oddly, in her gentle, wise way. "I know something of Russia. I lived in St. Petersburg for two years; my late husband, you know, held a diplomatic place there. It often strikes me that these passionate Transatlantic admirers of Tolstoi, and Tourgénieff, and several other famous Russian writers, can scarcely grasp the 'realism' they belaud. Really, being so ignorant of actual Russian life, I cannot quite see how they are able at all to verify it."

Linwood gave an amused chuckle. "Neither can I! You actually know the Russians' language, don't you, apart from your familiarity with many of their native and distinctive customs?"

"Oh, yes," she smiled. "But I *speak* Russian very poorly."

The next day when Linwood saw Fergusson at the office of the *Umpire*, he said, in his dreamy and lazy way: "Oh, by-the-bye, you didn't give poor Mrs. Forester's book much of a send off, Jack, did you?"

Fergusson looked up from his desk. He was reading a translation of one of Valdès's novels. He didn't know Spanish at all well; he had never been in Spain; he had already made up his mind to praise this novel copiously for its marvellous truthfulness to life. And by "life" the life of modern Spain must here inevitably be meant.

"No, Robert," he said. "A reviewer should be conscientious, you know, or nothing. Frankly, I thought your friend's view of society at the present time a curiously—ahem—feverish and—er—unauthentic one."

"I see," said Linwood drily. "Mrs. Forester goes about a good deal here, now that she's left off her widow's mourning."

"Oh, indeed!" Fergusson's eyes were busy again with the pages of his translated Spanish novel. "It—er—seems to me that I have heard somehow, somewhere, that she is a good deal sought after nowadays."

"No; not 'sought after' in any marked sense. She receives cards to a good many nice places, however, and often goes to them. Her observations, I mean, are usually first hand."

"Oh, yes! Quite so."

"Have *you* been much into society lately?" Linwood innocently went on.

"I?" Here Fergusson started, and then shrugged his shoulders. "I'm in mourning for my father, you know."

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"Yes; you've been in mourning ever since you took this place on the *Umpire*, haven't you? That was about four months ago, and previously, my dear Jack, you were on the Continent for three years. I remember that you went abroad just after we both took our degrees at Oxford."

Linwood delivered this parting shot very mildly. He always did everything mildly. You could have sworn that of him, after a glance at his placid, clean-shaven lips and his large grey, reposeful eyes.

But he would speak quiet words, now and then, that had the cuts of knives in them. To a fellow-editor whom he liked (a shaggy bearded man named Fosdick, who wrote poignant financial and social articles that often struck the public tellingly, and helped to sell the paper), he soon made certain remarks which roused a vigorous laugh.

"Why, my dear Robert," exclaimed Fosdick, trying to smooth that recalcitrant beard of his whose amber tangles needed for such purpose nothing short of a stringent and uncompromising comb—"why, my dear Robert, I'd love to fool Jack Fergusson in some such way! He deserves it for his ridiculous carping at modern story-tellers."

Linwood stroked his beardless chin with one meditative hand. "If I wrote the thing we could manage to bring it out cheaply, with our 'printing' pull, and all that. Only a few copies, you know, need be got out at first, and we could put as an *imprimatur* the 'Waverley Publishing Company,' or 'The Dorchester Press,' or something imposing and mystifying. There's a good deal of that sort of thing done nowadays, you know, in the way of a send-off for current fiction."

"Yes, quite right. We could manage the hoax dirt cheap, as soon as you have got it ready."

One day, several weeks later, Linwood paused at the side of Fergusson, where he sat before a book-piled desk. He was deep in an Italian translation of a novelist who holds high rank, just now, throughout the famed and historic peninsula. "Busy, Jack?" Linwood drawled.

"Oh, no," said Fergusson, "not particularly. I was only finishing this lovely story. Ah, how these fellows understand the full meaning of life, Robert!"

"Yes; no doubt. I don't read much fiction, at present. I wish I had more time for it. By the way, here's a small novel by a great friend of Tourgénieff's. You see it isn't very handsomely printed, though, after all, the get-up is fairly decent."

"Yes; yes."

Fergusson spoke somewhat eagerly. He had abandoned his Italian tale, and was turning over the pages of the paper-covered book which Linwood had laid before him.

"A great friend of Tourgénieff's?" he murmured. "I've never heard of any Russian author named Vladimir Karanoff. Ah! here is a preface. Explanatory, I suppose?"

"And yet quite short," said Linwood, "like the story itself. The unhappy young man died in his twenty-eighth year—shot as a Nihilist, though the accusation against him was afterwards found to be a false one. The inscription on his tomb, written by his famous friend, is given there in the preface. I think it is not translated. Is it?"

"No."

"Mrs Forester can tell you what it means. She put it all into English."

"Mrs. Forester?" queried Fergusson, raising his eyes. "The lady whose book——"

"You 'slated.' Oh, yes; but she's got over that long ago, especially as her novel went so well with the public. You know you promised, Jack, that I should take you to one of her 'At Homes.'"

"Mrs. Forester did the whole thing then?" said Fergusson, turning over the pages of the book, and letting his eye leap along the lines, in the way of the professional critic.

"She's the translator—yes, as I just told you."

"It contains a good many Russian words, I perceive."

"She thought those at least *partially* untranslatable," said Linwood with splendid gravity. "When you personally meet her she will no doubt define for you their *true* meaning as well as lies in her power."

And this, about a week later, Mrs. Forester did. Meanwhile Fergusson (who had a good deal of work distracting and pressing upon him, as happens with most modern newspaper critics) had written a column and a half in the *Umpire* on Vladimir Karanoff's novel. He had praised it for its "appealing pathos," its "fine dignity of intellectualism," but most of all he had applauded its "astonishing realistic fidelity."

The particular Wednesday they selected for the promised visit happened to be an extremely rainy one. Linwood and Fergusson were Mrs. Forester's only guests. The lady was very gracious, and for some time talked of the weather and of the latest pleasing play. At length she lifted from a near table a copy of Vladimir Karanoff's book. Then she thanked Fergusson, briefly, yet sweetly, for his goodness in having given it so genial a review. After that she handed him with a winning grace a certain evening newspaper.

"Pray read this horrid letter in the last number of the *Sentinel*, Mr. Fergusson. How unkind to print it from their angry correspondent. Don't you think so?"

Fergusson cast his eye on the column to which her delicate finger pointed. Linwood rose and slipped into the shadow at the further end of the room.

Presently Fergusson's face grew livid. The paper dropped from his hands. As he stared at Mrs. Forester, she said, in her dulcet voice, with her graceful head leaned a little sideways and the open novel in her hand:

"You see, Mr. Fergusson, you *have* made a mistake. There is no such person as Vladimir Karanoff. And you took those Russian words quite for granted, you know. For instance, when 'Liza's robes diffused, as she moved, a faint fragrance of, *et cetera*,' the word which follows is the Russian word for onion."

"Good heavens!" broke from Fergusson.

"And here, on page 10, when the gentle Katrina stirs the contents of her cup, at breakfast time, in sombre reverie, it—er—isn't *coffee* she's drinking; it's *raw rum*."

"Ugh!" broke from Fergusson.

"And on page 19, when you think Dimitoi gets into his carriage, what he does really get into is a washtub, drawn by donkeys. And on page 21, if you will permit me——"

But Mr. Fergusson had rushed from the drawing-room of Mrs. Forester. That night he scarcely slept a wink, and appeared haggard next morning at the office of the *Umpire*.

Linwood greeted him with a dreamy smile. "How you darted away yesterday afternoon, Jack! I hope you didn't find Mrs. Forester an unpleasant hostess."

"Oh, come, Bob Linwood," shot from the tortured young man. "I should say this joke had gone far enough."

The quizzical twinkle in Linwood's eyes faded. "Do you mean your joke about posing as so mighty an admirer of writers whose countries and the manners and customs of whose people you know almost nothing? Do you mean the joke of trying to strangle and crush every honest literary effort made by your own countryfolk? Because, if you do, Jack, I quite agree with you that such joke *has* gone far enough."

"I'm glad," fumed Fergusson, "that you like a woman of Mrs. Forester's kind! A woman who would stoop to such deceit, such treachery, such——"

"An extremely clever process of boxing your ears, my boy, and pulling your nose. . . . And, besides," Linwood went on in his cool, listless way, "please oblige me by not insulting Mrs. Forester any more than you can *help*, for I have to ask for your congratulation on our engagement."

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MR. STEPHEN PRIDDY.

MR. WALTER MIDDLETON sat in portly grandeur, gazing forth upon the neat little garden of his suburban villa. He was one of those regular City men who, as Dickens observed, can be said to have no recreation beyond his dinner, if it is not his garden.

Mr. Middleton fulfilled the type to a nicety; he never sullied his own bejeweled hands with the soil of his tastefully arranged half-acre, yet his shrubs were quite a personal matter, and had he by some wonderful feat of horticulture practically created fresh species of flowers, he could not have been more sensitive upon the subject than of the little inoffensive pansies and primroses which bloomed in the large central bed.

But then, to be sure, Mr. Walter Middleton was sprung from a nation which more than two centuries before had been convulsed by an almost incredible tulip mania.

Mr. Middleton had dined. Business had been pretty good, and the bulls, of which large, hornless herd he was a mild specimen, had succeeded beyond expectation in their speculative dabblings. He was, therefore, in a more than usually complacent mood. The sun was setting, and the motionless shrubs and bushes threw their elongated shadows upon the close-cropped grass.

Mr. Middleton's wife and daughter had gone to the theatre, and the City man had been dining alone. He was lazily following with his half-closed eyes the wreaths of cigar smoke which floated out through the open French window, when a rap fell upon the door of the room.

"Come in," said Mr. Middleton, still following the dissolving smoke with his sleepy gaze.

A maid-servant entered.

"If you please, sir, there's a person out in the passage as would like to speak to you in private; and please, sir, he says it's very perticular."

"What do you call a person?" inquired Mr. Middleton with dignity.

"A man, sir, with rather a dirty face, and dressed in nasty old clothes."

"Ah! some beggar, I suppose. Well, tell him I'm engaged."

The girl disappeared, but a moment later returned.

"Please, sir, he says it would be a matter of much regret to you if you was to refuse to see him. I don't think he's a beggar, sir; he don't talk like one."

Mr. Middleton reflected for a moment with a stolid expression upon his imperturbable countenance.

"Show him in here," said he. "Never mind about clearing away the cloth."

A moment later the man entered. He was a tall, seedy-looking individual, with hollow cheeks, ill-kempt hair, dressed in a rusty brown suit, holding a battered beaver hat in one hand and dangling a solitary glove between the finger and thumb of the other. Mr. Middleton propped himself up on his elbows whilst he gazed at his visitor for a moment, then, with a little grunt, let his ponderous form sink back into the luxurious arm-chair in which he was sitting.

The man advanced with a smirk upon his grimy countenance furtively gazing at the dessert upon the table. He had to come quite close to the City man before he could see his face, for that gentleman sat right in front of the French window, staring straight ahead of him, and studying the topography of his garden by the twilight.

"You are the owner of this house, sir, I believe?" said the seedy-looking man, stuffing his one glove into his trousers-pocket.

Mr. Middleton looked at him with a phlegmatic stare of indignation, and said in his deep voice:

"What right have you to ask——"

The seedy man waved his hand.

"Oh!" cried he, "I beg you will not question my right, Mr. Middleton. I think I shall soon establish that to your satisfaction. I am not asking questions from curiosity. Is this your house, sir?"

The fat City man twisted himself into a less comfortable attitude—a sure sign of uneasiness.

"Well, yes," said he, inspecting the ash of his cigar; "if you *must* know, this *is* my house. What then, sir?"

"You tell me it is your absolute property?" said the seedy man, setting his hat down upon the floor and fumbling in his waistcoat pocket. "And the garden?"

"Ah! my garden! What the dickens can you want to know that for?"

"You will very soon find out, sir," said the man, who was a very cool kind of customer, producing a piece of pasteboard as he spoke, and thrusting it into the City man's hand. "That is my name, sir," and he bowed whilst Mr. Middleton gazed at the card.

"Mr. Stephen Priddy," he muttered.

That was all; there was no address.

"Now come, Mr. Middleton," said Mr. Priddy, helping himself to a chair, and drawing it very close to the other's arm-chair, "I may as well at once inform you that I am here on important business, and furthermore that this important business will be greatly to your advantage."

Mr. Middleton expelled a great cloud of smoke into his visitor's face, and in his deep voice said:

"Well!"

"Do you know who lived in this house twenty years ago?" continued Mr. Priddy, waving off the bluish wreaths with his hand.

The City man slowly shook his head.

"Very well, sir; *I* do. Never mind names just at present. Let it suffice for me to tell you that she was an old lady—a connection of mine—and that she was very rich."

The seedy man uttered these last words very emphatically, staring hard meanwhile at Mr. Middleton. That stolid worthy merely again ejaculated, "Well!"

"This is your property *now*," cried Mr. Priddy, with a sudden air of earnestness, "and, therefore, any treasure"—he paused a moment, then continued—"any treasure that might be hidden upon it must be also yours."

For the first time since the seedy man's entrance Mr. Middleton regarded him with attention. He twisted quite round in his chair in order to obtain a good view of him, and after regarding him for at least two minutes in silence, said:

"What do you mean?"

Mr. Priddy rose and stepped to the French window.

"That garden," said he, pointing; "you have little idea what is concealed beneath the surface of it, sir, in the particular spot upon which my eye is at this moment resting. Briefly, I will tell you the story. Twenty years ago a lady lived here. She was a very nervous old body, and there came the news one evening as I was sitting with her that the house next door had been robbed. That very day she had drawn a very large sum of money out of the bank, and this report of burglars scared her horribly.

"You know what old ladies are, sir. She fancied the mere having of so much money in the house would attract thieves as cheese attracts mice. She became so nervous that she declared

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that she could not go to bed with all that gold in the safe downstairs. I was staying with her, for, as I have said, she was a connection of mine; and merely by way of pacifying the poor old soul I suggested burying the gold in the garden for the night. She jumped at the idea, and begged me to carry it out. Accordingly, I produced an empty box, placed the bag of money in it, dug a hole in the soil, and hid it. The old lady then went calmly to bed, but when next morning came she was discovered dead—stone dead, sir. Heart disease, the doctors called it. Well, this was a pretty considerable shock to me, as you may suppose, and drove all recollection of the buried money clean out of my head for the time being. All the relatives came flocking into the house like so many carrion, Mr. Middleton."

The seedy man tried to infuse an expression of disgust into his voice, and paused whilst he stared into the stolid and attentive countenance of the City gentleman.

"Well, sir," he continued, "it happened, owing to circumstances which I cannot very precisely recall now, it being, as you see, twenty years ago since the thing happened, that I was obliged to leave this house on the day following the decease of my old lady relative. I went away, still forgetting all about the money that I had buried. I am not going to detain you, sir, by an account of how I have been knocking about the world ever since," and here Mr. Priddy glanced over his seedy person. "My motive in calling this evening is just to inform you that the money still lies hidden where I buried it with my own hands twenty years ago. It is yours now, sir, alas! this old house is, too;" and the dirty-faced man threw what was intended to be a pathetic glance round the room, his eyes lingering long upon the dinner table.

"Why," said Mr. Middleton, an expression of perplexity coming into his stolid countenance, "I don't know what to say. How do I know you are not a swindler, for instance?" and Mr. Middleton tried to force a very knowing scowl.

"Oh, as to that," replied Mr. Priddy, with a superior smile, "give me a shovel and I will reassure you at once!"

"Good!" replied the City gentleman, rising. "There is still light to see by. Lead the way, sir."

"Hold! The bargain!" said the seedy man, picking up his hat and halting upon the threshold. "If the money is there, I take half. Is that fair?"

"It will be quite fair if the money *is* there," said Mr. Middleton, incredulously, stepping on to the lawn, and grasping the polished handle of a spade which leaned against the verandah.

Mr. Priddy took the shovel, and, carrying it in his hand, walked straight to the large, oval plot in the middle of the grass, pausing to gaze about him when he arrived on the edge of it as though to get his correct bearings. Mr. Middleton followed, forgetful even of his favourite flowers in the curiosity that was slowly over-mastering the sluggishness of his intellect.

Mr. Priddy then fell to digging. The earth was moist, and the large brown sods were easily turned. The seedy man worked hard, his shovel struck with rapid blows into the ground, and the scattered soil pattered like hail upon glass. Mr. Middleton, regardless of the flying mould, drew to the edge of the plot, and stood staring with expectant gaze down into the slowly deepening hole.

Suddenly the blade of the shovel smote something hard, and there was a slight sound of the splintering of wood. Mr. Priddy redoubled his efforts without a word; Mr. Middleton gave a deep "Ah!" In another moment a small, square box was disclosed to view, the wood of it discoloured almost to the hue of the clay soil which still adhered in lumps to it. Mr. Priddy stooped and raised it; then, holding it between his knees, he fell, all very deliberately, to replacing the mould in the hole.

"For goodness sake!" cried Mr. Middleton, fairly overcome with excitement, "let us go into the house and divide. Never mind the hole. The money, man—the money!"

"As you please, sir," said the seedy-looking individual coolly; and, throwing the shovel down upon the grass, he led the way back into the dining-room.

The City man, with a trembling hand, lighted the gas. Mr. Priddy took up the doormat, and very carefully deposited the befouled box upon it. The shovel had shattered the fragile lid, and with the aid of a carving-knife he speedily prised open the splintered fragments. Then, putting in his hand, he drew forth a small, red canvas bag, nearly round in shape, and tightly bound with a cord at the mouth.

"Cut it!" cried the portly City gentleman, thrusting a knife into Mr. Priddy's hand, when that worthy had been calmly trying to undo the knot for about three minutes.

"I trust you are no longer inclined to question the motive of my visit?" said the seedy man, passing the keen blade through the string.

"Oh, hang it, no! There, open it, do! Ah!"

A large heap of glittering gold rolled out upon the snowy tablecloth as Mr. Priddy turned the canvas bag upside down. Both men stood regarding it for a moment in silence, then Mr. Priddy fell to counting.

"Ah, that's right," said Mr. Middleton. "See how much we have here."

"One hundred pounds!" announced Mr. Priddy, after a long interval of silence.

"My friend, you have behaved like a true gentleman. The money was all within your grasp, yet you chose to say, 'No! it belongs to the owner of the house!' Give me your hand, Mr. Priddy."

They shook in silence.

"And now let us divide," continued the City man.

"Stay! One little favour, Mr. Middleton. Fifty pounds in gold is no light weight to lug to the other end of London. Would you give me paper for the amount—your cheque or notes?"

"With pleasure," replied Mr. Middleton, and going to a desk he unlocked it, drew forth a cheque-book, and, filling in a cheque for the amount, handed it to the seedy man, who, with the greatest *sang-froid* imaginable, placed it in the breast-pocket of his shabby jacket.

The two men sat awhile smoking and chatting, and then Mr. Priddy took his leave and departed.

. . . . . .

Half-an-hour later a vague suspicion slowly formed in Mr. Middleton's saturnine mind. He rose and went to his desk from which he laboriously drew forth the red canvas bag containing the windfall. This he emptied on the floor, and taking coins from the heap at random, he sounded them upon the table. They all fell dead as lead.

"THE TENTH OF JUNE"

is the title of the new serial tale which will commence in the next number of SHORT STORIES. The author, Mr. John K. Leys, asserts that, in point of interest and exciting incident, this, his most recent production, entirely eclipses all his previous romances, a statement which those readers of SHORT STORIES who are wise enough to follow the story from week to week will enthusiastically bear out.

Broadly speaking, the plot deals with the adventures of Geoffrey Dundas and others living in England in their attempts to avoid assassination by certain Hindoos who are under oath to wipe from the face of the earth all those Englishmen and their offspring concerned in an act of indignity against some Indian gods, perpetrated during the Indian Mutiny, on the tenth of June, 1853.

It treats of the extreme measures to which the hero and his friends concerned have to go in order to insure their safety each tenth of June, and with the narrow escapes and hand-to-hand fights necessarily resulting from the attempted assassinations. The marvellous manner in which the Hindoos contrive to live in the very heart of the metropolis, and in the most open parts of the country, without exciting suspicion, and always avoiding capture, is not the least interesting feature of the story. Their native craft and subtle cunning is evinced in all their actions, and is pitted against the cool judgment and courage of the young Englishman.

The story throughout will be embellished with striking and powerful illustrations by Mr. Raymond Potter, whose ability in this direction is already known to the readers of *Pearson's Library* and *Pearson's Weekly*.

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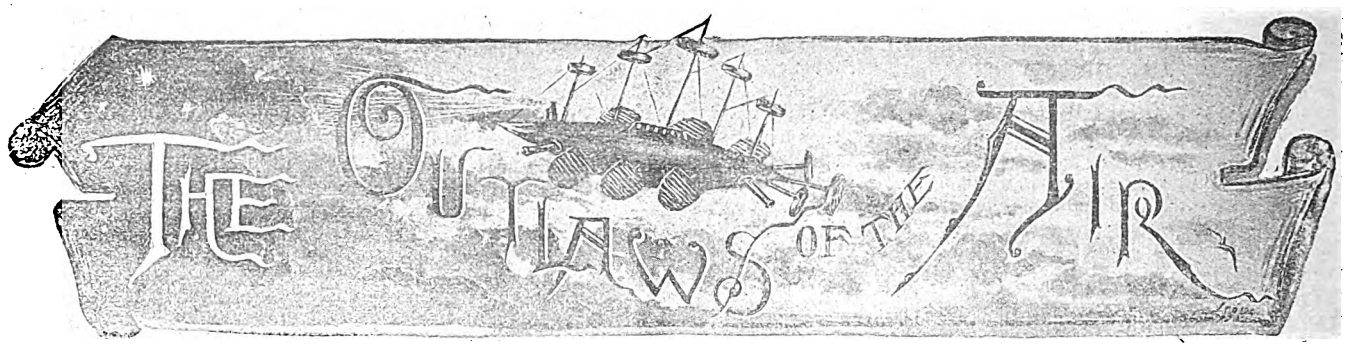

By George Griffith,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "The Syren of the Skies," &c.

CHAPTER LIII.

Wolves at Bay.

Three days after the meeting of the Directors of the Syndicate at Sir Harry's house in Grosvenor Place, soon after eight o'clock on a lovely summer morning, the news ran like wildfire through London that a large fleet of air-ships flying the Union Jack and another flag, on which were emblazoned in gold and white background two winged hands grasping each other, had dropped to the ground in the middle of Hyde Park.

Almost immediately ever-growing streams of people began to move towards the Park. Omnibuses full of men going to the City converged instead towards the Marble Arch and Hyde Park Corner, and there were promptly emptied by common consent. Business for the present was left to take care of itself, for rapidly succeeding rumours filled the air, and it soon became known that the much-abused and misunderstood Aerial Navigation Syndicate had been quietly and skilfully working for the best all the time, and had at last emerged from its secrecy and retirement with a fleet of air-ships powerful enough to meet the still dreaded Anarchists in their own element, and hunt them from the skies in which they had too long reigned supreme.

What the immediate destination of the fleet was no one knew, and no one seemed to care much to know. Everyone was satisfied for the time being to see the aerial cruisers there, resting quietly on British soil and flying the British flag. The Chairman and Directors of the Syndicate made, perforce, a triumphal progress through the cheering throngs that lined the way from Grosvenor Place to where the air-ships were lying, guarded by a strong body of police and lancers, and when at last at the firing of a gun the whole fleet of twenty-eight vessels rose at the same instant from the ground and soared away up into the blue cloudless sky, it was followed by such a roaring cheer of delighted enthusiasm as London had never heard before.

The Union Jack and another flag

At a height of a thousand feet the fleet separated into two squadrons, led by the *War-Hawk* and the *Volante*, and then, with a parting salvo of aerial artillery, they sped away to the southward, and in a few minutes were lost to the admiring gaze of the almost frantically delighted populace.

A flight of five hours brought them in sight of the Central Cantabrian chain crowned by the rocky summit of Mount Pietra. Signals were now flown from the two flagships, and the two squadrons separated, the one flying to the westward and the other to the eastward, and rising in long upward curves until a height of ten thousand feet had been reached. Then they converged again, with the mountain between them.

A few minutes later those on watch in their conning-towers could distinctly make out with their glasses the dark oval of the gorge to the north of the peak in which Berthauld had told the leaders of the expedition they would find the Camp of the Outlaws of the Air. That his information had been accurate and faithfully given very soon became manifest, for at the moment of their arrival over the gorge five air-ships rose out of it and attempted to scatter and escape underneath them, but before they had flown a thousand yards a converging hail of shells and Maxim bullets was rained down upon them from every ship in the two squadrons.

Three blew up and vanished in a brilliant outburst of flame, and with a shock that shook the atmosphere, and the other two, riddled and crippled, dropped to the earth like birds stricken on the wing, and were dashed to fragments on the rocks beneath. Then the squadrons halted, poised over the gorge, at the bottom of which about a score more air-ships could be seen resting. They waited for a good ten minutes, but not one of these made an attempt to rise.

"Those fellows are helpless," said Mr. Maxim, who was standing in the conning-tower of the *Volante* with Adams. "They've got no fuel and they can't rise. You may depend upon it that all the fuel they had left they put into those five ships we've sent to glory. That was their forlorn hope, and they've been fools enough to let us catch them like rats in a trap."

"Yes," said Adams, "I suppose that's it. They had no idea that anyone knew anything about this place, and really if it hadn't been for Berthauld we might have hunted the world over for years before we'd found it. Well, we must clear them out of there now we have got them, but we mustn't destroy those ships, they are too useful for that, and they are worth a fight to get hold of."

More signals were then exchanged between the flag-ships and the squadrons, and presently the *War-Hawk* and the *Volante*, each accompanied by three ships, sank slowly down towards the gorge, while the remainder kept guard in two great semicircles above. When they were on a level with the encircling rocks, the six ships ranged themselves three on either side, commanding the whole of the valley with their shell guns and

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Maxims, while the *War Hawk* and the *Volante* sank down in the centre, and stopped a hundred feet from the ground just ear of their consorts' line of fire.

On one bank of the stream that ran down through the gorge stood an irregular group of between forty and fifty half-starved and woe-begone looking wretches, the last remnant of the lately terrible Outlaws of the Air. Mr. Maxim had been correct in his opinion. The five air-ships that had been destroyed had contained all that was left of the motor fuel in the Camp. All the men that they would carry had crowded into them, ruthlessly shooting down those who had disputed the last chance of escape with them, and whose corpses now lay scattered about the space they had risen from.

But the fate of the five ships had apparently utterly demoralised those who were left in the gorge, for when Sir Harry hailed them in French, and asked them whether they preferred surrender or shooting down where they stood, they threw up their unarmed hands, and one of them shouted back:

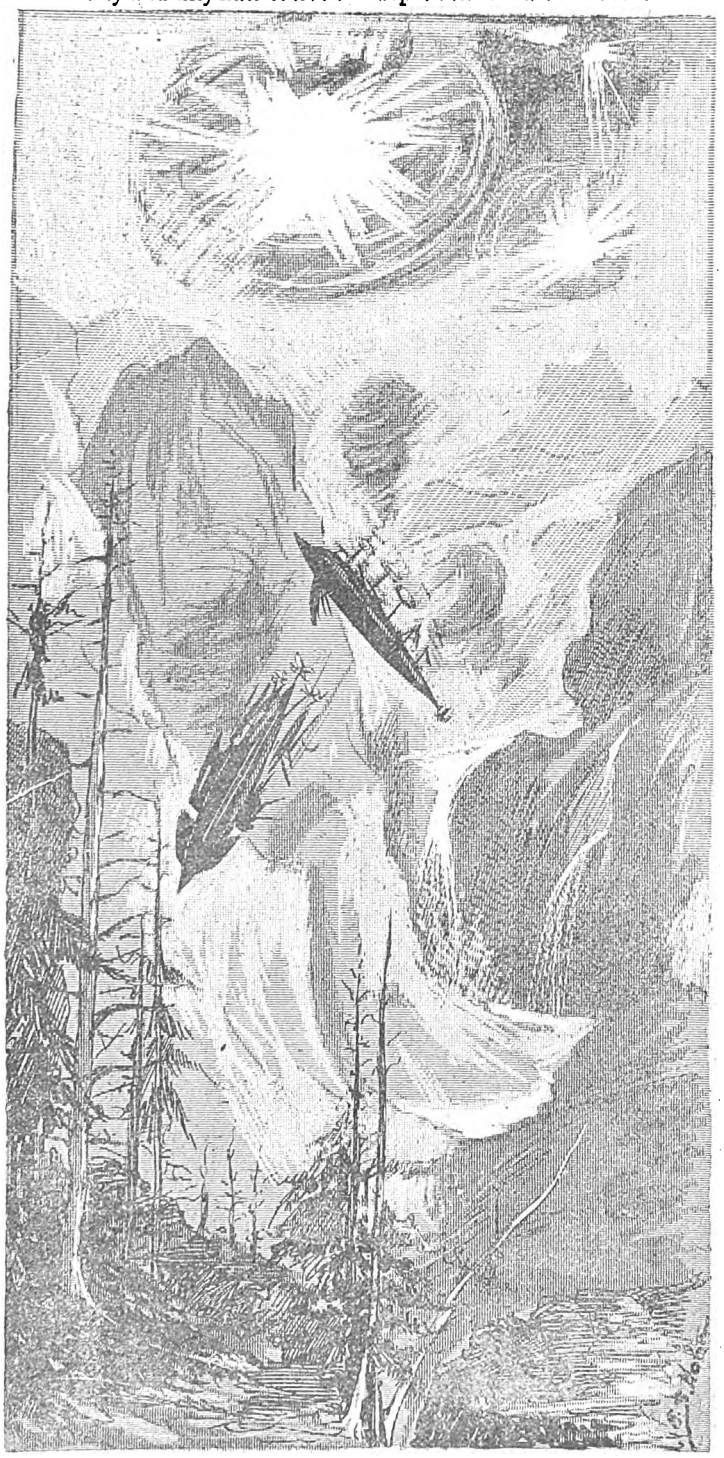
"Yes, we surrender if you will give us our lives."

"I can't promise that," he replied. "All I can promise is a fair trial and English justice."

"Will you promise to take us to England?"

"Yes, if you will surrender quietly, and if there is no treachery. If there is any, not one of you shall escape alive. If a shot is fired, either from those huts or the ships, you shall be shot down where you stand, every man of you. Now put your hands above your heads and keep them there."

Every hand went up as he spoke, and the two air-ships dropped to the ground, one on either side of the group, so keeping the Anarchists between the cross-fire of six Maxims. Three men from each vessel landed, and, taking the Anarchists one by one, bound their arms behind them, the others being compelled to keep their hands up until their turn came.



Dropped to the earth like birds stricken on the wing.

None of them made the slightest resistance, for they had chosen cunningly and well. Resistance meant nothing but certain death; but English justice was an unknown quantity, and might offer more than one loophole of escape to them, as it had done to many others of their evil kind. As a matter of fact, it may as well be said at once that a very clever Old Bailey barrister who was retained for their defence, and actually paid with stolen money, made out the impossibility of identification of the prisoners with those who had committed depredations within the limits of English jurisdiction, that everyone in court, from the judge to the warders, felt certain that a verdict of "Guilty" was almost impossible.

Of course, it was a moral certainty that they had manned the fleet which half destroyed Newcastle, just as it was that they had committed the outrages that had terrorised Europe; but moral certainty is one thing and legal certainty another, and all that the judge in his summing-up could do was to dwell upon the fact that they had been caught in the Anarchist Camp in possession of the air-ships. Berthauld, unhappily, had been employed chiefly on the transport *Voyageur*, and had not been present at the Newcastle tragedy, so that he was unable to swear positively that the prisoners were there

The case for the prosecution looked very weak when the judge had finished his admirably impartial summing-up; but for once, at least, twelve jurymen declined to be fooled by legal technicalities and forensic trickery. They did not even leave the box; they consulted for two or three minutes, and then the foreman stood up, and, in answer to the charge of the clerk as to whether they found all or any of the prisoners guilty of murder and arson on the high seas or within the limits of the British jurisdiction, he replied, to the relief and delight of every one but the prisoners:

"We find them all guilty.'

And so in due course Justice was done in spite of Law.

While the Anarchists were being secured two other ships landed in the gorge, and a complete search was made of all the huts and air-ships for men or explosives that might have been concealed with a view to treachery. Nothing, however, was found except in the regular magazines of the air-ships, which were nearly full. Hardly any food or drink was found in the camp—a fact which proved that the outlaws had been reduced by the desertion of the *Revanche* almost to extremity.

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The captives were distributed amongst their own ships and those of the Syndicate's squadron, and six hours after the first and only attack had been made, the united fleets, now numbering forty-eight vessels, mounted into the air in two divisions, and within six hours more the remnant of the Outlaws of the Air had been safely lodged in Pentonville Prison under lock and key and a special guard of military and police.

CHAPTER LIV

THE ULTIMATUM

FOR a fortnight the Directors and officers of the Syndicate were busily engaged in refitting the captured vessels with new guns and stores, and getting their new crews accustomed to them and their machinery, which was slightly different to that which propelled their own ships.

This period was signalised by at least two important events. The first was the unexpected appearance at dawn one morning, in Southampton Water, of the *Nautilus*, which had sailed under sealed orders the day after the success of Dr. Roberts' experiment. Behind her floated, peaceful and harmless at last, the long-dreaded *Destroyer*, once the terror of the Atlantic, and now the latest addition to the British Navy.

She had been sighted by a North German Lloyd boat chasing a French mail-ship bound for Buenos Ayres, and reported. Lieutenant Wyndham found that his sealed orders were to run her down and sink or capture her, whatever time it took to do so. By a stroke of great good luck he ran across her in three days, a little south of the Transatlantic track. The *Destroyer* at once gave chase, and the *Nautilus* went about and ran for it, always keeping just five miles ahead, until at last it dawned upon the pirates that the *Destroyer* had at last met a vessel faster than herself.

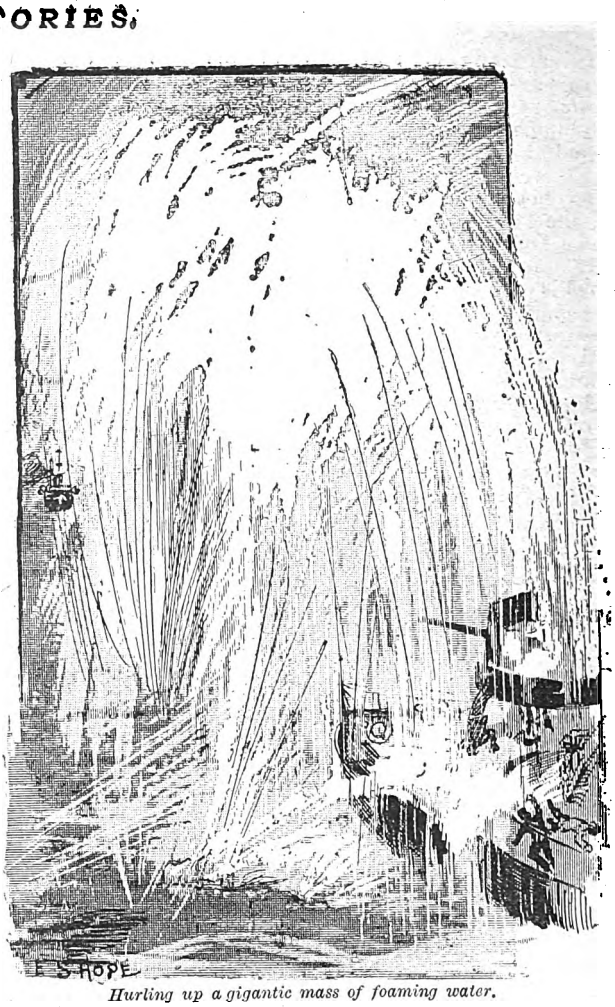
This they knew could be nothing but the terrible *Nautilus;* and so, after keeping the chase up all day, they doubled at nightfall and ran in the opposite direction. But this was exactly what Wyndham had expected; and the *Nautilus*, instead of being five miles away, as the pirates thought, was only three-quarters of a mile, so that the moment she turned she was seen in the clear summer night.

"We find them all guilty."

Then the searchlight of the *Nautilus* flashed out, and, after having wasted nearly half of their rapidly diminishing stock of fuel, as Wyndham had intended they should do, the pursuers became the pursued. Day dawned, and found the remorseless *Nautilus* still travelling at exactly the same speed as her prey, and exactly four miles astern of her.

All day the chase continued, the two vessels flying through the water at nearly forty knots an hour; but towards evening the speed of the *Destroyer* began to slacken. The *Nautilus* slowed down too, always keeping her four-mile distance, until at length the last pound of fuel had been burnt on board the *Destroyer* and she came to a dead stop.

This happened within about eighty miles of the steamship track between New York and the Channel, and here Wyndham knew he would be certain to pick up a British steamer on patrol duty, so, leaving the helpless *Destroyer* where she lay, he ran North at full speed, flashing the private



Hurling up a gigantic mass of foaming water.

signal all the way until it was answered from a British war-ship, which he found to be the *Ariadne*, a twenty-two knot cruiser on the Atlantic station.

He reported what he had done, gave exact directions as to the position of the *Destroyer*, and then sped away to mount guard over her until the cruiser arrived. When she at length did so the pirates were given their choice between being blown out of the water or surrender. They replied with a shot from their forty-pounder, which drilled a clean hole through the cruiser's unarmoured bows. Then Wyndham, training one of his guns, dropped a five hundred-pound dynamite cartridge with a time-fuse attached into the water about twenty yards from the *Destroyer*.

It burst well under the surface, hurling up a gigantic mass of foaming water high into the air, and this, falling back with frightful force, deluged the pirate craft with tons of water and left her helpless and half sinking, with every man on board her either drowned or maimed. The hint proved quite sufficient. The red flag came slowly down at last and a white one took its place. Then the *Ariadne* lowered her pinnace, and the terror of the Atlantic was ignominiously taken possession of without a struggle, to be towed back to England in triumph by her captor.

The second event was the despatch of the ultimatum of the Aerial Navigation Syndicate to the Tsar of Russia and the President of the French Republic at noon on the day on which the whole fleet was pronounced fit for service. The two copies were delivered simultaneously in Paris and St. Petersburg by air-ships flying flags of truce.

(*This fascinating story will be concluded in our next week's issue, and in the same issue will be commenced a serial story by John K. Leys which will rival in interest* THE OUTLAWS OF THE AIR. *For further particulars see page* 567.)

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Lost on Green Lake Mountain.

THE two had left the rest of the party, with the guides and burros, at the rude little half-way house by the tiny lake that lay like an oblong emerald in a setting of bronze, and had wandered away by themselves, the brown-bearded young Western mining engineer and she, the delicate-looking visitor from Boston, with her creole hair and eyes.

The benediction of a perfect Indian summer afternoon lay upon the scene. The cloudless sky, so blue that it reminded her of the exquisite colouring of the violets at home; the air so still that even the trembling of the aspen leaves ceased at intervals; the haze about the mountain top like a golden fog. It was an afternoon that made one forget there were ever extremes of temperature, or that the sunbeams must soon sink into the west.

They had sauntered some time, and Madge was tired, for the way had been rough. She did not realise the time nor the distance they had wandered; she only knew that to her the whole thing was a wonderful dream.

Bob's thoughts were different. A perfect Colorado afternoon was not new to him, while his love for Madge was; and his pleasure came from her keen and placid enjoyment. It was no accident on his part that they were separated from the rest, and he realised fully that they had been gone over an hour, and were a long distance from the lake.

His happiness lay in being alone with her, in watching the surprise and pleasure rippling over her face, as new shapes and new landscapes opened upon her, in answering the childlike questions that fell from the dark eyes and pretty lips; and, more than all, in the thrilling touch of the slender arms, and the soft warm hands, as he helped her over the rough places. It was heaven to him, and could not last long enough.

At last she gave a weary sigh, and sat down upon a convenient log as they reached a level stretch, saying, "Oh, dear! I am so tired!"

"I think perhaps we've gone far enough," he responded quickly. "It's getting on in the afternoon, and time to start back."

"Are we very far from them?" she asked suddenly, seeming to realise for the first time that they might be.

"About a mile, I should say; but I really have not kept much track of the distance, and this part of the trail is rather new to me."

After this there was silence for some time. He saw that she was quite exhausted, and it occurred to him that the altitude was having some effect upon her.

He blamed himself inwardly for his thoughtlessness, and was about to ask her if she had trouble in breathing when a sudden chill in the atmosphere, accompanied by a movement of the air that set the aspens shivering violently, followed by a gradual dimming of the sunshine, caused them both to glance towards the sun.

What appeared to Madge like a fog was hurrying across it, and rapidly growing denser; and as she looked up towards the highest point visible in the west she could see the grey, mist-like substance stealing in between the rocks and pines, and sweeping silently down towards them.

He answered her look of interrogation by saying, somewhat absent-mindedly, "Clouds. A change of weather! I might have known that the heat this afternoon meant something, if I hadn't been thinking of——"

He stopped abruptly and coloured; but she had turned, and was absorbed in the curious transformation that was going on, and lost his last low-spoken words.

The grey column had completely obscured the sun and was moving towards them.

They both shivered, and he sprang to his feet.

"As soon as you are rested, Miss Chamberlain, I think we had better start back. It looks as though we might have a squall, and perhaps some snow. This is one of the changes common here at this season of the year. It is my fault though, for you know nothing of these changes, of course."

She had risen, and started to speak.

"Don't you breathe easily?" he continued, with some concern, noticing that she pressed her hand to her bosom.

She had paled a little, and now gasped two or three times before she answered, with a smile, "It seems as though I couldn't get enough air in my lungs. I have felt it several times this afternoon. It's trifling," she went on, reassuringly. "I will take your arm though, please, because I am really very tired."

After they had walked a short distance, she continued, shivering, "What a heavy fog, and how damp it is."

"You could hardly call it fog," he said. "We are in a cloud, and it is an unusually thick one," he added, after a pause, glancing about nervously.

The great grey mass had caught them now, and had closed in upon them on every side—beneath them, above them, around them, pressing against their faces, and brushing their hands with its cold, clammy fingers, leaving moisture and chill with every touch.

There was no fear in Madge's mind. Why should there be? They were only a short distance from the hotel—a mile or so, perhaps. One could almost hear a shout so far. Then, she was leaning upon a strong arm, and enjoyed the sensation of being in the midst of a cloud as she enjoyed everything that was new.

"Why, see!" she exclaimed brightly, "it's so thick one can almost grasp a handful! Oh, dear me! I can see it pass between me and your hat," she laughed, as she threw her head to one side and glanced upwards. "And see the moisture on your coat!" she went on, running her hand along his arm, and flipping the water from her fingers.

Bob's eyes were fixed in front, and while she was wondering why he did not answer and appeared so quiet, a sudden gust of wind tore her hat from her head, and in an instant whirled it out of sight into the all-surrounding vapour.

"Stand quite still," he said quickly, and hurried after it.

How odd it was to be there all alone. There was something so solemn, so awful in the silence, the isolation, and the sombreness of the place! To be able to see and feel nothing save the rocks at her feet, and the noiseless mist floating by, to hear nothing but the moaning of the wind, to realise that she might be within a few feet of a precipice and not know it.

Madge shuddered, and there must have been something in the look that she turned upon Bob, who appeared out of the gloom at her side so suddenly and noiselessly as to startle her, that showed the relief she felt in having him with her again. His face, that was set and serious, softened into a reassuring smile, and the swift, eager glance of the eyes that she had noticed once before during the afternoon might have warned her that he, at least, was on dangerous ground. But it only caused a strange little fluttering of her heart, as she replaced her hat and took his arm without a word.

In silence they traversed now what seemed to Madge a long distance. It was but a short time since the change had taken place, but already the wind had risen to a gale, and the gloom deepened into a black wall around them, while in the

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distance could be heard the roar, and rattle, and crash of the approaching storm that was already heralded by a few wandering flakes of snow, whirled along too fast to find a resting-place.

Their pace had unconsciously slackened, and now they were simply groping their way over the logs and stumps, dodging the boulders, and between the swaying pines that arose one after another through the mist like a straggling column of retreating soldiers, when suddenly Bob uttered a surprised exclamation, and stood still.

Not five feet in front of them arose a solid wall of perpendicular rock, its boundaries lost in the mist.

Madge's glance showed her the perplexity, anxiety, and irritation in Bob's gaze, and made her ask earnestly,

"Why, Mr. Bartlett, have you lost your way?"

The only answer was a jagged, quivering glare that seemed to envelope them from every side, brightening up the scarped cliff in front, and showing them upon its surface the cold, dank tufts of dark green moss, between which the moisture was slowly trickling to the base. The very earth under them trembled, the air recoiled in terror, and the mountain seemed to split to its base with the almost simultaneous crash that followed.

The storm had overtaken them!

Madge tried to smile after she had relinquished her hysterical grasp of Bob's arm; but there was no answering smile from him, and a vague fear swept over her.

"I don't recognise this rock," he muttered in a low tone. "I seem to have lost the trail. Let us work our way carefully along the face of this a little."

Once more the slow and hesitating march was resumed. The fluttering flakes of snow had changed to tiny hailstones that were rapidly whitening the ground.

The first grand rush of the wind was over, and it had quieted down into a sullen moan that was merely an undertone to the great orchestra of heaven, whose reverberating notes were ringing from peak to peak, and rolling majestically down the valleys.

Faster and faster beat the hail, now rapidly changing back to snow; colder and colder moaned the wind as they drearily picked their way along in the shadow of the dreary cliff.

Madge shivered perceptibly, and Bob, turning quickly, tore off his coat, and with a peremptory "Put it on, please," threw it over her shoulders and buttoned it round her neck.

She felt by this time that they were in danger. It was growing very cold and snowing heavily, but such a combination was not new to her, although she was rather lightly dressed. And what if they had temporarily lost their way? The storm would soon be over, if they didn't find the trail before then. She might catch a bad cold. And that would have been the extent of her anxiety if it had not been for her companion's actions.

Madge had never before seen Mr. Bartlett so quiet and preoccupied. He seemed to avoid looking at her—which was certainly very unusual for him. His almost constant smile was gone and his mouth firmly set. He seemed to be watching and listening like an animal who knows there are enemies ahead. If he would only talk to her it would remove this uneasiness.

She could stand it no longer, and she asked, "Is there much danger, do you think?"

He did not turn his head, but answered with deliberation,

"Not at present; but we are certainly lost, and I am afraid we are simply making a circle and returning to the spot we started from. I hope to find the trail again."

"How can you find it when the snow is covering it all up?"

The question came from her impulsively, and she felt sorry the moment she asked it. Poor Bob! He had not deliberately lied to her, but he had not told the whole truth, and she had given utterance to the very question that was in his own mind.

"I think I could easily find my way by landmarks if the cloud would lift," he answered evasively.

She suspected now that he was concealing the truth from her, and her temper and courage rose with the crisis.

She said energetically, "Mr. Bartlett, don't conceal any danger from me. I am entitled to know it. I am not a baby."

He stopped, and turned on her abruptly. Then he said:

"The storm may last two or three hours, the snow get very deep, and the cold intense. I can stand it, because I'm strong; but you—you—" the deep voice was a little uncertain, and the two hands that had involuntarily grasped her arms as he turned, tightened—"you are delicate, you know——"

He did not finish, but before he turned his head away the same look came into his eyes again. There was no mistaking it. He might as well have said in so many words, "I love you!"

Madge's heart gave a great bound, and then there came a rush of tenderness towards the man who would lay down his life to save hers.

His strange mood was all clear to her now, and her own feelings were a revelation that almost shocked her.

The hours she had spent with him were the shortest and sweetest she had ever known. She recalled the sense of security and rest that his voice and presence always gave, the truth and earnestness of his character, his constant watchful devotion to her, which she had overlooked as mere gallantry; his strange conduct that moonlit night on the verandah when she had dropped her engagement ring, and he had first guessed that she was pledged to another.

And it was inevitable that, with the swiftness of thought, she should compare him with that other one in the East, with his boyish face, effeminate manner, and supercilious air of superiority, to whom, in their college days, she had bound herself.

It startled her, for she had never before thought him effeminate or supercilious, and she felt guilty in thinking so now.

These thoughts hurried through her brain as she stood waiting while Bob was endeavouring to discover through the whirling whiteness some landmark. Somehow she could not feel very much alarmed, with him by her side, after all.

She realised now, however, that she was very cold and very faint, and that the pressure about her chest was growing worse. The wind had risen again, and the snow was beating against their faces, as though it wished to blind them.

Bartlett was by nature hopeful, persistent, and pugnacious, with a cool, quick brain in any emergency, but he could hardly see his hand before his face.

The trail had long since been covered, and he was utterly at a loss what direction to take or what to do—except that Miss Chamberlain must be kept moving, if possible, to keep off that deadly chill until help should come or the storm lift.

His own teeth would have been chattering as hers were, but for his indomitable will. He knew that she relied upon him, and did not realise the danger. Would it be better to impress the truth upon her? Would she not rise to the emergency, and fight to the bitter end?

Her action at the moment decided him instantly. She sank upon a log, and was resting her face upon her hands.

He sprang to her, and said with decision:

"Miss Chamberlain, you must not give way like that. We are in great danger, and if we let the cold benumb us we are lost."

Her pleading answer sent a great throb of fear through his heart, for it told him that she was already under the influence of that awful spell which makes the approach of death seem like a delusive dream.

"I am not cold now, but so tired. The storm will soon be over, and they will come for us. Please wait here."

Action was needed now. He had his vest left. Without a word he wrenched that off, lifted her to her feet, unbuttoned the coat that was around her, took it off, forced the vest upon her—not heeding the feeble motion with which she waved it away—fastened it, replaced the coat, and hurried her forward through the storm—anywhere, anywhere—he cared not where.

But they went only a short distance when she tottered, stumbled, and almost fell, clasped her hands to her bosom, and uttered a cry of pain. He put his arm closer round her, her head dropped on his shoulder, and her voice came in a whisper:

"I can hardly breathe. I am too weak to walk. Leave me here, and if you can't get help, save yourself."

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All restraint was gone now. He pressed her close to him with both arms, and kissed her again and again.

"Leave you, Madge, when I brought you here! Leave all I care for on earth! Heaven forgive me for saying so, but I can't help it!"

She drew herself back from him an instant; the colour flamed again into her white face, the big eyes looked full into his, then closed slowly, as she put out her arms like a tired child, and was taken back into his embrace. He bent down closer to catch the words:

"I love you, Robert! There can't be harm in saying it now, with death so near. I was not sure until this afternoon. Kiss me, dear! I am so tired!"

He covered her long dark eyelashes, her cold, pale lips, her moist hair, her marble-like cheeks and forehead with passionate kisses.

Her feeble clasp about his neck strengthened a little, and she smiled gently.

The swirling snow and the wailing wind were nothing to him now. He raised his head, and underneath the joyous triumph in his eyes there was a desperate glitter as he glanced about him.

Death? Who talked of death? They should not die there, like rats in a hole. Life was sweet to him now. She loved him, and she was his by right. Was there no escape from this biting cold and pitiless snow?

He would shout. The wild wind swept his call away with a mocking burst. It was like shouting over the sea.

His voice was almost gone. If he only had his revolver with him, he might make himself heard. Fool! Fool to leave everything behind them that would have been useful! Robbins always carried a revolver. Surely they would try to signal. Hark! What was that? Only the roll of the far-off thunder.

When the storm came up it was from the west, and the wind was blowing towards the lake. Yes, he remembered that. The wind hadn't changed, and all he had to do was to follow it. Why had he not thought of that before? There was hope yet! He would carry her!

He lifted her in his arms and staggered forward a few feet. He had to give it up. His legs and arms were icy cold, and his joints stiff. He must get his blood in circulation first. He would scrape away the snow and place Madge against that shelving rock.

She seemed to be sleeping now. She was protected from the wind there. Now he would warm up a little, and then carry her to the lake. All he had to do was to follow the wind.

Ah, how awkward of him to stumble like that! It must have been a stone that tripped him. What's that? Blood! He must have cut his forehead, then. How hard it was to get up again.

"Oh, well, perhaps he had better lie down, and take a little nap, and then——and then——then——"

The snow had ceased falling, and the wind's dreary monotone died away to a mere whisper amongst the ghost-like pines that stood up stark, like sentinels frozen on duty. The lifted, shifting clouds were pierced here and there by slanting shafts of sunshine that touched the snow with diamond points. Wider and longer grew the blue rifts in the rolling, hurrying, and dissolving mass of clouds, changing from black to grey.

Suddenly, bursting through the ragged fringes of the western curtain, the sinking sun touched with gold the pyramids, towers, minarets, and domes outlined in white relief against the blackness of the swiftly-departing storm-clouds in the east. A rainbow poised on two marble peaks, and, spanning the valley, hung in the eastern sky.

The man slept on in his shirt sleeves, and the woman lay as quietly as though she had never known any other pillow than one of snow. Yet the cold was intense. The branches snapped in the frosty air. The sun had gone and the shadows were settling down upon the valley. It would be night soon.

"Oh, Heaven, Jim, look there!"

Robbins's strong voice was only a whisper.

"That's her, sir! And here he is! Hush! See, and in his shirt-sleeves, too! And there's blood on the snow at his head!"

"What was the signal? Five double shots, wasn't it?"

"Yes, sir."

"All right! Now—one! two! three! four! five! There! Have you got plenty of cartridges?"

"Plenty, sir."

"All right! Now let's turn him over. Heavens, how white he is! Hush! I think I feel a slight beat. Take off his shoes; light a match, quick! Ah, he feels that burn! Thank Heaven! Pour the whiskey down him while I go to her. Hark! They've answered. They are coming! Shout Jim! Poor little girl, I'm afraid we're too late for you! She seems very stiff, and I can't feel any movement of the heart at all. You had a great head, Jim, to think of bringing those burros. We'd had a hard time carrying them back. Better not try to do anything here but give them whiskey. It won't take long to get them to the house, and then we can go to work on them in dead earnest. Ah! there's her sister."

"Is she dead, Mr. Robbins?"

"I hope not, Miss Grace. It will take some time to bring her to, after we get her in bed. Quick—bring that burro here, Mike! Never mind the dress, Miss Grace. We mustn't stand on ceremony. It's a case of life and death! There! Balance her that way. That will take the weight off us, and we can rub her down as we go along."

. . . . . .

Mr. Robbins, manager and principal owner of the great Denver shelter, looked up over his glasses, his coffee, and his paper, at his wife who was busily engaged with pencil and paper on the opposite side of the breakfast table.

"My dear, you remember the two Chamberlain girls who were here last autumn?"

Mrs. Robbins was making out a list for a very select tea-party, and was consequently much pre-occupied.

"Yes, dear, shall I put their names down?"

"No, no, I didn't mean that. They are not here, anyway. By the way, though, I saw them when I was down at the Springs yesterday. But don't you remember it was the little one that was caught in the snowstorm with Bartlett up at Green Lake, and had such a hard pull with pneumonia? And you know we could not understand why they moved her down to the Springs before she was really well, and even before Bartlett got round himself. You thought there was something between her and him, although I told you she was engaged to young Colby, son of Chamberlain's partner. Well, here's a fine storm from Boston this morning about the boy. Listen:

"'A scandal in aristocratic circles, that has been suppressed for several months through the strenuous exertions of the two families interested, came to the surface yesterday, when it was discovered that the son of millionaire Colby, of the well-known firm of Chamberlain and Colby, was married to the variety actress, Annie Lesly, with whom he is now said to be travelling in Europe.

"'Of course, the matter would have been kept quiet, but for the accidental discovery of this marriage by an inquisitive reporter. A sad feature of the affair is that young Colby has been a long time engaged to a daughter of the senior partner, and the wedding day was actually arranged some time since, the postponement being explained on the ground that the young lady's failing health required a sudden return to Colorado Springs, where she is at present.'"

The reading was interrupted at this point by the appearance of a servant with a note for Mr. Robbins, whose puzzled and surprised look gave way gradually to a genial smile, as he perused the nervously written missive, laid it down, took off his glasses, and answered his wife's look of interrogation

"Bartlett asks for a week's leave of absence on personal business. You were right, dear, after all. He has seen the papers this morning, and he will be at the Springs before sundown."

. . . . . .

"We shall have nothing but chrysanthemums for Christmas," the faithful Grace was saying to the invalid wrapped in her pale blue eider gown, lying in a long chair among cushions. "There are hardly flowers enough to go round the churches

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It won't be like home, but you are going to pull through, and that's enough."

"I don't know but I had quite as soon be here as in Boston snowdrifts," Madge returned wearily. "It doesn't matter. Nothing matters any more."

A card was handed in at the door. A wave of shell-like colour swept over the pale face.

"Yes, you may bring him here, Grace. It's something to see anybody we've known before."

Robert Bartlett made short work of his compliments to Miss Grace outside the door, and said other words which sent her downstairs swiftly to the general parlour for the next hour.

In the soft light of the sisters' sitting-room he saw the slender shape among the pillows, hedged by the blossoming chrysanthemums on the low stands at her head. One long dark braid of hair lay over the pillow, with a pale blue ribbon knot at the end.

The star-like eyes under the thick curled fringes said mutely, "Why have you been so long?" and the slight form half raised itself to meet him. He knelt beside her and drew both her hands to his breast. There were no words for such a moment, while eyes questioned eyes, and answered them again with a fulness language knows not. Then he lifted the frail girl gently, tenderly, and she laid her head down on his broad shoulder with a long sigh of absolute rest.

The quick sunset faded, dusk gathered, and the moon came up and tipped the chrysanthemums with silver, but only the flowers knew what few words were said, and the flowers never tell. Only Grace wrote home to her bosom friend as follows:—

"It doesn't matter to her, nothing matters, so long as Robert is with her. She lets him arrange everything. They are to be married Christmas morning, in her room, and her wedding dress will be the long white china silk gown Aunt Diana sent out for her to wear while convalescent, and I believe Robert will have some white roses and jessamine on from Chicago. Of course there wasn't time to get anything suitable for an outfit; but Mrs. Eden, who was married and came out last spring, sent a box of the most beautiful lingerie from her trousseau that she had never worn, which helps one over the responsibility. I don't think Madge cares if she has a new thing or not.

"People who find out what they think of each other on a mountain shelf, in a snowstorm, at the point of freezing to death, are entirely above all lower considerations. I do think three days is a very short time to prepare for any sort of a marriage. But the look that comes in Madge's eyes when I say anything makes me feel queer, and thus you see it won't be Christmas for either of them unless their plans are carried out, and really there is nothing to be said against it—under the circumstances."

And so, under the circumstances, Mr. and Mrs. Bartlett were married on Christmas Day, so that neither storm nor snow could part them.

A COSSACK IN CLAY

THE light in Ruth Westover's studio was failing, for the day was in its decline; still the woman sculptor was hard at work. Nearly all the medallions upon the wall were shrouded in shadow, so that no one could have told which bore the profile of great Cæsar and which the likeness of Cleopatra. Here and there the model of an arm or leg could be seen with startling distinctness, while a number of unfinished statues, which were covered with wet cloths, made the room look like a sepulchre filled with corpses wrapped in their cerements.

There was a stronger light in the centre of the room than in the shrouded corners, and there the sculptor worked with her human model before her. She was a slim girl, with dark hair falling about her temples, and with a spirited and sensitive face. She was working rapidly and nervously, for this was the last sitting she could have from her model, and she was making the best use of her time.

The man who sat scowling before her wore the garb of a Cossack. He was named Sergius Zambrena, and was a man whose life had been extraordinary and tragical. He was broad-shouldered, deep-chested, and brown-bearded. His age was probably thirty-five years. He made a fine model, for he looked as muscular as a Roman athlete. While the girl copied his fine head and face in soft clay, he assumed the terrible aspect of a Cossack in battle. He might have been little better than a fierce savage if his face had been any indication of his real character.

They were rather silent while the sculptor worked; but when she ceased all the assumed ferocity died out of his face, and he took her hands, unmindful of the oil and clay still clinging to them, and forgetful of his own remarkable costume. Even now there was something tragic in his face and bearing.

"I must say good-bye to you," he said. "I will go down to Hoffman's studio and get into my everyday habiliments, and then I must be off. I go on board the steamer to-night, and will be sailing away early to-morrow morning. You cannot forget me while you have that ugly Cossack glowering at you."

"I am sorry you are going." There was a bright scarlet spot on either of her cheeks, and he noticed that the hands he held were feverish. "You have been a good friend to me, and I shall miss you exceedingly. I am beginning to think that real friends are rare, and when I have found one it pains me to lose him."

"We never lose our friends," Zambrena answered fancifully. "We separate from them, and sometimes they die; but I think their friendship is always with us. It is painful for me to go away. I love this town; I love this little studio; it breaks my heart to say good-bye to this little Bohemian sculptor. Yet it is gratifying to be able to go back. I was banished from my country ten years ago, and that banishment has been withdrawn. I am glad to show my enemies that I *can* go back, and I will be glad to receive at least a fragment of the fortune that the Government stole from me when it prohibited me from returning to Russia. Ah, Ruth! banishment is a sad experience. You cannot imagine how inexpressibly sad it is!"

Ruth Westover clasped her fingers tightly behind her, and stood looking up into the face of the man whose great form towered above her. There was a ring of defiance in her voice when she spoke again.

"Banishment from your country would seem to be an impertinence, not a tragedy. I would not be willing to live under a Government that is so barbaric as to use the knout upon delicate women. I could not be subject to a power that denies its people their right of a trial by jury for what are called official offences; and I would hate a country that has a Siberia, with all its legal crimes, for its background. If I had lived in Russia I could not always have bitten my tongue and strangled my speech, and I am afraid I would have been sent to Siberia."

Zambrena laughed with enjoyment of this hot-headed speech.

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"They would have sent you there, as sure as fate," he said, with conviction. "You have a trick of the tongue, Ruth, that would have given you no quarter in Russia. Your blood is too warm for that Government, and you would have been sent to the snow-fields to reduce it to what is considered a proper temperature."

Ruth shuddered, but she answered at once:

"Your blood is no cooler than mine, my friend. You are easily angered, and you hate injustice. Russia is not a good country for these characteristics. Are you quite sure you will come back?"

"Not sure," he said gravely; "but hopeful."

They were silent for a minute, and then he spoke again, rather abruptly:

"We have been the best of friends always, Ruth."

"Yes," she assented; "the best of friends."

He was smiling constrainedly now, and her eyes were dark with unshed tears.

"Your genius is already recognised," he continued; "you have youth, good looks, a manner that captivates and a social position that is assured. From the time you made mud-pies in your infancy you have been approaching success as a sculptor, and now you have gained it. Besides all this, you have won the love of a remarkably good and influential man. Think of this little potter moulding the Prime Minister of a great State just as she models her wax and clay figures! You are too practical not to know that Lord Balflower wants to marry you, Ruth."

"I have imagined something of the kind," she admitted.

"And you will marry him," he said, without looking into her face. "I would not speak of this if I were not going away, and if I did not believe that this may be our last meeting. You always came to me for advice when I was the only friend you had in this town, or I would not talk to you now about so personal a matter. I have watched Balflower, and I know that he is a good man. He is a gentleman, with a generous nature that is sweet without being effeminate. I believe he appreciates the womanliness in your nature as much as he admires the artist. If you marry him you will never have to pinch and economise, nor cook your own breakfast, nor drink out of jelly glasses—and give your visitors marble busts for seats, as you have done in this little studio. You will have an easy life, little Ruth, and I shall be enough your friend to be glad of it."

"Are you glad?" she asked. "Is it your wish that Lord Balflower shall marry me?"

He bent and kissed her forehead.

"Dear friend," he said, "I wish there were no partings in this life. I wish we never need say good-bye."

He went away then, hurriedly—almost abruptly. The sculptor sank into the chair he had occupied and covered her face with her hands.

. . . . . .

Sergius Zambrena had been a friend to Ruth Westover for several years. It was he who had first induced her to open the studio which had subsequently become a delight to them both, and so profitable to her. He was a man of strong character, but was one whom her new acquaintances regarded with distrust, and who, owing to his alleged Socialistic views, they had advised her to avoid.

He had been educated in one of the universities of St. Petersburg, where he had imbibed some of the rebellious spirit against the Russian Government which runs riot among the young men in such institutions. As his family were Loyalists, and, moreover, belonged to the nobility, his sentiments were not readily suspected; but, one night, one of his fellow-students had come to his bachelor quarters and begged for shelter and protection.

The youth had been accused of Nihilism, and was closely pursued by the police. Zambrena knew him to be a careless lad (he was little more than a boy) who gave no heed to political subjects, but who had repeated some of the disloyal sentiments of his mates. If he were caught he would be tried for treason—which meant conviction and death, or the greater punishment of a living burial in the mines.

Zambrena had risked everything that he had held dear in life to save this youth. He had aided and accompanied him in his escape to France. Later, when the facts were suspected, Sergius Zambrena had been banished for being absent from Russia in a foreign country without official permission, and all of his property had been appropriated by the Government as a further punishment for his offence.

After ten years his sentence of banishment had been withdrawn, and he was granted permission to return to his country for a small inheritance to which he had fallen heir.

Ruth Westover reviewed all these circumstances while she sat with covered eyes in her studio after his departure.

"He may never come back," she thought, with exceeding bitterness. "He has many enemies, and it is possible—even probable—they will make some other charge against him that will bring him into trouble. I believe he will never come back."

"I have been blind, stupid, vain," she continued. "I have fancied that he cared for me—that he would not tell me of his affection because he was as poor as I, and because he was afraid that association with a man who had been banished from his country would be a stumbling-block to my success. Now that stigma has been removed from him, and he is even promised a part of his fortune, still he calls me merely a friend, and advises me to make a prudent match with an influential man. Sergius has been called a Socialist, yet he urges me to marry a ruler and an aristocrat. How little women know of the motives and characters of men!"

She arose and approached the figure she had modelled, and which was fast hardening in the cool air of the studio. She looked into its scowling face, and spoke to it as if it could hear her utterances.

"This is the first time you have ever looked into my eyes and frowned, Sergius Zambrena," she said.

. . . . . .

Zambrena left Hoffman's studio, and stood at the street door waiting for a 'bus, and reflecting:

"A man would be a poltroon if he asked a woman to unite her life with his under such circumstances as mine," he thought. "Ruth Westover is an unusual woman—brilliant, successful, and accepted by the best society. I have no right to ask her to go to a country, even temporarily, where she would have no standing, where I will be an object of suspicion, and where danger may assail us both. She will have no Governmental wolves to fear here, and she will know nothing of the real tragedy of my life. I should not suffer like this. I have had hard knocks enough to have made me a philosopher.

His face was very grave and stern.

"And I advised her to marry Balflower," he thought. "I have met with cruelty so often that I am accustomed and hardened to it, else I could not have spoken my own death-warrant. She has appeared to belong to my life. It was I who first discovered her struggling alone, and who encouraged her to be what she is. It may be years before I can come back. I could not ask her to wait for me."

A 'bus went by unheeded.

"I thank God that I had strength to hold my tongue," he continued to reflect, "and yet I am weak—wretchedly weak. I am longing to go back and see her once more. Why should I not go back? It may be the last time before I die."

He went up the stairs softly, almost guiltily. He was sure now of his strength.

He could not see her at once in the darkened studio, but when his eyes became accustomed to his surroundings he saw that she was kneeling with her arms clasped round the neck of the sculptured Cossack, and that all the youth had died out of her face. Zambrena gave a cry of mingled happiness and remorse, and caught her in his arms, unmindful now of his stern resolution.

"Do not worship that graven image whilst a human heart is starving for your affection," he said brokenly. And then—"I did not mean to ask you to share my troubled life, but my love has conquered my human kindness."

Her eyes were bright again, and her youth had returned.

Later she said:

"I am not afraid of any peril while you are with me, Sergius, and now we will never be apart. Have you never learned that there is no cruelty so fatal to a woman as the tragedy of being separated from the man she loves?"

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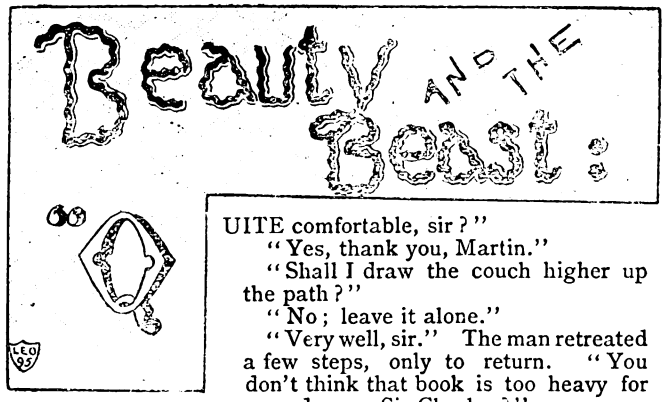

UITE comfortable, sir?"

"Yes, thank you, Martin."

"Shall I draw the couch higher up the path?"

"No; leave it alone."

"Very well, sir." The man retreated a few steps, only to return. "You don't think that book is too heavy for you, do you, Sir Charles?"

"Oh, no, Martin. Do go," I cried; for this constant reference to my helplessness was a sore trial to me, as I was paralysed, and as the old fellow went off I shut my eyes with a sigh.

"What a very ugly man!"

Opening my eyes with terror—for my hermit-like existence had rendered me as timid as a woman—I saw a little child standing at some paces from me.

"What are you doing here? How did you get here?"

My voice, rendered angry by surprise and distrust—for I dreaded that the child should be followed by others—did not in the least seem to frighten the little intruder. She did not answer, but she stood looking steadily at me, and I, in return, looked steadily back at her. Such a pretty little girl!

"Come here, little one. So I am very ugly, am I? Well now, do you know who I am?"

She nodded wisely, answering me in the soft, deliberate voice I was soon to love so dearly:

"Yes, I know: you are the Beast."

"The what?"

She was clasping a tattered picture-book in both her chubby hands, and she now held it out straight before her, peeping over the top with solemn blue eyes.

"Beauty and the Beast."

I read the title, and then took her treasure from her, wondering what on earth she could mean.

"And the house and the garden were always shut up quite tight. No one ever saw the poor Beast, because he was so ugly he would not come out. But he was very lonely and miserable, and all the time he hoped that Beauty would come."

"That's it," cried the child delighted. "Does Beauty ever come?"

"No, Beauty never came. It hurt her to look on me. She was so 'sensitive,' you know."

I spoke very bitterly, but my new friend only smiled in reply.

"That's all right," said she, comfortably. "We don't want her, you and I. And now, I suppose it is time to have some cake, isn't it?"

I blew the whistle for Martin, and enjoyed his utter amazement at the sight of my little visitor.

"It is little Miss Trent, one of the Vicar's daughters."

Martin lifted her off the couch, and then, without the slightest warning, she stood on tip-toe, and then kissed me good-bye.

"When you say your prayers to-night you'll hold my kisses quite tightly," she said quaintly.

"Good-bye, dear Beast."

"Good-bye, dear Beauty," and Winifred was gone.

Little Winifred Trent, or "Beauty," as I always called her, cherishing the pretty fancy that had first led me to her, came to me day by day throughout these summer months.

My couch had been wheeled into the garden, now in the full blaze of its August glory, and Beauty was near me digging in her own little plot of ground.

"Beauty, come here, darling, and show me the flowers."

I called to the child, but the industrious little gardener did not hear me. She had wandered further down the path, and was now nearly out of sight

Suddenly my couch began to move!

You who are able to protect yourselves, who have full control of your limbs, and who can guard off any danger that menaces you—you will understand me when I say that my heart literally stood still with terror. I felt for the whistle; it had fallen to the ground. The couch started down hill, rolling somewhat slowly at first, but gaining speed with every turn of the wheels.

"Don't be afraid. I'll stop you! I'll stop you!"

The voice, Beauty's voice, rang out clear and shrill.

"Go away, darling, go away!" I screamed, as the space between us rapidly lessened. "Don't touch me! Oh, God, save the child!"

The agony in my voice arrested her steps, and for one moment she stood motionless, beautiful as a guardian angel who wards the path of danger; and the next—ah! how can I write it? She was knocked down, the coach stopped with a jerk as the wheel ground into the little, soft body as it turned over, and I was flung out on the path.

When I awoke to consciousness I was in my own room. "He is all right," I heard someone say; and then another voice replied, "I wish the poor little girl was as well as he is; she is dying."

I lay and listened to them as a man in a dream.

"Martin, take me to her."

"Mr. Charlie, my poor lad! You mustn't go."

"Martin, I must go. You can carry me well enough!"

"Carry you? I'd die for you, Mr. Charles!"

And thus, carried in the same kind arms which had first held me as a child, I went to kiss my Beauty good-bye.

The child was apparently asleep, and there I waited by her. Some one (I suppose the doctor) was whispering to me, and telling me that my darling was free from pain, and that very likely she would leave us in her sleep.

"Without one word!"

As I spoke Beauty opened her eyes, and looked full at me.

"Read 'Beauty and the Beast,' she whispered. "It is almost time to go home, isn't it?"

"Not to-night, my darling! I can't read to-night!" My voice choked as I strove to answer her, but the weak whisper was repeated.

"But you always read it before I go. Do read it to-night."

Tears stood in the sweet blue eyes as she reiterated her request; and then I felt a book was put in my hand, and I was told to read—the child must go in peace. "Yes, I will read it, Beauty."

"Thank you, dear Beast."

"'And the house and the garden were always shut up quite tight. No one ever saw the poor Beast, because he was so ugly he would not come out. But he was very lonely and miserable, and all the time he hoped that Beauty would come.'"

For a moment my eyes grew dim. That very sentence had first brought her to me, and now?—Ah, Beauty, Beauty!

"'And the Beauty and the Beast were very happy together. They loved each other very much.'"

A tiny sigh broke from the child's lips, and I stopped in sudden fear.

"It is almost time to go home, isn't it, Beast?"

"Yes, my darling, very, very soon."

"I'm so glad. Finish it quick."

"'Till at last they wanted Beauty to go back to her father's home. And they sent for her, and the poor Beast had to let her go.'"

With faltering voice and bowed head I had read on. Now—the angels had flown back to Paradise, and the little child could no longer hear me.

Beauty had gone to her Father's Home.

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 325.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING MARCH 23, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

BY JOHN K. LEYS,

Author of "In the Toils," "My Hindoo Friend," &c.

Illustrated by RAYMOND POTTER.

PRELIMINARY STATEMENT BY GEOFFREY LANE DUNDAS, ESQ., B.A., BARRISTER-AT-LAW.

HAD I been deliberately poisoned, or had I merely been the victim of a strange accident?

That was the question that agitated my mind as I slowly and painfully rose from my bed on the afternoon of the 11th of June, 1883.

It happened in this way.

The morning of the previous day, the 10th of June, I had spent, as usual, in "Queen's Bench No. 4," with occasional flying visits (when the tedium became unbearable) to Appeal Court No. 2. I had a genuine brief (the brief of a friend) in my hand, which was my reason for haunting Court No. 4.

Once or twice during the forenoon a Hindoo looked in at Queen's Bench No. 4. Now, Hindoos and Parsees are as common as peas in the Inns of Court, in the Halls, Libraries, and Common Rooms of the Temple; but one never sees them in Court. The reason is, that all they desire is the status of a barrister, so that they may practice in the courts of their native land. They seldom or never hope to attain a practice in England, and are, therefore, hardly ever seen in an English court of law.

In the weariness of listening to petty and uninteresting details any distraction comes as a relief. When, therefore, I saw a Hindoo in wig and gown standing in the passage between the jury-box and the benches allotted to counsel, I stared at him, I fear rather rudely. He took no notice of me. His mild, dark eyes wandered from the Judge to the witness, and thence to the cross-examining counsel; but they never met mine. "What handsome fellows those Hindoos are!" I whispered to my next neighbour, Jack Linton.

"Do you think so?" he asked carelessly.

"I do," said I. "Look at those beef-fed, heavy, coarsely-modelled British countenances around you, and then look at that Hindoo's, with its clearly cut, intellectual features, its refined expression, its look of alert yet not arrogant or self-assertive intelligence. If I were a woman I should fall in love with a fellow like that if I were to meet him," and I nodded gently in the direction of the Hindoo before us.

"You don't mean to say you think a decent English girl could marry a Hindoo?" asked my friend, incredulously.

"Yes, I do," I returned. "Why not? He is no darker than many a Spaniard or Italian; and I am sure he has twice the brains of an average Englishman. To be sure, there is the religious difficulty——"

My aimless talk was cut short by the Judge rising for the mid-day adjournment. We all rose, and, pouring out of the court, passed along the corridor and down a corkscrew staircase to a large subterranean room, still smelling of damp plaster, where various refreshments were offered for sale.

A long bar ran down one side of the room. Linton and I strolled up to it together, he being on my left. I called for a plate of sandwiches and a glass of sherry; and as I began eating, the Hindoo came in, and, standing next to me on my right, asked for a bottle of lemonade.

He got what he wanted; and then, I remember, with a smiling "Pardon me," he caught up the wide left sleeve of his gown with his right hand, so as to prevent it knocking over my glass of sherry, which was standing close to his left elbow, and reached across me for a cake, or bun. It would

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I just managed to avoid being run over.

have been more civil to have asked me to hand the dish to him; and this made me notice the action. That was all.

Having finished one of my sandwiches, I took a sip of sherry.

Now, I have been favoured by nature with an exceptionally keen sense of taste; and I perceived, or thought I perceived, a peculiar, rather unpleasant taste in the wine. It was so slight that I did not suppose anyone else would have noticed it, but it was enough to make the sherry distasteful to me. I had no doubt it belonged to the spirit with which the wine had been "fortified" by way of preparing it for the English palate.

I went on with my lunch; and as several other men came up to the bar at that moment, the Hindoo retired with his cake and lemonade to one of the small marble-topped tables which were scattered through the room. When I next looked round for him he had finished his modest meal and was gone.

"I don't admire your sherry," I remarked to the young woman behind the bar, "please give me a glass of claret." As I spoke I handed her the glass of sherry (still almost full); she placed it on a small ledge within the counter, and gave me the claret.

When I returned to court I felt queer and uncomfortable—hardly ill, but decidedly uncomfortable.

An hour passed, and I grew worse; I though I would go home. In addition to a feeling of nausea, I experienced a strange numbness which made it a trouble, almost a pain, to move. I just managed to avoid being run over in crossing Fleet Street; and it took me five or ten minutes to climb the stairs to my rooms, and a good half-hour to get into bed.

The afternoon and night that followed seemed to me like a long, hideous dream.

I was not free from pain; but it was not the pain that was my worst symptom. My muscles seemed to be paralysed; while my brain—my imagination, at least—was excited in the strangest way. The most hideous and grotesque figures, the most revolting ideas, crowded my fancy; and at the same time a dreadful depression seemed to crush me with an iron hand.

Gradually the languor abated, but a dreadful nervous headache took its place and lasted until noon. I was still suffering from it when Linton called to see why I had not turned up in court.

"I'll send you a doctor," said he, as he prepared to leave me.

"You needn't mind," said I. "I feel that in spite of the headache, which almost blinds me, I am getting over it."

"What can have been the matter with you?"

"Haven't the least idea. I have not been eating or drinking anything that could hurt a baby. An egg and toast at breakfast; sandwiches and sherry—no, claret—I say, Jack, I wonder if that sherry can have hurt me? I only had half a mouthful of it, but it tasted queer."

"My dear fellow, you're talking absolute nonsense! You only took two teaspoonfuls of the stuff. If it were as deadly as all that, half the lawyers in London would be poisoned by this time—no bad thing, either."

My friend left me, but came back in an hour or two to see how I was getting on. I was better, much better; and in the afternoon I was able to rise.

Next day I went to the courts as usual, and I had not long taken my seat when Jack Linton came in and sat down beside me.

"Glad you're all right again, old man," said he. "By the way," he added suddenly, "rather an odd thing has happened, a sad thing, I should say. One of the girls who acted as barmaids downstairs was found dead in her bed yesterday morning."

A strange chill seemed to pass through my body.

"Had she been drinking any sherry?" I whispered.

"I can't tell. I only heard that she was taken ill suddenly yesterday afternoon, was sent home in a cab, and went to bed, and was found dead this morning. She lived alone, poor girl, so that no one knows exactly how or when she died."

"There will be an inquest?"

"I suppose so."

"Then I will attend and state what happened to me."

Found dead in her bed.

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"Why not make a communication to the police? It would be more effectual, as they would have all the sherry in the refreshment room analysed. And you would avoid all publicity."

I followed my friend's advice; and I afterwards learned that all the sherry which had been opened on the 10th of June had been subjected to close, scientific analysis without any foreign substance, beyond German potato spirit, being found in it. Nor did the autopsy of the body of the unfortunate waitress reveal anything. A verdict of "Death from Natural Causes" was returned.

In spite of these facts I even then entertained a strong suspicion that the poor girl's death was *not* accidental; that in some inexplicable way poison had been introduced either into my wine-glass or into the wine; and that the barmaid, having drunk the glass of wine which I had barely tasted, had suffered, as it were, in my room.

And the reader may imagine how strongly that suspicion was confirmed by a circumstance which came to my knowledge a few days later.

Through the carelessness of my laundress, a letter which had been delivered by post on the eleventh of June, the morning of my illness, dropped behind a pile of books and lay undiscovered for a fortnight. When at length it was put into my hands I found that it contained two lines of writing in a language I did not understand, and beneath them the words—"Churruckpore, June 10th, 1853."

The Hindoo name Churruckpore recalled to my memory the Hindoo who had been standing beside me on the day that had so nearly been my last. I remembered his gesture when he caught up the sleeve of his barrister's gown with his right hand, and, at the same moment, reached across me with his left, thus diverting my attention. Could he have dropped a deadly powder into my glass with his right hand in that fraction of a second? It was possible. And if so, the letter probably contained a boast, or a warning, or something in the nature of an explanation. Or was this a document actually written in 1853, two years before I was born?

I carefully copied the lines, and submitted them to a friend who knew Hindustani. He told me that the meaning was—"The hand of the avenger has once more fallen," with the name "Churruckpore," and the date.

From this it seemed clear to me that the letter had not been intended for me. No; the writer of these lines believed that when he penned them I was lying a cold, neglected corpse in my solitary bedroom in the Temple. They were meant for the eyes of my friends or relations. And they were intended to proclaim the fact that I had died, not by accident, but as a victim. It had doubtless been intended that I should be put to death on account of something that had happened some thirty years before; and, but for an accident, that intention would have been carried out.

I had escaped once; but would I escape if the attempt should be made a second time?

A shudder ran through my limbs as I realised that I was a marked man, an object of vengeance to a foe that could neither be fought nor bribed, an enemy passionless, cold, silent, and remorseless as death itself. Again and again during that summer the haunting thought recurred to me—Should I survive another Tenth of June?

I could not act. I could take no precautions, or none that I could depend upon as being of any avail. I could only await my destiny with such courage as I possessed.

(Signed) G. L. DUNDAS.

4, Plum Tree Court, Temple.
July 15th, 1883.

THE NARRATIVE.

CHAPTER I.

AT SEACOMBE TOWERS.

IT was the 23rd of May, 1884, and Geoffrey Dundas was sitting in his room at Plum-Tree Court, studying an open letter. He had well-nigh forgotten the events of the previous year. The young have short memories; to them twelve

A shudder ran through my limbs.

months are what half-a-dozen years are to men of middle life. And Dundas was in the flood-tide of existence, perpetually busy, either with men or with books; with work or with play.

He was neither rich, nor highly born, nor endowed with unusual talent; but he enjoyed life quite as much as if he had been a millionaire, or the son of a Duke, or an acknowledged genius.

He was only an ordinary young Englishman, fairly good-looking, and fairly well educated. His father had been General Sir Owen Dundas, K.C.B., and this fact lent to the young man a certain prestige, and procured him many kindly services, though it did little to improve his financial prospects.

"I wish to goodness my father had been a solicitor or an accountant," he would often say when lamenting his want of a legal "connection;" but he did not mean what he said. He was proud of his father and his father's career.

Perhaps Geoffrey's most notable characteristic was a certain self-dependence, a resourcefulness, and an ability to look after himself when placed in difficult or trying circumstances, which he had no doubt inherited from his soldier father.

The question Geoffrey was now debating with himself, as, for the third time, he read the letter before him, was whether he should leave town at the height of the season, and bury himself in a country house in Devonshire for some days.

"Of course one ought to be in town just now, when all the Courts are sitting," said Geoffrey to himself; "and I wanted to hear the debate in the House on Thursday. Then there's the polo match, too; and that tennis handicap; and I've not found time to see the pictures yet. On the other hand, I believe Sir Arthur is bored to death down there, and would take it ill if I refused to go. If only I could find out whether Leila is at home or not!"

Yes, Leila was the determining factor in the whole calculation; and her father most provokingly said not a word about her—did not even mention her name.

"Perhaps she has gone to pay a visit to some friends, and the old General simply wants me to keep him company in his solitude. Why can't he come up to town? I wonder whether, if Leila is at home, that fellow Byngham will be there? I wonder whether it's any use my going on thinking about Leila? But I needn't say that; I can't help thinking about her. I fancy it is a bad sign for me that her father does not

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A slender figure dressed in white.

mention her name in his letter. But now that I have an invitation, it would be a pity not to go."

The young man's deliberations ended as any person of judgment who had ever seen him and Leila Chetwynd together might have known they must end—in his writing a letter accepting the General's invitation.

On the appointed day he set out for Devonshire.

The General himself—a fine, tall, upright man, with a sun-tanned face, clean shaven but for a splendid white moustache, and short white hair—came to meet his guest at Torwyn, the nearest railway station. He greeted Geoffrey with a warmth that was unusual for him.

"How like you are to your father!" he exclaimed involuntarily, as he took the young man's hand, and gazed into his face.

Sir Arthur's four-wheeled dogcart, drawn by two powerful bays, was waiting outside the station. The General took the reins himself as a matter of course; and they drove off at a splendid pace.

The fairest of English counties was looking her best. Tall, lithe spruces, and silver birches in their freshest green, stood in rows by the wayside, like maidens decked for a festival. Here and there a laburnum tree by the side of a cottage gateway lighted up the road as with a torch from fairy-land; or a thorn bent beneath its load of scented blossoms; and over all the air was so pure, so keen, so fresh, that it seemed as if care, pain, sickness, languor in that region must be things unknown.

Even Geoffrey, though not as a rule a great admirer of Nature, felt the spell of the summer eve.

"This is like Paradise," he murmured, as if speaking to himself.

The General, sitting at his side, turned his clear blue eyes full upon him.

"Ay," said he, "and Paradise wasn't long without a snake, was it?"

"I hope you don't refer to me?" said Dundas laughing.

Sir Arthur only answered him by cutting one of the horses over the neck; and in the plunging which followed the General found plenty of occupation, and plenty of excuse for saying no more on the subject.

Seacombe Towers—the name was not inappropriate, if it was a little pretentious—stood on a high plateau close to the sea. On the west a thick plantation hid a ravine or "coombe," which ran up from the sea some considerable distance, and afforded a ready access to the beach. The house itself faced the sea, but there was a western front, and in it a side door leading to the hall through a conservatory which was generally used as the main entrance when the family were alone.

Near this door stood a slender figure dressed in white. Geoffrey caught sight of it as the dogcart was whirled rapidly up the avenue; and it made his heart beat fast. The General saw it, and his eyes suddenly filled with tears. A great dog of the rough St. Bernard species was struggling at her side. The dog was pulling at his chain, which the girl was holding in both hands to prevent his leaping up on the dogcart when it came to a standstill; and the great size and weight of the animal made the girl bend backwards to resist the strain.

The breeze—there was generally a breeze at Seacombe—had loosened one or two locks of her hair and blew them across her face, so that she was forced every now and then to leave hold of the chain with one hand that she might clear the hair out of her eyes. The dog seemed to be perfectly aware of this, and every time the operation was performed he dragged the girl a foot or two onwards. Geoffrey thought he had never seen a prettier picture in his life.

He jumped down from the dogcart, and Leila met his smile with a smile as frank as his own, while she offered him her hand. Her dark hair made the best of contrasts with her clear, pale complexion. There was not a touch of colour in her face except her lips. Her eyes may be best described as dark grey; they were clear, and soft, and shining—like the evening sky after a storm. The outline of her face was good, if not entitled to be called beautiful; but the charm of it lay in her mouth. Some fairy had touched it with her wand, and given it

Miss Frewin, Leila's companion and chaperon, was good-nature itself.

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that look of tenderness which one sees sometimes on the lips of a child, very seldom on the face of a grown woman. But after all, Leila Chetwynd was hardly more than a child; she was barely nineteen.

There was only time for a little ordinary talk about the weather, and Geoffrey's journey, before the dressing-bell sounded.

"How long do you mean to stay this time, Mr. Dundas?" asked Leila in all simplicity during dinner.

Her father frowned slightly. He wished that Leila would remember that she was a woman, and not be quite so familiar with her old acquaintance.

"As long as your father will keep me," he answered with a smile.

"Then I hope you won't leave us till we go to London. Haven't you heard? Papa has promised to take me to town for the fag end of the season—the middle of June to the end of July—hardly worth having, just a little better than nothing! Why he won't go before the middle of next month I cannot imagine. And it is so dismally dull here in the meantime that I hope you won't desert us till we go."

"I shall be glad if you can stay for the next fortnight, Dundas," said the General; "I daresay we shan't stay here ourselves long after that."

Dundas was surprised. He had contemplated a visit of three or four days, a week at most; and though the General's invitation was not so cordial as his daughter's, it seemed sincere enough. But as he did not feel quite sure whether he could stay away from town so long at that season, he gave a reply which "reserved his liberty of action," as the French say; and the subject dropped.

The evening passed most pleasantly. Miss Frewin, Leila's companion and chaperon, was good-nature itself; and Geoffrey managed to spend one of the happiest hours of his life in the neighbourhood of Leila's grand piano.

After he went upstairs that night he asked himself what the General's unusual friendliness could mean. Ever since his boyhood he had paid occasional visits to the Towers; for Sir Arthur was not the man to forget the son of his old friend and comrade, General Dundas. But Geoffrey knew very well that from this sort of friendliness, to accepting him for a son-in-law, was a very long step. He was quite aware that the General favoured the cause of his cousin's son, Captain Byngham.

The two young people went for a ride.

"It will come . . . on the Tenth of June."

He had expected to be asked to Seacombe Towers some time during the year, seeing that he had not been there for the previous twelve months; but he had not expected to be asked at a time when there was no other guest in the house, and when he must necessarily be thrown a great deal into Leila's society. Nor had he ever stayed at Seacombe Towers for more than a week at a time; and now he was asked to stay at least a fortnight.

"Of course Leila means nothing," said Geoffrey to himself in the solitude of his chamber. "She is as guileless as a child. But Sir Arthur is a man of the world. He must know that his daughter is a singularly attractive girl. If he asks me to spend a fortnight in his house, how can he be surprised if I fall in love with her? But last time I was here he as good as told me Captain Byngham was the chosen man—Bah! After all, Leila's hand is not her father's to dispose of as he chooses. I mean to make the most of my chances while I have them."

"My dear," said the General next morning at breakfast, "Captain Byngham says we may expect him to-morrow, and——"

Geoffrey looked at Leila, and a faint blush rose to her cheek. He felt that he would have given a thousand pounds to know what it meant. Did it mean that they were already engaged? Or was it the blush of a maiden on being told that her lover will soon be at her side? Or was it simply an indication that she was conscious of Geoffrey's questioning eyes?

Absorbed in trying to find an answer to these questions, Geoffrey did not notice that his host had not finished his sentence. Immediately afterwards Sir Arthur gathered up his letters and newspapers, and quitted the breakfast-table, leaving a cup of tea behind him untasted.

After breakfast the two young people went for a ride, attended only by a groom; and during that ride Geoffrey came to the conclusion that Leila was not engaged to her cousin.

The day passed quickly enough. Geoffrey could not forget that his rival would appear next day. After dinner the General retired to his study, and did not appear in the drawing-room till a few minutes after ten.

"Will you come into the smoking-room, Dundas?" said Sir Arthur, when the two men were left to themselves.

Geoffrey did not particularly care for talk at that moment.

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He wanted to be alone and let his thoughts busy themselves with the fair girl whose voice still lingered in his ears; but he followed his host to the smoking-room as a matter of course.

The young barrister was not one of those persons commonly called "observant," who take a pleasure in watching their neighbours like a lynx; still, even he could not help thinking that Sir Arthur seemed to have something on his mind. He fidgeted about, made one or two unsuccessful efforts to keep up conversation, and at length fell into a moody silence.

"Did it not strike you as odd," he asked suddenly, "that I should ask you to come into the country at this time of year?"

Geoffrey started and blushed a little at this question. "I thought it was very kind of you," he said.

"I think, perhaps, I ought to tell you the real reason of my asking you," said the General.

Geoffrey stared, wondering what could be coming next.

"The fact is," said the old man, with a queer look in his face, "I wanted to increase the garrison."

"To increase the garrison!" echoed Geoffrey in amazement. "Do you mean that you are in danger?"

"Yes," said the old man quietly, "we are in danger."

"Impossible!"

"It is true."

"Do you mean that you have enemies?"

"Yes."

"Enemies that can harm you living here, in your own house in England, in the nineteenth century?"

"Yes, I do."

There was a moment's silence.

"I hope you can trust me, Sir Arthur, to do my best for you and—for the family—that is, if I can be of any service."

"Yes, I can trust you."

"I do not ask what the nature of this peril may be," said Geoffrey after another pause; "but you can, perhaps, tell me when it may be expected to come upon you?"

"It will come," said the General, "if at all, on the Tenth of June."

(To be continued.)

HE woman was dead. Her face, ashen-hued and distorted, was turned upward, and Darcal, as he gazed upon it, began to understand what he had done. Perhaps, even at that moment, he began to fear the consequences of his crime. Yes, the woman was dead; there could be no doubt on that score. The grip had been too firm, and the lithe, sinewy, rage-strengthened fingers had clutched the white, soft, slender neck with a ferocity that only death could appease.

The brutality of the crime did not move Darcal so much as wonderment that his purpose had been accomplished so easily. She had scarcely struggled when his fingers closed upon her throat. She could not scream, and her gurgling sobs were smothered by the other hand of the murderer, close pressed upon the woman's mouth. Darcal was calm enough now, as he stood there, looking down into that face so cold and still: the eyes almost closed, and the lips parted as if the sleeper were trying to utter the incoherent thoughts of her dreams.

And now he wondered why he had killed her. He wanted to analyse and make clear to his understanding the motives that had impelled him to this murder. Yes, murder. He would not try to disguise or palliate the truth; and, having admitted the truth, he derived an intensity of pleasure in contemplation of his crime that can be appreciated only by those who have wantonly, or in cold blood, slain a fellow being.

Why had he killed her? That he was justified Darcal did not doubt for an instant. It was only necessary that he should collect his thoughts, arrange the details in their proper order, and trace the logic of events to find ample justification for this murder. It was not necessary that his theory of self-defence should satisfy anyone but himself, for it was impossible that anyone else should ever know who had murdered the woman, or why she was murdered. Only in the rarest instances are murderers unable to arrive at this self-justification, and Darcal was confident that his was not an exceptional case.

Going back to that troth-plighting under the apple blossoms, in that distant land where the flowers are perennial beneath skies that are for ever blue, Darcal sought for his justification and found it not, though he saw dimly through the mists of the years that followed a fateful shadow creeping athwart the sunshine of those happy hearts. Then he came to the little grey chapel where the priest gave them his blessing, and he remembered even the odour of the lilacs wafted by the warm breezes through the half-opened windows. Are those lilacs in the bosom of the dead woman's dress?

And the future—how bright it looked, and how swiftly it came to the flower-decked portals of their present; and what a miserable, crime-stained future it was, corroding the honour of the husband, corrupting the virtue of the wife. And so they parted, and went their ways, never dreaming, even then, that it would come to this.

For a time Darcal could not bring himself to a close contemplation of the incidents immediately environing the slaying of the woman. They were too sordid, too insignificant in comparison with the enormity of the event. At first he tried to justify himself by accusing the woman; but, strangely enough, that did not satisfy him—it lacked the strength of an honest judgment. There was a time, perhaps, when such an accusation would have acquitted him before all the world and in the tribunal of his own conscience—but not now. The statute of limitations had intervened to mitigate even the heinousness of her crime.

The bells of a distant steeple struck seven as Darcal softly closed the door behind him and walked down the stairs to the street. In the hurrying crowd he was safe from that human justice so frequently at variance with individual estimates of right and wrong. The hounds of the law could not track him now, and only his own soul could sit in judgment over him.

Why had he killed her? The question kept beating through his brain like a hammer on the anvil. The monotonous iteration became momentarily more painful, manifesting itself in a physical depression, as if extraneous forces were exerting their powers to oppress. Why had he killed her? Why had he killed her?

True, he had asked her for money, and she had refused him, with a sneer on her lips and the scorn of bitter contempt, distorting a face already hardened by reckless disregard of every womanly virtue. But that refusal could not be construed as a sufficient motive for what he had done.

The perfume of lilacs and roses, gushing warm from the

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open door of a florist's recalled to Darcal's memory the scene in the little grey chapel: the priest blessing their union, the coloured shadows of the stained windows, through which the sunlight streamed; and, like a ghostly melody, he seemed to hear the music of birds, singing in the magnolias—the twitter and carol of merry songsters, distinct and clear through the turmoil of the town.

Surely that shadow, just beyond the side-glance of his half-closed eye, had substance; else why did it so persistently make its presence felt? That absurd fancy again—absurd, but terrifying as an illusion that one fears may become a delusion firmly fixed in a mind capable of understanding that such fixity means insanity. An absurd fancy—and Darcal laughed.

The beggar on the crossing shuddered to hear the laugh of this man hurrying by, instinctively recognising the horror of the thoughts that provoked it—knowing, as some natures know, that the man who laughed thus, alone in the crowd, was one not at peace with himself and God—a creature to be dreaded, shunned, abhorred.

Once more Darcal stopped, and again his eyes stared into the awful gloom of this house, intently listening to hear a moan, a shriek, any sound, human or inhuman, that might break the silence that brooded where the dead woman lay, with her ashen face upturned in the darkness. Why had he returned? His intention had been flight, though he was fain to admit, on reflection, that he had no set destination for that flight, guided only by the instinct of self-preservation. Why had he come back to this scowling abode of sin and death? And as the murderer gazed at the silent house and remembered what lay within, a terror came upon him that only the outcry he dreaded would have lifted.

This time Darcal went away determined never to come back, reasoning with himself that it was not safe for a murderer to haunt the scene of his crime. He would cross the city to his lodging, where the hangman could not find him and where the vengeance of offended justice would never seek him.

Still his thoughts ran upon his motive for this murder. Still he debated with himself his reasons. Why had he killed her? Not because she had refused to give him money, but because—ah! that was the reason! He had discovered his true motive at last. How simple, how natural, what a complete and unmistakable justification!

Yes, he had found it at last, and there was relief, almost happiness, in the thought. The whole world would justify and give him sympathy. He need not fear the hangman, because they do not hang men who strangle women for that. He need not fear the reproaches of a too-exacting conscience, for this monitor accepted the justification as ample and adequate.

He could look the house squarely in the face now; he could meet its scowl with the stern consciousness of rectitude—as the executioner meets the frown of those who execrate him for his work upon those they love. He was strong in the faith of justification.

The man who came down the stairway stepped aside to let Darcal pass, but the latter paused to make inquiry.

"Have you seen her?" His voice was low, but its tone was pleasant, and the other was constrained to reply.

"Seen whom?" he asked.

"Why, my—the woman who lives—who lived here."

"No. There was no answer to my ring at the bell. The house is dark. They are out, I imagine."

"*She* is not out," said Darcal, earnestly; "let us go in."

Darcal took hold of the man's arm and gently urged him up the stairs.

They stood together in the darkness of the apartment, heavy with the odour of lilacs. They could hear the little clock on the mantelpiece ticking steadily.

"There is no one here," said Darcal's companion.

"You are mistaken," the murderer answered; "*she* is here. It is not three hours since I left her. I will show her to you."

Darcal struck a match, and gradually the yellow light pervaded the room, revealing the form of a woman outstretched upon the floor, with her face upturned. Darcal waited until the sulphur of the match had burned away, and then he lighted the gas.

Darcal and the man looked down into the woman's face. The eyes were wide open, now staring up at Darcal, and there was a sinister smile on her lips—a ghastly smile, a smile of triumph and satisfied vengeance.

"Why did you kill her?" inquired the man.

"Because—because I loved her," Darcal answered.

I.

"PITY a grass widow!" sighed Mrs. Vancouver, with a shrug of her shoulders as she turned to Lady Greyland.

"When does your husband return?"

"I cannot say; his business is keeping him longer than he anticipated. If I had known that weeks were to drag into months I should have conquered my prejudice against a sea voyage, and braved the Atlantic."

"I believe Stuart will return unexpectedly and surprise you some day. It would be just like him!" declared Lady Greyland.

"Poor dear fellow, he is longing to be back."

"I don't wonder!" replied her companion, with a critical glance at the fair woman married to her nephew Stuart.

Mrs. Vancouver was conscious of the scrutiny.

"Why do you gaze at me as though I were a vanishing point or a phantom form?"

"You are looking so wonderfully well, my dear."

"That is not surprising. I have lived the stupidest, quietest life imaginable since Stuart left, vegetating in the country, going to bed at ten, and rising at seven. My complexion is due to healthy exercise and a schoolroom diet; not, thank goodness, to the art of my maid. But now I have come to London I shall doubtless be bitten by the season's festivities, and then——"

She broke off shortly, resting her chin on the tip of her fan, while a doubtful expression stole over her face.

"You will lose the country bloom in a week if you plunge into the dissipation as recklessly as you did last year."

"The flowers must fade," laughed Mrs. Vancouver. "And I have a restless nature. It has been perfect pain to me stagnating in Wiltshire."

"You are too fond of making yourself out a butterfly. I hear you have been playing Lady Bountiful, and making Stuart's tenants adore you by a hundred acts of sympathy and kindness."

"Don't believe it," said Ray Vancouver. "If I had their children to tea occasionally, and scandalised the natives by running races in the park, it was only because I have no children of my own to play with."

"You will never learn the inestimable benefit of getting

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credit for what good you do in the world. You always have an excuse for every virtuous action."

Lady Greyland rose as she spoke.

"Thank you so much," said Mrs. Vancouver, "for dining with a deserted creature like myself. I should have been so melancholy here on the first evening, thinking of the great fathomless ocean between me and my dear boy."

She glanced at a photograph of her husband, and Lady Greyland thought she caught the sound of sobbing in her niece's voice.

"You must go everywhere with me till he is home again," she said fondly. Nevertheless, she left her sad, for Mrs. Vancouver was dissatisfied with life, and pondered deeply as she sat alone in the silent room. Thought is an unaccountable evil which attacks the mind at intervals in quite an unexpected manner.

After mentally dissecting the mysteries of Lady Greyland's teagown, which had made her look so very much slimmer than she really was, and wondering whether microbes lurked in the lips and kissing should be abolished from the face of the earth, Ray wandered back in fancy to the early days of her girlhood. Why had one face risen before her with haunting recollections just when she most wished to blot it from her memory? The face of a man years older than herself, whose will once influenced her so strongly, that had it not been for Stuart she would have linked her fate with his.

Yet her husband never knew or guessed there was anything deeper between them than "friendship," that wide word, comprising such a multitude of contradictions. They were friends still, and in one of her husband's letters she learnt he had met Kenneth Reynolds in America. She thought of the great expanse of water between her and those two men, fancying in the roar of the London traffic she could hear the noisy monotonous thunder of waves, and then the foaming water tearing down the shingle. She seemed to see its bosom heave as with the very passion of unrest, and haunted by the sense of its cruel and omnipotent strength Mrs. Vancouver went wearily to bed.

The following morning she received a letter from Lady Greyland. "Come this afternoon," it ran, "I have a surprise for you."

Ray liked a mystery, and drove to her aunt's house full of anticipation.

She entered the room in the full swing of youthful spirits. Lovers of the picturesque would have fallen down and worshipped Mrs. Vancouver, as she drew back involuntarily, in her Liberty gown and wide-brimmed hat, a tremulous smile parting her lips.

A man rose and met her gaze. In her he recognised the girl of three summers ago! The sunlight had fallen on her where she stood, touching her reddish brown hair of the tint known as Venetian, with which is generally associated sea-green eyes and a snow-white throat. There was something of an underlying fire in her expression as she turned to Lady Greyland.

"You were right," she said, "this is a surprise! I thought Mr. Reynolds was in America."

"He only returned yesterday, and as he has so lately seen Stuart I thought you would like to meet him."

"So kind of you!" she murmured extending her hand. "Well! what news of my truant husband?"

Mrs. Vancouver spoke flippantly.

"I met him at a dance given by Mrs. Graeme, a well-known lady novelist in New York. He was talking to a dowager who weighs sixteen stone, and mingles irrelevant gush and ponderous jocularity in her conversation."

"Then I need not be jealous," laughed Ray.

Kenneth looked her straight in the face but did not reply. Something in his eyes troubled her.

"Stuart seems enjoying himself at any rate," put in Lady Greyland somewhat tactlessly; "but then the Americans are noted for hospitality, and he is bound to be a favourite wherever he goes."

"It is a mistake to have a fascinating husband," declared Mrs. Vancouver, with the same forced gaiety of voice and manner.

"Did he look well?"

"Oh! in the very best of health and spirits," replied Kenneth Reynolds. His tone implied that Mr. Vancouver was not pining for his wife's presence.

"I suppose he must amuse himself, poor dear!" she said. "It would be dreadful moping in a huge hotel alone."

Her eyes were slightly averted from Kenneth's, while her smile faded. He seemed suddenly aware of her depression, and shot a kindly glance of sympathy across the delicate china cups among which Lady Greyland's slim hands were moving.

"Sugar and cream?" she asked, but Mrs. Vancouver did not reply. Unconscious of her silence the words re-echoed in her ears—"sugar and cream."

"Kenneth is like a bird of ill omen," she thought.

Once more she looked at the brocaded chairs and silver tea-tray—they were quite familiar to her, yet engrossed her attention. The chairs were rather vivid in their colouring, and she could see Kenneth's face in the tray?"

"What are you thinking of?" asked Lady Greyland.

"Nothing of any importance," replied Ray, plunging suddenly into a hundred items of gossip, such as she knew rejoiced her aunt's heart and disgusted her friend—that friend of three summers ago.

II.

THE faint suspicion which sprang to life in Ray's heart when Mr. Reynolds first spoke of her husband increased tenfold as the days wore on. She never saw him without an uncomfortable feeling that he knew more than he cared to own, and was concealing something painful yet of grave importance. Stuart's prolonged absence increased the doubts and fears for which she reproached herself every hour of the day.

Kenneth Reynold's reserve on the subject troubled her, for he seldom spoke of Mr. Vancouver, and always appeared glad to turn the conversation, at the same time endeavouring to cheer her loneliness by a hundred delicate, unobtrusive acts of kindness. If he wondered at the pallor of her cheeks, and the lines beneath her eyes, he said nothing, and for a while Ray welcomed silence gratefully. But the strain of uncertainty was telling on her, and at last his very reticence drove her to despair.

He had come to call late one afternoon, and found her seated in her favourite attitude when she had some serious subject to consider, her hands clasped, her eyes looking fixedly upwards, and her body thrown backwards in a long, low chair.

"Why are you so depressed?" he asked in his mellow voice, which seemed to invite confidence.

Mrs. Vancouver tapped her foot on the ground impatiently, while the tears sprang into her eyes. She saw in his question the possibility of ending her horrible speculations on Stuart's absence. One moment she forced herself to take a hopeful view of life, making good resolutions, and struggling vainly to think no evil. But "Doubt" with its black whispers, renewed the attack, and Ray found herself laying her harassed mind bare before this man, and telling him her secret thoughts which, in more peaceful moments, she would have given her soul to recall.

When first she spoke to him her face looked slightly worn with fatigue in the twilight, but as he rose to leave her it was livid and haggard. She had wrung the cruel truth from his lips, and watched her idol totter from his lofty pedestal, leaving uncovered the feet of clay. Yet still she could hardly believe the cruel rumour that dispelled her girlish illusions.

That Stuart could have wearied of her, and so far forgotten his marriage vows as to sin irretrievably, seemed too hideous and impossible. She had drawn the truth from Kenneth's unwilling lips, though his wish to spare her pain made the task a hard one. The cruel facts lay before her in crude incredible plainness, while she sat staring in hopeless apathy.

"What can I do?" she asked, in a low hollow voice.

"I hardly know how to advise you," he murmured, "but of course you would never go to America yourself and discover——"

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"The truth!" she ejaculated, "why not? How can I stay here with this cloud upon my life?"

"Whatever you decide on is sure to be right," he replied. "All that I have told you is, so far as it is possible for anyone to speak with certainty, perfectly true. God grant that you may find it otherwise."

Ray determined upon her plan of action quickly, restraining from any comments on the accusations against her husband, and simply stating her intention of leaving England by the next mail.

"You have an iron will—an iron nerve," said Kenneth Reynolds with admiring wonder. "But you are too young and beautiful to travel alone unprotected, and arrive friendless in a strange country." A look of fear crept into her eyes as she thought of the unknown future.

"Alone!" The word held terrors innumerable.

"By the next mail, did you say?" he asked.

She bowed her head.

"I have some American friends crossing at that time—a lady with two daughters. I could give you an introduction."

Mrs. Vancouver tried to express her thanks.

"I am returning to New York at the beginning of next month," he continued; "but if you decide finally upon this step, I can go by the same mail, and be on the spot if you should need me. Let me take all responsibility off your hands, book your passage, and place you under the care of my friends."

"You are too good," she stammered, "but I would rather no one knew my movements."

"No one in England, naturally. They would worry you with ceaseless questions, and, for the time being, your secret must be kept closely. But my friends would know nothing, and I will do everything in my power to further your comfort and convenience."

Again she thanked him falteringly, and held out her hand. He pressed it fervently as he bade her good-bye.

The door closed. Alone she stood, for all the world meant but that one word to her then. Her heart's uneven beating seemed to cease suddenly, while the stillness closed round her motionless figure as a wall entombing life. For a single second she was back in the past, dreaming a girl's fancies, hoping a girl's hopes. Then the weary vigil of the woman who has loved and been awakened commenced, and Ray laughed ironically, the jealous anger and bitter resentment in her heart burnt to ashes of despair.

III.

MRS. VANCOUVER was standing in the old-fashioned hall of her country house, speaking to Kenneth Reynolds.

"I have arranged everything for a long absence," she said. "Heaven knows when I may set foot in the old home again! Yet no one has any idea I am leaving England to-morrow, except yourself."

"That is well. Have you received the letter you were expecting from Stuart?"

"No; he cannot have written by this mail. Till now he has kept up the farce."

Her face grew hard, and she paced the floor with the restlessness of some untamable creature.

"I am afraid you were annoyed with me for coming down to-day, but I was most anxious to see you."

"What does it matter; what does *anything* matter?"

"To-night you sleep in town?"

"Yes; I am going up by the afternoon train."

"So am I, and will drive with you to the station if you have no objection."

Mrs. Vancouver consented reluctantly.

As the sound of wheels approached, she looked with burning eyes at the dog-cart in which she had so often driven her husband, feeling that Kenneth's presence was an intrusion. But Kenneth had known well how to make himself necessary to her in those days of misery, when from sheer weakness she felt unable to enter into mortal combat against fate without the strong hand of a clever man. From his point of view women were anomalies, their hearts outweighed their brains, and even the most reasonable lost their heads in times of emergency. Without her knowledge, he had studied Ray's nature, and could influence it at will.

"This is all so like a bad dream," she said, gathering up the reins, and averting her head from Kenneth as he sprang to her side. She was vexed that his presence brought her the slightest comfort.

"Strained to a certain point feeling becomes numbness," he said, as though reading her thoughts.

He looked at the darkly circled eyes, and the lips closed in a hard line. What would he not have given to see them smile? Hardly had the thought passed through his mind than they parted involuntarily.

"Why do you smile?" he whispered.

The colour rose to her cheeks, while she flashed on him a look of surprise.

"I don't know," she replied. "I felt compelled." Her fingers seemed to relax their firm hold on the horse, and a sensation of faintness crept over her. The fresh young mare plunged forward, some children throwing stones startling her at that very moment.

At first Ray hardly noticed what had happened till she was conscious of the swift rush of air in her face. On—on—they dashed, defiance in the mare's snorting nostrils, and vice in her wild eyes. Mrs. Vancouver rose to her feet, realising she had lost control, and pulling at the reins with a mighty effort. Seeing the danger Kenneth added his strength to hers. A sudden snap—a cry from the woman—a groan from the man—and they grasped the broken leather in mute horror and amazement!

"Save me!" she cried. "For pity's sake save me!"

Her words woke him to fresh action. With a bound he leapt from the swaying cart straight on to the horse's back, and groped for the broken reins flapping in the wind. For a second she watched him grasp the harness, then roll to the ground half-caught in a loose rein, which dragged him under the clattering hoofs of the infuriated beast.

Blind, dumb, and deaf with horror, she still clung to the seat, dimly seeing a tall figure in the road that darted forward and wrestled with the horse's head. The rapid motion ceased, and with it the unbearable throbbing of her temples, as she sprang thankfully from her perilous position to the safe, firm earth. Two strong arms clasped her tremblingly—fervently, and Ray was sobbing on her husband's breast.

"Oh! My darling! My darling! Are you hurt?"

The words were simple enough, but they rang out in agonised intensity.

"No," she gasped. "No! But what of him?" pointing to the senseless figure of a man lying face downwards in the mud of the country road.

Stuart raised the heavy body and looked long into the blood-stained face.

"Poor fellow," he murmured compassionately. "I am afraid he is terribly injured, and you were coming to meet me too. If only you had not received my letter in time! Stay with him, Ray, while I run for a doctor. Here, help me to get him to the bank and hold his forehead—so."

"Run quickly, dear," she murmured. "There may not be much time."

Too bewildered to wonder at her husband's re-appearance, Ray sat half-dazed under the sweet-smelling hedge. Kenneth moved faintly and opened his eyes.

"What has happened?" he asked.

"Stuart is here—Stuart," she said.

"*Stuart!*" he cried, trying to raise himself, but sinking back with a moan.

"Ray," he whispered, "bend down, I am dying, but I *must* speak. Can you hear me?"

"Yes, yes."

"It was all a lie, Ray,—that—that story against your husband. I was scheming to get you away—alone—with me. I—I loved you—forgive——"

The words came singly and faintly on the summer air, "Forgive!"

He murmured them again and again as the life ebbed slowly out of vein and pulse, and a miserable sinner sank down—down—down into deep waters.

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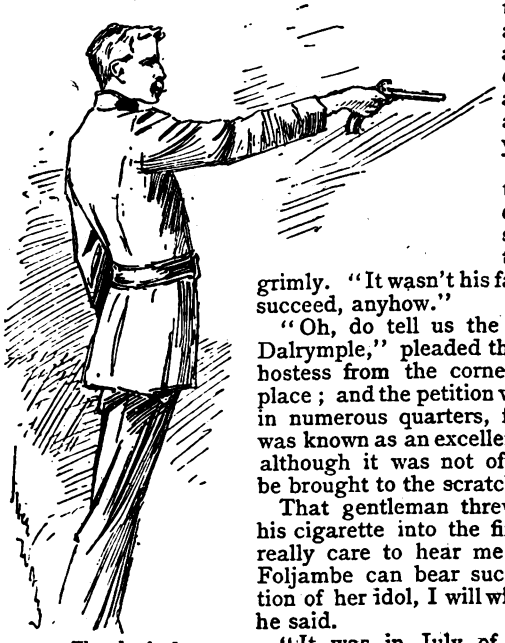
TOLD BY THE MAJOR.

THE morning after the dance at Arden Tower last month was a drencher, and no mistake; there was no getting out of doors except under the penalty of the most complete soaking. Perhaps one's natural disinclination to face the unpropitious elements was heightened by that feeling of comfortable lassitude which seems invariably to impregnate the mental atmosphere of a country house on the morrow of a Terpsichorean festival; anyhow, as one by one the house party, after a late breakfast, sauntered into the old oak-paneled central hall, with its huge open hearth, on which the great logs blazed cheerfully with many a crackle and splutter, each dropped lazily into a comfortable arm-chair, and, after one glance at the rain-blurred windows, settled down resignedly to a quiet morning indoors, with hardly a regretful thought in the direction of their host's well-stocked coverts, or his amply-furnished stables.

"Well," said Miss Foljambe—a pretty, sparkling brunette, and an enthusiastic votary of Diana—"I don't care. He may be as foolishly in love with that handsome old wife of his as you assert, Mr. Elton; but if a tithe of the young men of the present day were destined in after-life to turn into such sweet, unselfish, kind-hearted old gentlemen as General Fordyce, it would be a better look-out for the world at large than it is now. My only wonder is how ever he got on in his profession; I cannot understand his bringing himself to harm any living creature."

"They would have told you a different tale in India thirty years ago, Miss Foljambe," remarked a tall, dark man seated nearly in the centre of the group. "It was before my time, of course, but even now, 'Fordyce' is a name that carries a terrible meaning to many a native. He had totted up a pretty heavy score to his own bat before 1859 came to an end. Did you ever hear how he came to shoot his wife?"

"Shoot his wife! Major Dalrymple," exclaimed the startled young lady. "Good gracious! what do you mean? My dear old General kill a woman? He *couldn't* do such a horrible thing! You are laughing at me; but I don't think it a nice joke at all, I can tell you."



Then he fired.

"Well, he tried hard enough to do so," replied the Major, grimly. "It wasn't his fault he didn't succeed, anyhow."

"Oh, do tell us the story, Major Dalrymple," pleaded the voice of his hostess from the corner of the fireplace; and the petition was re-echoed in numerous quarters, for the Major was known as an excellent *raconteur*, although it was not often he could be brought to the scratch.

That gentleman threw the end of his cigarette into the fire. "If you really care to hear me, and if Miss Foljambe can bear such a desecration of her idol, I will with pleasure," he said.

"It was in July of that terrible year 1857, the year that will be remembered in many an English and Indian home with bitterest sorrow—ay, and with heartfelt pride, too. The hideous fate of hundreds of English women and children, the almost superhuman gallantry of the handful of British troops against the overwhelming hordes of mutinous demons of cruelty, will never be forgotten while history lives. All the details of that fearful struggle we shall never know. Many a little garrison of now almost forgotten posts fought like heroes, though their ultimate annihilation leaves no record of the deeds that would have ranked beside those of the defenders and rescuers of Lucknow had any living creature survived to tell the tale.

"Among the miniature sieges, these mad despairing conflicts, where men fought with the reckless courage of desperation to save those they loved from a doom too hideous to bear thinking of, was the one which is the scene of my little story.

"Of the little garrison of Beinapoor, eight hours after the first attack of the mutineers, who thirsted to avenge their imaginary wrongs and glut their bestial ferocity on that devoted handful of Europeans, there remained only fifteen men of the A Company of the 120th Regiment, Captain Gerald Fordyce, and half-a-dozen native servants who had been faithful to their salt.

"Inch by inch, they had been driven from one line of defence to another, every hour bearing its token to the fury of the struggle in the shape of dead or dying comrades; and now nothing was left for them but to make their last hopeless stand in the open central court of the large building which had served as a barrack for the detachment. There was hardly a cartridge left of their little store of ammunition, and only a few feeble barricades interposed between them and their yelling assailants. Many of the small band were wounded, and, even as they stood there, awaiting their inevitable doom, but prepared to sell their lives as dearly as brave men may, some of their number dropped helpless and feeble to the ground, exhausted by fatigue and loss of blood.

"Saddest sight of all was the white, drawn face of a fair young girl, who stood in their midst, clasping with both slender hands the arm of Gerald Fordyce as she looked up into his eyes with a mute but terrible appeal in her own. It was the face of his bride of a few short weeks.

"'You have *one* cartridge left in your revolver, Gerald,' she said in a hoarse whisper. 'I claim it. I *must* not fall into their hands alive, remember. You can save me from that horror, at least. Oh, my darling, my darling! swear to me by the love we bear each other that it shall be as I ask. Even death from your dear hand——.'

"She ceased, and a terrible shudder shook his strong frame from head to foot as he looked down into those deep, loving, appealing eyes, his own wild with the torture of that awful choice. Then he turned away and hid his face from her, as the fate of the woman he loved so fondly at the hands of the shrieking, bloodthirsty throng that clamoured at the barricades pictured itself to his imagination.

"'Promise me, Gerald,' she repeated. 'When all hope is gone and the last moment comes—promise!'

"'I promise, love,' he said at last, in so low a whisper that it almost failed to reach her ears. 'I swear it.'

"Then he turned to his men with a few words of praise and encouragement—but, alas! what room was left for hope now?

"They had not long to wait. A very few minutes sufficed for the demolition of the feeble obstructions to the mutineers' progress. A crash or two, some dropping shots, and then with frantic yells of triumph that fiendish crew swarmed into the court.

"The moment had come. Gerald Fordyce strained his wife

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in his arms, close, close, and covered her face with mad, despairing kisses; then he stood off a few paces and levelled the revolver at that beloved head.

"'Ah! no,' she cried, with a woman's terror of disfigurement. 'Not my face, Gerald! My heart—here!'

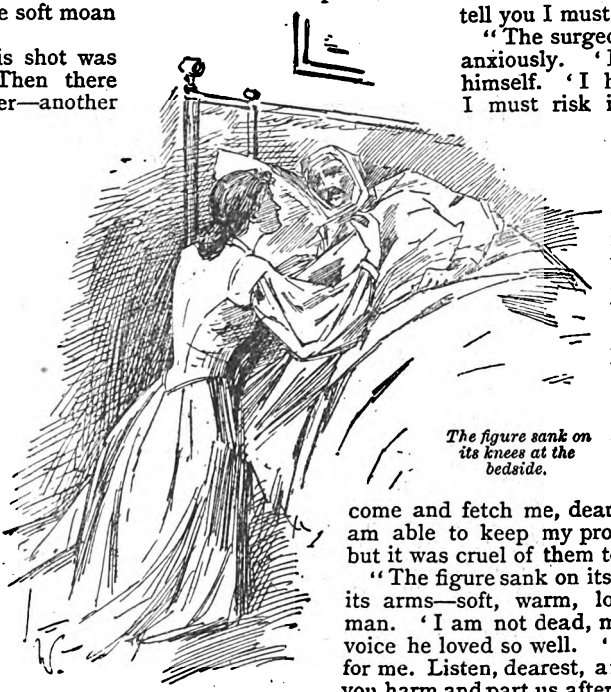
"He changed his aim. 'I shall not be long after you,' he muttered. 'Farewell, Muriel.'

"Then he fired, and with a little soft moan she fell at his feet.

"Hark! What was that? His shot was echoed by a volley outside. Then there came the sound of a British cheer—another—and yet another.

"Captain Fordyce threw up his hands in frantic horror. 'Rescued!' he cried, and his voice rang with intolerable agony. 'Oh, God! what have I done? Too late—too late!'

"Then the steel waved around his head, and, silent despair on his white, set features, he rushed at the mob of sepoys in front of him, determined to rejoin in death the woman he had slain.



The figure sank on its knees at the bedside.

"Many weeks have elapsed, and a surgeon is bending anxiously over a little cot in the temporary improvised hospital at Beinapoor. 'By the Lord Harry! he's pulled through after all,' mutters the gallant medico to himself as the patient's eyes slowly opened, and with a feeble and totally ineffectual effort to raise himself he sinks back again on the pillows, his head and limbs one complicated mass of bandages. 'I believe he's conscious at last.'

"Gerald Fordyce looked about him. 'What is all this?' he whispered faintly. 'Where am I?'

"'On the high road to recovery, I hope, my dear fellow,' is the cheerful reply. 'It's been the deuce and all to keep the life in you, but I've succeeded somehow. You must keep perfectly quiet—do you hear?—perfectly quiet, or you'll slip through my fingers after all.'

"Gradually recollection came back to the sorely wounded man, but with recollection came, alas! despair.

"'Life?' he murmured feebly, while a look of horror gathered on his features. 'Why could you not let me die in peace? Life? And Muriel dead by my hand. Let me be. I tell you I must die—I *will* die.'

"The surgeon looked at him attentively and anxiously. 'I had forgotten that,' he said to himself. 'I had forgotten. Well, I suppose I must risk it. The shock *may* kill him, but it is his only chance. If he goes on like this he will die before sunset to a certainty.'

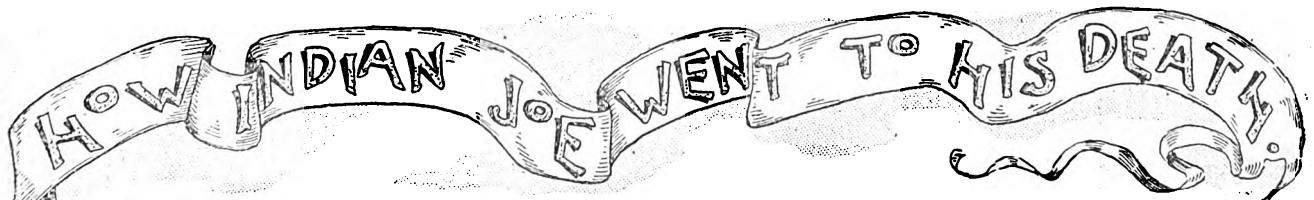
"Then he turned and beckoned to a figure at the other end of the room—a figure that rose, trembling with overpowering anxiety, and approached the cot in obedience to his summons.

"'You must be calm,' he whispered. 'Be a brave girl and we shall save him yet.'

"Captain Fordyce turned his poor bandaged face and saw the figure standing beside him. 'Muriel!' he whispered faintly. 'Muriel! How good of you to come and fetch me, dear. I shan't be long now before I am able to keep my promise. They meant it for the best, but it was cruel of them to try and keep me from you.'

"The figure sank on its knees at the bedside and wreathed its arms—soft, warm, loving arms—around the wounded man. 'I am not dead, my darling,' came to his ear in the voice he loved so well. 'You must live, Gerald—not die—for me. Listen, dearest, and be very, very quiet, or it may do you harm and part us after all. I am afraid you are a very bad shot, Gerald, even at so short a distance, for you only wounded me when you fired. They cured me a week ago, and I am strong and well again, and able to nurse you. See! Lay your poor battered head here, my husband, and rest. Oh, Gerald! I am so happy.'

"And that, Miss Foljambe, was how your pet General came to shoot his wife," concluded the Major.



ONE night, on coming to my tent from my claim in the gulch, I found the following note, scrawled on the back of a blank location notice, sticking in a cleft stick in front of the tent:—

"Git yer hoss an gun an come down to the store az soon az yer git this. Biznes of importance. COMMITTEE."

I knew what it meant, an all-night ride—possibly several days and nights—so I set about getting my supper and frying an extra quantity of bacon. Supper over, I wrapped the surplus bacon and a few squares of pilot bread in a bandana, tied it with a canteen to the saddle, and fastened down the tent fly. Then, taking up my rifle and saddle, I went to where my horse was picketed, and, saddling, was soon at the store, some three-quarters of a mile down the gulch.

The "store" was only a big wall tent at the forks of the cañon, and the stock consisted only of rough wearing apparel for miners, coffee, sugar, flour, pilot bread, bacon, frijoles (beans), tobacco, and a few kegs of whiskey, all packed into the camp on burros. A group of miners, all armed and some mounted, were gathered about the front of the tent; while to one side lay the figure of a man, the upper part of his body covered with a blanket.

"What's the trouble, boys?" I asked, as I rode up.

Two or three jerked their thumbs in the direction of the blanketed figure.

"Who is it?"

"Albany."

Albany was a man from New York State and a native of its capital, upon whose beauties and wealth he was always descanting and planning what he would do on his return there after having "made his pile." This had earned for him the

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sobriquet of "Albany." No one knew his other name, or if they had it was forgotten, and "Albany" answered the purpose as well as Tom Jones or John Smith.

I dismounted, and, going to the prostrate figure, turned back the blanket. Yes, it was Albany. His skull was crushed in a fearful manner, and his hair and the lower part of his beard matted with congealed blood. The boys had washed the grime and blood from his face in order to recognise the features.

"Who did it?"

"Dunno, unless 'twas Injun Joe: he's the only man missin' from camp. Jimson an' Kaintuck foun' Albany a layin' in front ov his tent with his head busted open. His hoss was gone, an' the tent had been ransacked, an' his gun, best clo'es, an' a lot ov grub took. Jimson come back an' got a hoss an' they brought him down here; then they started out to give the word while some ov the boys went up to fin' the trail.

"They's a lot ov barefooted tracks aroun', an' some ov 'em's made in the blood wha' his head laid, but none lead away. That don't go fer nothin' though, 'cause Albany's shoes is gone. They foun' the trail ov the hoss, an' it led over the hog back, down Toughnut gulch, in Coyote Pass, an' out on the desert towards t'other mountains. It pinted towards Stinkin' Wells. He's got purty nigh twelve hours start, an'll prob'ly camp thar to-night, makin' Mule Spring to-morrer night."

During this brief statement others had come up, until all the miners in the camp, something less than one hundred, were present. According to the custom we divided into five groups, and a slip of paper for every man in each group was thrown into a hat. On one slip in each hat was written "Go"; the others were blank. The men drawing the "Go" slips formed the vigilance committee to accompany the captain on the pursuit. I drew a "Go."

The captain gave orders to have all of Albany's camp outfit brought down to the store, and after adding to our scant supplies we filled our canteens at the spring, and filed away down the gulch to take up the trail at the foot of Coyote Pass.

In the dim light we discerned the hoofprints of the horse, evidently riding at a gallop and headed directly for Stinking Wells, the next water-hole. Paying no more attention to the trail, we rode away into the desert night straight for the wells. Indian Joe was a half-breed, who never acknowledged his tribal origin, but drifted about from one mining camp to another, picking up a precarious livelihood.

He was not known as a bad Indian, could be safely trusted with any message or to do any errand, and no miner where he was known would object to giving a meal, or several of them, if necessary. In fact, he was good-natured and harmless as Indians go, and it seemed almost impossible that he could have committed so foul a crime, yet the circumstantial evidence was too strong to admit of doubt.

It was early dawn when we rode up to the few cotton woods that surrounded the wells, or more properly the "sink" of tepid water. There was evidence of a recent camp, and down under the ashes were two or three half-dead coals, showing that the camp had been abandoned several hours before. We had breakfasted in the saddle, and after a brief council we decided to camp there for the day.

The trail of our quarry led straight for Mule Spring, in the mountains, miles away across that level stretch of desert. He had the advantage in knowing that pursuit could come but from one direction. If he had reached the mountains he would have no difficulty in seeing us far out on that level, and by abandoning his horse he could safely laugh at his pursuers. We figured it out that he would reach Mule Spring possibly that night, and would camp there. By travelling at night we would not only avoid the heat and the chance of being seen, but make more rapid progress, and by hard riding hope to reach the spring before he broke camp in the morning.

The sun had been up an hour as we began the ascent of a "hog back," beyond which in the cañon below was Mule Spring. A noise in the bushes to the right attracted our attention; there browsing on the leaves was Albany's horse.

There was no mistaking the raw-boned pinto, with the peculiarly blazed face. The saddle had been removed, and a lariat around his neck picketed him to the bushes. Indian Joe was still in camp at the spring, but why picket his horse away off here? We would soon know.

As we spurred our jaded horses up the ridge, a scattering volley of rifle shots was fired from somewhere over the cañon, and little clouds of dust were knocked up near a heap of rocks on the summit of the ridge. A puff of bluish white smoke arose from among the boulders, and the report of a single shot came down to us on the morning air.

As we neared the top we dismounted and ran, in a stooping posture, up the rocks, our rifles ready. Indian Joe turned from watching the cañon below, between two boulders, a grim smile on his swarthy face, his white teeth showing like a wolf's through his scraggy black moustache.

"Buenos, dias, amigos. You have ridden hard and well."

"You air our prisoner, Joe," said the captain.

"Bueno. Take me away from here and I will thank you, señor."

"What's the trouble?"

"Apache Kid and a dozen of his cowardly coyotes are on the other side of the cañon; they were fifteen," and again that grim smile passed over his face.

"But you air a Injun; what are they after you for?"

"Yes, but, gracias a Dios, I am not an Apache. Besides, have I not a gun, cartridges, and a horse? I picketed my horse below there in the bushes last night and made my camp here among the rocks to watch for your approach, my amigos, and was awake long before the day. As the night went deeper into the cañon I saw about the spring Kid and his band. At the same time they found my trail and that of the horse, and followed it straight for the rocks, but not far. Two lie below us at the foot of the hill; on the rocks across yonder you may see another."

Hardly had he finished when another scattering volley came from the cliffs opposite; the bullets, glancing from the rocks, went singing away in other directions. With an oath, Jimson laid aside his rifle and clasped his left forearm with his right hand. Turning back the sleeve of his rough woollen shirt, we found a jagged hole in the flesh, torn by a glancing bullet. With part of the water left in Joe's canteen we moistened a spot in the dry earth, and, plastering the wound with mud, bandaged it with the bandana from around his neck.

Then we flattened ourselves behind the rocks and waited. We were in for a fight, that was evident. The murderous renegade, Kid, was not the sort to retreat before our small force, leaving his three dead unavenged. It was useless for us to try to escape; our horses were tired out, while his were fresh. He knew that his single enemy had been reinforced, but our thirsty horses having already crossed the divide to the spring told him how small the force was.

On the opposite side we occasionally caught sight of a red blanket inviting a shot, which was replied to from a dozen seemingly inaccessible places. "There's only one thing to do," said the captain. "We've got ter stay here an' try ter keep 'em off tel night, an' then make a sneak fer camp, pervidin' they don't git our hosses." However, the latter had already drunk their fill, and were coming back over the hog back to graze.

As the day wore on the sun's power increased, and beat down upon us with terrible force. The rocks were blistering hot, and the heat radiated from them with scorching effect. Our thirst grew intolerable.

Our canteens had been emptied during the night ride, and Joe's contained less than a half-pint, which we carefully treasured against an emergency. There was not a bush or weed for shade among the boulders, nothing but the blistering rocks and the hot, dry earth.

Somewhere about noon Kaintuck carelessly exposed his shoulder for a moment, and had it badly cut by a bullet. The mud poultice required for the wound took the last of the water in Joe's canteen. By three o'clock in the afternoon the wounded men were almost crazed for water, which we could see purling about the rocks in the bottom of the cañon less

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than one hundred yards below, and the sight only increased the thirst of all.

Joe was the only man who did not complain, but lay flat on his stomach motionless, save when he lowered his head to glance between the sights of his rifle, or to throw another cartridge into the barrel.

There was absolutely no shelter in the cañon by which the spring could be reached. Nothing but the bare, brown hill-side, the sandy bed of the cañon strewn with small boulders, the spring, and one hundred yards beyond the cliffs with death lurking at every point of vantage. A horned toad could not have hopped unseen at any spot in the entire distance.

"I've got ter hev some water," muttered Jimson between his teeth.

Joe turned his head.

"There is a spring a mile or two up the cañon," he said to the captain. "I can take the canteens, and, by slipping back down the hill, can go and come with water in less than an hour."

The captain grinned sarcastically. "Putty good scheme, Joe, but 'twon't work. We've got you, an' we're all goin' ter see this thing through tergether." Joe silently turned his face back to the crevice between the boulders and resumed his watch.

An hour passed. Picking up a canteen, Kaintuck, crazed with thirst, half started to his feet, but was jerked down by the captain just in time to escape a volley.

"Whar you goin'!"

"I've got ter hav some water, an' I'm goin' ter the spring," replied Kaintuck, struggling to free his unwounded shoulder from the firm grip.

"No, señor, I will go."

Kaintuck stopped struggling, and we gazed at Joe in surprise. "It air almost sure death," at last said the captain.

Joe looked him square in the eyes for an instant, then shrugged his shoulders. "Yes, señor;" but we understood. Taking four canteens, he tied two cartridges about the neck of each. "I will throw the canteens in the spring, the cartridges will pull the mouths below the water; while they are filling I will try to keep them from being hit. You must keep up a constant firing and hope for my return."

As he arose to his knees he said, "I will tell you the truth. I killed Albany. I wanted tobacco; he refused me; we were both drunk. I went to take the tobacco, and he struck me; I knocked him down, and he drew his revolver; but I struck him with a club before he could shoot. The sight of his blood maddened me, and—you know the rest." He gathered up the straps of the canteens. "I am going. Will you say good-bye?" Silently each man extended his hand, but the copper-coloured one was the steadiest of the lot.

Crouching, he sprang over the barricade of boulders with an "*Adios, amigos,*" and went leaping like a mountain lion down the bare slope. He was at the spring before the Apaches had recovered from their suprise. Throwing the canteens in the water, he began a series of gyrations about the spring, his steps timed by some weird song which we did not understand, but which evidently maddened the Apaches, who at once began a rapid fire on the dancer. Some paid dearly for the reckless exposure of their persons.

In a few moments Joe made a sweep with his hands and came bounding back up the slope, two canteens in each hand. We were too much excited to continue our fusillade into the cliffs beyond. With every nerve strained and breath suspended we lay there and watched every step of that dark-skinned figure running through the hail of death for our lives and his. On he staggers; another crash from the rifles; down he goes, struggles to rise, but fails, and holding the canteens upright tries to drag himself towards us. There was a clatter among the rocks as rifles were cast aside, and, forgetting their thirst and wounds, six men leaped over the boulders and ran to the fallen Indian, who, gasping on the hillside, still held the canteens so that the water would not spill.

Four of us grabbed him in our arms, Jimson and Kaintuck took the canteens, and we ran to the rocks. As we did so there was a chorus of yells from the cliffs, and the number of shots seemed redoubled, but we gained the shelter of our barricade unhurt, and laid our burden down tenderly.

"——*El agua—did—you*——." We held a canteen to his lips, but he turned away his head. "No—*muy poco* (very little)—save it."

There was absolutely no hope for him. He had been literally shot to pieces. His right arm and shoulder were shattered; another bullet had struck him in the kidneys, and two more had gone straight through him, from back to front. He lay there gasping for a few moments, then suddenly raised himself on his left elbow, tried to speak, his limbs straightened convulsively, and—Albany was avenged.

We moved the body to one side, out of the way. The captain picked up a canteen and, removing his hat, bowed his bared head towards Joe in silent acknowledgment, and after drinking passed the canteen. Having satisfied our thirst we took up our rifles, and the monotonous firing continued.

"Tan-a-ra, tan-a-ra, tan-a-ra," came the clear notes of a bugle down the gulch, just after a volley, and a squad of troops galloped round a bend in the cañon on the trail of the renegade Kid. Then there was a scattering on the cliffs, and we had our innings at the scurrying Indians.

"The surgeon is with the ambulance two miles below if you need him!" yelled the lieutenant in command, as dismounting the squad he took to the mountains in pursuit. We went down to the spring and waited for the ambulance to come up. Our captain borrowed a pick and shovel, and while the surgeon dressed the wounds of Jimson and Kaintuck the rest of us dug a grave for Joe among the rocks were he died.

It was nearly finished when the surgeon and our two comrades came up. "That's right, dig it deep; I see he is an Indian," said the surgeon. The captain straightened up in the grave, a reproving look on the face. "Yes, sir, he air only a Injun, but he died like a man."

Wrapping Joe in his blankets, we lowered his stiffening body into the grave with our lariats. Then we stood silent and gazed at the captain. He thought for a moment, and, removing his old weather-beaten hat, said:

"I dunno what ter say, boys, but I've heerd ur read som'ers that greater love hath no man than this."

Then we filled the grave, heaped it round with boulders to protect it from the coyotes, and, picking up our rifles, turned to depart. But evidently a thought of other days came over our old captain, for he paused, his blue-shirted figure straightened to its full height, and the heels of his rough mining boots came together with a chug. "Halt!" One look at him, and at least four of the party knew what was coming. "'Tention, squad! Ready! Fire!" and a soldier's last salute rang out on the evening air. Then we started back for camp across that weary stretch of desert.

Now, whenever I receive a word from the "committee," I see a bare, brown hill-top, and on its summit a rounded heap of stones, from which little clouds of bluish-white smoke are slowly drifting.

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BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

THE OUTLAWS OF THE AIR.

By GEORGE GRIFFITH,

Author of "The Angel of the Revolution," "Syren of the Skies," &c.

THE allotted forty-eight hours passed and no answer came back. As the forty-eighth struck, the two fleets of twenty-four vessels each, headed as before by the *War-Hawk* and *Volante*, rose into the air from Hyde Park and winged their way at a hundred miles an hour, the former to St. Petersburg and the latter to Paris. Before the last extremities were resorted to a second message was delivered to each city, repeating the terms of the former with the additional intimation that the indemnity would be increased a hundred millions for every day of delay and that the bombardment would begin within an hour.

But before a quarter of the hour was up both cities were in a state of utter panic and disorder. The terrible experiences, still fresh in the popular mind, of what the Anarchists had done under similar circumstances, made the mere sight of the air-ships, circling slowly in small divisions over the cities, with their guns pointing downwards, ahead, and astern, and the muzzles of the Maxims peeping from the port-holes in their broadsides, sufficient to drive the inhabitants into a frenzy of fear which made it impossible for the authorities to control them.

Vast throngs half mad with fear filled the streets and squares, besieging the Government buildings and demanding surrender on any terms, since absolutely certain destruction was the only alternative to it. But the authorities in both St. Petersburg and Paris could do nothing without the consent of the Tsar and the President, and the Tsar was at Posen preparing for an advance on Berlin, while the President was at Strassburg inspecting the now triumphant army of the Rhine which had driven the Germans out of Alsace and Lorraine.

Telegrams had been despatched to both on the first appearance of the air-ships, and the reply to the one from Paris was received just as the hour was expiring. Then a war balloon with a white flag flying from the car rose from the Garden of the Tuilleries; the *Volante* sank down to meet it, also flying a white flag, and Adams had a brief interview with the General in command of the city, who had ascended to meet him. The General informed him that the President had communicated with the Tsar, and that both refused to comply with the demand of the Syndicate. It was, therefore, impossible for Paris to make terms for France.

"Very well," said Adams. "Then I will spare Paris for the present, as it is helpless; but the President shall learn the cost of his refusal in Strassburg, and if he then persists Paris must prepare for its fate, for we are determined to bring the war to an end at any price."

Three hours later the fleet ranged itself in five divisions over the ancient city of Strassburg, which was thronged with troops in the full flush of victory. No warning was given this time, for it had already been telegraphed from Paris. The moment the ships were in position the work of death began.

It was short, sharp, and terrible. The streets were swept with incessant storms of Maxim bullets, and shells began bursting in fifty parts of the city at once. The air-ships flew to and fro far beyond the range of terrestial weapons, and in an hour the city lay little better than one vast shambles under the hurricane of death and destruction that had swept over it. At the end of an hour a white flag was hauled up the spire of the Cathedral, and the firing instantly ceased.

The *Volante* descended, and when she rose again, half-an-hour after, Adams had in his pocket the written consent of the President to an armistice of ten days between France and Britain, during which terms of peace were to be arranged. He then took his fleet back to London, replenished his fuel and ammunition, and the next morning he was far on his way to Posen and St. Petersburg to form a junction with the other fleets in case the Tsar had not consented to the terms accepted by his ally.

At Posen he found the whole Russian force, amounting to more than a million and a half of men, beginning the advance on Berlin under cover of a fleet of a hundred aerostats similar to those which Renault had destroyed over the Baltic. He took in the situation at a glance, and at once flew the signal to engage.

It was in vain that the huge, slow-moving aerostats tried first to cope with, and then to escape from, the agile cruisers of the air. One after another they were blown up by the shells, or sent, riddled and crippled, to the earth. When half of them had been destroyed, the second division of the Syndicate's fleet appeared on the scene of action from St. Petersburg, which had been spared as Paris had been, and for the same reasons.

The combined squadrons made very short work of the remainder, and as the last one vanished in a mist of flame a message was dropped to the earth calling upon the Tsar, who had watched the destruction of his aerial fleet in impotent rage, to stop his advance and accept the same terms that France had accepted. If within half an hour a white flag in token of consent was not upon his head-quarters the forces of the Syndicate would co-operate with the British and German armies before Berlin, and a hundred millions a day would be added to the indemnity until he surrendered. If in despite of this the war was prolonged for more than a week his head-quarters would be destroyed and himself put to death.

The half-hour passed and no white flag appeared; so, without firing another shot, the two squadrons turned westward in the direction of Berlin and the same evening formed a junction with the allied British and German forces. Three days later the final battle of the war was fought. Although the Russians considerably out-numbered the Allies, the loss of the aerostats on the one side and the presence of the air-ships on the other, made the issue a foregone conclusion from the first.

The *Voyageur* and two other air-ships had been constantly employed bringing fresh fuel and ammunition from London, and so the fleet was able to go fully equipped into the fight. Before their first assault had lasted half an hour the Russian commanders found it utterly impossible to keep even their best troops steady under the rain of shells, bombs, and machine-gun bullets that was hurled upon them from the sky. Wherever a bomb or a shell burst they broke and ran like so many sheep.

The British and German commanders were kept constantly informed of the position of the Russian forces and the havoc that was being wrought upon them, and when the confusion in the Russian ranks was at its height, the allied armies advanced in perfect order upon their demoralised foes. To a battle fought under such conditions there could be only one end. Five hours' fighting saw the complete collapse of the Russian host. From an army it had become a rabble.

A retreat was attempted soon after nightfall, but the search-lights of the air-ships flashed down upon them from the clouds, making their every movement plain to their pursuers, and after a night of indescribable carnage and destruction the Tsar at last surrendered his sword to the German Emperor and accepted terms of peace.

By the expiration of the ten days' armistice these terms were finally settled. France gave up the whole of her African possessions and spheres of influence to Britain and Germany, evacuated Madagascar and Siam, and gave guarantees for the payment of three hundred millions of war indemnity. Russia withdrew all her pretensions in Central Asia south of the 40th parallel of north latitude, the crossing of which, on any pretence, by her troops or allies, was to be for ever considered as a declaration of war.

The Tsar's obstinacy, or his ignorance of the power at the disposal of the Aerial Navigation Syndicate, had increased the Russian indemnity to six hundred millions. Thus eight hundred and fifty millions were practically at the disposal of the Directors of the Syndicate, whose original capital had been a million sterling. Two hundred millions each were given to Britain and Germany to cover the expenses of the war, and the remainder was divided equally among the original subscribers to the Syndicate.

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EPILOGUE.

THE NEW UTOPIA.

A YEAR after the signature of the final terms of peace a new State came into existence and took its place among the Powers of the world. This was the State of Oceana, and its jurisdiction extended over all the islands included within the vast parallelogram inclosed by the 30th parallels of North and South latitude and the 120th and 160th meridians of East and West longitude. A glance at the map will show that this includes nearly all those myriads of lovely islands which gem the bosom of the Central and Southern Pacific, and that is equivalent to understanding that the State of Oceana was beyond all comparison the most beautiful realm on earth.

Although it was in every sense a Sovereign State, free and independent of all control or interference on the part of other empires of the world, it was yet entirely unique among them in consequence of the fact that it was without government, politics, or laws in the ordinary acceptation of the terms. It was managed simply as a huge business concern, and its managers were the Directors of what had lately been known as the Aerial Navigation Syndicate.

The various islands had been acquired either by treaty or cession under the terms of peace, or else by purchase. The rights of the native inhabitants, which had been sorely infringed both materially and morally under the alleged "protectorates" of the Powers, which had exploited them chiefly for their own benefit, were restored.

Absolute religious, social, and commercial freedom was proclaimed throughout the whole area of Oceana, subject solely to two restrictions. The natives were forbidden to make war on each other under any circumstances, and any trader or other white person, whether a citizen of Oceana or not, convicted of giving or selling alcohol in any shape to them was to be put to death, as experience had clearly proved that to the Kanaka alcohol is poison.

Subject to this prohibition the trading ships of all nations were admitted on equal terms to the islands, but no war-ship was to be allowed to cross the invisible lines that formed its frontiers on any pretence whatever. The penalty for an attempt would be destruction, and all the nations of the world were given to understand that the Directors of Oceana not only would but could enforce it, for they had at their disposal four aerial fleets numbering a hundred vessels each, and the Powers of the earth did not need telling after what had happened in the war that this was a force capable of dominating the whole world were the policy of the Directors to change from one of peace to one of aggression.

Such was the outcome attained, as we have seen, through many and strange adventures and vicissitudes of the little social colony which had first been conceived in the brain of Edward Adams, and discussed and matured by the modest and obscure society which had called itself the Brotherhood of the Better Life.

Although Oceana possessed neither capital nor seat of government, yet all those who had been chiefly instrumental in achieving its greatness naturally returned to their lovely home in Utopia, there to continue the tranquil and natural existence which had been so rudely interrupted by the involuntary visit of the *Calypso* three years before. Only one or two changes had been made manifest when the colony once more settled down in its old home, and the nature of two at least of them may be guessed from the few lines that now remain to be written.

It was New Year's day 1901, and the first day of the new century was being celebrated in Utopia as the second anniversary of the foundation of the State of Oceana. Almost exactly such another picnic as had taken place on the fatal first of January two years before was being held on the slopes of Mount Plato, and just before sunset Violet and Dora were standing almost exactly where Dora and the rest had stood at the terrible moment when they saw the air-ship rising above the crater of Mount Orient. They had both been gazing for a little space in silence at the dark oval of the crater when Dora said:

They turned their backs on the darkening crater.

"Whenever I think of all that has passed since then and now I always think also how little people know who say that the age of miracles is past. Who would have thought then that within two years you would be standing here well and strong and the wife of the Lord High Admiral of the Aerial Fleets of Oceana?"

"Or," said Violet, slipping her arm through Dora's, "that a certain fair Socialist would so soon have been transformed into a millionairess, the Lady Bountiful of broad lands in capitalist England, and the wife of a Baronet who might be a Duke if he liked. I think there is quite as much miracle in that, your ladyship."

"If you ever use that horrid term of address again," said Dora, disengaging her arm and stepping back a pace, "I'll never rest until I've worried Harry into going to England and using the whole weight and influence of the State of Oceana in persuading the Queen into making your Admiral a Duke at the very least—and then I'll call you 'Your Grace' every time I meet you. Now come away back to the others, for every moment it grows darker I seem to see the shape of that awful air-ship growing out of the darkness over yonder."

"Don't," said Violet with a shudder, putting her arm round Dora's waist and turning her away.

And with that they turned their backs on the darkening crater and went down to the mountain side with the full glow of the tropical sunset shining in their eyes and lighting up two faces as fair as any that that day's sun had shone upon.

THE END.

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MRS. CASALIS' LAST BALL

UT merciful goodness!" the man cried out, driven to half-crazed desperation. "Don't you understand? Can't you understand? It is ruin! It is complete ruin!"

She stood before him like one of the antique Greek statues, that looked calmly out from jewelled eyes. Her cold mouth curved a little.

"I suppose you mean that our expenditure has been too heavy; that we must retrench. You are dramatic about it—as you are about everything." She shrugged her shoulders. "And you know that I detest the dramatic."

As he saw that still she did not understand, the moisture came out on his forehead.

"No; I do not mean that we must retrench, as you conceive the word, Camilla. I mean that everything is gone."

"Everything?"

"You will not starve. You will have a house over your head. But——"

"Thank you," she smiled ironically. "That is much. Yes, I think I understand now." She turned to the door.

"Camilla!" He called her back. His eyes strained out of his ashen face. "If you knew—if you knew!—how I have struggled against it! For months it has been coming. But I always hoped that I would retrieve all. But one unfortunate investment followed another. Still I would not tell you; I could not—could not! But now I will explain everything to you."

"Oh, pray spare me." She drew aside the folds of her house-robe as if his outstretched hand might seize and detain her. "I wish for no explanation of disagreeable subjects. After the ball I will hear as much of what you may have to say as I care to know—though speech is useless enough now."

"After the ball?" he repeated. "You do not mean—it is not possible—that you think of still giving this ball?"

"Certainly." She gazed at him through her cold glance. "This ball shall be given. My invitations went out to-day."

"But I say that it is monstrous!" cried Egbert Casalis. "Do you realise what will be said of me? In a fortnight more the whole world will know that I am a bankrupt. My honour——"

"Your honour!" she interrupted, laughing a little. "A man who marries a girl, above him socially, but of impoverished family, under the claim of being a wealthy man, and who, five years later, announces to her that he is bankrupt, need talk little of his honour."

She turned away again and finally, as she uttered the words. They had been spoken in her even, clear, cruel voice. Surely in the five years of their marriage Egbert Casalis had learned to know those tones well. They had never warmed with love or melted with tenderness. They had remained what they had been when he, a self-made man, a man who had arrived at great riches, despite his youth, had paid his addresses to the daughter of the old Vivians, and had been willing that she should marry him without, as she confessed with explicit calmness, loving him in the least.

. . . . . .

Mrs. Egbert Casalis had given her ball.

The early morning hours wore on towards the dawn. The last carriage rolled away. Mrs. Casalis' great ball had marked the summit of the social year. She had achieved her desire. She would fall; but it would be a fall enwrapped and decked in splendour.

She dismissed her servants for such remnant as was left of the night. And then she saw that, at the door of the wide, empty ball-room, littered with its scattered débris of crushed rose leaves, her husband was standing.

She was about to move past him without a word. He checked her.

"I have been waiting to see you until the last guest had gone. There has happened one thing of which I wish to speak to you—very briefly. I shall not keep you. The day after to-morrow the fact of my insolvency will have been published to the world. I had a relative—an uncle of my mother. He was an unmarried man, and rich. For years we had held no communication with each other. It came to me that I would appeal to him—not for myself—for you."

He paused. She stood, her head half-averted, reluctantly waiting. He looked at her. She did not see the glance.

He resumed:

"I wrote three days ago. To-day I received this letter."

He took out a folded sheet. "It is from the old man's lawyer. My mother's uncle died a week ago, and I am heir-at-law of all his property. It is estimated at a quarter of a million."

The silence that fell upon the great room could almost be heard. Not a muscle of Camilla's body moved. Her head was averted.

"I tell you this, because it is you—not I—who hereafter will own this fortune. That is all," resumed Casalis.

When she turned sharply he was gone. The blood surged to her cheeks, and left them again. Was it true? Yes; she knew that it was. She might taunt him with having won her by "false claims," but she knew, in her soul, that falsity and he could not together be mentioned. His word was never doubted. What did he mean, then, by saying that this fortune, which had fallen to him in the hour of direst need, like rain from the clouds, was to be hers not his? Gathering up the long, rustling train of her ball-dress, she mounted the stairs, she pushed open the door of his dressing-room——

"Egbert—My God!"

The cry broke from the lips that had grown stiff and still. She swept forward. Her white arm and wrist struck against his uplifted hand. The pistol, whose muzzle had been raised to the temple, diverted from its direction, was discharged, and the ball struck the wall.

"Egbert! Why did you do this? You were about to take your life! Why? Why?" Her hands closed upon his wrists. The vice-like pressure recalled him from the trance in which he had stood till then.

"Why not?" He spoke hoarsely. "Can you love me? Can anything recall the words you uttered two weeks ago?"

"Egbert! Forget them! Forget!"

"I thought I knew you," he went on as before; "I thought I knew you as cold—but not—not as you revealed yourself that day. I always hoped, hoped for your heart some day. That afternoon I saw you and your heart as they were. You have what you wish—a fortune. Me you do not need."

"I do!" she cried. "You must listen to me. You must understand me, though I scarcely understand myself! My heart was cruel and cold because it had never been awakened. I never knew you as you are—as the man you are!"

. . . . . .

Egbert Casalis and his wife have been abroad two years. Theirs is the model of a harmonious household. Their fortune, generously expended, draws society about them. But Mrs. Casalis has ceased to be a society woman.

"Since when have you so changed, Camilla?" ask her friends.

She smiles and replies:

"Since my last ball."

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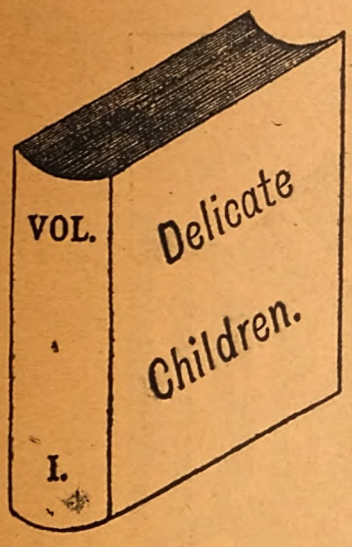

If your children have failing health from any cause, no matter whether they are healthy children but out of health, or are naturally pale, delicate, and thin, do not hesitate, but procure them a Tonic at once, for no time should be lost in improving the general health of delicate children.

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Infantina's Syrup is a simple, harmless, pleasant remedy, prepared from pure ingredients of a well-known curative and corrective character. The Hypophosphites of Iron and Lime are delicately united with other tonic and strengthening restoratives. These invaluable Iron and Lime Salts are absolutely essential for the growing tissues, and often health cannot be maintained without them.

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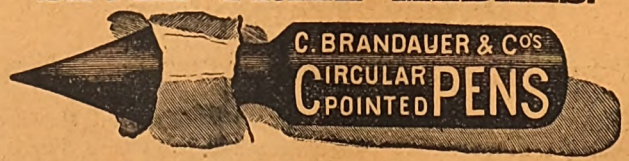

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EDITED BY
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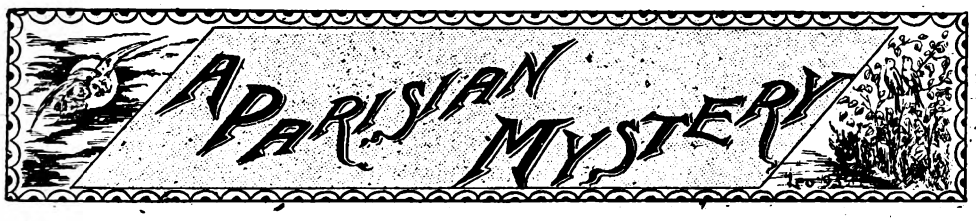
SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 326.] FOR THE WEEK ENDING MARCH 30, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.



"IT is a bargain, monsieur—a bargain! The rent is a mere nothing," said the old *concierge*, as he threw open one of the shutters, and flooded the room with dusty sunshine.

The apartment was on the first floor, at the back of a small court numbered 59 of the Rue Neuve St. Augustin. No. 59—I give it fearlessly, since even its foundation-stones have long been swept away.

The tremulous eagerness of this good Casimir made me half suspect that he had not the remotest right to let the rooms at all. But he told a well varnished tale of an old proprietor who hated women, and who passed his life in search of a country so civilised as to do without them.

From this journey of desperation he returned now and then to restore his tired senses, and to gather courage for a new departure.

It was midsummer; I might keep the rooms until the autumn; not an hour longer, since the patron would then be likely to pounce down upon his possessions, unannounced, at any moment. Just now he was believed to be in Lapland.

When I moved in that very afternoon, a guilty feeling of intrusion overcame me. The place was so luxurious, so well ordered, so unlike the four walls of lodging for which one pays. In the library with its leather hangings the patron's books were upon the shelves, his portfolio and his paper-knife upon the table; the ink in the miniature helmet of blue steel was dry, it is true, but there lay the well-worn quill beside it.

"The room reveals the man," says the philosopher. Granting this, the patron was a man of taste and well-informed. I took down some of the books: here were superb bindings, old and new editions. Upon one fly-leaf his name was written—Marius Morizot—the hand clear and fine, like a woman's. All here was as if he had left it yesterday. What if the door were to open and admit him at the next moment?

Just then the door did open, but only Casimir came in, bringing firewood, for the sun had already left the little court in shadow, and then there was an unseasonable chill in the waning summer day. The old man wore a black skull-cap over his thin, grey hair, and a green baize apron that swathed him nearly to the ankles. He chattered about the fire as he made and lighted it, all the time holding under his arm the eternal feather duster, which appeared to be his badge of office.

"The patron has his treasures," I said, laying down my book.

Casimir looked at the shelves with a certain respect, and then shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes, but not there," he answered.

Thinking that he referred to the glittering objects of the saloon, I treated myself to a complacent smile.

"Not there," he repeated, shuffling towards me in his loose slippers, and letting his voice die away into the important whisper that is the emphasis of a French man-of-all-work, "Ah, if monsieur knew."

"Knew what?" I asked. "Have we a gold mine at our feet?"

He chuckled and nodded. "Better than that, monsieur. See!"

And he pushed aside one of the hangings, and showed me that it covered a door of burnished steel.

"A safe?"

"Yes, monsieur, in the wall."

"And of such size," I continued, for the doorway, though narrow, was higher than my head. "What can he keep there?"

"Jewels, monsieur," said Casimir, enjoying my surprise. "Jewels from the ends of the earth, laid away in little drawers, lined with velvet as soft as the down of a bird. It is a passion with him; the collection is a property in itself."

I laid my hand gently upon the shining metal; it might have been the door of a tomb. I drew back shivering. The thought of these untold riches, hardly out of reach, disturbed me; I felt in a measure responsible for their safety.

"The door is locked, of course," said I.

"Oh, yes, monsieur: only the patron has the key." He brushed the door lightly with his feather tips, as though he were dealing with some fragile work of art, and then dropped the curtain over it.

"Casimir! You have your master's leave to let these rooms; you are sure?"

"Oh, certainly, monsieur. Monsieur need give himself no uneasiness; it is permitted at this season. In the summer-time the patron always absents himself. He has been nearly two years away."

I changed the subject, though I doubted him instinctively.

"What is Monsieur Morizot like?" I asked.

"A lamb, monsieur, amiable, as one cannot be more so. Monsieur, then, has not noticed his portrait?"

The pictures were chiefly modern, and were none too well lighted; I had barely glanced at them. Casimir led me to this one, which hung in a dark corner, so high that the flame of a candle held up at arm's length but just revealed it. The face was long, thin, sharp-featured and sallow, with the prevailing moustache and imperial of the time. But the eyes were fine and friendly. On the whole, I felt happier about Monsieur Morizot.

"And yet he hates women! Was he never married?"

"Never, monsieur; in youth he had a disappointment, they say, and now it would be somewhat late for him to think again of that. At his age one no longer makes such plans."

His hand shook more than ever, and the melted wax of the candle ran over, one drop falling upon the floor. "He is good, the patron," he murmured, so tenderly that the drop might have been a tear from his own failing eyes.

When the old retainer had left me I dismissed all scruples, and unpacked my trunk in the little chamber, singing to myself in the happiest of moods. I was in luck, evidently.

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"He is good, the patron."

Even should Monsieur Morizot turn up, I felt sure that he would accept my explanation, supposing one to be necessary. But he would not come. I doubted Casimir no longer.

Later I pulled myself together and went to the Opera, stayed the performance out, and left the theatre somewhat damped in spirits. The sky was overcast; a drop or two of rain fell. The great doors of No. 59 were closed and locked, of course; at that hour I could have expected nothing else. But Casimir slept soundly; it was long before I could make him hear, though I pulled the bell till the whole place resounded.

The rain came on in earnest, and I was just about to despair, when the door gave a welcome click and swung back an inch or two. I stumbled in through the darkness, and passed the lodge, where I could hear Casimir swearing to himself drowsily, without a thought of challenging me; and guided myself by the hand-rail of the staircase straight to my own door. I struck a match, found the key, and went in.

The outer rooms were black and unfriendly; through them I saw a thread of light from the library door, to which I groped my way. The light came from a lamp that stood on the table, and I blessed Casimir for his forethought. But for the lamp the room, at the first glance, seemed to be as I left it. The carved chair was drawn up before the fire, which still burned brightly. That I found a fire and not a heap of ashes might have struck me as a curious circumstance, but I set this down to Casimir's forethought, too; all the more readily that my clothes were wet, and that I needed it to dry them, as I proceeded to do.

Standing thus before the chimney, with the crackling logs at my heels, I observed a book upon the table. It lay close to the arm of the great chair—so close, in fact, that one sitting there could hardly fail to see it, even in the twilight. Yet it had escaped my notice until now.

"What book?" The moment my unspoken question was answered, I felt absolutely sure that it had never before been in my hands. Its vellum covers were worn and moth-eaten; its musty leaves were yellow with age. I read the title, "The Trial of François Ravaillac for the Murder of King Henry IV., 1610." I could hardly have forgotten that book had I taken it down.

Immediately a strange terror seized me; vague, unreasoning it was—like a child in the dark. I dropped the book, caught up a candle, and peered into the chamber; then searched the other rooms throughout. I saw no one, heard no sound. I was alone. Yet this knowledge failed to reassure me. I spoke, and was startled at my own voice. I tried to sing, but the walls gave back a mocking echo that was unendurable. And I returned to the library with the same childish dread of nothing still oppressing me, like the remembrance of a nightmare.

I can recall distinctly my struggle to conquer this feeling, and I know that I must have conquered it, for I sat down in the arm-chair and began to read the trial of Ravaillac:

"The prisoner is sworn, and asked his name, age, rank and place of abode.

"He said that his name was François Ravaillac, born and dwelling at Angoulême, between thirty-one and thirty-two years of age."

I can see those lines now, in all their quaintness of type, as one makes a sun picture by a sudden closing of the eyes. I remember that I read on and on till I came to a page so stained as to be indistinct, part of which had been torn away. Then I must have fallen into a doze—a mere cat-nap of a moment only. I woke with a start, unable at first to recognise the surroundings.

The lamp had run down, after the provoking manner of French moderateurs. I knew that it only needed winding, and leaning over the table I gave the key a turn or two; but I was too late—the lamp went out in a long, smoky trail. Yet the room was not quite dark. The fire burned on, flickering at my feet, and making fantastic shadows on the glass.

I rose and looked in the glass, and grew dumb with horror. For I saw there the reflection of a man's face, so hideous in its expression that, even in a crowd, one would have turned from it with loathing. I have never been able to describe it; in that uncertain light it had no colour, I could barely trace its outline. But I should know that face, if I saw it at the top of the great pyramid, or in the plains of Arizona—anywhere, indeed, at once; and I should shudder at the sight, as I do now at the thought, like a frightened animal.

For a few seconds I was helpless. My muscles refused to act; I could not even turn my head to look behind me. Thus with all senses gone but one, I saw the face drawing nearer to my chair and looking down at it. The lines grew more distinct; a strange mark came out upon the cheek, as if the skin there had contracted. Then, with an effort that seemed like a trial of strength with some force unseen, I wheeled

I saw there the reflection of a man's face.

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about the dark, silent spaces of the room, conscious only of a sudden draught of cold air that chilled me to the bone.

Darkness—there was nothing else. Yet I turned again to the glass, finding only my own figure, scarcely recognisable.

Then, for the first time, I was aware that my left hand, cold and damp, like a dead man's, still clasped the old book, marking my place, between its leaves. I shivered, and would have laid it down; but instead of that, I flung it from me into the fire with a shriek that set the room ringing. For the stain upon its torn page had deepened and freshened, and was oozing out upon my fingers. They were red with it. Kneeling at the hearth, I wiped away the drops with my handkerchief, and burned that, too.

Still on the hearth I crouched, and listened. If there were only something human to face and challenge! Not a sound. But again the current of cold air, as if from an open door or window. That, at least, was real. I found a candle, lighted it at the fire, and searched the room once more.

To my great surprise, I discovered in the darkest corner a small door I had never seen—one of those blind doors so common in French apartments, cunningly contrived to fit a panel of the wall. It stood ajar, moreover, as though forced open by some mischievous gust of the night wind that had lost its way in the house and then made a frantic effort to get out again.

Rejoiced to account so easily for one disturbing element at least, I pushed the door aside, and saw merely a narrow, flagged corridor, leading to a servants' stairway communicating with the ground floor. By the dim light I held, I could distinguish three steps leading down into awful darkness, like a murderous oubliette of the middle ages.

I strained my ears and listened. There was nothing more to be seen, but my ears caught a faint sound, startling at that hour; though by day I should have laughed at it—simply the noise of running water, gently falling, as if from a pipe, upon the pavement below. I went on cautiously to the stair-rail, leaned over it, and looked down. No one; but under the stairs, in the dark, the water went splashing on intermittently, as though it fell first upon invisible hands—washing them, perhaps. The thought suggested itself instantly.

"Who is there?" I shouted, lowering the light towards the dark corner, but in vain.

The water stopped. There was no other answer.

"Who is there?" I repeated, in a voice that was not mine.

I heard a shuffling step, and there came a blast of the night air strong enough to put out the light, if I had not drawn back, shielding the flame with my hand. A door below me quietly closed, and all was still again.

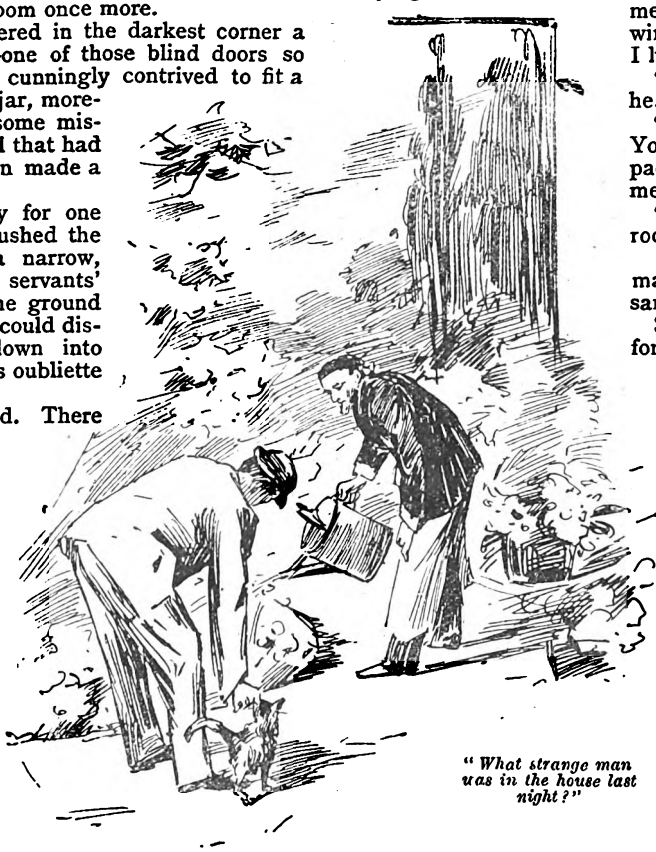
I rushed down the stairs and found the door. It was securely bolted; the bolts were rusted. I tried one, and could not stir it.

Then, out in the court, a harsh cry rang back along the walls, "Cordon!" the familiar call to the sleeping concierge. "Cordon!" the same rough voice repeated. The heavy street door fell into place with a dull, jarring sound. The presence, whatever it was, had escaped scot-free into the world of Paris.

Drip, drip, behind me I heard the water; falling now, drop by drop, upon the stones. There was nothing else to show that I had not been dreaming. I gave one searching look at the dismal little corner, and then fled from it and from the house for ever.

In less time than it takes to tell it, I had rushed through the rooms overhead, and down again by the main staircase, out into the court, and on through the falling rain, shouting to Casimir as I went, "Cordon—cordon—cordon!" And I woke echoes there that drove me half mad; I beat upon the door. At last the cord was drawn, and I found myself in the street, where I recovered my senses sufficiently to put on my hat and coat, snatched up in the flight mechanically from the table in the anti-chamber.

I went back to my hotel, and passed a sleepless night. In the morning, very early, I hurried out again, laughing at my folly. The day was fine and bright, as only Paris can be; and yet I trembled on turning into the court, where, however, I found nothing more terrible than Casimir watering his flowers and talking to a grey cat, that rubbed itself affectionately against his shins. The old man started when he saw me, and looked from me to the window, behind which he supposed I had been sleeping.



"What strange man was in the house last night?"

"Monsieur rises early," said he.

"Yes. I am called away. You will be kind enough to pack my trunk, and send it after me."

"Monsieur gives up the rooms?"

"Unavoidably. It does not matter, they are paid for all the same."

Surprise made him speechless for a moment. The cat came slowly towards me, purring. I stooped and stroked it between the ears.

"He is called Chambord, monsieur. He lives upon raw meat, but he is very kind and gentle. I regret that monsieur goes away."

"Thank you. Casimir, what strange man was in the house last night?"

"Monsieur, I do not understand. There was no one."

"You let no one out, then?"

"Oh, that, of course. The house has many apartments, many lodgers. I do not count them in my sleep."

"Nevertheless," I said with some warmth, "there was a stranger in my rooms last night. I saw him."

"Monsieur was dreaming. It is impossible."

"But I can describe him to you."

And I tried to do so, making only a stammering failure of it.

Casimir shrugged his shoulders.

Then I remembered the curious mark upon the man's cheek, and put in that evidence triumphantly.

The dull eyes opened a little wider, but he smiled and shook his head.

"Sapristi? Now I know that monsieur was surely dreaming. That is the Brazilian Cornelio, the good patron's valet de chambre."

"Well, then, I tell you, he has come back."

"But, monsieur——"

"I swear it to you."

"Impossible. Monsieur Morizet keeps him always at his side. They are both in Lapland."

I argued with him to no purpose. He grew angry, and, in his excitement, tipped over his watering-pot upon Chambord, who turned tail and disappeared. I could convince him of

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nothing but my own imbecility; and so I left him muttering strange oaths among his flowers.

One rarely fails to recall a startling bit of his own experience, the first time its date comes round again. So it happened that this adventure was uppermost in my mind one midsummer night of the following year, on board the good steamer *Baron Osy*, bound from London to Antwerp.

One by one the passengers who were about me on the after-deck had gone below as the night breeze strengthened. I knew that the stars were coming out, that under the pale green streak of western sky the English coast was fast receding. But my thoughts were hundreds of miles away.

With them I was really strolling through the Passage des Princes and back along the Boulevard, humming as I walked, the doctor's air in "L'Ombre"; and so, on through the details of that troubled night. I lived again in Monsieur Morizot's apartment; I saw his chair at the fire, his book upon the table; nay, even the old letter-press danced before my eyes:—

"The prisoner is sworn: and asked his name, age, rank, and place of abode."

"He said that his name was François Ravaillac, born and dwelling at Angoulême——"

The sound of my voice brought me back to the deck of the *Baron Osy*. I had spoken the words aloud. I turned, and saw that they must have been overheard by a passenger who stood at the rail, not ten feet away. He wore a close-fitting, pointed cap and a long dark coat, buttoned tightly under his chin, and these garments had a suggestive richness in them. A splendid jewel, too, shone upon his hand. But his eyes were fixed on me with a look in which fear and wonder mingled strangely; his face seemed white as death, and it was the face of the valet, Cornelio.

I realised an unknown power in the words which I had spoken; and, without moving from my place, I finished the broken sentence from the trial of Ravaillac, then repeated it word for word from the beginning. With that, the mark upon his cheek quivered convulsively; he gave a wild cry, like some brute brought to bay, and with one appealing look, as if towards imaginary pursuers closing in upon him, he flung himself over the rail into the sea.

I rushed to the ship's side, as one of the hands, who had seen him jump, tore a life-preserver from the guards, and threw it in after him. We caught sight of an arm tossed up in the foaming wake far behind. A wave swept over it. The engines were stopped, and a boat lowered. After a long time it came back, bringing only the wet corks. The old grey sexton of the sea works quickly and well.

We found his name registered upon the list—Ramon Quizas, renter of Rio. He had no companion, and his trunks were stored somewhere on the quay at Antwerp. When I left the city they still remained there unclaimed.

Three years later, in one of the continental reading-rooms, I took up the *Figaro*, to divert myself. Between the last words of Madame X., and the announcement of a *fête* at Asnières, I found a line of reference to a matter familiar enough, as it seemed, to all but casual readers—the division among the heirs-at-law of a handsome property—that of one Monsieur Morizot. The name, and the mysterious importance given it, roused my curiosity, and I wrote at once to a Parisian crony for fuller particulars. This was his answer:

"Have you retired from the world that you cease to read the news of it? We are worn out with details of the life and death of Monsieur Morizot. Pardon me if I recite them to you very briefly. The worthy man lived, *en garçon*, in one of those houses of the Rue Neuve St. Augustin, already condemned to make way for the new avenue, which will be a marvel. Like you, he was a traveller, and he often remained for years an absentee, staying away at last longer than the code allows. He became, to all intents and purposes, a dead man, and his heirs demanded to share his estate, and to break up his collection of jewels, known to be of great value. Man proposes! The safe was opened, but it had been rifled, *mon ami*. They found there, instead, the owner's body, stabbed through and through.

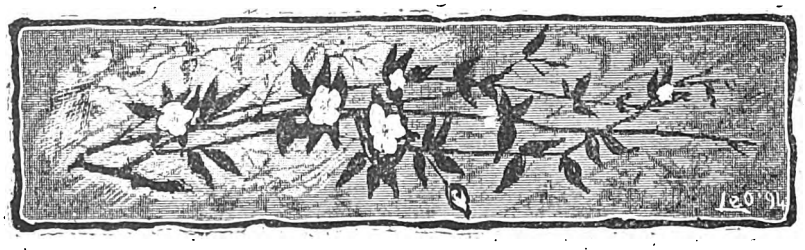
"The good soul had made a hard fight of it. His hand still clutched a bit of watch-chain, identified as the property of a certain Brazilian ape of a servant who never left him. Our police is enormously cunning. Bit by bit the case has been worked up, and this is what happened. The two arrived late one night at the Northern Railway station, where, to save time, at the servant's suggestion, their trunks were left to be claimed in the morning. Thus they installed themselves at home without stir, and unannounced. Then the man got the better of his master, and became in his turn an absentee.

"No one ever dreamed of the arrival or the departure, yet now it is all clear as though we saw it in a glass—the very date proved by the fragment of a journal found in the pocket of what was once Monsieur Morizot. Heed the warning, and travel no more, but marry, and let madame watch over you. Get thee a wife."

I answered my foreign correspondent in good English fashion, by asking a question. "Upon what date," I prayed him, "was the crime committed?" His reply brought me a printed slip, fixing upon the very night of my adventure, but in the year preceding it. And on this point all known records of the affair obstinately agree.

That Señor Ramon Quizas and the valet, Cornelio, were one and the same, I have no manner of doubt; but that he ever could have revisited the scene of his double crime is inconceivable. Whose face, then, appeared to me in the mirror? Whose hands were washed in the running water? Who, besides myself, clamoured there in the dark for release from his own haunting fears? Did I, by some strange coincidence, dream these things, one after another, in quick succession?

Or did the murderer leave behind him in his flight a ghostly presence, to play his hideous part out, time and time again; while the faithful glass of Venice reflected line for line, moment for moment? I cannot answer. But now, when I walk in the Avenue de l'Opéra, I am grateful even for that dullest of improvement's dull marches, sweeping, as it does, all memory but mine of my grim lodging from the face of the earth.



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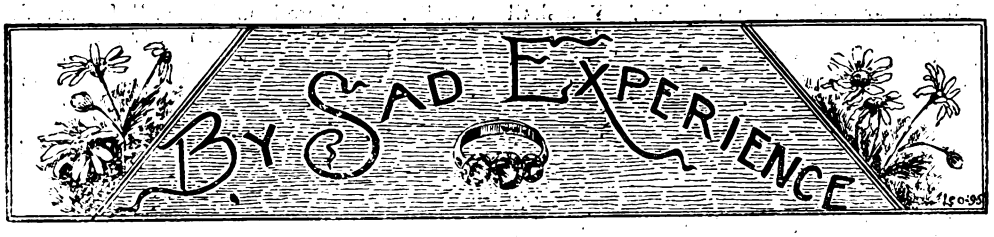

THE time was about a fortnight before Easter. There were not many travellers and I had a compartment in the early boat train to myself. My destination was Paris; my errand to convey from my father (a London jeweller and silversmith) to his agent in that city a very valuable brilliant ring.

"The diamonds in it are worth five hundred pounds if they are worth a penny," my father had said to me, "so I hope you will take special care of the ring, Ned, and neither lose it on the way nor allow yourself to be robbed of it."

I smiled a little superciliously as my father spoke. As if it were at all likely that I should either lose it or allow it to be stolen from me! I was just turned one-and-twenty; and my father had no right to speak to me as if I were still a boy.

I had got the ring in an inner pocket of my waistcoat, as I took care to assure myself from time to time. I had not seen it since my father put it into the little velvet-lined box in which it was still shut up. When I had finished my first cigar and had got through the morning news, the thought struck me that I might as well have another look at the ring. There could be no harm in that, you know.

I took the box out of its hiding-place and opened it. My eyes were dazzled as I looked. There lay the darling in its nest of purple velvet. Who could have resisted the pleasure of taking it out and trying it on? Certainly not I. I tried it. Had it been made for the third finger of my right hand it could not have fitted me better. It looked simply exquisite. Now I came to think of it, was there or could there be a safer hiding-place for the ring than my finger? I had only to keep my glove on and not a soul would know anything about it. It was far safer there than in my pocket.

In such a case, to hesitate was folly. I placed the ring on my finger and put the empty box back into my pocket. As I was alone there was no occasion to put my glove on just then, so I mused and smoked and watched the many-coloured rays of light that flashed from the brilliants, and wondered what great swell's finger the ring was destined to decorate. How I wished that I could call it mine!

A quarter of an hour later we were steaming slowly out of Dover Harbour. There were not more than a dozen passengers on deck. The day was cold and clear, with just enough sea on to make the voyage unpleasant for bad sailors.

Only two ladies were visible. One was a stout middle-aged person, who was eating and drinking nearly the whole way across, evidently an old salt. The other was—well, simply the most charming creature I had ever set eyes on. In point of fact, I could not keep my eyes off her. I passed her and repassed her as I paced the deck from end to end, and every time that I passed her I looked at her.

What lovely grey eyes! What superb yellow hair! But as for her complexion—it would need a poet to describe its wild rose tints. Once or twice her eyes met mine, just for a moment, and it struck me that they were full of a wistful sadness. So far as I could judge she was entirely alone.

We were about half-way across, when, as I passed her for the fiftieth time, she spoke:

"Would monsieur have the goodness to ask the steward to bring me a little cognac?"

She spoke in French. As the song says, her voice was low and sweet. I was too fluttered to answer her. I could only bow and grin, and make a bolt for the steward's den; of course, I took the cognac to her myself. You should have seen how prettily she thanked me. She sipped at it as a canary might do, if that bird were in the habit of drinking brandy.

"I hope that mademoiselle is somewhat revived?" I ventured to observe presently.

"Yes, very much revived, thanks to monsieur. But I am not mademoiselle, I am madame. I am a widow."

She pressed her handkerchief to her eyes as she spoke. How interesting—nay, how touching—was this simple confession! The wistful sorrow in her eyes was at once accounted for. Would that it had been my happy lot to comfort her.

There was a camp-stool close by. Presently I ventured to draw it a little nearer and to sit down on it, blushing at my temerity as I did so. She did not seem offended, and we were presently in the midst of an animated and interesting conversation.

There was no hauteur about madame; on the contrary, she was candour itself. She had only been three days with Sir Henry FitzEvans, who had charge of her late husband's interests in England.

She was now going back into seclusion, going back to the little cottage in which she had dwelt ever since her dear husband's death. She would not be able to go forward by the tidal train, she told me, having a business call to make in Calais. She would go by the evening train.

All this was told me with charming frankness. There was no reason why I should not wait, and go along with her by the evening train, if she would allow me to do so. When I threw out a hint to that effect, she offered no objection. She admitted at once that she was fond of society, and then she looked at me, and—well, I could almost have sworn that she blushed.

I had already told her that I was bound for Paris on a special errand for my father, but I had not said a word about the ring, nor had she even seen it. I had put on my gloves before leaving the train at Dover, and still wore them.

A little while longer, and we found ourselves at Calais. When we landed, madame admitted she was hungry, and that luncheon would be a desirable feature of the programme. Accordingly, while she went about her business, I took a *voiture*, and drove to the Hôtel Dessin. There, in the course of half an hour, madame joined me.

Now, one can't very well partake of luncheon in kid gloves. The question was, whether I should partake of mine with the ring on my finger, or whether I should put it carefully away in the box, and hide it out of sight. If you have any kind of knowledge of what human nature is at twenty-one, especially when there is a pretty woman in the case, you will know the decision I arrived at. Madame pecked a little at this and that; but hardly ate more than a sparrow might have done.

How swiftly the minutes seemed to fly! I could have lingered on in that cosy little room for a year. When the cloth was drawn and we were left to ourselves, with a bottle of hock on the table between us, somehow our chairs seemed to gravitate towards each other, or perhaps it was the stove that attracted us, for the afternoon was chilly. In any case, we found ourselves in closer proximity.

Then said madame, "Do you not smoke, monsieur?"

"Yes; considerably more than is good for me, I am afraid."

"Then smoke now. Oblige me. I like to see a gentleman smoke."

I rose in order to get my cigar-case out of the pocket of my overcoat. Madame laid her hand lightly on my arm—and what a charming hand it was!—"Monsieur, I am going to make a confession," she said. "I smoke too—*moi* cigarettes. I lived for many years in Spain, where nearly all the ladies smoke. You are not shocked, I hope, at the idea of a lady smoking cigarettes?"

"Shocked, madame!"

"No, of course not. You are too much a man of the world;

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you are above such insular prejudices; *eh bien!* You shall smoke one of my cigarettes."

From the sachet by her side she drew an embroidered case, which she opened, and bade me choose a cigarette. I did so, and she took another. Then with her own fair fingers she struck an *allumette*, and held it while I lighted the weed. Then she lighted her own. She could not fail to see my ring as she lighted the match.

"I daresay you find the flavour a little peculiar," said madame, a minute or two later. "These cigarettes are made of perfumed tobacco; I never smoke any others. I hope you do not find yours disagreeable."

"On the contrary, madame. I am quite in love with it. As you say, the flavour is slightly peculiar, but aromatic and pleasant—very pleasant."

To tell the truth, I didn't like it at all, but I wouldn't have said so for worlds. We smoked on in silence. What would this superb creature say to me, I wondered, if I were to tell her how madly I had fallen in love with her? Would she reject me with scorn, or would she ——

I gave a sudden start, and was shocked to find that I had been falling asleep. Fortunately, madame had not noticed me. Her large melancholy eyes were bent upon the stove. There was certainly something very soothing, something that inclined to slumber and happy dreams about madame.

Peculiar cigarettes! If I had but two thousand a year now, and this sweet creature to share it, how happy I could be! Certainly she must have been some six or seven years older than myself, but I never was one to care for your chits of schoolgirls, who set up for being women before they are out of their teens. Here was an angel who had been left desolate, who had been cast on a bleak and unfeeling world, who pined for a heart and a home—for a heart that brimmed over with love. Gracious goodness! I had a heart that yearned towards her—that—that——

Why—eh—how was this, and where was I? I awoke with a shiver. But for the lamp in the courtyard, the room would have been quite dark. My head was aching frightfully. I got up and staggered to the window. When I looked out and saw the familiar courtyard, everything came back to me like a flash of light.

Where was madame? Why had I slept so long? I groped for the bell and rang it violently. Up came the waiter with a candle. "Where is madame?" I demanded. "Madame," he answered, "went out nearly three hours ago, saying that she wanted to make a few purchases, and would be back in a little time. On no account, she said, was her brother, who had suffered terribly from *mal de mer* in crossing, to be disturbed."

Gone three hours ago! Her brother! *Mal de mer!* What could it mean? As I sat down, utterly bewildered, my arm pressed against the little box in my pocket. Mechanically I glanced at my finger; the ring was no longer there. My heart turned sick within me. I sank down and buried my face in my hands. The waiter thought I was ill and ran to fetch some cognac. I saw it all now. Fool! fool that I was, I had allowed myself to be swindled by a common adventuress.

At nine o'clock next morning I stood before my father a miserable, haggard, woe-begone wretch. I told my tale, but as I did so I could not quite keep down my tears of mingled shame and vexation. He listened to me with a curious, cynical smile. When I had done he went to his bureau and opened a drawer.

"Set your mind at rest, Ned; here's the ring safe and sound."

I could only stare in astonishment.

"When madame, with the ring in her possession, left you asleep, she was just in time to catch the afternoon boat back to Dover. The ring was in my hands again before ten o'clock last night."

"But—but," I stammered. "I don't understand. When she had once got the ring in her possession, why did she bring it back to you?"

"Because she was paid to do so; because she was hired through the agency of a private inquiry office to act as she did. Madame, by profession, is not a thief, but a thief-taker. You had grown so conceited of late, Master Ned, I thought it would do you no harm to take you down a peg or two. If you profit by the lesson my money will have been well spent."

An hour or two later I said, "But wasn't it rather a risky thing to do with a ring worth five hundred pounds?"

My father winked at me with the solemnity of a judge. "My dear Ned, what do you take your old father for? The diamonds were nothing but paste!"

UNITED IN DEATH

It was three o'clock of a hot, drowsy afternoon in Santiago, Santo Domingo. All the town, recently awakened from its accustomed siesta, was bestirring itself and going about its usual occupations. From the billiard room over the way came the click of the balls, mingled with the monotonous "*Uno, dos, veinto-seis,*" of the loto players.

Pedro, the son of the man who kept the billiard-room, sat outside the door, his chair tipped back and resting on two legs. He was thrumming on his guitar and humming a song, the burden of which was "*Te amo, te adoro, mi querida*" (I love thee, I adore thee, my darling).

The water boys, fresh from their afternoon dip in the river, their four bright tins brimming full, went galloping by, mercilessly digging and pounding the poor burros with their heels. Lucky the boy who had an old spur tied to his bare foot; the less fortunate ones had to content themselves with a good bit of *maya* (century plant), with points an inch long, projecting on either side, with which to prod the poor beasts. They droned their sing-song, "*Aqua, aqua, quatre por un medio*" (Water, water, four tins for twopence halfpenny).

It was hot and still inside the *patio*, the tropical sun beating fiercely down, but in the sheltered verandah it was cool. In a Creole hammock a young woman lay, looking, with wide-open eyes, across the courtyard, where the lime-trees, laden with fragrant blossoms, green and ripe fruit, bent their branches almost to the ground. The lizards darted up and down, snapping, like a flash, at some tiny insect; now ashy white as they crawled on the wall, or black with anger in a sudden contest over a fly.

Just beneath the sour-orange tree, with its russet-brown fruit glimmering through the shining leaves, a pomegranate tree stretched its slender branches up, as if to cling to the stronger tree for support, but the heavy, scarlet, waxen blossoms caused it to sway backwards and forwards.

There was a tap at the door.

"*La madama quiere dulce?*" (Does madam wish for sweets?) asked a sweet, plaintive voice.

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Then came the slip-slap of Creole slippers on the brick floor of the *porton*.

"Come in, Martina," called out Mrs. Burton, in reply.

A tall, striking-looking girl came into the *patio* and walked towards the verandah. A little of the Indian could be traced in the high cheek-bones and the straight, glossy braids of blue-black hair; the negro showed itself in the soft, sad eyes; and the Spanish in the erect and free step. With all that mixture she was a beautiful creature.

She wore a simple gown of unbleached linen, which hung loosely from throat to foot. A deep-red hybiscus flower was thrust over the left ear.

She went towards Mrs. Burton, balancing on her head the large, square wooden tray, heaped high with golden squares of orange *dulce*, white blocks of fresh cocoanut sweets, clear, wine-coloured slabs of guava jelly, in neat, white paper cases, and the amber-coloured *dulce leche*.

"I have just been wishing for some of your *dulce*," said Mrs. Burton, a slender, dark-haired English girl. "Sit down, and let me pick out what I want."

Martina knelt down beside the hammock, holding up the tray for her to make a selection. Mrs. Burton chose a goodly pile, for she was childishly fond of sweets, and fumbled in her pocket for her purse, from which she selected several *reals*, and dropped them into the slender, well-shaped, olive-tinted hand which Martina held out for the money.

She put the tray down on the floor of the verandah, leaned against the brick-plastered wall of the house, clasped her hands about her knees, and looked up expectantly at Mrs. Burton, half-hesitated, then began:

"Ay, Doña Juanita."

"Well, Martina," said Mrs. Burton, smiling encouragingly, "you have something to tell me, I know. We are all alone here, and it's a good time to talk."

Thus urged, Martina went on, the colour rising in her cheeks as she talked.

"Doña Juanita, I have a *novio*."

"*You*, Martina!" exclaimed Mrs. Burton, in surprise, for Martina had always before sedulously avoided the young men, and had reached the age of twenty without having had a lover.

"Yes, it is true," returned the girl shyly. "I have never felt love before; but, when it comes, who can withstand it? But perhaps you know, madama?" she asked, glancing quickly up at the older woman, who nodded in return.

"They say," she continued, "that the people of the great *Extrangero* are colder than we; but you are *simpatico*, and must have loved. Stupid that I am! there is your *marido*, the señor. Pardon me, madama."

"But let me hear your story, Martina; tell me about the wonderful *novio*. Is he handsome?"

"Ah, yes, madama; handsome, brave, tall, generous. He is a soldier—one of the President's bodyguard. He has land, too, and a fine *bohio*. I first saw him two weeks ago, when the President was here. As the troops went by, Pablo looked up and smiled at me. I felt my heart go out to him. I met him at the park that evening, and since then I have seen him every day; and, oh, madama, he wishes to marry me. You will come to the wedding, won't you? There'll be wine and *dulce;* and Pablo has already sent to Puerto Plata to buy a gown of white muslin and satin shoes for me. Are the *novios* of the *Extrangero* as kind as that?"

"Well, no," answered Mrs. Burton, "they are not so generous in that way; besides, it is not the custom. The bride has to provide her own clothes."

"*La pobre*," sighed Martina sympathetically. "I could not rest until I had told you," she added, as she lifted the tray to her head and prepared to go. A moment later the gate closed with a click.

Some six months later, Mrs. Burton, who had made a round of afternoon visits, and had just stepped up on her own pavement, her dainty muslin skirt held up with one hand, and her white silk sunshade in the other, fancied she heard a sound of subdued sobbing. She looked about, but saw no one; then she unhooked the gate. There, in one corner, close to the great door, crouched a woman, her head bent over her knees, sobbing at intervals, as if she was almost exhausted with the effort.

As Mrs. Burton entered, the woman lifted a drawn, haggard face, so changed from the bright, laughing one of the summer before, that she hardly recognised Martina.

"Why! can that be you, Martina?" she exclaimed in surprise. "What is the matter with you?" With difficulty she persuaded the girl to rise, and half dragged her across the *porton* into the cool *sala*, where she made her lie down on a bamboo couch, then ran to the dining-room for a glass of wine, which she forced Martina to sip. She waited quietly for a few moments until Martina had somewhat regained her composure, then she said gently:

"Tell me about it, my dear."

Martina suddenly threw off the limp black mantilla that had covered her head and shoulders, and sat up.

"God knows, madama, that I am a wicked woman. I have told the padre. It does no good. When I saw you last I was to have been married, but the troops were ordered off to Monte Christi—there was a revolution on the line. I followed as close as I could, and saw Pablo nearly every day. I kept a little shop in Monte Christi. Well, one day, not long ago, that ashy-faced Rositar Ramirez—she who has the evil eye—looked at Pablo, and took him from me. They both left the place. He has since said he was true to me; but I would not believe him, I was desperate.

"One night I went across the line into Haiti, to a little village where old Jacques, the *guaguna* man lived, and asked for something to bring back my Pablo. Old Jacques said: 'There is no remedy but to have him killed; he is gone from you. Bring me some pure gold and he will trouble you no more.' I took the gold to him, and now, madama"—with a wild burst of tears—"he has been found guilty of a conspiracy against the life of the President, and will be shot here, in Santiago, to-morrow at sunset. There is no help. He was *guagunad*—that made him do it."

"My poor girl," said Mrs. Burton, softly stroking the girl's hand, "I'll ask my husband; perhaps he can see the President and intercede for Pablo."

Just then Mr. Burton came in. Martina fled out of one door as he entered the other.

"Hullo, what's up?" he asked.

His wife eagerly related the case in full, confident of his assistance.

"I'm afraid nothing can be done," said Mr. Burton; "he has no wealthy relatives. I'm sorry," he added, relaxing his somewhat self-assertive manner at the sight of his wife's distressed face, "but really, dear, I can do nothing. Come," he said, lighting a cigar, "let's go for a walk before dinner. We'll run over to the Benoits'."

The next day a band of twenty soldiers slowly filed down towards the cemetery. In front walked a young man, with his arms bound behind him. There was an expression of stern resignation on his well cut features, and he held his head erect. On either side walked an armed soldier. A rabble of town folk straggled along behind. Low mutterings and an occasional sob could be heard.

The men entered the gates of the cemetery; then they turned to the right, where there was a freshly-dug grave in that part of the cemetery set apart for murderers, thieves and conspirators. Pablo was placed at the foot of the grave. The soldiers drew up in line with their rifles stiffly held upright.

The condemned man opened his lips.

"Compadre Felipe," he said to the soldier at the end of the line, "before God, I am innocent of all conspiracy. I have been denied a trial in this country—a republic—tell Martina Fernandez that I was true to her."

"One, two," sounded slowly, as the men raised their Remingtons, and as the "three" came, there was a swift, rushing movement from a tomb near by. A woman flung herself upon Pablo, and fell backwards into the grave with him.

"*Por Dios!*" exclaimed the men in horror.

As the smoke cleared Felipe went forward and raised Martina, shot through the head, from the shallow grave, where Pablo lay dead beneath her.

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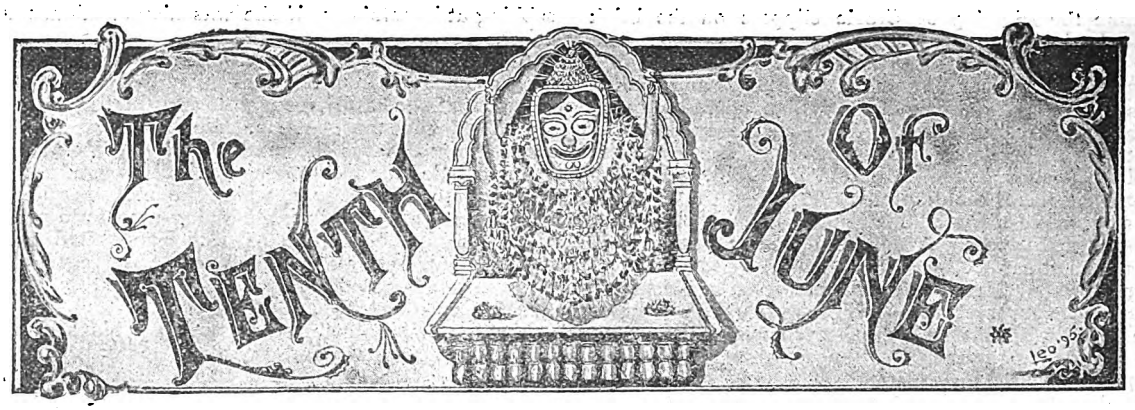

By JOHN K LEYS, *Author of "In the Toils," "My Hindoo Friend," &c., &c.—Illustrated by* RAYMOND POTTER.

SUMMARY.

GEOFFREY DUNDAS, whose life is attempted on the 10th of June, 1883, by a Hindoo barrister at the Law Courts, by means of poison, pays a visit to General Sir Arthur Chetwynd at Scacombe Towers, in May, 1884. There the General takes Geoffrey into his confidence, and explains that a serious danger threatens the household, and that it will come, if at all, on the Tenth of June.

CHAPTER II.

THE GENERAL'S STORY.

GEOFFREY started; his hand, holding a match with which he was about to light his pipe, remained suspended in the air; he forgot that he had been about to smoke, and quietly laid his pipe down on the table.

The General noticed the young man's agitation, and noticed, too, how he mastered it.

"You seem surprised at my mentioning that date," said Sir Arthur.

"Surprised? No. And yet—yes, General, and I don't know why I should conceal it from you—your speaking of that particular day did seem strange to me. The reason is, that a very curious thing happened to me on the tenth day of June last year. I suddenly, and for no apparent cause, became ill; and I believe I was poisoned by a Hindoo who was a perfect stranger to me. As if to place the matter beyond a doubt this odd letter was delivered at my chambers next morning——"

He took out his pocket-book, and, after searching a little, produced the sheet of paper he spoke of and handed it to his host.

The General's hand did not tremble, but Geoffrey, looking at him, saw that his face turned perceptibly paler as he read the few brief lines.

"Do you understand this?" he asked, as he handed back the letter.

"I had it translated to me; but I have no idea what it refers to. I can only imagine that I am in some way held responsible for something that occurred in Bengal before I was born."

"True—before you were born. Yet the sins of the fathers—God forbid!"

Sir Arthur threw his unlighted cigar on the table, and began to pace the room with long, rapid strides.

"You shall know all about it, Geoffrey," he said suddenly; "you have a right to know."

He continued to march to the end of the room and back again all the time he was speaking, while Geoffrey sat in his chair quietly watching him.

"It was in the days of the Mutiny," he said, "that your father and I first became acquainted. That was in fifty-two. There was wild work doing in those days, I can tell you. They are half-forgotten now, except by a few old fellows like myself—just as well perhaps. The suddenness, the diabolical treachery of the outbreak were enough to make one lose one's head; and then when one realised the extent of the rising, and the length of time that must elapse before help could arrive from home—it was frightful, I tell you.

"You have no idea of it. You have no idea, either, what it is to talk to men who have seen their wives murdered, their little children—bah! It is enough to say that for weeks our peril was extreme; we lived in a perpetual fever; and when at last we got the upper hand, and orders were given to crush out the smouldering embers of the revolt, we were in no mood to show mercy. I say this, not to justify, or even to excuse, but to explain what follows.

"In the month of May, Eighteen Fifty-three, parts of two regiments, with a small detachment of artillery, were sent to reduce the town of Churruckpore, still held by a rebel force. The job gave us more trouble than we had expected; and we lost a good many in the final charge. This infuriated our men; and when we got inside the place—well if an historian were to say that the town was sacked he wouldn't err very far from the truth. At any rate we lost control of the men—perhaps we didn't try as hard as we might have done to keep it—and there was looting, fire raising, and general wantonness going on for the best part of three days.

"Now I must tell you that inside the outer wall of the city, but surrounded by palisades and walls of its own, stood a temple of some Hindoo deity. The place was a favourite resort of pilgrims, who had enriched it with all manner of precious things—cloth of gold, caskets of ivory and sandal-wood, cups and plates of beaten gold, and especially gems. One idol, I remember, was well-nigh covered with strings of pearls; another was clothed in a vestment that was simply stiff and blazing with jewels—and so on. Anyhow, Major Panton of the Sixty-third, as it was then, with Captain Druce of the Artillery, your poor father and I—we four, determined to pay a visit to this temple."

"You didn't mean to st—to take those jewels and keep them?" interjected the listener.

"A lot of fighting men ranged inside the palisade."

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"I rather think we did," said the General drily. "And let me tell you, young man, that if you expect men to go through what we went through at a pay of three or four rupees a day, and not help themselves when something good comes in their way, you expect a little too much of human nature. You must remember, however, that this was not exactly private property. In our eyes it belonged to nobody in particular. And, to say a great deal in two words, up to that time we had been living under the rule of John Company.

"Well, we took a dozen men whom we could trust, and proceeded to the temple about two hours before sundown. It was the tenth of June, Eighteen Fifty-three.

"The priests must have got notice of our coming, for they had a lot of fighting men ranged inside the palisade, close to the main entrance; and, as we were demanding admittance, they deliberately potted us! It's a wonder any of us escaped with our lives. There was nothing for it but to go back and get reinforcements. This was not so easy, as most of our fellows were drunk, and the rest were under no sort of discipline; so we were compelled to take two more, Grey of the Eighty-ninth, and Crawford, one of the surgeons, into our confidence. We got together about fifty men, and went for the place again.

"It was getting near dark as we got up to the palisade. This time we proceeded cautiously; but the enemy had vanished. There was not a soul to oppose our entrance; we went on in column of fours right up a broad avenue that led to the temple.

"As we grounded arms, a strange sound fell on our ears. It was a sort of wailing chant—not the sort of thing I could describe to you; but it was eerie, and outlandish, and mournful to the last degree.

"Leaving the bulk of the men outside, we six officers went into the temple. It was a strange sight. The great space was lighted up by hundreds of tapers, so that there was no glare, only a mild soft radiance.

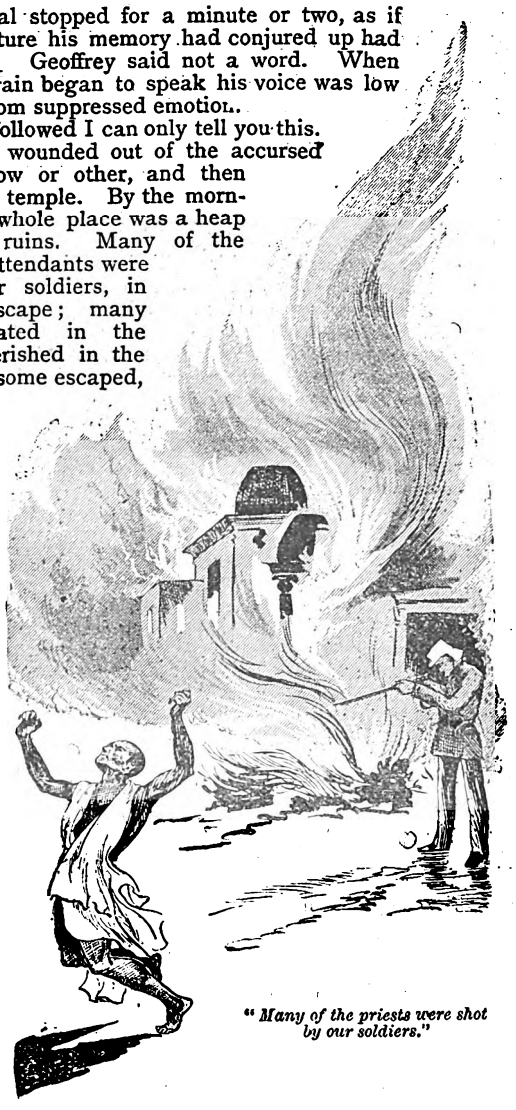
"Right in front was an altar, and towering above it something which I supposed was an idol—the ugliest, most repulsive object my eyes ever beheld. All the treasures of the shrine, it seemed to me, were exposed on and about the altar, and round it were ranged about a score of priests—Brahmins, I suppose—each with a single robe thrown round his body. They were chanting alternately, right answering left, just as they do in our own churches; and at stated intervals they they would unite in that horrid, low, wailing sound—I fancy I can hear it now.

"For some minutes we stood looking on in silence. At last Panton, who acted as our leader, lost patience, and called out something, I forget what—something to the effect that they had better be off. At the sound of his voice one priest stood up, and remained standing in his place while the chant proceeded for a few words; then a second rose and joined him; after a few moments a third, then a fourth, until all were on their feet. Suddenly, in the midst of the chorus, or part in which they all joined, the whole body of priests prostrated themselves before the idol. Then slowly they rose, turned, and marched in a long, thin, dark line beyond the altar, and so left the temple. Not a man of them stretched out a hand to the precious stones, images of gold, and jewelled weapons that were hung on the pedestal of the idol, or lying on the altar. They went out slowly, each with his eyes on the ground, each chanting the mournful burden. It seemed to me as if they meant it for the last service that would ever be rendered to their god to the end of time.

"The sound of the chant died away; and two seconds later we were rushing pell-mell on the treasure. We were, in fact, too eager; for we left no guard at the door, and the men outside, knowing perfectly well that they were not on duty, but engaged in an unlawful errand, and hearing the sound of our footsteps as we ran through the empty temple, came pouring in through the main entrance to see what was going forward. Of course, the sight of the gold and jewels was too much for them. Every man-jack of them came racing up to the great image; when, suddenly, without the slightest warning, a hundred flashes of fire came, as it were, through the wall, with a deafening roar of musketry; and in one instant a score of us lay dead or dying!"

The General stopped for a minute or two, as if the awful picture his memory had conjured up had silenced him. Geoffrey said not a word. When Sir Arthur again began to speak his voice was low and hoarse from suppressed emotion.

"Of what followed I can only tell you this. We got our wounded out of the accursed place somehow or other, and then set fire to the temple. By the morning light the whole place was a heap of smoking ruins. Many of the priests and attendants were shot by our soldiers, in trying to escape; many were suffocated in the smoke or perished in the flames. But some escaped, I fancy by a subterranean passage—or if not, their co-religionists have known how to avenge them. Geoffrey——!"



"Many of the priests were shot by our soldiers."

The old man walked up to his guest and gripped him by the arm.

"Geoffrey! Every year from that day, on the tenth of June, the anniversary of the destruction of the temple has been marked by the death of some one who took part in that destruction, or some member of one of their families! Such, at least, is my conviction. I believe they mean to exterminate not only the survivors of the attack they made on us in the temple, but our children."

The young man made an exclamation of horror and incredulity.

"Listen." I have ascertained that several of the soldiers died on the tenth of June, some in fight, some in sickness, one or two evidently murdered by an unknown hand. But it was impossible to trace more than a certain number of the privates, because we could not be sure who actually were there.

"We knew the officers, however—Panton, Druce, Grey, Crawford, your father, and myself. Panton died of cholera before the year was out; but his son—a fine young fellow of five-and-twenty—was drowned while bathing (as it was supposed) on the tenth of June, four years later. Crawford's horse threw him, and he broke his neck. That was on the tenth of June. His sister died, I remember, on board ship on her way home. And I ascertained that *she*, too, ceased to live on the same fatal day.

"I cannot go on with the list. Some, of course, came by their deaths naturally, at different times of the year. But what puts the fact of the vendetta beyond a doubt is this Several times, to my knowledge, a letter exactly similar to the one you have just showed me has been received by the surviving relatives. Some disregarded it; others thought it

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pointed to an old grievance of a private nature. But your father and I long ago made up our minds that we were marked men. Your poor father himself died on the tenth of June."

"But that was in Afghanistan, fighting with men of a different race altogether!" cried Geoffrey.

"True; but how are we to know whose hand fired the shot that killed him? I heard, long afterwards, that the colonel who succeeded him in the command of his old regiment received one of those mysterious letters on the eleventh of June, though the regiment was in Calcutta, and your father was killed in Afghanistan!"

Geoffrey shuddered, and bent his head down on his hands.

"The question is, What are we to do?" said the General, once more beginning to walk up and down the room.

"Do! We can do nothing. Who can guard himself against an unseen enemy, who may strike now, or delay for years?"

"Don't say that. We can do something! I am certain that I have preserved my own life and my daughter's ——."

"Your daughter! Miss Chetwynd! *She* cannot be in danger."

"But she is—or would be if I were not here to guard her. My life is, of course, the first object. I did not dream that yours would be attempted before mine or I would have warned you."

"It would have been of no use," said the young man moodily.

"Wouldn't it? You were saved by an accident. The avengers were baulked for once. But it was only an accident. If you had known what to expect you might have shut yourself up in your room, and set them at defiance."

Geoffrey was astonished at the pluck shown by the veteran soldier. Far from being overwhelmed by the fatalistic dread that the terrible vengeance of the Hindoos was calculated to inspire, he had set himself to overcome it. His spirit was not crushed nor likely to be crushed. As he stood there, upright and bold, his eyes flashing fire, as if he were about to lead a regiment into action, Geoffrey thought he understood how it was that a few thousand Englishmen had conquered India.

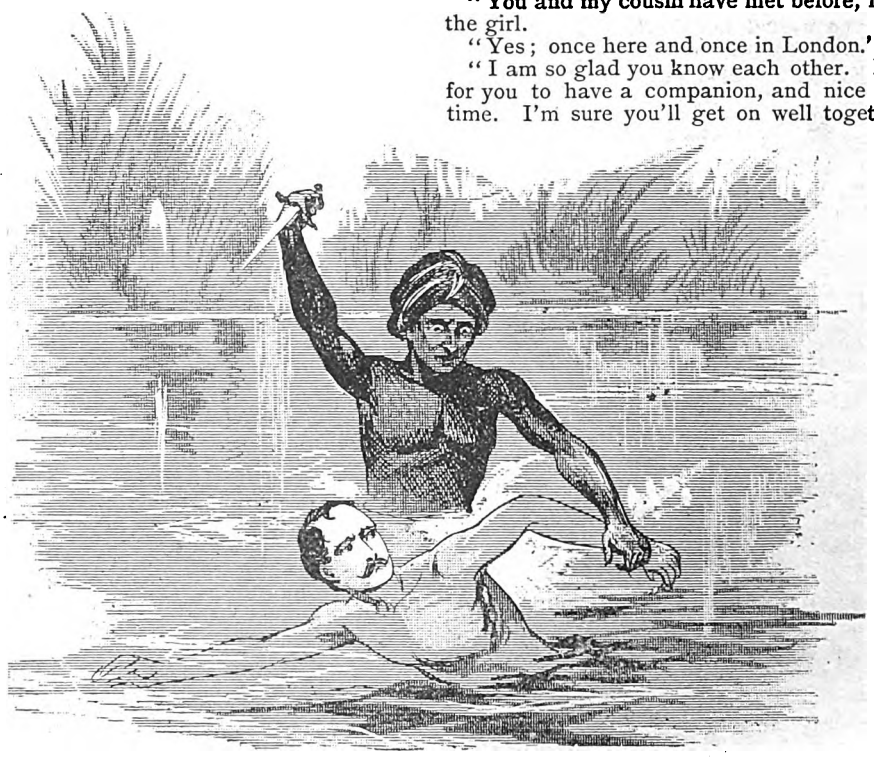
"It is time for us to be off to bed," said Sir Arthur, looking at his watch; "but I may tell you this for your comfort before you go: my chief hope is that the vendetta will die out with the men who first conceived it. I can easily imagine a set of fanatic priests conceiving and carrying out a scheme of vengeance that was to include the whole race of their enemies, and that would require many years for its accomplishment; but I do not believe it possible that they could inspire their successors with the same ferocity of purpose. It is not in human nature that they should. And India is not what it was thirty years ago. The power of the Brahmins has visibly declined since the Mutiny.

"So I hope that we—or at least you and Leila, will outlive these murderers. After all, why shouldn't we? It is only taking special precautions at a particular time of the year. This year, however, I have a special cause—it may be a mistaken one—for alarm, and special need of your help."

"I am yours, sir, to the last drop of my blood!" cried Geoffrey, starting to his feet, and holding out his hand.

"I am sure of it, my boy;" and Sir Arthur took the offered hand and shook it warmly. "And now, good night. Perhaps the incident from which I apprehend danger may not happen. If it does, you may be sure I shall make use of you if I can."

The two men parted without another word.



"His son was drowned while bathing."

CHAPTER III.

GEOFFREY'S RIVAL.

IT was the afternoon of the day on which Captain Byngham was to arrive. The General had gone to the station to fetch him; Miss Frewin was sitting at her wool-work in a corner of the drawing-room, and Geoffrey and Leila were seated by the window, awaiting the advent of the new guest.

"You and my cousin have met before, haven't you?" asked the girl.

"Yes; once here and once in London."

"I am so glad you know each other. It will be so pleasant for you to have a companion, and nice for him at the same time. I'm sure you'll get on well together."

It was with the greatest difficulty that Geoffrey refrained from bursting into a laugh. He looked at her, but she seemed perfectly serious.

"I'm afraid Captain Byngham and I have not much in common," he said drily.

"Oh! perhaps you don't like him?"

"Our tastes are different; so are our occupations."

"Yes; but you might be good friends for all that. You seem annoyed, depressed—I should say bored, at the idea of his coming."

"Well, it is only natural."

"Natural! Why?"

Surely the spirit of coquetry, which they say is inborn in every woman, prompted the question. But Geoffrey replied to it quickly enough.

"Why? Because he will naturally have the lion's share of your society. Miss Frewin and I will be a great deal 'thrown together,' I expect, during the next ten days. As for my intercourse with you, if I get 'good morning' at breakfast, 'please pass the salt' at lunch, and ——"

"Don't talk such nonsense," said Leila, blushing as she spoke.

"It isn't nonsense at all—but here is the dog-cart."

The dog-cart swept up the avenue at that moment, and Leila went out into the porch to meet her cousin, Geoffrey following her a little way behind.

Sir Arthur's cousin was a few years on the wrong side of thirty, but, like most men of fair complexion, he looked younger than he was. In appearance he was short, and decidedly stout, with thick limbs, fat podgy hands, and a bull neck. His eyes were of a light-blue, large, and rather prominent. His closely-cropped hair was fair, one might say reddish; his moustache was arranged after the approved pattern of the day.

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Fighting with men of a different race."

In spite of his stoutness Byngham was strong and active in his habits. He jumped down from the high dog-cart as lightly as Geoffrey could have done, stepped up to Leila with a jaunty "How are you, coz?" and kissed her. He then turned round and helped the General to alight, chatting with Leila all the time.

A minute or two passed before anyone remembered Geoffrey; and when the General said, "I think you have met Mr. Dundas before," Captain Byngham took care to show that he did not by any means consider the young barrister his equal. Calmly applying his glass to his right eye, he regarded his fellow guest in silence for a second, and then saying—"Ah! Think I have. How d'ye do?" he slowly extended his hand.

Geoffrey did not refuse to take the offered hand, though it cost him a little internal struggle to do so. He took care to be polite; and he considered that no more was required of him.

From that hour Geoffrey kept a good deal in the background.

He foresaw that if he were to insist on his rights as a guest, and try to secure a fair share of Miss Chetwynd's society, he must live in a state of perpetual rivalry and ill-will with Captain Byngham—a rivalry and ill-will which might at any time culminate in an open rupture. Apart from the awkwardness of carrying on a struggle of a personal nature with his host's nephew, Geoffrey felt that such a contest would be beneath him. His pride would not allow him to push himself forward where he might not be wanted; and he told himself again and again that if Leila preferred the society of a man like Captain Byngham, he would be the last man in the world to interfere with her choice.

But this did not prevent him from suffering a jealous pang, as every morning after breakfast he saw Byngham stroll up to his cousin with—"What shall we do to-day, Leila?" as if there were no one in the world to consider but themselves. The mere fact that the Captain called Leila by her Christian name—a privilege to which as a relation he was fairly entitled—was most distasteful to Geoffrey; but still more obnoxious to him was the air of protectorship which Byngham assumed towards his young hostess—a manner which seemed to say, "You are really very pretty and amusing, my dear coz; and since I have nothing better to do, I don't at all mind playing with you."

It was hard for Geoffrey to see them go off together under the feeble chaperonage of Miss Frewin, or with only a groom for escort, while he had to be content with the society of the General, or betake himself to the library. If it had not been for what Sir Arthur had said to him in the smoking-room, he would at once have returned to London, even although he knew very well that to end his visit abruptly for no ostensible reason would only be playing into Captain Byngham's hands.

Nor could Geoffrey avoid thinking that Leila might have managed differently. He felt that he had cause to complain of her treatment of him; and when, one morning, she asked him whether he would not join Captain Byngham and herself in their ride, he declined, offering but a very flimsy excuse. He thought the girl flushed as she turned away from him, and he was glad to think that he had at last made her see that he was not insensible to the treatment he was receiving.

"How are you, coz?"

He expected to see her ride off with her cousin a few minutes later, a groom following at a respectful distance in the rear; and he was surprised to see, shortly afterwards, three figures cantering down the avenue, one of them being that of Sir Arthur himself.

"Can it be," Geoffrey asked himself, "that the continual companionship of Byngham is really distasteful to her—that she is glad to get anyone to accompany them and prevent her being alone with him?" It almost looked like it; and the mere suspicion that it might be so was sufficient to restore Geoffrey to his usual good spirits. He went and had a dip in the sea, then took a walk, and managed to get a little reading done before the riding party returned.

They all met, of course, at luncheon; and Geoffrey thought that Captain Byngham looked rather surlier than usual. Leila was in good spirits; but Geoffrey

Nice, frank, ladylike girls.

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noticed that she addressed her conversation exclusively to her father and her cousin.

"Papa," said Leila, when the meal was almost over, "don't you think it would be a good thing to ask Emily and Jane Stoddart to pay us a visit just now?"

"Do you really mean it, my dear?" inquired the General, frowning a little.

"Yes, papa. I feel that we ought to invite them sometimes when we are not alone. Besides, they will help to entertain the Rajah."

"Oh, very well; have them by all means," said Sir Arthur. "The Misses Stoddart," he continued, turning to Geoffrey, "are the daughters of a half-pay lieutenant of the Royal Navy, a fine old fellow who lives a few miles along the coast. Nothing would induce him to sleep out of his own house; but he is willing to spare us two of his daughters occasionally. He can do that easily enough, for he has no fewer than five of them. And very nice girls they are."

It seemed to Geoffrey that this was a new indication that Leila did not care to be left much alone with Captain Byngham—a sign that his own case was not so very desperate after all.

That very afternoon an invitation was despatched to the Misses Stoddart, and on the following day they arrived—two nice, frank, ladylike girls. Everybody at Seacombe Towers, Geoffrey Dundas more especially, felt that they were a great acquisition. They lent an air of ease and festivity to the house. They filled the vacant places at the table; and made the dining-room resound with their merry talk and laughter. They laughed at everything, their own poverty included. Papa had brought them up to do it, they said; and they gravely assured Geoffrey that it was by far the best way of lightening that burden.

Resting after a game of tennis.

"What *is* the use of grumbling because one can't have new clothes, or nicer food, or larger rooms?" said Emily to Geoffrey one afternoon as they were resting after a game of tennis. "It only makes the privations harder to bear. Of course, we should like to go to London occasionally, and—oh! there are many things of more importance than that! But if you can't have what you want it is better just to try and think of something else."

"Upon my word, Miss Stoddart," said Geoffrey, "you are the first practical philosopher it has been my good fortune to meet."

Jane and Emily were always ready either for riding, boating, music, tennis, or whatever amusement was proposed; and best of all (from Geoffrey's point of view) the addition to the party made it much easier for him to get a few minutes with Leila now and then. He did not notice that on these occasions there was much less said than used to be the case when they were alone together. Geoffrey's supply of talk, usually plentiful enough, seemed to desert him whenever the much longed-for opportunities arrived. But happily Leila did not seem to notice that her companion's eloquence was not what it had been.

"Can you speak with me in the study for a few minutes?" said Sir Arthur to Geoffrey one morning.

"Certainly," was the answer.

"Don't let the others think we have made an appointment. Keep out of the way until they have settled down to their morning's amusement, and then come and tap at my door."

When Geoffrey presented himself in the General's sanctum, he found him pacing up and down the room. The young man had anticipated that Sir Arthur had something to say to him respecting the danger which in a few days might be at hand. Nor was he mistaken.

"Sit down," said the General abruptly. "Do you remember, on the night you and I talked over that—that business, I said that I had asked you here mainly for a selfish reason—that I wished to increase the garrison?"

"Yes, I remember."

"What I had in my mind was this. Some weeks ago I had a letter from an old friend in India, a man high up in the Government service, introducing the Rajah of Nagore, who, my friend told me, was paying a visit to Europe. The introduction was one I could not disregard. I felt that it must be honoured, and that it would be necessary for me to invite the Rajah to stay here. But I could not divest myself of a suspicion that this visit would be found to coincide with the tenth day of June.

"I have done all I could to insure the visit taking place at a different time. But my plans have fallen through. I have a letter this morning from the Rajah asking whether I can receive him quite early in the month. It may be only a coincidence; but I confess it alarms me. I would give anything to put off the man, but I cannot do so without offending, and, in all probability, injuring my friend in India. The Rajah will be here—my guest, free to go and come as he pleases, with his own countrymen at his beck and call, on the tenth of June!"

"But, General, you will not permit this, surely? The danger is too great!"

"It may be purely imaginary," interrupted the General. "That is the worst of it. I have no shadow of an excuse to offer, either to the Rajah, or Lord ——, or my friend in India, for shutting the door in the man's face. For that matter, he comes from a part of India a long way off from Churruckpore. But for aught I know some member of his train may be an emissary of the priests. They may even have arranged the time of the visit."

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"At least, sir, have Miss Chetwynd sent to a place of safety," urged the young man, forgetting that he was allowing his anxiety for her to appear too plainly in his face.

"I cannot bear that she should be out of my sight," said Sir Arthur; "and fancy she may be safer here than anywhere else. Elsewhere she would be undefended; and I have an idea that those assassins strike first at the weakest and the most defenceless."

"Have you thought of any precautions that might be taken?" asked Geoffrey after a pause.

"The Rajah will probably have his own cook," said the General, "and I will take care that he does not have access to the regular kitchen. I will give a hint to the housekeeper and the cook, and tell the butler to open the wine in the dining-room, under my own eye. We must give no opportunity for anything like violence; and if necessary I shall not hesitate to tell the Rajah my story. I may be able to learn from his face whether he knows of it already. If he does he will understand that if anything happens to us while he is in the house he will be suspected. For myself, I mean to carry a revolver during his visit."

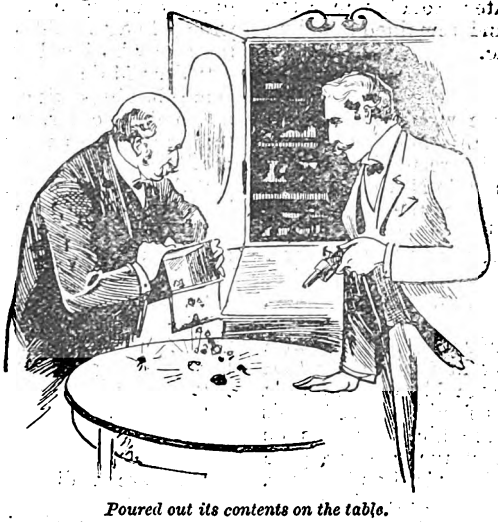
"I will do the same," exclaimed Geoffrey. "I will run up to town to-morrow and buy one."

"You needn't do that; you have only to help yourself," said the General; and opening the door of a closet he displayed a small armoury, containing a variety of firearms.

"What have you got there?" asked Geoffrey, pointing to a small black box which rested on a shelf by itself.

"That," said the General, with a queer look at his companion, "that contains a handful of jewels which I had snatched from the altar before the fusillade in the temple. Somehow I have never cared to have them set. I might have sold them; but as the Seacombe property came to me soon after I left Churruckpore, there was no need. Would you like to see them?"

Without waiting for an answer, Sir Arthur selected a key that hung on his bunch, opened the box, and poured out its contents on the table. To Geoffrey, who knew little about gems, there was nothing remarkable about the stones, many of which were uncut. But there was one exception. This was an opal as large as a blackbird's egg, and marked by this strange peculiarity—it was *black!* That is to say, it was so dark that at a little distance it seemed perfectly black. Yet the usual iridescent colours—green and red, and orange, and blue were there, glowing in the black depths of the stone as if their light was fed by some invisible fire.



Poured out its contents on the table.

"That is a strange stone; I should think very valuable," said Geoffrey, taking it into his hand.

"Yes, I daresay," said the General.

To Geoffrey's surprise there was an uneasy look on the old man's face. He seemed disturbed until the singular-looking stone was returned and safely locked up.

"Do you share the common superstition about opals?" asked Geoffrey.

Sir Arthur turned aside the question without directly answering it.

"Choose your own weapon," he said, "and be sure that your cartridges fit."

Thus brought back to the business in hand, Geoffrey chose a plain but serviceable revolver, and carried it, along with a box of cartridges, up to his bedroom.

(To be continued.)

The King's Favour

"ARISE, marquise," said Louis XV., fervently, giving his hand to the young woman prostrate at his feet. "Your name lifts the latch of our hearts as of our door; we have nothing to refuse the daughter of one of our bravest servants, the wife of one of our highest noblemen. Speak boldly; what do you wish?"

"Sire," replied Mme. de Navaille, sorrowfully, but with firmness, "I implore your Majesty's permission to withdraw from the Court and to enter a convent."

"Withdraw from our Court where you have just arrived, to take the black veil of the religious order when the white marriage veil has scarcely slipped from your brow!"

"Might it have pleased Heaven never to have placed it there!" faintly breathed the poor woman.

"What are you saying, marquise? Have you reason to complain of M. de Navaille?" inquired the monarch, in a kindly manner.

"Less of him than of another, sire."

"Has anyone failed to show you due respect, madame?" replied the king, gravely, in a doubting, slightly ironical tone.

"My life has been broken, all my hopes of happiness blasted."

"Who has done this?"

"An august and sacred person, whose humble servant and subject I am—your Majesty."

"I!" cried the prince, with unfeigned astonishment. "How so, if it please you?"

"Alas, sire, by a word, a smile!" answered Diane de Navaille, with a touch of charming melancholy. "Kings are the reflection of God; as He, they give life—and death. Their admiration adorns beauty, their disdain adds to homeliness—and I am homely, sire."

"Oh, marquise!" gallantly protested Louis XV.

"I am homely! I know it; it is not my fault; could I have chosen my face, most assuredly I should have chosen one less disagreeable to your Majesty."

"But it is not disagreeable; on the contrary——"

"Your Majesty is too good! I am homely, it is a fact——"

"Debatable."

"But is it kind of your Majesty, so favoured by Heaven, to make me feel it so cruelly?" continued the complainant, not allowing herself to be disconcerted by this interruption.

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"Such a thought is far from me, marquise, you have misunderstood——."

"No, sire."

"Then it is I who am in the wrong," said the monarch, smiling with a pleased assurance. "Let it be so! The guilty one is ready to make *amende honorable*. Make your complaint, Madame; but first of all be seated, since you are my judge."

Then, with that courtesy towards all women, beautiful or homely, duchess or work-woman, inherited from his ancestor, the king led the marquise to a chair and remained standing before her in the most respectful attitude.

II.

Mme. de Navaille had said truly: she was homely. But till the day of her presentation at Court this homeliness had offended no one, not even the one most interested in her, her cousin and *fiancé*, the handsome Roland de Navaille, officer in His Majesty's guards. Surfeited with the pretentious beauties of Versailles, whom he disdainfully qualified as so many dolls, he found a new pleasure in the little wild flower that grew for him in the shadow of the old Brittany *donjon*, thinking as little of comparing her features with other women as the eglantine with the rose.

Besides, Diane was lovable, *spirituelle;* she dressed with taste, and the harmony was so perfect in the setting that surrounded her that Roland readily gave his consent to a marriage long determined upon by both families, and led his wife to Versailles to present her to the king. It was on leaving this memorable presentation that the new marquise noticed a troubled scowl on the brow of her lord and master. For the first time he was sullen, disagreeable, even forgetting when leaving her to kiss the ends of her rosy fingers, the more unpardonable as Diane had a beautiful hand—dainty, slender, aristocratic, a really lovely hand—proving better than all the parchments in the world her right to the society of the Court.

"Wherefore this cloud in the clear sky of this radiant day?" Mme. de Navaille questioned herself vainly. All had passed off to one's heart's desire; her toilet was irreproachable, her manners, without a flaw, had merited the approbation of the Countess of Egmont, a former mistress of this difficult art; not a breach of etiquette, not a slip in the ceremonial. His Majesty had been perfect, his gracious words still echoed in the ears of the young wife:

"We congratulate you on your choice, marquis; it justifies your motto: *Oncques ne crains*. Mme. de Navaille will honour our house and our Court."

As a compliment—was it really a compliment? Why, then, had the old nobleman, the *Maréchal de France*, Richelieu, looked at her with so much scorn, as with a fillip he scattered his snuff over his shirt front? Why had the king, noticing this look, suppressed an almost imperceptible smile? Why, catching the flying glance and smile, had Roland scowled?

III.

Alas! Yonder, in the depths of her own Brittany, Diane was only plain, at Versailles she was homely. This word falling, as was said, from a royal mouth had condemned the poor woman, and she bitterly regretted having come to the Court. With what a charming reception she had met? She had nothing to fear, neither rivalry, nor jealousy, nor backbiting, nor calumny.

"Mme. de Navaille is impeccable," solemnly declared the most viperous prudes.

"Navaille does not need to sleep with his ears open," grinned the young courtiers.

"Do not laugh, gentlemen; honour the unfortunate man's courage," repeated the Duc de Richelieu, cackling like an old dowager.

Some of these remarks reaching the ears of the marquis were acquitted at the point of his good sword. But the wound to his self-love was not so easily healed; he grew gloomy, sullen, reserved, and completely deserted his young wife.

Diane did not complain. Too proud to show her suffering, too brave to abdicate without struggle, too subtle not to divine the cause of neglect, she went straight to the king and demanded a reckoning for her lost happiness with an audacity that amused and interested the monarch. Besides, if homely, Mme. de Navaille was endowed with piquant and expressive features, unusual keenness, added to eyes sparkling with malice, a smile of a demon and the voice of an angel. Her small body contained great self-assertion, knowing perfectly well what she wished and wishing it intensely. The king listened to his virulent accuser with great courtesy and some pleasure; humbly confessed his wrong-doings, and offered to repair them by punishing the refractory husband severely.

"Your Majesty would make me still more odious," sighed, somewhat hypocritically, the disconsolate Ariadne, "love is not made to order, and all your royal power would not suffice to bring back to me the heart your disdain has stolen from me."

"Perchance, marquise—Achilles' lance healed the wounds it made—and if you would but lend me some assistance—"

He told his plan; she listened, as perplexed and blushing as a young village bride.

"Your good taste will be questioned."

"The king's taste is always the best in the eyes of his courtiers," said the monarch with the philosophical irony of the celebrated. "After me the deluge. For my part I fear but one thing."

"What is that, sire?" ingenuously inquired the marquise.

"To burn my fingers playing with fire."

IV.

"I have a disagreeable communication for you, my dear marquis."

"I am at your Majesty's orders," replied M. de Navaille, the towers of the Bastille dancing before his eyes, as he had been called into the presence of the king after the long audience with his wife.

"A bitter sacrifice for a young husband——"

"Now we're coming to it," thought the marquis.

"——as much in love as you must be," calmly continued Louis XV.

Roland winced.

"I have just informed Mme. de Navaille of her appointment as lady of honour to my daughter-in-law. The Dauphine desires it unconditionally."

"Oh, sire! such an honour——"

"Deprives you somewhat of your wife, marquis, but we will find compensation for you; the first provincial regiment at our disposal will be put under your command——"

Roland left the presence of the king with more anxiety than he wished to acknowledge; the perplexity, the evident zeal of the monarch had not escaped him, and the favours falling so abundantly upon the heads of himself and wife moderately reassured him. Distracted, preoccupied, he pondered over the royal words. A compensation? For what? A regiment—provincial. Did they wish to be rid of him? Why? A fleeting idea passed through his mind: was it—Diane? Nonsense! Was it possible?

"My sympathy, Navaille!" said one of the gentlemen equerries, stepping up to him familiarly. "You come from the king looking somewhat sheepish. Has your wife recalled you back to duty—to the conjugal fireside?"

"You are far from the mark, my dear sir," returned the young man, assuming a careless manner. "On the contrary his Majesty has appointed the marquise as lady of honour to the Dauphine and promises me a regiment."

"Hear, hear, hear!" said the courtier, with a peculiar inflection, as he had already noticed with what particular courtesy the king had dismissed the fair suppliant.

"In any case, my compliments, my dear sir; you can but be satisfied."

"Charmed!" replied Roland in a funereal tone.

V.

That evening, as foreseen by His Majesty, the marked attention the king gave the new lady of honour was noticed by all; moreover, it became more pronounced day by day.

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His eyes did not leave her, he chatted with her familiarly, laughing and joking like a young man. Diane returned his sallies with a spirit worthy of the Mortemarts, bringing to mind the celebrated favourite of the *Roi-Soleil*. The periwigs turned like so many weathercocks in the direction of the royal breeze.

Mme. de Navaille was soon the object of every eye, Dazzled by this new planet, even M. de Richelieu, so disdainful on the day of her presentation, recited to her his most flowery madrigals. The men, discerning in her a thousand unknown and charming attractions, the women a thousand frightful defects unperceived till now, biting their lips and disdainfully pouting, gave a sure guarantee to her triumph.

As to Roland, furious, vexed, he champed his bit in silence, trying in vain to pierce the circle of courtiers who surrounded her. She was his wife! By what right had they dared to steal his treasure? A furious temptation to snatch her from this crowd and carry her far, far away, penetrated his whole being. Was he forgetting his indifference, his disdain! The old love was born again within his heart. Diane was now in his eyes, as in those of all the Court, the most adorable, the most beautiful, since the king had distinguished her.

This punishment lasted an entire week, for the poor husband could not succeed in reaching his wife; he was obliged to restrict himself to ferocious glances, inordinate pantomimes, which seemed to amuse the marquise very much whenever she deigned to notice them. M. de Navaille tore his lace frills, beat his servants, lashed his horses. His vexation turned to rage; he accused Diane of ambition, of perfidy.

It was even worse when, one morning, he received his commission as colonel from the Dauphin, with an order to join his regiment immediately—at Strasburg! Astounded, he was yet obliged to receive the congratulations of his comrades; to thank the king, making the best of a bad bargain; to leave, after exchanging a simple good-bye with his wife, who replied to him by a gracious bow.

VI.

"Most assuredly, marquise, M. de Navaille does not love you as you deserve to be loved," said Louis XV., noticing Diane's dejection.

"Alas, sire, I fear it is so."

"And hope it is so."

"Oh, sire!"

"To submit so readily, to forsake such a heart as yours, is to undervalue its worth?

"What could he do, sire? The commands of a sovereign must be obeyed."

"Nonsense, marquise! A man really in love braves all for the one he loves. Had I been M. de Navaille I should have wheeled about at the first relay and returned to Versailles."

"Your Majesty would, then, absolve him for doing so?"

"What, has he dared——"

"I did not say that, but in case it should happen that——"

"On my honour, marquise, I do not know, for the temptation would be great."

"Your Majesty is jesting."

"No, madame, I am just as earnest as I am sincere."

"Let his Majesty recall his first impression, the true one!"

"I remember but one thing, and that is that you are adorable and adored!"

"Sire, you are making light of all this. Your Majesty promised me——"

"To return you to your husband on the first requisition; but he does not demand you of us, he leaves without looking back, without a word, without a letter. Let us profit by his negligence."

Diane opened her mouth to reply, but quickly bethought herself as she carelessly toyed with her ruff. She was a clever and resolute little body; if regretting her imprudence, and trembling for having thrown herself into the wolf's mouth, she dissembled her fear beneath a smile.

"Grace, sire. Permit me to await as many days for the return of Ulysses as Penelope awaited years."

"When this time is passed, and he does not return——"

"Then, sire, you may put me to the test—I shall be no wallflower."

"You are delightful."

"It will be fair play, will it not, sire? And if he returns there will be no Bastille awaiting him?"

"I swear it," replied the monarch with some hesitation, consoling himself with the words of the Duke de Guise: "He would not dare!"

VII.

The marquis had dared. Returning at full speed, he has succeeded in sending a note to his wife, begging her, in the name of his honour and his love for her, to accord him an interview. Kneeling at her feet, kissing her hands with the most tender protestations, he besought her to fly with him from the dangerous love of the king.

"But, my friend, you are crazy! The king loves me! I, so homely! I even doubted your love!"

"Do not doubt it, Diane! I love you; for you I would brave exile, prison, death. I love you!"

He meant what he said. Diane listened to him, laughing to herself at the mobility of human vanity. But, being a woman of as much heart as mind, she was indulgent, and allowed herself to be convinced.

. . . . . .

The next morning, on rising, the king found a cleverly written note awaiting him, signed "Penelope," apprising him of the circumstances and reminding him of his promise.

"The little masquerader!" he exclaimed, "she has played us both a trick."

But as he was a good prince he pardoned the "pretty homely one."

M. de Navaille never suspected the truth.

The marquise, judging that discretion was the better part of valour, left him in ignorance, and was happy in his love for more than fifty years.

"Ha! ha! my boys," he would say with his cracked voice, "I was obliged to kidnap your grandmother from the late Louis XV., who was a *connoisseur* in pretty women and very much in love with——."

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THE ACCIDENT AT THE FOUNDRY.

TWENTY years ago I was employed as an inspector of engineering work of various descriptions, chiefly connected with railways manufactured in this country for export to one of the colonies. This occupation brought me constantly in contact with the production and working of iron in all its various branches and in many different parts of the country.

At the time I refer to, a large contract had been placed with a firm in the North of England for the material of an important iron bridge, for the supervision of which I was responsible. This work included the casting of some heavy iron plates of rather complicated design for the caissons of the foundation.

The foundry where my plates were cast was a large open shop, a hundred yards in length and of great height. Across one end of it, at about fifteen feet from the ground, was an iron platform supported on columns, and the mouth of the "cupola," or melting furnace, which supplied this end of the foundry, was on a level with this platform.

In the centre of the platform was a deep bay or recess, to receive the casting-pot—a huge iron cauldron holding some eight or ten tons of molten metal. This was suspended by chains from a massive iron crane erected on the platform. The movement of the crane carried the casting-pot to and from the mouth of the furnace, and enabled it to be placed over any of the moulds within reach, so as to run the metal where required.

The next running was to take place in the early morning, before the breakfast hour, and the last thing at night I went round to examine the moulds and discuss our difficulties.

The manager of the foundry department, whom I will call Mr. Conyers, happened to be an old friend of many years' standing. He had been a foreman at the works in Sheffield where I served my time, and was an excellent fellow, for whom I had the greatest regard. After talking over the coming day's work with him, we went into a small office partitioned off at the end of the shop under the iron platform, and I made one or two sketches relating to the castings, after which we left the shop together.

"I am going down to Sunderland by the morning express for a couple of days," said Mr. Conyers. "Would you mind wiring to me if you want anything special?"

I assented, and shortly afterwards we parted.

The next morning, soon after six o'clock, I was again in the foundry, where a gang of men were preparing for running in the next charge for our plate-moulds. As the operation required prompt movement and separate attendance at each mould, they were standing round in a circle, each man ready to do his own part.

The blazing stream from the cupola was already filling up the great vessel hanging at its mouth, and the men at the crane were waiting to bring the charge out over the moulds. As soon as the furnacemen with their irons had lifted off one or two flakes of scum from the glowing surface, the casting-pot began to move majestically outwards through the recess, when a mishap occurred, of a kind, unfortunately, too well known in these risky operations.

On a small trolly, underneath the platform, there happened to be standing a long cast-iron rib belonging to some girder-work, which had been cleared from the mould, and was waiting to be moved away. Up to the moment of bringing out the present charge from the cupola, nobody had observed that one end of this rib, as it stood in the shadow, projected between the columns just far enough to touch the side of the casting-pot as it passed clear of the platform. It was but a matter of an inch or two; but, as ill-fate would have it, just sufficent to tip the great pot forward on its pivot, and cause the weight of the molten mass inside to overbalance it.

The next moment the whole charge of seven or eight tons of liquid iron was poured forth in one tremendous cataract of fire upon the floor of the foundry.

Of course there was a frantic stampede among the men, every one of whom flung down his tools and made a dash for the far end of the shop. They most of them knew by terrible experience the common results of such accident—namely, that the damp sand of the floor usually causes the hot metal to fly explosively all over the place.

Luckily, although it had been impossible at a moment's notice to stop the crane, its comparatively slow movement had given everybody a chance of seeing what was going to happen, and therefore an opportunity of escape. I, who being specially interested in the casting had placed myself somewhat closer to the moulds than anyone else, sprang back at once with the same intention.

But at the very instant of doing so I saw before me a sight which, even at that moment of fearful peril, seemed to rivet me to the ground.

In the very middle of the veil of liquid fire, which for three seconds streamed from the tilted cauldron to the ground, I saw standing upright, and gazing with a fixed look of astonishment and dismay at me, the figure of George Conyers, the manager!

All power seemed to have gone out of my limbs. The thought thrilled through my brain that at that moment some dire catastrophe had overtaken him also on his journey, and that the mysterious coincidence of our fate had thus brought us in the spirit face to face.

I stood still, gazing at him in like manner; and before I could move again, a splash of the melted metal flew at me, struck me on the shoulder, and instantly burned through my clothes.

For a few wild paces I stumbled back once more; and, amid the agonising pain that followed, fell on the floor, fainting.

I remained unconscious for a considerable time, and on "coming to" found myself lying in an arm-chair in the counting house, with several men around me, and a doctor at my side, whom I recognised.

"Where is Mr. Conyers?" I exclaimed, starting up as the light came back to me.

"Why, here, to be sure!" replied that gentleman, stepping in front of me, "and as hearty as anybody present at this meeting."

"Why—why"—I muttered, sinking back again. "I thought you were going to Sunderland!"

"So I am," answered the manager, "As soon as we've cleared this mess up. But the express is at 8.30, and it isn't seven yet."

"Where were you?" I said, still hopelessly bewildered.

"In the little office under the crane, of course. I rushed out when I heard the shouting, and was nearly as scared as you were when I saw you staring at me over the moulds like that."

"I can't understand it," I replied, still half regarding him as a disembodied spirit.

"Why, bless the man!" said Mr. Conyers, with a merry laugh, "how many weeks have you been mixed up with the foundry trade? Have you been an iron-worker all these years and didn't know that clean molten iron, when it is quite liquid, is *transparent* like water? I was on one side of the stream and you on the other, and we *saw each other through it!*"

Such, indeed, was the explanation of the mystery, and with all my years of experience and powers of observation, I had never taken any note of this curious natural fact. But having, as I said before, had it brought home to me in the manner just related, I think the reader will agree that I am never likely to forget it.

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Curious Experiments IN CORPULENCY

"A Mr. Russell, author and specialist in obesity, has experimentally tried the effect of administering large doses to moderate lean persons of his well-known herbal discovery, which is so marvellously effectual in reducing superfluous fat, with the result that there is not the slightest alteration or diminution of weight recorded, thereby proving conclusively to our minds that it is only the unhealthy adipose waste tissue which is destroyed, for after dispensing a few fluid ounces of his remarkable vegetable compounds he succeeds in destroying the diseased fatty mass at the rate of from 2 lb. to even 12 lb. in seven days. There can be no ambiguity about it, for any persons can test this for themselves by standing upon a weighing machine. He explains that all lean persons carry a certain amount of fat necessary for the natural production of heat in the body, but Nature has only stored up her requisite stock in the healthy system, which she most zealously guards, and thus declines to part with an ounce to the persuasions of Mr. Russell's vegetable tonic, however immoderate the dose may be, which testifies abundantly to the fact that it is only a chemical solvent of insalubrious adipose tissue. There is no doubt that the inventor of the composition must have possessed a profound vegetal knowledge in selecting this simple but peculiar combination.

"Those who resort to the pernicious products of the mineral kingdom, or even the deleterious sections of the vegetable world, doubtless can decoct something powerful but injurious in its action; such, however, require no laudatory commendation; but Mr. Russell (we herewith append his address: Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., the author of 'Corpulency, and the Cure,' 256 pages, price 4d. stamps) makes no secret of the simplicity of his treatment, and avers that the decoction can be drank as a refreshing summer drink, pleasant to the palate, yet having sufficient effect, although perfectly harmless, to remove generally 2 lb. or more in twenty-four hours. We think stout persons would do well to send for his book, which can be obtained through booksellers, or at the address given above."—*Leeds Times*, December 1, 1894.

TO METAMORPHOSE FAT PERSONS

"We were reading in the 'Penny Illustrated Paper' how to reduce obesity, wherein it says in that very excellent publication: 'The corpulent will be glad to learn how to lose two stone in about a month with benefit to health, strength, and muscle, by a comparatively new system. It is a singular fact that the patient, returning quickly to a healthy state with increased activity of brain, digestive, and other organs, naturally requires more food than hitherto; yet, notwithstanding this, he absolutely loses in weight one to two pounds daily, as the weighing machine will prove. The Book, "Corpulency and the Cure" (256 pages), containing the "recipe," can be had gratis from Mr. F. C. Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., by sending cost of postage, fourpence.' He has discovered a simple herbal remedy, most pleasant to the taste, which entirely disposes of the necessity of starving oneself in endeavouring to be rid of all superfluous matter. An interesting point, which goes to prove that the almost magical compound is beyond doubt harmless, is that in prescribing it in a tentative way to lean persons, or rather to those who carry no superfluity of fat beyond that which is required as fuel for Nature's furnace, the medicine is absolutely inoperative, attacking only that unhealthy, disease-creating waste accumulation which is the burden of the fat creature's existence. In many cases where people take decoctions reputed to be new medical discoveries to cure some specific disease, they may recover by the action of the medicine, or Nature may have effected her own cure. In the case of corpulency, if a simple remedy undertakes to reduce a person, say, 7 lb. in a week, all that one has to do is to get weighed, and thus prove it conclusively. So it is with Mr. Russell's compound, but he asks you to prove it in twenty-four hours only."—*Coventry Standard*, January 18, 1895.

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1/6, 1/10, 2/5, and 2/4 per Pound,
In Lead Packets and 3 lb. and 5 lb. Tins only.

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MADAME FRAIN'S FAMOUS FEMALE MIXTURE.

The most powerful and effective on earth.

For the most obstinate cases. Will not injure the most delicate. Price 7s. 6d. (Strongest, 11s. per bottle); post free, 6d. extra. HERBAL INSTITUTE, 1a, Hackney Road (opposite Shoreditch Church), London, N.E. Send at once stamped directed envelope for particulars and proofs. I will forfeit £100 for every testimonial that is not genuine, and they can be seen at any time.

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TO WOMEN. IRREGULARITIES OBSTRUCTIONS, &c., removed by an ABSOLUTELY CERTAIN Method WITHOUT MEDICINE. No Pills, Mixtures, or Useless Injections. *Greatest Discovery of Modern Medical Science.* Send stamped envelope for particulars, testimonials, &c., to Mrs. SHAFFER-BENNYON, 328, High Holborn, London, W.C.

ONE BOX OF
DR. MACKENZIE'S IMPROVED HARMLESS ARSENIC WAFERS
will produce the most lovely complexion that the imagination could desire. Clear, Fresh, freed from Blotch, Blemish, Coarseness, Redness, Freckles, or Pimples. Sent post free 4s. 6d.
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Dr. Mackenzie's Arsenical Toilet Soap.
1s. per tablet, 3 for 2s. 6d. Postage, 3d.
S. HARVEY, 12, Gaskarth Road, Balham Hill, London, S.W. *Beware of injurious imitations.*

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Letters to be addressed—

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RUPTURE CURED WITHOUT OPERATION, S. J. Sherman. Hernia Specialist, 64, Chancery Lane, London; 26, King Street, Manchester; now sends his new Book of *full information*, post free, **7d.**

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A lady who has permanently destroyed Superfluous Hairs on herself, will be happy to forward free, to all similarly afflicted, full particulars of a simple, inexpensive and harmless self-treatment. Send stamped addressed envelope in confidence to Mrs "T. D.," 87, Strand, London.

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QUICKLY CORRECT ALL IRREGULARITIES, REMOVE ALL OBSTRUCTIONS and RELIEVE the distressing SYMPTOMS so prevalent with the sex. Boxes 1s. 1½d. and 2s. 9d. (the latter size contains three times the quantity), of all Chemists, or will be sent anywhere on receipt of 15 or 34 stamps, by the maker,

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Beware of Imitations injurious and worthless.

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TO LADIES
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NEVER FAILS TO AFFORD
RELIEF,
GENERALLY IN A FEW HOURS.
No case hopeless, failure is simply impossible, as Mrs. Snow, of Denmark Hill, Camberwell, writes:—
"By adopting your treatment my anxiety and misery was over within twenty-four hours, although I had been daily taking pills and other things in vain. Half the quantity you sent proved effective, to my intense joy and surprise."
A sworn guarantee is enclosed with all testimonials and medicine, which is inexpensive, as one bottle at 4s. 6d. (by post, 4s. 9d.) is usually sufficient for any case.
Full particulars will be gladly forwarded to any lady on receipt of addressed envelope.
Write privately to—
Mrs. P. S. S.,
145, STOCKWELL ROAD,
LONDON, S.W.
TO LADIES

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ON SALE, with 25 per cent. Discount for Cash, or 14s. 6d. per month (Second-hand 10s. 6d. per month) on the three years' system.—Lists Free of C. STILES and CO., 40 and 42, Southampton-row, Holborn, London. Pianos Exchanged.

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NEW SERIAL JUST COMMENCED, PROFUSELY ILLUSTRATED.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 327. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 6, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

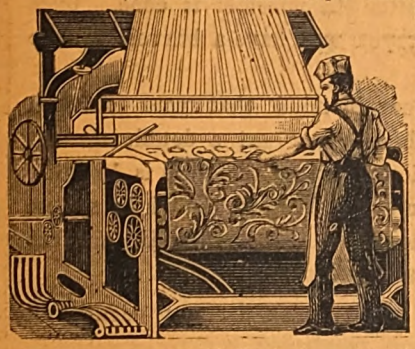
IF YOU INTEND TO BUY

Buy New Carpets at the Price of Old.

It would be ridiculous to buy old carpets, old designs, shop-worn, out-of-date goods, when you can purchase a stylish GENUINE, WOVEN, REVERSIBLE TRIUMPH CARPET suitable for Drawing-room, Dining-room, Bedroom, etc., for

4/- Each. 4s. Postal Order or 50 Stamps, **4/- Each.**

handsomely bordered and woven in fifty different patterns and colourings, to suit all requirements, and LARGE ENOUGH TO COVER ANY ORDINARY-SIZED ROOM. These Carpets will be sold as an advertisement for the goods of the British Carpet Weaving Company, below the actual cost of production. Thousands have already been sold at almost double above prices.



With every carpet we shall supply a very handsome Rug to match, for 1s. 3d. extra.

SPECIAL OFFER—Two Carpets and Two Rugs for 9s. 6d.; Four Carpets and Four Rugs for 18s.; Eight Carpets and Eight Rugs for 35s.

Money willingly returned if not approved.

The *Queen* says: "Decidedly stouter and handsomer than any of the kind, the price being the astounding part of the matter." *Schoolmistress:* "For style, durability, and cheapness they cannot be beaten." *Penny Illustrated Paper:* "Manufactured in every variety of colour, and is one of the most surprising bargains I have seen." *Church Bells:* "Truly wonderful value."

Hundreds of unsolicited testimonials are being received from delighted purchasers who have had these carpets in use for years.

Stafford Road Post Office, Wolverhampton. M. A. Dudley, writes:—"Having purchased two of your Carpets between three and four years ago, I am thoroughly satisfied, and have recommended them to several people, who I know have tried them, and are equally satisfied."

65, Abbey Street, Nuneaton, Warwickshire. "Mrs. Bostock will thank the British Carpet Weaving Co. to send her one of their Carpets, for which she encloses postal order. She has had one of these Carpets in constant wear for some years now, and finds it the best wearing and cheapest carpet she can get."

Do not miss this opportunity, it may not occur again.

CARPET ORDER FORM.
On receipt of this order form, and Postal Order or stamps, we guarantee to send any goods, as above, to your address in any part of the United Kingdom. Money returned if not approved.
(Signed) THE BRITISH CARPET WEAVING CO.

All orders despatched in rotation same day as received. Cheques and Postal orders to be made payable to J. HARGREAVES, Secretary, and crossed "UNION BANK." Address—

The British Carpet Weaving Company,
31, OLD STREET, ALDERSGATE, LONDON, E.C.

100 YEARS' WORLD-WIDE RECORD OF SUCCESS!

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INDIGESTION BILIOUSNESS HEADACHE
STOMACH & LIVER COMPLAINTS DEBILITY

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Mild in Operation, Perfectly Safe, & Free from Injurious Drugs.

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Ask for "NORTON'S CAMOMILE PILLS," and do not be persuaded to purchase an imitation.

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Please mention this paper.

TO LADIES.

English Wives should send at once for **Special Treatise and Price List of Surgical Appliances.** Advised by the Medical Faculty throughout the world. Apply, enclosing stamped addressed envelope.—M. D., 217, Graham Road, London, N.E. Please name this paper.

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To Tobacconists Commencing.

£20 See Illus. Guide. 259 pp. 3d. "How to open a Cigar Stores from £20 to £1,000." "TOBACCONISTS' CO.," 186, Euston Road, London. Manager — H. Myers. Estab. 1866. *N.B.*—Shop-fitters and Show Case Makers for all trades. ESTIMATES FREE.

BREAKFAST—SUPPER.

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GRATEFUL—COMFORTING.

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BOILING WATER OR MILK.

TOO STOUT.

IF you require a reliable remedy for the relief of Superfluous Fat, send for a box of my "H.D." Pills. No starvation required. You may eat and drink what you like yet I guarantee to either sex a permanent reduction of 5 to 7 lbs. weekly. They are agreeable to take and harmless, being entirely of a vegetable preparation, are successful in the most stubborn cases, and never fail to improve both health and figure. Their action is rapid, certain, safe, and entirely free from inconvenience. They are pearl-coated and tasteless, and highly recommended by the Medical Profession. Price 2s. 9d., 4s. 6d., and 11s. Prof. F. A. HOLT, Argyll Chambers, West Strand, London.

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For heading Notepaper, endorsing Envelopes, Cheques, and Postal Cards, Marking Linen, etc. Monograms two letters, 1s. each; three letters, 1s. 6d. each, full name in neat type, 1s. 4d each. Postage, 3d. Self-inkers, from 2s. each.

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RUPTURE CURED

WITHOUT OPERATION, **S. J.** Sherman. Hernia Specialist, 64, Chancery Lane, London; 26, King Street, Manchester; now sends his new Book of *full information*, post free, **7d.**

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As a temporary Advertisement to induce a trial of "Mosque," we will send you a Novelty, Rubber Tobacco Pouch, a Turkish Amulet, a really sensible Pipe, and Three Ounces of Ismael's Exquisite "Mosque" Smoking Mixture for Twelve Stamps.

Address P 15,
EUREKA MANUFACTURING COMPANY,
CLAPTON, LONDON, N.E.

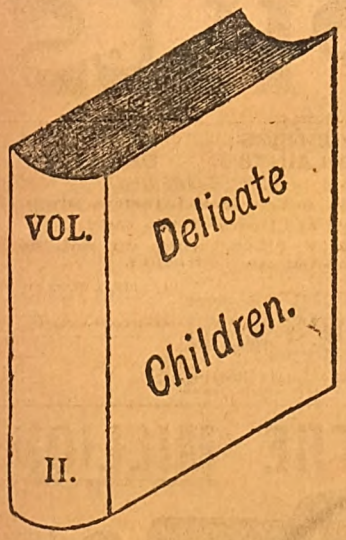
ROSY CHEEKS

and a Lovely Complexion, clear as alabaster, immediately produced by one box of our ARSENIC AND IRON PILLS, no matter how pale or bad your complexion may be at present. Price per large box, post free 2s. 9d., from—

The LONDON TOILET COMPANY,
190, Acre Lane, London, S.W.
Warranted perfectly harmless, and made from the Prescription of a most celebrated Physician.

HAIR DESTROYED.

A lady who has permanently destroyed Superfluous Hairs on herself, will be happy to forward free, to all similarly afflicted, full particulars of a simple, inexpensive and harmless self-treatment. Send stamped addressed envelope in confidence to Mrs "T. D.," 87, Strand, London.



Parents will not realize the fatal error of neglecting the first symptoms of delicacy in their children. Looking at the matter from a purely selfish point of view, it is a considerable saving to one's purse, for medical authorities all admit that one single dose of medicine given in time will be worth 999 after the mischief is done. Once allow the seeds of ill-health to sprout, and remember you will have a harvest to cope with.

If there is constitutional weakness in yourself, bear in mind that your children are liable to inherit it, and therefore that their ailments warrant a double amount of anxiety and care. If you attack the delicacy tonically before the child is 15 years of age, and it is a complete waste of time to treat it in any other way, the whole system will be built up and the nutrition of the body renewed and strengthened, and the result arrived at will be a thoroughly sound and healthy organisation.

Because your children are delicate and weak, do not imagine for a moment that they need remain so, for youth responds readily to a tonic treatment.

No matter how undermined the constitution may be, it can be permanently reconstructed by putting new blood tonically into the system.

Delicacy, natural feebleness, and languor in children cannot prevail against the curative properties of Infantina's Strengthening Syrup, which contains all the necessary ingredients for rebuilding a delicate constitution. It restores to the blood the vital elements eliminated by fragility, gives the brain its necessary stimulus, and the muscular system a new elasticity; in a word, what is lacking in failing health, it supplies. All delicacy, no matter how chronic or obstinate, will yield before it.

It is useless to patch up here and there; go to the root of the mischief and attack that, every organ will then come under its influence and become healthy. It is too well known that a delicate chest leads to consumption only when the child is imperfectly nourished; germs find no soil in a perfectly healthy body.

Infantina's Syrup must not be confounded with any of the old-fashioned out-of-date oily compounds, for it is quite different. It resembles in appearance and taste a fruit syrup, is pleasant to the taste, and far surpasses such nauseous mixtures.

Infantina Syrup is a perfect tonic for children from 2 to 15 years of age.

It is sold by Chemists at 1s. 1½d. per bottle. If you cannot obtain it promptly, remit 15 penny stamps to the INFANTINA CO., 6, Sloane Square, London, S.W., and it will be instantly sent post paid. Full instructions accompany each bottle.

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 327.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING APRIL 6, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

THE LOVE OF SISTER MARIA

THERE it was, just as it had been years ago—the long stretch of sand dazzling white in the sunshine, the high grey rocks encircling the little harbour as with a sheltering arm, the broad stretch of ocean beyond, with white caps dancing over it. Two or three fishing-boats rocked slowly in the distance, and an occasional gull swept the blue horizon with its shining wings. He felt as though he had opened a book and come unexpectedly upon a picture known in childhood, and long unseen, save in the mirror of memory.

"It is beautiful," he said slowly, "and yet——"

He did not finish the sentence, but turned and walked the length of the beach.

Strong as he looked, Percy St. John was a victim of disease—a disease which, as yet, his elastic figure, firm cheek, and bright eyes refused to indicate. But his physician's skill taught him the truth, and with feverish anxiety he watched the development of each new symptom, as a man unrolls with his own hand the paper bearing his death sentence. On this, the morning of his arrival in the little seaport, with not an acquaintance in the village, and with the words, "Here for health!" indelibly graven before his mental vision, it was not to be expected that he could look on anything with joy-seeing eyes.

He reached the end of the sandy stretch, passed round a high rock, and came upon a figure of a young girl, standing barefoot in the shallows, with a bunch of seaweed in her arms. Her back was half-turned to him, and she was singing vigorously in a clear, full voice. She saw him directly; the song died upon her lips, the red colour in her smooth, sun-burnt cheeks deepened vividly, and she dropped the seaweed on her feet, which were strangely fair in contrast with her slim brown hands.

"I beg your pardon," he said courteously. "I did not expect to see anybody here; and you—you did not expect to see anybody here; and so I have startled you."

The girl had surveyed him critically and unconfusedly as he spoke. She liked him. A smile dimpled her mouth.

"You need not go," she said quickly, as he stepped back, "unless—you want to."

"Then I will stay, thank you. What beautiful specimens of seaweed you have. Would you care to part with some?" He bent, and took up a piece like a pale pink feather.

"Take it if you like it—take it all," she urged.

"Oh, no; you did not understand me. I thought of collecting some to take home with me, and this is the prettiest I have ever seen. I wanted to purchase the rarest specimens."

"*That* you can find anywhere. Take it!" she insisted; and at the sight of the coin he had taken from his pocket she stepped quickly from the water and went a little way from him, where she seated herself on a shelf of a rock, and began to draw on a pair of queer little wooden shoes.

"Now I have offended her," mused St. John, "worse luck!" He began to gather the seaweed from the sand. "I am always clumsy nowadays. I wonder why?"

"You should see the place where it grows!" said a soft voice at his elbow; and there she stood beside him again with a childlike smile on her lips.

"Where is it? I will go to it."

"Come, I will take you; I can row," she answered. "Leave that here: there is much more beautiful growing there. That I get to stuff pillows with." She pushed away the bunch he had selected with the broad toe of her shoe; and he followed, feeling strangely glad in this human companionship of hers.

It was while the little boat danced gaily over the waters of the bay that he noticed again how pretty she was in an odd type of her own; her large eyes, as blue as the dark water around them, her little head uncovered save with her thick brown hair, that fell from it in two heavy plaits far below the waist, and her strong, sun-kissed arms waving in rhythmic motion with the oars.

"My name is St. John—Dr. St. John," he said. "I am here for my health. I hope to get strong soon and go back to my work."

She looked at him critically from under her dark lashes. "You do not look ill," she murmured. "You look big and strong."

"I am big," he admitted, smiling, "and I am trying hard to get strong. And your name—won't you tell me what it is?"

"Maria." She pronounced it as though she caressed it—in a slow, sweet fashion that sounded like "Mareeya."

"How pretty it is!" he exclaimed. "I have a little friend who has the same name: but she pronounces it as she spells it. I think I must teach her to pronounce it as you do when I

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go back. She will be so pleased to hear of you, and your beautiful home, and your boat which you row yourself." A shadow crossed his face.

"Why do you look sad when you talk of her?" the girl asked.

"Because she is a cripple. She will never walk again," he said sadly. "You know, I have charge of a big house, a hospital, where all these poor little sorrowful children are brought and cared for—hundreds of them. I miss them very much, and they will miss me; and that is the reason I must hurry and get well for their sakes."

"A house full of children who will never walk again!" Her great eyes opened wide; never in her free, bright life had she heard of a child who could not walk after it had once been taught.

"Oh, no; many of them are cured, and go out strong and well, and bright for the rest of their lives." His dark eyes glowed with happy memories of these.

Her face beamed with interest; she asked question after question, and he had hardly answered them all when they reached the cavern where the seaweed grew.

A skilful sweep of the oars brought them under the cool, grey rocks overhanging the entrance and into a floating sea of the delicate plants. She watched him in pleased silence as he raised piece after piece from the water and held them in the clearer light.

"Do you know," he said, examining them closely, "they have a deeper interest for me than their mere beauty arouses."

"Yes?" questioned the girl.

"They have medicinal properties; there is a medicine, iodine, made from them. Iodine brings strength and rest from pain to many of my poor little hospital children. I must make a collection of these to carry home with me. Who knows how valuable some of them may be!"

"Oh, may I help you?" she asked breathlessly: "I might find some very fine ones, and that might help the poor children in the home you tell me of."

"Oh, may I help you?"

He smiled softly as he thanked her, and pressed the little brown hand next to him. She had never seen so courteous and gentle a man before.

As they rowed home, with a great wet mass of the delicate grasses piled between them, she was strangely silent, with a wonderful tenderness in her splendid eyes. He saw that the story of the suffering children had sunk deep in her responsive heart.

When they parted on the beach it was as friends, and friends who had at heart a common cause. He wondered how the morning had slipped away, and she dreamed all the afternoon of long lines of snowy beds, from which pale faces looked expectantly, and seemed to feel the thrill that brightened them at sight of a handsome face, a merry laugh, a strong arm, such as she had known for the first time to-day.

Dr. St. John had just finished his breakfast next morning, and started for a stroll on the beach, when Maria came, with sparkling eyes, to meet him.

"Oh, come with me!" she entreated, forgetting, in her earnestness, any greeting. "Such a beautiful place outside the bay—such seaweed! Come!"

She was so excited that she skipped often in her walk with him to where the boat lay; and when they were in it she rowed so fast that her cheeks crimsoned, her hair streamed in unheeded riot to the wind, and her breath came through her parted lips in short, quick gasps. In vain he insisted, entreated, half-scolded; her impulsive spirit could not be suppressed, and quietude reigned not again in her heart until his own delight and enthusiasm in the beautiful spot to which she guided him brought satisfaction.

This was the beginning of a close companionship. St. John revelled in the charm of a nature the pure simplicity of which was unlike anything he had known before; and the girl's heart glowed when the fisher-folk spoke of the fine young doctor as "Maria's friend." "Fine" meant to them bright, generous, congenial. Percy St. John was all of these. He had a way of adapting himself to other people, even the simplest.

The days went by—days that brought no ripple of excitement to the little seaport, the serene monotony of which, calm with sunshine, pure with sea-winds, put new strength in St. John's veins, and, gradually, new hope in his heart. He grew stronger.

To Maria they were a revelation. No shadow dimmed their brightness until one morning, as they floated idly in the boat, the Doctor said suddenly: "Maria, I must go home in a week. I wish I could take you with me."

Her heart sank at his first words and rose at his last. He saw the light in her eyes, and added kindly, "But that would never do. You would pine there, in city walls, for your sea, and your sky, and your boat."

He was sorry he had suggested it, for her lips trembled; she bent her head, and presently a big tear splashed on her round arm.

"Never mind," he went on soothingly: "you must not feel sorry about it, because I am going to leave you something to do for me."

She looked up quickly from under wet lashes.

"I want you to stay here and row and live out in the fresh air, as you have always done, until you are well grown and strong—a woman. And then you will want to leave your boat, perhaps; and, if you do, I will send for you to come to my hospital and help me nurse my poor little children. It would be too much for you now."

She smiled a little at the thought, but looked so grave again that he was afraid for several days to broach the subject of departure.

A "wet spell," as the fisher-people called it, came after this, and during its duration the Doctor kept his room closely; while Maria, accustomed to the chilly dampness and desolation without, haunted the beach like a restless wraith, wondered at her strange discomfort, and watched and longed for the sun again.

At last it came; the sea-fog lifted, the waves danced merrily, and she waited by the boat for her friend. But he did not come, and a sudden terror seized her heart. Perhaps he was ill—and she had not known it—she had not been to see—he would think her heartless. Tears blinded her eyes at the thought. She ran as fast as her nimble feet would carry her to the cottage of old Lois, where he lived—so fast that her

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breath was quite gone when she reached it, and she must needs gasp hard as she knocked at the door to regain it.

The old woman came, grumbling, to answer the summons. "Oh, it is you, is it?" she called, angrily, as she discovered her visitor. "To come and batter my door till I think the pig is got loose, or the boat swept away; an' I leave all my dinner to burn!" With this she would have shut the door again, but the girl cried imperiously: "Wait! Tell me if the young doctor is ill."

"The young doctor! Ha, the young doctor, is it?" returned the old woman with a toothless grin. "The young doctor is gone!" With which she was gone too.

The girl's heart gave a great thump, and then sank with a sickening thud as heavy as lead in her breast. It seemed to sink quite away from her and leave her without feeling. By some impulse she pushed the heavy door open again and went in. The living room was deserted.

From the back of the cottage came Lois' shrill treble. She was singing as she cooked her dinner of fish and eggs. In front of the girl was another door. She knew where it led, and, with a wild desire to be where he had lately been, she stole noiselessly to it, opened and entered it, shutting it behind her.

Then she stood in the little study that had been Percy St. John's her hands rigidly clasped, and her great eyes staring straight ahead of her. Then a long quivering sigh escaped her lips—a sigh of relief. There between the little windows stood his trunk; on the rough table were his books. He would come back! He was not gone for ever!

The revulsion of feeling that swept over her made her head swim. Her limbs shook; she fell upon her knees and buried her face in her hands, too happy to pray in words. Minutes passed while she knelt there. When she raised her head she looked, still kneeling, about the little room once more. It was barely furnished—scarcely comfortable, it would seem, to eyes accustomed to the luxuries of life; but to her it was holy. In its surroundings she felt the spell of his living presence.

Rising slowly, she crept to the table, and looked at the books scattered over it. One was left open; she had often found him studying it on the beach. She longed to touch it; she felt she must lay her head on it, and sob her heart out; but she could not. She turned suddenly away, and almost cried out in pain, as though she had been struck.

On a chair, before her, hung the heavy jacket he wore in the boat. It seemed an unresponsive part of himself that rose before her, and mocked her with its silent personality. She went to it and bent over it, passing her hands up and down its warm roughness, in lingering caress; she slipped her fingertips into the loose pockets, where she had seen his shapely hands, that shamed her own in their whiteness, so often thrust.

In the button-hole still hung a faded flower; she had seen him put it there, whistling to himself, the last day they were together. The merry whistle rang out for her again.

She buried her face in her hands.

She threw her arm across the chair and pillowed her head upon it, crying miserably.

She was startled by footsteps in the outer room. Shuffling feet, in wooden shoes, approached the door behind her. There was no means of escape save through the open window of the little bedroom beyond. With a swift bound she reached it, grasped the sill with her hands, and, with one agile spring, was through it and on the ground beneath. Then she ran, ran, ran, until, with the tears still wet on her cheeks, she reached the boat, flung herself panting into it, and pushed out far from shore.

She did not return until the stars were reflected in the dark water. Then she crept home, tired out. She lingered in the living-room only long enough to hear them say the young doctor had spent the day at the neighbouring town, ten miles inland, and had returned late that evening to the village. Then she went silently to bed. She did not want to be questioned.

It was early the next morning, when the sun was shining gloriously, and she was stretched at full length on the sand, regardless of the fulness of its power, that Dr. St. John suddenly looked down at her and said, with his happy laugh:

"Well, little salamander, I have found you. What a runaway you are! I looked for you yesterday, to say *I* was going to run away for the day, but I couldn't find you anywhere."

She listened to him without stirring, and some new expression in her wide eyes puzzled him. Then she sat up, shaking her glossy braids free of the little sand particles. "Did you have a fine day?" she asked.

"Very. I enjoyed my new experiences; but not so much as my new home and the companionship of my little friend here." His tone was full of gentle courtesy. Its very friendliness hurt her. She sprang up.

"Did you come for a row?" she asked abruptly. He did not understand her strange, new mood. But she was a creature of moods; he did not question this one.

"No," he said kindly, "not now. I came to talk to you; I have something to show you. Won't you walk back to the cottage with me? It is there."

They went back together; he talking constantly, and she listening with pleased attention.

Old Lois was out, and the cottage was very quiet. He threw open the study door and stood back for her to enter, little dreaming with what agony she had so recently crossed its threshold. She was thinking of it, with a sudden swelling at her throat, when she stopped abruptly, her hands clasped together, and a long "Oh-h-h!" escaping her scarlet lips.

The small apartment was transformed. Table and chairs, and even the floor, were strewn with bright toys of all descriptions—quaint dolls and birds and animals, fishing-boats and fisher-folk in their native dress, long strings of rainbow-coloured shells, and half-a-dozen seagulls with outstretched wings and eyes as bright as they had been in life.

"Do you like them?" he asked at last, as she ventured a step nearer.

"Ah, beautiful!" she gasped, sinking in childlike abandon upon the floor beside them. "But what can you do with so many?"

"Can you not guess?" he questioned smiling. She shook her head.

"Why, they are for the hospital children—all but those which you like best. I want you to choose——"

"You are going away!" The words seemed wrung from the bitterness of her soul. He looked down suddenly into a white face, with piteous, upturned eyes.

"Poor child, poor little thing!" he said tenderly. "I must. I am much stronger, and my children need me. But, Maria——." He bent and laid a hand on her soft hair.

"You must not! You shall not!" she groaned.

St. John was in despair. He smoothed the thick braids soothingly. "Listen, Maria," he urged; "be sensible——"

"I cannot," she cried. "I will not. I love you—you shall not go away from me!" She raised herself on her knees and threw her strong young arms around him, holding him as though she would never let him go.

He did not speak for a moment, until her wild passion had

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spent itself in a frenzy of weeping. Then, with the tear-stained face hidden against his knees, he spoke to her again in a low voice that sounded strangely unlike his own. "My poor little misguided child!" he said, and the hand on her head trembled a little. "Listen, Maria! You *must* listen to me."

The masterfulness of his tone overcame her. She suffered him to unloose her arms and lead her to the armchair, in which he placed her. Then he sat down by her, and took the cold, quivering fingers within his own warm grasp.

"There has been a great mistake, Maria, and it is my fault." He paused an instant in pitying tenderness for the white, set face before him. She was making a mighty struggle to be calm.

"It is my fault," he said again; "I looked on you as a child, when you are a woman. I thought of you as a child, and you did not understand me——"

"I am growing fast—I will be quite grown up soon," she sobbed.

"Yes, you will be fully grown soon," he answered gently, "but you must never think of this again."

"Do you mean I must not love you?" she gasped.

"Yes, child; I mean that. You must not—you cannot——"

She threw herself downward on the table. "Why not?" she wailed. "I must—I must!"

He walked away from her the length of the narrow apartment and into the sleeping-room beyond. When he came back she lifted her head slowly, and he laid a tiny velvet case in her hand. It enshrined the fair face of a woman—a young woman, with a halo of bright curls above her brow and a joyous smile on her lips.

"This," he said reverently, "is my wife."

The girl gave him one wild, despairing look. Then she put the picture from her and got up.

"Let me go!" she said fiercely.

"Then you will not say good-bye to me? You will not let me tell you how sorry I am; you will not let me help you!"

She looked at him helplessly, with eyes the desolateness of whose misery wrung his heart.

As he took both her hands and pressed her into the chair once more, she did not comprehend how it was that all the spell of his old influence came over her and kept her there—kept her great eyes reading his face while he told her gently of the sweet-faced woman who, for a year, had been his own; how she missed him and longed for him with an intensity of love unutterable; how, if Maria would come down to them for a visit, his wife would welcome and love her and make her their own.

She grew quite calm while he talked. Her heart seemed to have broken with that last great blow. She took her hands from him quietly enough.

"I must go now," she said wearily; "good-bye."

She got up and put out her hand to him again without looking at him. He took it in his own, and drawing from his watch chain a little cross, brilliant with rubies, laid it upon her soft palm.

"I want you to have this as a keepsake, Maria," he said. "I have always intended to give it to you when I went away. Won't you wear it and think of me often, and how I will remember you always and hope to see you soon again?"

She watched it glittering for a moment before she said simply, "Yes."

Then she turned to go, without a backward look.

"But this is not really good-bye, you know," he called after her. "I am not going until to-morrow morning, at five; I will see you again."

Soothed the fevered hand within her own.

But the day grew to noon's splendour and evening's shadow, and the night came on unheeded by the girl who lay hidden in a crevice of the rock by the sea—lay with her face half-buried in the spray-kissed lichen, her hands convulsively clasping the little jewelled cross.

When morning came she lifted herself stiffly, and the wan light showed a face which bore the imprint of years of suffering. She had hoped to die in that long, silent night.

She sat shivering—that deadliest of all shivering that is not from cold—and saw the boat come near, and land. She heard her own name called long and shrilly from the beach. She could even see them as they stood in the early light, the group of faithful fisher folk assembled to see the young doctor safely on his journey.

She strained her eyes until the familiar figure came in sight and moved briskly among them, lingering, she knew, for a hearty handshake, a word of thanks, a kindly wish for each one. And she—she would never hear him, touch him, know him near her again! She shrieked aloud, but the remorseless wind beat the echo back upon her.

Once, as he approached the boat, he turned again; not towards the little crowd he was leaving, but in the direction of the tiny hut she called her home; he looked intently, paused, waved his hand, and disappeared. And all was darkness.

Ten years later, and still the long rows of cots in the Hospital of the Holy Innocents were full of patient child-sufferers. For patient the gentle innocents seemed ever to become.

But they were not the same children that had been there ten years before. Some of them had been sent back to happy homes and friends, cured; some had no homes awaiting them, had learned to look upon these rooms as home, and had stayed to nurse, with tender care and tender sympathy, long-sufferers such as they had been.

To these last the little invalids were never tired of turning for the restful tales they told of other children, who, in wretched pain, from which nothing but death could ever bring relief, learned to look forward bravely to that time, and even to welcome it. The beds of these were made in the sweet, old garden, flower-covered; where the little ones, in death as in life, grouped close around the spot where rested their benefactor, their father, their dearest friend and comforter, Dr. St. John.

There was one who never talked of this; who moved about serenely in her soft black gown; whose every touch was calm; whose face was peace itself. "Sister Maria!" the little voices called. And in the night she sought their beds of pain; and, sitting in the shadow, soothing the fevered hands within her own, she told strange, lovely stories of the far-off sea; a strong, bright girl, untouched by pain and care, who lived there once, and rowed her own brown boat, and knew the caverns where the seaweed grew; learnt how to tame the wild sea-birds, and where to find the rainbow-tinted shells that never ceased to murmur of their home. Daylight would come before they dreamed that the long night was gone. And with its cooling balm, soothed by the caressing of her tender voice, the child would fall asleep.

Then Sister Maria noiselessly flitted from bed to bed, drawing the curtains to keep out the growing light. When her last mission for the night was done, she always went to the old window that overlooked the garden, fell on her knees, and offered up her morning prayer to God. And at its close she lifted the rosary that hung ever to her side, and pressed its cross of rubies to her lips.

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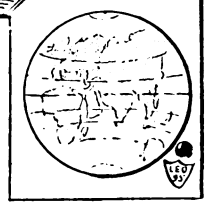
A SIMPLE MISTAKE



AFTER I had received a diploma from one of our venerable universities, I felt that I could not do better than to complete my education on the Continent. As I wished to perfect my already excellent knowledge of modern languages, I thought residence in some continental town would enable me to accomplish both purposes.

Whether I chose the University of Göttingen or Heidelberg, I do not care to state; and, if the ingenious reader can learn from internal evidence that I pursued my studies at neither of these great institutions of learning, let him not be surprised. I prefer not to indicate precisely the scene of the strange happening, about which I am going to tell, for reasons which will be readily understood by anyone who attentively peruses this story.

We were instructed principally by lectures. Some of us took notes, some drew caricatures, or scrawled verses upon the otherwise blank pages of our books; and only a very few became thoroughly imbued with the enthusiasm for learning which animated many of the learned men who expounded to us the accumulated wisdom of the ages, and propounded novel theories of their own.

While I was not equally interested in all of the lecturers, there were one or two of them who deeply impressed me—none more deeply than Herr Schwartz. He was a short, thick-set man, with tightly curling black hair and beard. His nationality I am not certain about, but I think he was a German or Austrian.

He lectured upon comparative anatomy and physiology, and was an advanced and uncompromising evolutionist. By advanced, I do not mean an evolutionist of these latter days—one of the men of science who admit or explain away so much that they state nothing definitely—but one of the old and imperfect disciples of Darwin.

Outside of his lecture hours Herr Schwartz was supposed to spend the greater part of his time in his laboratory—a large and mysterious building situated upon the outskirts of the town. Much curiosity existed among the students as to the nature of the researches he carried on in this gloomy building; but never, so far as we know, had any student been admitted within its windowless walls.

Great, then, was my surprise one morning when the learned lecturer was taking a long walk with me—a thing that he had done once or twice since he discovered my intense interest in his bold theories—to receive an invitation to come with him to inspect his laboratory. My astonishment must have been evident in my expression, for he said:

"Come! Is it so strange that I should ask a student to my laboratory?"

"Indeed, no," I answered, with some hesitation, "but I imagined——"

"Yes," he interrupted, "you thought because I had never thrown open my working room to the general rabble of students that there was some mystery about it—something I wished to conceal. Ah, no! You are different; you have a truly scientific mind. To the ordinary intellect what I am doing would seem but nonsense. Incapable of comprehending me, they would see in my experiments but the vagaries of a lunatic. But once I have shown you the plan, the reason, the theory upon which I work, you will see the logical basis for each wheel and each cog in the whole apparatus."

"I am proud, indeed, Herr Schwartz," I began, but he did not wait for the end of my sentence.

"There is no reason for pride," he said, waving his hand disdainfully. "You cannot help it. You judge all things without prejudice and upon their merits. Will you come?"

"Most willingly," I answered. "When shall my visit be made?"

"To-day," he said promptly.

"But it is your lecture day," I said, looking at my watch; "and, in fact, you will have no more time than is necessary, even if you should go now to the lecture-room."

"Bah!" he answered, with a curl of the lip. "What care I for the gaping of those boobies now? It is true I have spent two years in pelting their dough faces with the crumbs of science which not one of them can receive. But now all that is past. My apparatus is at last ready. To-day it will be put in operation."

"Will it not be better, then, for me to postpone my visit for another time?" I asked, not wishing to inconvenience the experimenter.

"You do not understand," said Herr Schwartz, turning to me with a smile. "I do not ask you to come into the place so long sacred to my deepest musings, my most important researches, merely as a spectator to be amused, nor as a student to be instructed. I need help. For a long time I have been upon the look-out among the young men in the university, hoping that when the day of final proof should come I might be able to secure just the right assistance. Well, I have found the man I sought; and you are he. I cannot perform the experiment, for which I have passed years in laborious preparation, without the aid of the right brain and the right hand."

By this time we had arrived at the top of a slight eminence from which the laboratory was distinctly visible. It was a large, square building, with a hemispherical roof—not unlike an astronomical observatory. As this strange, windowless structure came into view, Herr Schwartz halted, and turning his back upon it, solemnly addressed himself to me:

"Wait," he said. "It is not too late yet for you to withdraw. You have known me long enough to be sure I am of sound mind, and to know whether you can rely upon my good faith. I assure you that in the experiment I am about to make no harm can come to you. I alone will take all risks and be responsible for all the results. That is but right, since I alone shall reap whatever benefit may spring from the momentous trial. Speak, then, and let me know whether I have rightly concluded, that I can rely upon your nationality and your intellect. Are you willing to assist me in this purely scientific experiment?"

"Herr Schwartz," I replied, after a moment's reflection, "only assure me that you will call upon me to do nothing derogatory to my status as a man of science and a—a gentleman, and I will consent gladly to aid you in any way within my power."

"I give you my word, as an evolutionist and as a scholar, that you can safely assist me upon those conditions," said Herr Schwartz.

"Very well," I answered, "I consent."

"There is no time to be lost, then," he answered.

We set out for the laboratory, and after a few minutes stood before the heavy oak door. It was secured by a combination lock. Herr Schwartz gave the handle a few revolutions, the bolt flew back, and we entered the building, and, when the door was shut, found ourselves in perfect darkness.

In a moment, however, I heard a slight click, and the interior of the laboratory was flooded with the radiance of an enormous incandescent light.

I do not know how I can most clearly convey the impression

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made upon me by the wondrous sight which was revealed to me. Perhaps the plainest and simplest method is the best. I must trust for the rest to the imagination of my readers.

I saw that the enormous hemispherical dome that roofed the edifice had been raised to accommodate a model of the globe—a terrestrial globe. Its dimensions I cannot give; but perhaps it was one hundred feet in diameter. The electric light was so placed as to be a representation of the sun.

A large parabolic mirror seemed to take the place of our satellite the moon; more distant were other celestial bodies, while tiny lamps were grouped like constellations. In other words, I saw an orrery, but such an orrery as man had never before made.

"Go nearer," said Herr Schwartz, "and examine the machinery, It is purely artificial—I make no pretensions to the black art. But do not interfere with any of the mechanism; it is the result of months of careful adjustment."

I was speechless with admiration; for, as I came nearer, I saw that I was gazing on a dwarfed world. I said something of the sort, when I had recovered from my first stupefaction.

"Yes," said the maker of these marvels, "you have comprehended it. As the Chinese and Japanese dwarf trees, I have a dwarfed world. I have made some wonderful discoveries. I have replaced gravitation by electricity; have made an artificial solar body; have produced artificial temperatures, and, in short, have created a world in miniature; but a world that is, save for some few inferior forms of life, uninhabited.

"You see upon this tiny (for tiny it is compared to the world whereon we dwell)—upon this tiny world an ocean rolls, continents exist, vegetation flourishes, and the seasons pursue their wonted round. The animal life is restricted, for a purpose, to a few forms—to such as are necessary to sustain life in the human being. The purpose of this great invention—for modesty over such an achievement would be absurd—will soon be revealed to you."

"It is truly superhuman," I said. "It seems to move as I look upon it."

"It does," he answered proudly. "It is essentially a new world. But let us not waste time in boyish wonder. All this is not a toy, but a piece of scientific apparatus."

"But what purpose can it serve?" I asked, after a few moments of bewilderment.

"After years of investigation," said Herr Schwartz slowly, "I have learned the history of the development of man. I have slowly unravelled the links of the chain extending from man as he exists to-day to the mere potential nomad. You, too, have surveyed a part of that wondrous story literally wrung from the heart of the rocks."

"Yes," I said, hesitatingly; "but the—'missing link'?"

"I have several skeletons of the 'missing link,'" said Herr Schwartz. "That is the very least of my discoveries. My thoughts for years have not been busy with the past of evolution. My dreams—nay, reasonings—my inventions, and my discoveries have dealt with its future. But enough. The experiment will make all clear to you where words piled upon words fail to effect a beginning. A few short explanations and we will proceed to deeds; and you will see for yourself whatever now seems obscure. Sit down."

"Listen," said Herr Schwartz, "and, unless it be necessary, do not interrupt me. You have seen the apparatus. It only remains for you to know that I have discovered a method of reducing my own size to such dimensions as to fit me to dwell upon the miniature earth you have already examined. This method is simple, effective, and entirely harmless. But for the present I shall not reveal it. Suffice to say that I shall utilise this method, and shall then allow you to place me upon that globe, selecting that part of India which is the cradle of the human race.

"Previously I shall have taught you to control and operate the mechanism whereby the little world is actuated. Having placed me, then, in the proper spot, you will by gradual degrees increase the speed of the earth's rotation. The effect, as I know from some minor experiments upon inferior animals, will be to greatly—indeed immeasurably—increase the rapidity with which evolution operates.

"Meanwhile, the tiny being which I have become will devote himself with all his powers to develop all his higher and nobler attributes. The result, I am sure, will be the production of an unimagined type of man. I will become an individual, so highly evolutionised, so supremely developed, and that what I am now, compared to an ape, I will be then, compared to my former self."

"And then——" I began.

"Silence!——for a moment longer," said Herr Schwartz impressively. "I have not done. Then you must stop the revolutions. A bell will strike for a signal. Take, then, the portion of that earth's crust upon which you know me to be—in fact, you might take the whole of India, as it is but a light burden—and carry it into the open air. There you will see the result of this experiment. What it will be, I know almost beyond the possibility of error. But you shall not have the supreme happiness of that moment destroyed by anticipation."

It was now about noon, and we partook of a light luncheon. After the meal was finished, Herr Schwartz took me into the operating-room, and explained to me the use of the electric buttons, the regulators, the governors, the switches and brakes, the dials and indicators which set in motion and controlled the complicated and beautiful mechanism by which his whirling globe was operated.

Mechanical matters had never offered any puzzles to me, and in a short time he pronounced me capable of performing the *rôle* he had entrusted to me. Then we proceeded to another apartment. He entered a small cabinet, after supplying me with a powerful magnifier, and told me when I should hear the stroke of a tiny bell to enter the room and take from over an alcohol lamp a small retort.

"By examining with the glass," said Herr Schwartz, "you will see that I have become a mere atom of humanity, too small to be seen save by a powerful lens. Place the mouth of the retort over the spot in India, which you will find indicated by a metal pointer, and then retire to the operating-room and set the machinery in motion. The process ought not to take over a few hours, and may be much shorter."

"Good-bye," said the experimenter with a smile, "and remember, whatever happens, the results are mine alone."

With a hand-shake we parted, and Herr Schwartz entered the transforming cabinet.

I do not know how long I waited. My interest and curiosity were so intense that I was hardly aware, all through the experiment, of the time which elapsed.

The bell sounded. I entered the little cabinet, found the retort over the tiny lamp, found the result to be what Herr Schwartz had predicted. There was a microscopic image of the scientific friend to whose lectures I had so long listened.

Realising the responsibility which now rested upon me, I hastened to carry out Herr Schwartz's instructions to the letter. I placed the mite of humanity upon the artificial globe, returned to the operating-room, and set the wonderful apparatus (which had been at rest during the preceding preparations) again in motion.

Gradually I added to the speed of rotation, keeping my eyes upon the dials and indicators. My great anxiety was to keep the speed at just the points which Herr Schwartz had prescribed.

There is no need to dwell upon the anxious time that followed, nor to tell the thousand thoughts and fears that pressed upon my throbbing brain. After what seemed an endless time, the bell sounded the signal—I rushed to the main hall, tore the whole of India from its place, and made my way to the outer air.

It was still a moonlight night. I placed the bit of earth gently upon the ground, and from it there arose a figure! But what was it that slowly took shape before me! Was it the noble figure of a man, grown to some grander, nobler shape?

Alas! no.

On the contrary, it was a diminutive and far from attractive *monkey*.

I saw at once there was something wrong, and my trained scientific intellect at once solved the mystery. *I had turned the apparatus backward.*

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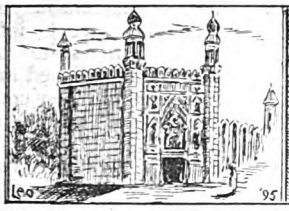
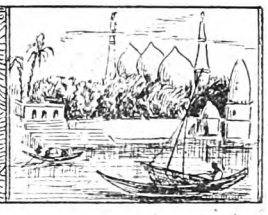


THE TENTH OF JUNE



By JOHN K. LEYS, *Author of "In the Toils," "My Hindoo Friend," &c., &c.—Illustrated by* RAYMOND POTTER.

SUMMARY.

GEOFFREY DUNDAS, whose life is attempted on the 10th of June, 1883, by a Hindoo barrister at the Law Courts, by means of poison, visits General Sir Arthur Chetwynd at Seacombe Towers, in May, 1884. The General explains that a serious danger threatens the household, and that it will come, if at all, on the tenth of June. The reason for this is that during the Indian Mutiny on this day, in 1853, Sir Arthur, together with Geoffrey's father (since dead) took part in the looting of a Hindoo temple, and every Tenth of June afterwards one of the Englishmen concerned or some member of their families is assassinated. It appears that the Rajah of Nagore is now coming to pay a visit to Sir Arthur.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RAJAH.

THERE was, of course, some excitement at Seacombe Towers, as the day fixed for the arrival of the Rajah drew near. The Stoddart girls had practised themselves in private in the art of saying "Your Highness" in a natural and off-hand manner. Leila was not free from the curiosity commonly ascribed to her sex. Sir Arthur and Geoffrey Dundas had very good reason for looking forward to the visit with unusual interest. Only Captain Byngham was, or affected to be, indifferent. He felt inclined to resent a guest of superior rank to himself being brought into the house.

"After all, the man's only a nigger," he remarked to Leila; "I don't see the necessity for all this fuss."

On the evening of the last day of May the expected guest arrived.

He travelled with his secretary and two servants, for whom separate accommodation had been provided in the house.

Sir Arthur, with his family and guests, were in the drawing-room ready to receive him; and when the butler announced in a loud voice—"His 'Ighness the Rajah of Nagore!" every one in the room rose up.

The next moment they all felt that a person of distinction had entered the room. Amavati Sastri—so the Rajah was named—came in without the least pretentiousness or awkwardness, and, singling out Miss Chetwynd instinctively from the other ladies, he advanced and bowed gravely to her in perfect silence. Having saluted the mistress of the house, he turned to Sir Arthur and held out his hand.

There was a dignity, a self-possession, in the Oriental's demeanour which, apart from his rank, compelled respect; and there was also a quiet gracefulness in his every movement which was extremely charming. For the moment Sir Arthur forgot his fears, his suspicions, and only desired to do the honours of his house worthily to so distinguished a guest.

Each one in turn was presented to the Rajah, who shook hands with each; but he performed the ceremony in such a way that one could see that it was to him a formal act of courtesy with which he was not familiar.

"Have you been long in this country, Rajah?" asked Leila, when the party were seated.

"Only a week—ten days," said Amavati in pure, musical English.

"I thought," broke in Captain Byngham, "that people of your religion lost caste when they crossed the sea."

Leila watched the Oriental turn his fine dark eyes on the speaker; and she thought she could detect a faint flush under his dusky skin, as he replied, without a trace of resentment in his voice:

"It is enough that I have come."

"His 'Ighness the Rajah of Nagore."

"I hope your highness had a fair passage," said Geoffrey hastily.

"Very fair, I thank you," was the reply, accompanied by a grave smile.

"And I hope you intend to stay some time in England," said Sir Arthur heartily.

"My arrangements are not yet fixed."

"At all events I hope you intend giving us all the time you can," said Leila.

For the first time a look of animation, of pleasure, came into the Rajah's face.

"It is gracious of you to say so, madam," he said quietly.

Shortly afterwards the dressing-bell rang, and a footman appeared to conduct the Rajah to his room, whither one of the Hindoo servants had preceded him. The other was busy over the fire in a small room which had been given him to use as a kitchen.

"I like him!" exclaimed Leila, when the door had closed behind Amavati. "I like his quiet dignified ways—so different from the vulgar familiarity of our English manners."

Sir Arthur said nothing, but smiled grimly. Captain Byngham's lip curled in contempt.

"I confess he impressed me very favourably," said Geoffrey.

"Why should you say 'I confess'?" demanded Leila, "It almost sounds as if you had made up your mind to dislike him."

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Crossing one of the glades in the park.

"Come, Miss Stoddart," cried the General in a purposely loud tone, "you have not yet given us your opinion of our illustrious visitor."

"I agree with Leila," said Emily with some decision of manner. "I think the Rajah is delightful; and as for his skin being darker than ours, I don't think it is Christian-like to think less of him on that account."

"Why, the man is an idolator, a pagan!" exclaimed the Captain.

"He was brought up in that way," said the young lady serenely, as she made her way to the door; "and I daresay some pagans are better, all things considered, than some Christians."

Of course, the presence of the Rajah and his secretary made a considerable difference in the ordinary life of the house; but the General's Hindoo guest made no demand on the time of his host and hostess. He took great pleasure in wandering about the garden and the park. If the General, or Leila, or one of the Stoddart girls, chose to bear him company, he was sure to repay the attention by some graceful compliment; but he seemed to be quite content to go about by himself. Of course, he took no part in the common amusements of the season—boating, riding, and tennis-playing. Probably in his secret soul he thought of those who joined in them very much what we should think of grown men who played leap-frog or rounders. But he was a great deal out of doors.

At any hour, from dawn to midnight, except the sacred hour of dinner, the tall, spare form of the Hindoo prince might be seen crossing one of the glades in the park, or gliding from one clump of laurels to another, followed very often, at a little distance, by the short rotund figure of Ajeer Chunder Sen, his secretary.

As a rule, Chunder Sen, when not in attendance on his master, was to be found in the library; but he was fond of pacing up and down one of the alleys in the garden, and there Dundas often joined him for a chat. He was much more communicative than the Rajah, and Geoffrey found him an interesting companion. He was never weary of extolling the power and greatness of England; and he often declared that the conquest of his native land by British soldiers was the best thing that could possibly have happened to it. This was, in a sense, gratifying to Geoffrey's feelings as an Englishman; yet there seemed to be too much of Uriah Heep's manner about the avowal. A licking often does a man good; but you would not give much for the man who would acknowledge the fact in so many words.

Geoffrey soon perceived that Chunder Sen was a man of high education, and considerable mental powers, and that he had great influence with the Rajah. But, in spite of his cleverness, his smooth and polished manner, and his readiness to please, Geoffrey could not bring himself to like the Rajah's secretary.

With the Rajah himself it was different. The young Englishman felt that Amavati was a prince by nature as well as in rank. But he had been only a short time in the house when Geoffrey made a discovery that made him look on the Rajah with anything but friendly feelings. He became convinced that Amavati had fallen in love with Leila. Every now and then the Hindoo's large dark eyes would wander to the place where Leila sat—and rest there. She was his loadstar: as often as the usages of Society permitted he would steal to her side.

Geoffrey, looking on, was at first inclined to think that the idea of Leila Chetwynd listening to the Rajah's suit was utterly preposterous and absurd. But after a short time he began to ask himself whether this was quite so certain—whether the Rajah might not be a much more dangerous rival than Captain Byngham.

There was a charm about his personality, depth in his great, melancholy eyes, a tenderness in the liquid tones of his voice, which to a romantic girl—such as Leila certainly was—might be very attractive. It could not be said that intellectually and socially he was not Leila's equal; among his own countrymen he would, of course, be considered vastly her superior.

It was impossible to gather anything from the girl's manner. She was invariably gentle and pleasant with the Rajah; but she never allowed her voice to sink even by a semitone when she conversed with him.

There was one other of the General's guests who watched the pair with much interest, and this was Emily Stoddart. She had espoused the Rajah's cause from the first; and more than once she had teased Captain Byngham and Geoffrey into something like anger by predicting a match between the Rajah and Leila, and protesting that she saw nothing objectionable in the idea of such a marriage.

"It's my idea," growled Byngham after one of Miss Emily's outbursts, "that that young lady wouldn't greatly object to marrying the melancholy nigger

She was his loadstar.

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"What! Ask my daughter!"

herself." And for once Geoffrey felt inclined to agree with his rival.

But the question of the Rajah's admiration for the daughter of his host soon passed beyond the region of mere conjecture.

One afternoon, the afternoon of Tuesday, the 6th of June, as the General and his guest were smoking under a tree on the lawn after lunch, the conversation happened to turn upon the dignity of the ancient races of India; and Sir Arthur, partly from conviction, partly from a desire to please his guest, was drawing a comparison between Eastern races and Europeans, not greatly to the advantage of the latter, when the Rajah suddenly interrupted him.

"Do you believe, then, that all the races which belong to what your scholars call the 'Indo-Germanic family,' are on a certain equality."

"Yes, I think so."

Outwardly the Hindoo was unmoved; but some seconds elapsed before he put his next question.

"Members of these races might, then, intermarry without either party suffering any loss of dignity?"

"Yes—under certain circumstances."

"Would it, then, be displeasing to you if I were to ask your daughter to become the Ranee of Nagore?"

The General started as if he had been shot.

"What! Ask my daughter!" he exclaimed. Like many another man, Sir Arthur entertained some liberal theories; but resented any attempt to apply them to himself or his family. His surprise was so great that he needed time to recover himself; and thus he was able to remember that he had no excuse for being indignant. His own words were fresh in his memory. He remained silent for what seemed a long time, and then said coldly:—

"You honour me, Rajah, by this proposal. Your rank is sufficient to justify it; and I have never heard anything but good of your private life. But this is one of those matters in which a father must be allowed to judge for himself what is best for his child's welfare and happiness. With every respect for you, I beg leave to decline your proposal."

As he uttered these last words the General unconsciously rose to his feet. The Rajah followed his example, bowed, and turned sadly away.

The General followed him.

"May I ask, Rajah, whether you have given my daughter any intimation of your feeling towards her?"

"No, beyond the small tributes of respect which you have witnessed."

"Then let me beg that what you have just now said to me may be forgotten. Let it make no difference between our relations in any way."

The Rajah quite understood that Sir Arthur meant to beg him not to shorten his stay on account of what had passed, but had too much delicacy to refer to the subject directly.

He bowed politely, yet with some haughtiness of demeanour, and answered—

"I accept your goodness, Sir Arthur, on one condition—I have not yet abandoned all hope of overcoming your—your dislike——"

"No, no; not dislike!" cried the General.

"Your disinclination, then, to think of me as your son-in-law. I still hope to win your daughter's hand. May I come back in one year's time? This time next year——"

Again the General started—started in so marked a way that the Rajah instinctively stopped and looked at him.

He had absolutely forgotten the approaching Tenth of June!

In his anxiety not to appear inhospitable he had deliberately thrown away the chance of getting rid of his Hindoo guests before the fatal day. And now the Rajah was actually proposing that he should come back at the same time twelve months hence! There was little wonder that the General threw a quick, suspicious glance at his guest. The Hindoo bore it without changing a muscle.

"What a fool I am!" was Sir Arthur's next thought. "If he wants to marry Leila he cannot be plotting her death, or mine."

"Do you forbid me to come again in a year's time?" said Amavati, with quiet dignity.

"No," answered the General, in some confusion. "No; I'm sure it's of no use, you know. It can't be of any use. But if you wish it, I should not think of forbidding your coming."

"I thank you," said Amavati. "I have already laid my plans for a journey in America. I shall return to this country in the end of May next year. Till then, we will, as you say, forget what has passed between us."

With these words the Oriental again saluted his host, and walked into the house.

CHAPTER V.

SUSPICIONS.

THAT evening the General and Geoffrey Dundas happened to meet in the drawing-room before the others obeyed the dinner-bell.

"Geoffrey," said Sir Arthur, going close up to him, "my apprehensions about the Rajah have been greatly diminished—in fact, I may say, they have disappeared. I think you ought to know, since you, and you alone, have shared my anxiety. The truth is, that this afternoon Amavati made a most extraordinary proposal to me. He wants to make Leila Ranee of Nagore."

Geoffrey suddenly turned pale.

"And you said to him——?"

"Oh, I said it wouldn't do at all. I refused him flatly. But the point is this—feeling as he does towards my daughter, he cannot be a party to any scheme to injure, much less to murder us."

"True," said Geoffrey, whose face had brightened wonderfully at the words "I refused him flatly." "True, sir; and I may say that since I have known the Rajah, I have been unable to believe——"

"Hush! not another word. Here are the girls."

After what he had heard, Geoffrey was not surprised that when coffee had been served, and the three girls had gone out on the terrace as usual, the Rajah did not follow them, though Captain Byngham did, but remained at the dinner-table with the General and himself. But not a sign of what he felt appeared on the Hindoo's delicate features.

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On account of the good news—for to him it was the best of good news—that he had just heard, Geoffrey had been in better spirits than usual, and had made an uncommonly good dinner. He felt well-disposed towards all men, and especially towards his defeated rival, as the Rajah certainly was. He entertained for his highness much the same sort of feeling that a steeplechaser has for a competitor who, after riding pluckily and dangerously well, has come to grief in a ditch.

He leant across the table and chatted to the Rajah, his friendly feeling being increased as he noticed the manly courage with which the Hindoo concealed his pain.

When the General sauntered out to smoke a cigar, the two young men did not feel inclined to move, and Geoffrey carried his glass to the other side of the table and seated himself beside Amavati.

"This must be a very different scene from the kind of landscape you have in India," he observed as the Rajah gazed silently over the wooded park that stretched before the windows.

"Yes, very different—and more beautiful."

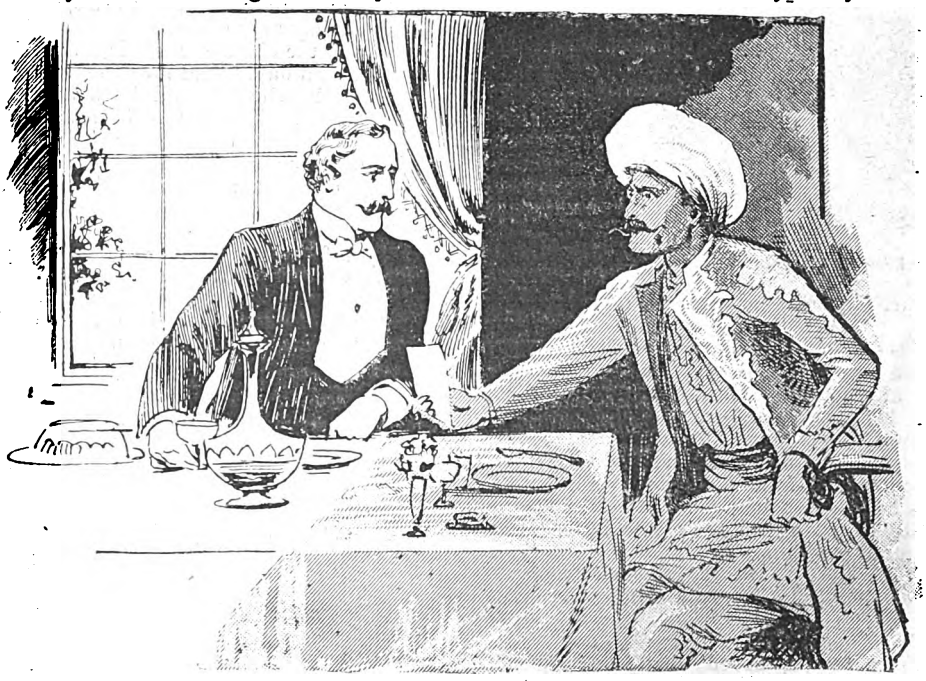
"Ah! But you have yet to see an English country landscape in winter," said Geoffrey with a laugh.

"Is it more beautiful than this?"

"Hardly. I meant that an English country landscape in winter is the dreariest scene conceivable—though I admit that when the snow is on the ground it has a beauty of its own. But I forgot. You have never seen snow, perhaps?"

"Never."

"And I suppose that no matter how you may try to imagine what you have never seen, the reality will always seem very different from the scene you had pictured to yourself."



The hand that held the sheet of paper twitched involuntarily.

"I have always found it so. Life in England is in many ways quite different from what I had fancied it would be, although I had often seen Englishmen, of course, in India. You are different from what they call Anglo-Indians?"

"In what way?"

"You are less proud and stiff, less overbearing, altogether more agreeable at home than your countrymen are in India."

"I can understand your saying that. But it is only natural. You yourself, Rajah, are a very different kind of personage from what I had anticipated." Here Geoffrey helped himself to another glass of port. "Do you know," he continued, "we entertained rather a strange suspicion concerning you before we saw you?"

"Indeed! May I ask what it was?"

The young Englishman did not answer immediately. He had suddenly recollected himself, and was dismayed at the folly he had been guilty of.

"I see you would rather not answer—pardon me for putting the question," said the Rajah. His voice was calm; but his tone was that of a man who has been ill-used, and is too proud to make any complaint. An answer of some sort Geoffrey felt he must make; and, on the whole, judging on the spur of the moment, he thought it better to tell the Rajah what had happened to himself. But he resolved that, for the present at all events, he would keep the General's name out of his narrative.

He laughed rather uneasily, and moved one of the decanters out of his way before speaking,

"Not at all, Rajah," he said. "On the contrary I feel that I ought to beg *your* pardon for entertaining such absurd suspicions about you as I confess I had in my mind before I saw you."

The Rajah was now listening with the keenest attention; and, indeed, Geoffrey's awkward, embarrassed manner—the manner of a man who finds himself in a false position, and is too honest to get out of it by means of a falsehood—was enough to excite his curiosity.

"One day last year, the tenth of this month in point of fact, I was very nearly poisoned. An unfortunate girl, who, as I believe, drank the wine I had in my glass, did actually die. There was some ground for suspecting that the poisoning was not accidental, and that the guilty person was a countryman of yours. I say I had a suspicion that it was so, but a letter was delivered next day at my chambers which put the matter beyond a doubt. It referred to a 'vendetta,' a scheme of vengeance on the part of some Hindoos, and intimated that I was one of the victims. Clearly I had been poisoned by a Hindoo barrister who had an excellent opportunity for dropping poison into my glass."

Geoffrey had been watching his companion's face closely. He detected no sign in it beyond this, that Amavati's eyes seemed to have a wider, fuller look than they had before.

"Have you still this letter?" asked the Rajah, in his usual calm manner.

"I have it still. Would you like to see it?"

"If you have no objection to show it to me."

"Not the least in the world. I'll fetch it," said Geoffrey, and tossing off the remainder of his glass of wine, he left the room. In less than five minutes he returned with the letter in his hand.

The Rajah took it; and when his eyes rested on the writing, the hand that held the sheet of paper twitched involuntarily. The sign was so slight that Geoffrey never noticed it.

"Of course, it is possible," said Geoffrey, "that the letter may be a hoax, the work of some friend at the bar with more leisure than sense. But I certainly was ill; and then there is the death of the poor girl. *That* was no hoax."

"I should not advise you to treat it as a hoax," said Amavati slowly, keeping his eyes fixed all the time on the few lines of writing before him.

"But I can do nothing to help myself. I cannot guard myself against a foe who may be lying in wait behind any corner."

"And you believed that I had to do with this outrage?" said the Rajah with a smile.

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"No," said Geoffrey, "for when I had that suspicion in my mind I did not know you. It was only because you belonged to the same race; and then the coincidence of the date was remarkable."

"The coincidence! I fear I do not understand."

"Yes," said Dundas, speaking slowly, lest he should unwittingly say more than he intended. "You see, the attempt on my life was made on the tenth of June. I have since ascertained that the affair which gave rise to this long-standing passion of revenge happened many years ago on the tenth of June. So that, when I heard that Hindoos were to be guests in the house in which I proposed to be staying on that very day in the following year"—again the Rajah gave a slight start, so slight that his companion did not observe it—"well, the coincidence struck me as odd."

"Don't you think it possible that a mistake was made—that you were taken for some other person?"

Geoffrey shook his head.

"Why?"

"Because my father was a soldier in India. He was concerned in the fight, or massacre, which happened on the tenth of June. And——" here Geoffrey's voice unconsciously sank, "and he fell on the tenth of June."

The Rajah remained perfectly motionless, still holding the letter in his hand.

"Will you allow me to keep this for a few hours?" he asked.

Geoffrey stared at him in surprise.

"Why?" he asked bluntly.

"I wish to study it."

This answer did not convey much meaning, but Geoffrey felt that he had no good reason for refusing, and answered, "Oh, if you like; but please take care of it; I should like to keep it as a curiosity. Shall we go out and smoke a cigar now? It will be quite dark in half-an-hour."

* * * *

About eleven o'clock that night Geoffrey was roused by a soft tap at his door.

In an instant he was wide awake, but he paused for a moment before answering. He knew that his bedroom door was unlocked, and he thought of remaining silent in order to see whether his visitor, who would suppose him to be asleep, would enter the room. But the next moment he had rejected the idea, and called out:

"Who's there? Come in."

There was no reply, and in an instant Geoffrey had sprung out of bed, and had opened the door himself.

"Who knocked at my door?" he called out.

Geoffrey had sprung out of bed.

"It was I," said a soft voice near him.

"The Rajah?"

"Yes."

"Just wait a minute, till I get a light."

"I need not trouble you to-night. It will do in the morning. I only came because I thought you would not be in bed."

But Geoffrey was curious to know what the Hindoo could have to say to him. He begged Amavati again to wait a moment, lit a candle, got into bed, and then called to the Rajah to come in.

He sprang to his feet.

Amavati came in, and softly closed the door behind him. He then sat down on a chair that stood near the bed.

"I wished to return your letter as soon as possible," he began, laying the paper on the coverlet.

Geoffrey took it and put it under his pillow.

"I suppose you have not discovered who the writer is?" he asked carelessly.

"I have been able to form a guess concerning it; but I am afraid I can say no more upon that point. It is, after all, only a guess. What I wanted chiefly to say to you, however, is this, do not despise the warning that your good fortune has given you. I think it is a real danger that besets you."

Geoffrey was startled by the Rajah's grave tone as much as by his words.

"You have been attacked once," continued the Rajah; "you may be attacked again."

"But what can I do to ward off the danger? How can I defend myself?"

"Your safety lies in flight. I should certainly advise you to leave England at once. Go secretly to some foreign country, and remain there till the eleventh of this month. Then, even if your fears are well founded—and I admit that I think they are—you may consider yourself safe for another year. Or you might shut yourself up in your house until the day is past, and admit no one. I see you are armed."

The Hindoo's glance rested on the General's revolver, which lay on the dressing-table at some little distance. Geoffrey could hardly understand how he had noticed the weapon, for to all appearance the Rajah's gaze had been fixed on him since he entered the room.

"That revolver belongs to the General," said Geoffrey. "But do you mean that I must hide myself, or shut myself up every year on the tenth of June?"

"That is what I advise you, and beg you to do," said Amavati. "I believe you cannot otherwise be safe."

"How do you know?" asked Geoffrey abruptly.

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The Hindoo paused a moment before answering. Geoffrey felt convinced that he was carefully preparing his reply.

"I am only giving you the advice that any cautious, any prudent man, who knew the character of my countrymen as I know it, would give you. If you doubt me, ask your friend Sir Arthur."

"The General! Is *he* in danger?"

"*He?* No! Why should he be in danger?"

"Because ——."

He stopped; then being unable to see how it could possibly injure Sir Arthur to say what he had in his mind, he went on:

"Because the General has the same reason to fear the tenth of June that I have. And so has Miss Chetwynd. I beseech you, Rajah, if you have any influence, if you can help us to lay hands on those murdering wretches, do so!"

For the first time since the interview began, for the first time since he came to the house, the Rajah showed genuine emotion. He sprang to his feet, and looked at the Englishman with something like horror in his eyes.

"No, no! It cannot be!" he exclaimed.

"It is so, I assure you. There is no doubt of it. Will you help us?"

"Is anyone there?"

"I cannot. I can do very little—nothing out of my own dominions. But what I can do, I will. I will consider what can be done. But you may be mistaken; I trust you are. Meantime, take my advice, and secure your own safety. You have plenty of time to hide yourself. I beseech you not to delay. Now I must go. Good-night."

And before Geoffrey had time to form a reply, the Rajah had gone.

Geoffrey locked the door and blew out the light; but to sleep was impossible. His mind refused to turn from the conversation that had just ended. He could not rid himself of the conviction that the Hindoo knew more than he had admitted he knew. But the main point was—Could he trust him? Ought he to secure his own safety by flight, or stay by the General and Leila? True, the Rajah seemed to think that they were in no danger, but he might be mistaken. Or, the Rajah's advice might be a ruse to get him out of the way.

The loneliness and perplexity were intolerable. After lying awake for an hour, Geoffrey was seized with the desire of seeing the General and talking over the difficulty with him. Quietly getting out of bed he threw on his dressing-gown, opened his bedroom door, and stepped out into the passage. All was quiet; all was in darkness.

On his way to Sir Arthur's room, which, like his own, was on the first floor, he paused a moment at the head of the stairs, and stopped, listening, for he fancied his ear had detected a slight sound in the library. So sure did he feel that he had heard something that he glided softly downstairs to see if anyone was there. In crossing the hall, however, his foot struck against a chair, which moved, giving out a loud grating sound against the tiles with which the hall was paved.

Opening the library door Geoffrey found the room in total darkness.

"Is anyone there?" he called out.

There was no answer.

He moved cautiously to the windows and examined them. They were both securely fastened.

"I must have been mistaken," he said to himself, "or perhaps there is a mouse behind the skirting-board. I am getting nervous and foolish. I had better get back to bed. To-morrow will be time enough to talk to the General. Why should I disturb his night's rest?"

He went back to his room, and once more tried to sleep; but sleep would not come. Perplexed thoughts, vague fears, and gloomy forebodings kept him awake till dawn.

(To be continued.)

HONOUR AVENGED

It was at the club, and we were all young fellows, gathered around the white-haired old Colonel who had found a refuge in Marseilles from his debts and his tyrant of a wife and the new customs that were pouring into Paris. More than any other man I ever knew, he had, what we call the grand air, a certain condescension to those he regarded as his inferiors, a sweetness and a simplicity of manner that those whom he liked found it impossible to resist. He belonged to the old *régime*, and the elder members of the club ill brooked his bitter tongue and sarcastic comment, but we lads of twenty-five and less hung upon his words, and would have liked to model ourselves on his pattern.

Fortunately that was impossible—heredity, early association, education, had all formed the Colonel.

"Ah, well"—he began, "for the story of revenge that I promised to tell you. It was in the year 1836 that old Detrouville died a ruined man, and to the amazement of us all old Baré married his daughter. I call him 'old Baré' because he was a grave and taciturn man, whose silent though courteous intercourse with his neighbours gradually won him that appellation while he was still young.

"Time did not tend to improve it when it gave him iron-grey hair and bent shoulders, although other men older by several years, still considered themselves gay gallants. But on one opinion all of us were unanimous: Jean Baré was a man of strictest honour, and the warmest though the most undemonstrative of friends.

"He was fifty when he astonished the world by his marriage with Blanche Detrouville. She was about twenty, a fair-haired little creature with the most innocent of blue eyes. Le Bon Dieu never made any woman as innocent as Blanche Detrouville looked. How it happened that she fascinated old Baré is a mystery—but fascinate him she did.

"He fell desperately, passionately in love with her—as one of you young blades would fall in love, and he married her, and took her out of the howling nest of her father's creditors, whose mouths he stopped with a *bonne bouche*. He set her up in his great mansion at Nouvre and loaded her with fine furniture, fine dresses, jewels, gew-gaws—what will not a man give for love?

"Old Baré had had a charge, a near neighbour, one Phillipe Doucet. This Phillipe had been old Baré's ward, and he turned over to him when he came of age a decent property. A fine fellow was Doucet: dark, slender, handsome, gentle, brave, a tremendous favourite with the women and many men.

"With all the men, in fact, except those with whom he had money dealings. They found him—to their infinite surprise,

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for he was courtesy itself—singularly hard to bargain with. He was gracious, complaisant, but as hard as a granite wall when it came to real concessions.

"But perhaps only old Baré knew the extent of his avarice; he who had seen it when Doucet was a little dark-eyed boy cherishing his belongings with the passion of a miser when he was hardly out of the cradle, and throughout his well-regulated studious youth saving, twisting, and turning to keep his allowance untouched from quarter to quarter, and happy only when he could return a goodly portion to his guardian for re-investment next year.

"Blanche Baré née Detrouville, as I have already said, was treated by her husband as if she were a queen, an Eastern queen, at whose feet he poured jewels, gold and precious stuffs. And she loved them with a passionate love.

"For several years his gifts so utterly filled her heart that she was entirely happy as old Baré's wife. For all his taciturnity the man must have discovered the secret of her content, for he continued to heap them upon her, and in return she gave him smiles and her little cheek to kiss, and perhaps a more tender embrace when something she had coveted cost a sum great enough to demand this exceptional concession.

"But the empty fool could not continue to let her trinkets and her stuffs fill her heart and mind to the exclusion of less dangerous idols. She began to crave flattery, excitement, homage, all of which she might have had from the silent, throbbing heart that was lawfully hers. Phillipe Doucet, the dark, handsome ward, soon supplied it. It was easy for him to ride over to Nouvre and spend the summer days, especially when old Baré had gone on his monthly visit to Paris.

"There were uninterrupted *téte-à-têtes* in the long, cool salon, sweet with roses and jasmine gathered in the terraced garden on which it looked; there were strolls in this garden at night-fall when these dreamy odours ladened the air, and the nightingale sang in the orange groves, and the moon waxed pale.

"Old Baré was a loyal friend, and his friendship was returned with equal fidelity. As it has happened before, the Bon Dieu gave the task to that friend who loved to break his heart.

"It was said in as few words as possible, but it was said. Instead of staying a week in Paris at his next visit he must return unexpectedly to his wife, in two days. No one but the friend was to know the change of plan.

"Old Baré did not look at his wife when he told her that evening he must leave on the morrow for the city. He did not touch her or address her except to make the statement, and when she gaily asked whether it was to be for a week, he simply bowed, but she was used to few words from him. Perhaps that was a fault—the authors of your recent novels make a silent husband an excuse for the severing of all wedded ties—but I do not believe had he been a Cicero of eloquence it would have made her different. She wanted first luxuries, then forbidden fruit.

"It was in the early morning of the third day that old Baré returned. The birds were singing in the garden; all the air was heavy with the perfume the dew extracted from the flowers. It was a fair mansion; he had guarded his jewel well, if beautiful things and tender care for her caprices were good guardians. He entered; down the winding stair with their shallow mahogany steps a man was coming. He started back repressing a cry.

"'Good day, sir,' said the master. 'You are welcome; I am glad to see you. Come with me to the dining-room.'

"Could he trust his ears? Phillipe was no coward, and he had prepared himself in that fleeting instant, when their eyes met, for the worst, which was, of course, a challenge.

"'The man is mad,' he thought, 'crazed by the blow.' Did he regret it? He was a tender-hearted, fair-speeched man. We are forbidden to judge.

"Old Baré drew nearer. 'You will come with me, and we will have our coffee?'

"There was something in old Baré's eye that commanded Doucet as he had never before been commanded. He obeyed.

"Baré rang for coffee. 'And say to your mistress that I particularly desire her presence,' he ordered the wondering servant.

"With that he led the way into the dining-room.

"'But, sir,' said Tontine, Madame's maid, coming into the room breathless. 'Madame could not at once obey Monsieur's summons. She sleeps; she is not half awakened. It will be necessary to make her toilet.'

"'Say to Madame, with my respectful compliments, it is necessary that she should come, and come at once.'

"The power in the man's eyes subjugated the woman as it had subjugated Doucet. She returned to her mistress, who appeared almost immediately after. It is evident to you, of course, that she had been listening at the keyhole.

"Old Baré bowed over her hand, and led her to her place.

"'You will make coffee for us, will you not, my dear? And drink it, and eat at least a few little cakes, of which you are so fond.'

"But she was not hungry! How troublesome! She must eat, whether she was hungry or not.

"You have the picture. The early, dew-laden morning; the woman robed, with hair awry, unkempt, a sorry sort of spectacle for a lover's eyes, especially as he must pay so dearly for it; the sun shining mercilessly on her pale, frightened face, and she sitting at the head of the table, serving viands to the husband opposite her, who, carefully dressed, cool, collected, was playing elaborately the part of host; while at the place of honour—her right hand—was her lover, with burning cheeks and downcast eyes, bewildered, confused, and cursing his strange place.

"Old Baré talked almost uninterruptedly, telling stories and making merry over the escapades—if so they might be called—of Phillipe's youth. Then when the weary meal had dragged itself far beyond its accustomed length he arose, and, with extraordinary civility, invited them into his own library, a room his wife seldom if ever visited.

"The cringing, trembling creature obeyed his first words, though Phillipe hung back, but there was something in the look of old Baré which compelled him to follow her, and with much cordiality, but quite an air of ceremony, old Baré ushered them into the dark, richly-furnished room with its books, and desks, and severely business-like air which betrayed the character of the master of this house.

"He then seated himself at his desk, opened his bank-book and wrote a cheque. Rising, he handed it to Phillipe.

"'I will trouble you to sign,' he said with an unfamiliar amiability. Half dazed at the whole proceedings Doucet read the words inscribed on the slip of paper, 'The National Bank of Paris will pay to the order of Blanche Detrouville Baré £10,000.'

"'I refuse, I utterly refuse to sign,' cried Phillipe, in an agony. 'Sir, I am at your service at any day, any hour you please. As the challenged party you may choose the weapons, but I will not sign the cheque.'

"Old Baré walked up to him and laid his hand on his arm. The look, sweetly smiling, transfixed him.

"'It is my whole fortune,' cried Doucet; 'the savings, the accumulation of years.' The miser had entered the soul of the gallant and driven out courage and self-respect; he who would have gone gaily to the field of honour was broken like a whipcord at the prospect of resigning his gold and his silver. Ah, well did his former guardian know his man and where his treasure lay, and his heart also.

"'Nay, if you will pardon a contradiction, not your whole fortune, but your pinchings and savings and extortions from the poor. It will not ruin you, monsieur, this £10,000; it will simply break your heart.'

"He did not take his eyes from the white, convulsed face. Something in them drew the man to the table, he signed, and then he turned towards the crushed, trembling creature who stood between them, understanding nothing except that she whom the winds of heaven had not visited too roughly, she who had known only petting, caressing words, respectful admiration, silent though consuming love, was suddenly alone in the world, stripped, despoiled, despised.

"The man who had robbed her of all she held dear looked

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at her. His mask of courtesy, knighthood, impassioned romance had fallen from him. He was haggard and old with suffering—although it had only been five or ten short minutes since he had heard his doom. He looked as he would look fifty years after, a greedy miser, his fingers clutching at his gold, his gold!

"She swayed her body to and fro. 'Phillipe!' she cried, in an agonised voice; she could not bear his look of consuming hate. 'May evil come to you!' he said, and he shook his fist in her face. Then suddenly he seemed to bethink himself. 'I will go,' he muttered, and stumbled out of the room.

"Old Baré looked at him, then a light broke. 'It is unfortunate that Monsieur walked from his house to ours, for it is a hot morning,' he murmured, in his strange, new, courteous voice. 'Jules,' as a servant answered the bell; 'a fresh horse at once.'

"Then he addressed the creature he had cherished. 'Since what has been mine has been yours,' he said, 'luckily we have the power to sign each other's names. I always arranged it. I never wished you to feel any difference between yours and mine.' His voice did not break, though, perhaps, the tender care he had given her, and the untrammelled liberty for those days may have occurred to him. 'I could not keep you in honour. The church of which we are all three devout members,' and he smiled, 'will not admit divorce, so that you cannot marry him and share his dearly loved fortune. Nor should I permit a divorce. What you are to do is to leave my house immediately, and with it leave all except what you brought with you. What you care for most is comfort, luxury, even, and as far as ten thousand pounds, which you have justly earned, can bring it to you, you shall have it. In two hours I will return with your money.' Then he mounted his horse, rode at full speed, and presented the cheque at the Bank.

"When it was cashed and he was, in his deliberate way, descending the steps, he met a frantic, exhausted man with a wild light in his eyes, who, having flung himself from his panting horse, was rushing into the bank. Old Baré lifted his hat. 'Too late, monsieur, by half a minute. I have cashed your cheque, so it will not be possible to draw out your capital before I arrive.'

"That," continued the Colonel, "was the way to punish—the reasonable, just way, too, for the woman should not have borne it all, as is now the custom. Old Baré accepted the fact that her betrayer owed her something, and he made him pay it, and he had the joy of turning the sword round and round in his heart. An encounter! Bah! Duels are for blunderers, neophytes, the indiscriminating, common herd. But for an artist, for a student of character, he will learn his man and hurt him in the secret, tender spot. This I rank as genius."

There was a murmur of dissenting voices, but the Colonel had already donned his overcoat and was limping out of the room.

ADRIFT ON A BELL BUOY.

WHEN I was twelve years old, during the summer vacation of 1860, I spent the month of August on the Government schooner *Ranger*, then charged with the duty of supplying oil and provisions to the lighthouses on the South Coast. Sometimes the *Ranger* set buoys and assisted revenue cutters in taking soundings; so we had a busy time on the whole.

One day early in the month our captain, whose name was Gardner, learned that the bell-buoy at Shellham had gone adrift, after having been run into by a vessel. Next morning we sailed from Shellham to look for it, and found it before long near Vineyard Sound. But it was not now adrift. It was in tow of the *Sea Hawk*, one of a class of vessels that go in search of derelict ships, securing their chains, anchors, or anything of value that can be taken from them.

The skipper of the *Sea Hawk* said that he had found the buoy. He objected to surrendering it without receiving pay for it. Our captain ended the dispute by ordering him to take the buoy into Portsmouth, where we would call for it.

"You'll have to pay for it," cried the *Sea Hawk's* captain, in a squeaky voice, across a wide space of water, as we left him. "You'll have to pay for it yet," was what he squeaked late that evening when our skipper was leaving the *Sea Hawk*, after taking the buoy without having made any payment. Whether Trinity House did or not admit the squeaky captain's claim I know not to this day.

The buoy was to be hoisted to our deck and taken to its former position at Shellham bar. But instead of hoisting it that evening our captain, as the hour was late, resolved to leave it all night moored to the *Ranger's* stern by the same rope the *Sea Hawk* had used in towing it.

Somehow it had fascinated me. What a weird, dismal-looking object it was, bobbing up and down. Then I wondered why its bell did not ring, though there was movement in the water about us. In the dusk it seemed like a human being; and, indeed, the round, cage-like basket on its top, which was its distinguishing mark in the daytime, was very suggestive of a person's head.

An impulse to try to make its bell ring took possession of me. Once I crawled half over the stern, meaning to lower myself to the buoy by its rope, but of this I thought better, and crept back to deck. Then I went to my berth for a while. Still I could not sleep.

"What is the reason that bell does not ring?" kept running in my head. So after a long time I went up and sat down on the cabin skylight. Glancing at the clock within it was one o'clock in the morning.

The night was beautiful, though breezy. Our *Ranger's* mast and rigging was clearly shown against the sky. I lay back and watched the black painted end of the mast as it traced all sorts of fantastic figures in and out among the stars; for there was a gentle ground swell, and the schooner was idly rocking on it.

The tide was running out, and I could plainly see the *Sea Hawk* some distance astern, for there was a clear, waning moon. The surf, as it broke on the beach, could be plainly heard.

Going again into the steerage, I took a blanket and pillow from my berth, and spreading the blanket on the deck I lay down and tried to sleep. But all was of no use; my thoughts would revert to the buoy and why the bell did not ring.

Giving up all thoughts of sleep, I arose, walked aft and looked at the buoy. There it was, tugging at the hawser, for the tide had swept it across the stern and off the quarter of the schooner.

Taking hold of the rope, I found I could draw it up closer. The bell was there all right—why did it not ring? I must know. So, tying the rope to a cleat that was close at hand, I slid down the hawser until my feet touched the ball-like basket on its top.

The cold, damp iron chilled my bare feet; for when I last arose from my berth I had not stopped to put on my shoes and stockings At first I thought my courage would fail me, but the sight of the bell so close at hand renewed my curiosity. Letting go my hold on the rope, I clambered down the iron cage that held the bell.

The buoy, which was made of iron in the form of a hollow pyramid with its apex in the water, had a top surface which was flat and about five feet in diameter. Over this was the pointed lattice framework in which the bell was hung.

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A large hole had been stove in the lattice framework by the vessel which had set the buoy adrift. As the frame was about five feet high, I had no difficulty in crawling inside. Putting my hand on the tongue of the bell, I found that it was tightly covered with canvas sail-cloth, which the men on the *Sea-Hawk* had tied there to stop its constant ringing.

For some minutes I was so enraptured with my strange surroundings that I paid no attention to the *Ranger*. When I did glance towards her I was amazed to find the buoy adrift.

The rope that held it to the vessel had been much worn by the constant chafing it had received while the *Sea Hawk* towed the buoy. It had let me pass down safely, but when my weight was added to the tossing buoy, after the rope had been drawn up taut, it gave way, and the tide was sweeping the buoy out of the harbour, with myself a prisoner on it.

Terrified at the idea of being carried out to sea under such strange conditions, I screamed. But the *Ranger* was now a hundred yards away, the surf was roaring, and no shipmate heard me. The buoy moved on a course right past the *Sea Hawk*. Oh, how sweet would that old skipper's squeaky voice have sounded, could I have heard it reply to my screams! But everybody seemed asleep on the sloop.

I thought of throwing myself overboard and trying to swim to the vessel, but the sight of the phosphorescent water frightened me. The buoy had a piece of cable attached to its sunken end. This, in the shoal water of the harbour, dragged along the bottom, and a bright streak in the water marked its course. This scared me, because I could not imagine what it could be.

The land and lights ashore appeared like a huge black cloud, with here and there a little star peeping out. It was useless to call for help to that distant vision. God seemed nearer. In the agony of my heart I knelt and prayed fervently for aid.

After that I felt better, and remembered the bell above my head. Could I call some boat by ringing it? I quickly clutched at the canvas covering and tried to tear it off. But my little fingers bled as I tore my nails in vain attempts to loosen the hard cloth.

By this time the waves had grown larger, and they were continually washing over the buoy. I was wet to the skin; and as the morning air was cold I was soon chilled through.

Just then I saw something alight on the top of the buoy. One of the owls from the mainland, in its flight across the harbour, had sought a resting-place over me. As I half-rose from my sitting position, the bird gave a hoot and looked down on me with its large, bright eyes. Then it rose from its perch, circled round for a moment, probably wondering what strange creature I was, and flew away. I was glad to see it go, for its eyes seemed to pierce me through.

When out in the Sound, and fast drifting towards the open sea, I made another attempt to loosen the canvas. Standing upright, I caught sight of a bright object in the water, which seemed to be following the buoy. What could it be?

It was long and looked like a snake as it followed wriggling after. I shut my eyes, for I dared not look at it. Still groping with my hands on the canvas, I found a knot at the top that in the darkness I had not felt before.

It was easily untied, and the muffle was soon removed. As I struck the tongue of the bell on its side it rang out a sound that caused me to fall flat on the buoy and cover my ears with my hands. Now with the tossing the ringing continued.

Oh, how its deep tone did strike into my ears! *Dong, dong, dong, dong!*—would it never stop? Sometimes for a moment it remained quiet, and I would uncover my ears, then it would start to ringing again, and its awful sounds penetrated my brain. It seemed as though I must faint.

With the swash of the water, the deep dong of the bell, my wet clothing, my numb limbs, and an occasional screech of a sea-fowl my senses were fast leaving me. Then I caught sight of the fiery serpent again, and lost consciousness.

When I regained my senses I was lying on the after hatch of a fishing vessel, and the captain and officers stood around me. They had seen the buoy at the first streak of daylight, with my unconscious body lying across its top. They had sent a boat and brought me on board. Late in the afternoon, after a long, warm sleep, we reached Southsea. Just as we were moored I saw the *Ranger* coming to anchor.

She lowered a boat, and soon it was drawn up on the beach. As Captain Gardner stepped out I reached out my hand, which the amazed man clasped with joy. He and his crew had supposed that I had fallen overboard.

As he took me back to the *Ranger* in his boat we passed the buoy, and the memory of the fiery serpent was brought back painfully. Captain Gardner inquired the reason of my emotion, and I told him of the last few moments before I had fainted.

"Well, boy," he said, "your story has a strange sound, but let's pull the boat up alongside of the buoy, and perhaps I can explain the mystery of the fiery fish."

When beside the buoy he pointed his finger and said, "Yes, I am right. There is your snake, boy."

Down beneath the water, and hanging idly to the broken cable below the buoy, was a long string of kelpish seaweed. It was alive with a fine species of animalculæ, that had shone in the darkness with a brightness that might well have deceived a more experienced person than I was then.

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The Face of Flame

IT was the sacred hour of the pipe, and the men who sat in the verandah of the chief hotel at Scarborough were worshipping in concert.

"Craddock," said the physician, breaking a long silence, "I am a believer in the evil eye."

"And a man of science!" exclaimed his friend in an exaggeration of despair. "To what are we coming?"

"I am a man of science," retorted the other firmly, "and therefore I do not doubt that the phenomenon is capable of some simple solution. The trouble is to find the key. Anyhow, I have myself witnessed lately not less than two very curious and interesting manifestations of the phenomenon."

"Besides the Eternal Feminine?" suggested the lawyer.

But the other man said slowly: "I was travelling in America a year ago. At one of the stations on the way from New York to Chicago two people entered the sleeping-car—a man about my own age and a woman some ten years younger, evidently his wife. The habit of observing without staring becomes second nature to the physician, and an apparently casual glance told me all I cared to know. He was just the ordinary, peevish, masculine invalid; while her every movement told of patience learned in a hard school.

"I turned in rather late, and during the night I had a call for professional aid. Hastily obeying the summons of the conductor, I followed him to the private room occupied by this couple. We went in and he locked and bolted the door. The porters had not observed us; the passengers were presumably sleeping. The conductor, whose peculiar expression of countenance had struck me earlier in the night, sank on the couch like one whom despair had bereft of his senses, whilst I glanced hurriedly round. On the floor, almost at my feet, was stretched the woman, apparently in a state of collapse; on the bed lay the husband—dead!

"I saw that she held tightly clenched a small empty phial. It was labelled 'Strychnia.'

"A suppressed groan at my side startled even my professional nerves. 'For goodness sake, doctor,' said a harsh voice in my ear, 'keep this thing quiet for awhile!'

"I turned and beheld the conductor in the act of opening the door. He went out, leaving me alone in a situation which was unpleasant even for a physician. The sight of the phial in the hand of such a woman had given me a strange shock. I proceeded to make as careful an examination of the dead man as circumstances could permit. 'Poison—the vehicle, strychnia,' I muttered. A hand was laid on my arm, and in shifting my position I confronted the woman. Though handsome, she was no longer what is termed a young woman, yet she had the air of an innocent child.

"'Doctor,' she whispered, holding out the phial, 'I tried to take it from him, but I was too late.' Her lips trembled, and in a moment her cheeks were wet with tears.

"'Tell me what you can,' I said quietly. She began to speak in low uncertain tones:

"'My husband is—was—an invalid. Some physicians said that there was serious trouble; others, that he was chiefly hypochondriac He thought he would like to try California, and we were on our way to San Diego. I did not mind where we went, so long as it helped him. That was all I cared for—all I have cared for—for years!'

"'He—my husband—was restless, and about midnight called for the strychnia, of which he was in the habit of taking a dose when suffering from nervous exhaustion. As he had already used the prescribed quantity, I suggested that he should wait awhile, and that meantime I would ring for boiling water and prepare him a cup of beef-tea. He consented, but grew impatient and opened the door to hurry the porter.'

"She paused again, as if her task were a hard one, then proceeded: 'Suddenly he fell back on the bed, with his hands before his face as if warding off some evil thing. Alarmed, I, too, looked out, but saw nothing but the porter awaiting orders, and heard only the departing footsteps of the conductor in the passage. What my husband saw, Heaven only knows. After awhile I quieted him.'

"She shuddered, and closed her eyes for a moment, then opened them and fixed them on mine, probing them as one who is confident of her facts, but seeks contradiction for peace of mind's sake.

"'He always saw one thing when a death was going to take place in the family. It was a face—a face of flame, with dead eyes. The flame was white, and composed of little fiery tongues. He had been asleep—and so, I think, had I—when he clutched me by the wrist, shrieking: "The face! the face! Don't you see it, Alice? Here—pressed against the window? Heavens, he has killed me! I am a dead man!" In vain I tried to persuade him that what he saw was merely the effect of flying sparks from the locomotive on the darkness of the night. He grew wilder—lost his mind, I believe—seized the strychnia bottle, and before I could prevent him——ah! you know the rest!'

"She sank back upon the cushions, her extraordinary power of self-control exhausted. Before daylight the conductor returned. I observed him narrowly, for a strange idea, evolved from the woman's recital, had taken possession of my mind. Could it be that I had stumbled on one of those phenomena, the question of whose existence has been for centuries a subject of dispute between scientific men?

"The corpse was removed to the baggage car, and there I went in search of the conductor.

"The remnant of humanity, rigidly outlined beneath its shrouding sheet, appeared to be the only occupant of the car. The lamps were out, and daylight was streaming through the half-open door, revealing the piled-up trunks, and—what was that in the corner by the dead man? I stepped over. There, hanging from a hook in the roof, in close proximity to the corpse, and with the wan light of morning on his face, was the conductor—a suicide!

"I found a note addressed to me, pinned on the conductor's coat. I had the presence of mind to possess myself of it before making known this fresh tragedy. You can believe that for the lady's sake I spared no pains to prevent her husband's death going into the papers under sensational headlines. I succeeded. 'Death by misadventure' was a true bill; the sick man had taken an overdose of strychnia by mistake. That was the simple truth, yet not the whole truth. For the conductor's relatives I could not thus provide; but the real cause of his death must for ever remain unknown to the world, or at least until science claims her own, as she will, as she must, some day.

"That note said:

"'Doctor, I can bear my life no more. When these spells come upon me I am better dead, as my father, who was similarly afflicted, thought before me. I felt one coming on last night, and as I was hurrying away to my quarters I met that poor sick man face to face. I could not help myself, doctor. Whoever meets my eye when I have one of those spells is doomed either to death or some terrible misfortune! You won't believe me, I know, but I have the Evil Eye—not always, but often enough, Heaven knows! Explain this if you can, doctor, for the sake of some other poor wretch who may be in the same fix as I am.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 328. FOR WEEK ENDING APRIL 13, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

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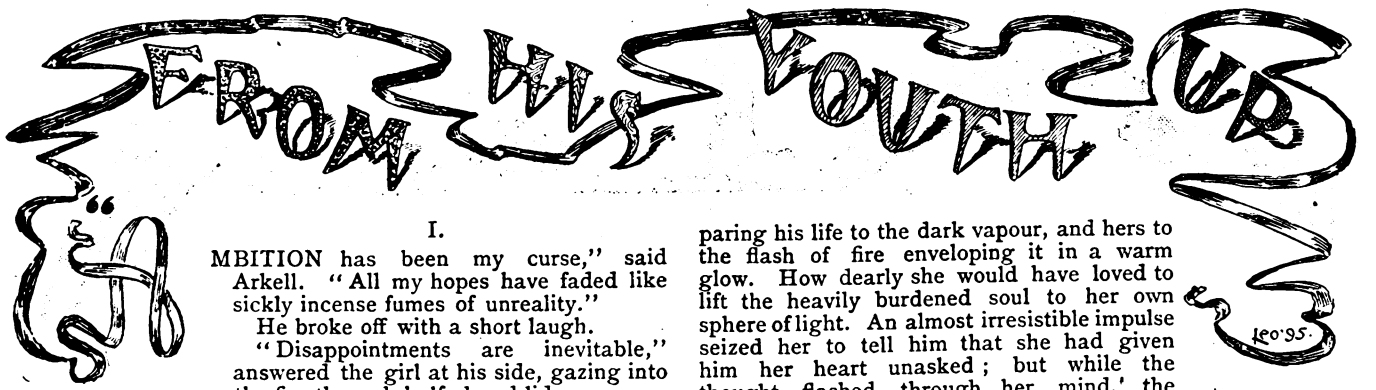
SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 328.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING APRIL 13, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.



I.

"AMBITION has been my curse," said Arkell. "All my hopes have faded like sickly incense fumes of unreality."

He broke off with a short laugh.

"Disappointments are inevitable," answered the girl at his side, gazing into the fire through half-closed lids.

"Your life," he declared, "has been one of happiness, and mine of sorrow. From my youth up ill-luck has followed me. My aims have been frustrated and cramped at every turn."

"How so?"

"As a boy I devoted myself to study, and eventually went to college; but there my health stepped in to run all hope of success, breaking down when I most required physical strength. A friend—a very eminent man—while I was still weak and nerveless, dealt me the cruelest cut of all. He had followed my progress, struck by my dogged perseverance.

"He told me most forcibly that I had not the mental capacity to distinguish myself, at the same time advising me to leave college before taxing my brain further. I *felt* the wisdom of his words, and, in a frenzy of disappointment, left the University to seek fresh fields. Crushed and woe-begone, still I craved for success. Thirsting for excitement, I joined a company of strolling players, with whom I travelled in the provinces for three years. All that time I worked hard upon a play, with which I intended to checkmate fate and triumph.

"With this idea firmly implanted in my mind, I sought out a rich uncle, my father's only brother, who had recently returned from America, and induced him to provide me with sufficient capital to start a theatre on my own account. This he gladly did, fully believing in the ultimate success of my venture. It is gall and wormwood to remember now the rhapsodies in which I indulged. At last I was to pacify my craving for distinction! The game was in my own hands, and I felt confident of scoring a success. Alas! for the lame blunder—the date is not so far distant but that you can recall the shame and humiliation which fell to the lot of that unfortunate actor, manager, and author—Adrian Arkell!"

"It was a crime," she said. "Do not let us talk of it."

"You mean the criticisms?" he asked eagerly.

"No," she replied, unswerving from the truth; "the play."

"Candour is sometimes difficult to digest," he muttered, kicking the fender. "My folly has received its final death blow at your hands."

"Then at least you owe me some gratitude. I cannot fall down and worship before false gods."

Alys smiled a little bitterly as she spoke. If he only knew how it hurt her to pain him! Why had he been mad enough to court the sneers of the public, when his lines might have fallen in pleasant places had he curbed his ambition!

She felt something more than pity for him, as she watched a bright flame wreathing itself round a pillar of smoke, comparing his life to the dark vapour, and hers to the flash of fire enveloping it in a warm glow. How dearly she would have loved to lift the heavily burdened soul to her own sphere of light. An almost irresistible impulse seized her to tell him that she had given him her heart unasked; but while the thought flashed through her mind,' the sound of voices reached them.

"That is Julia," she said uneasily. "I do so dislike Julia."

"You mean your sister-in-law, Mrs. Fergusson?"

"Yes. She is a worldly type of woman, frivolous to her finger tips! I get saturated with her frivolity. I find myself repeating Julia's sayings and trading on them. I even copy Julia's dresses; isn't it hateful of me?"

He ignored her remark, and rose mechanically.

"Must you go? Perhaps it is as well. I have to run the gauntlet of Julia's criticism."

"You need fear no one, Miss Fergusson—much less a woman."

"But women are more formidable foes than men."

"Ever since Eve tempted Adam, men have repaid his wrongs with interest."

He held out his hand, and in another moment he had gone.

"You are to be congratulated!" said Julia, entering the room like a petticoated whirlwind.

"Why?"

"For making a conquest of that bear, Arkell. Everyone knows he is a woman hater. Play with him, my dear, but do not love him."

"Why not?"

"Love brings sadness, Alys. If you marry the object of your affections he disappoints you, and if you don't marry him he worries you."

"But you are happy."

Julia sank down before the fire and laughed. "Oh! don't take me for an example. I married your brother, and he is a man in a thousand. Ring for some more tea—here is Doctor Musgrave."

Julia, kneeling on the hearthrug, nodded to the Doctor as he entered. He was too familiar a friend to be greeted ceremoniously. His eyes brightened visibly as they rested upon Alys perched in the window-seat, and after exchanging a few conventional words with Julia, he joined her.

"I wish you could cure a troubled spirit," she said, leaning her head against the curtains with a sigh.

"First I must know the trouble," he replied.

A slight flush rose to the girl's face.

"I am miserably restless and dissatisfied. When I desire a thing greatly I cannot wait for it—I want it at once, or not at all."

"At the present time, then, you require—what?"

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"The moon—but I do not ask you to procure it for me."

"Everything is possible where there is a will."

"You think so?"

"I am certain of it."

Julia glided between them, laying her head on Alys' shoulder. "Are you looking at the sunset?" she said, assuming a dreamy expression. "I love the going down of the sun! It makes me think of the eve of life, when in our hoary age we too shall wane and sink behind the veil."

"She is trying to harrow our feelings in artistic language," laughed Alys, turning to the Doctor, "but to tell you the truth no one has a greater horror of growing old. She declared only the other day that she would commit suicide at the first sign of a crow's-foot."

"Alys can afford to laugh," was the retort, "since she is in the hey-day of youth."

"My horse is tired out with a long day's rounds," said the Doctor, "and I must not keep the poor beast standing. I only ran in to leave a message for your mother. Good-bye and good luck to you, Miss Alys. This is my advice: Dare all, hope all, venture all, but, above these three things, never despair." Then he was gone.

"What did he mean?" asked Julia, sharply.

"It was only a prescription," replied Alys, laughing.

II.

The following night Alys met Adrian in the full glare of a ballroom. She was pale, and her lips trembled as she greeted him.

"I thought you never danced," she said.

"I came here to see you," he replied, "and my presence has caused some comment. I am a novelty on such an occasion."

"How delightful to meet something original! But I guessed your reason." She lowered her eyes, breathing hard. "Mr. Arkell, I must speak to you alone."

"Come this way."

She followed him to the conservatory, while her heart beat high with expectation. She glanced nervously round, as a blush of embarrassment rose to her cheek.

"What do you wish to say, Miss Fergusson?"

"*You* ask me that?" cried the girl, raising her eyes indignantly to his. "Can it be possible that I have been the victim of a trick?"

"I—I do not know," stammered Adrian.

With a swift movement she drew a letter from her dress. A strangely pathetic look crept into her eyes as a sense of immeasurable distance seemed to rise between them.

"What troubles you?" he asked eagerly. "For Heaven's sake, don't look like that!"

Alys clasped her hands imploringly.

"Here is your letter," she said.

He took the paper from her, though she pretended to hold it back, with a gesture of mute horror at his action.

"If it is not yours," she whispered in a strained voice, "for pity's sake return it without a word."

"Do you rebuke me for reading?" he pleaded, drawing closer to her side. "I would that I could claim the authorship! Had some angel of God intervened to plead my cause, it would have been in no better language. My mysterious representative has put into words what I should not have dared entertain in my heart."

Alys trembled from head to foot, and a blaze of triumph flashed from her eyes. In a moment her hands were grasped by Adrian, while he drew her head down softly on to his shoulder.

The sheltering palm trees seemed created to veil lovers in a temple of foliage.

"I feel," he whispered, "as though I had often held your hands and kissed your hair."

"Yet you never thought of me before to-night?"

There was a long, sweet silence. At last Adrian broke it with the thought uppermost in his mind.

"Who could have written this letter?"

"Ah! who indeed!" she answered slowly. "Yet after all, what does it matter?"

"It was Julia," he said, tightening his grasp on her hand; "your sister-in-law."

"Why should you suspect her?"

"She is jealous of your youth and beauty, and thinking I was indifferent, hoped to slight you."

"That is a very unpleasant thought, but do not condemn her upon suspicion."

As she spoke, the perfume clinging to Julia's chiffons pervaded the air.

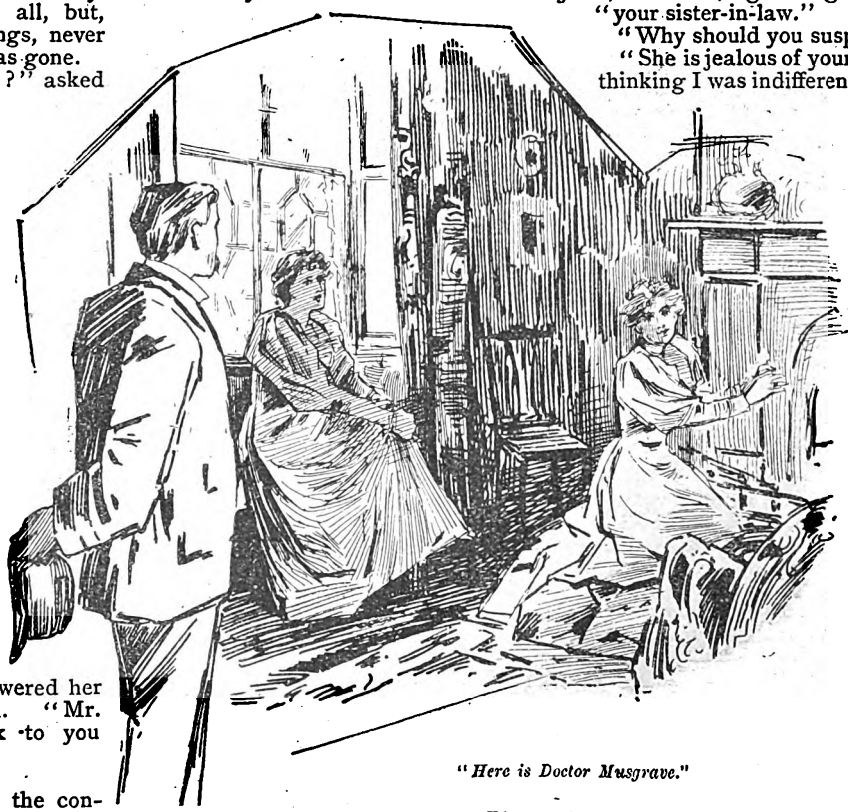
"Are you not going to dance?" she cried as she rustled by. "There are a score of people waiting to be introduced to your partner, Mr. Arkell."

She laughed half mockingly, and, waving her fan, passed out of sight.

"I wish we could go away," he said. "I dread the talk an engagement creates."

"You do not deserve to be married, for you are a hermit at heart still."

"Any publicity is hateful to me, since the finger of scorn has been so often pointed at me."



"Here is Doctor Musgrave."

"Please forget that unfortunate play. Come to the ballroom and see what a rush there will be for my programme."

Adrian tried to detain her, but she rose and left him watching her disconsolately, as Doctor Musgrave claimed the dance.

When the music ceased she confided to him the news of her engagement.

A few moments later the doctor escaped from the ballroom, and dashing out into the night, hurried home scarcely able to breathe.

III.

Time flew quickly, but love had not kept pace with its wings. That of Alys somewhat waned ere the wedding day approached, though her dogged nature refused to admit the fact even to herself. Before the important event she wrote to Doctor Musgrave wishing to see him.

"I was afraid you would not come," she said somewhat shyly, as he arrived in answer to her summons.

"I am entirely at your command," he replied, "to serve

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"Do you rebuke me for reading?"

you faithfully to my dying day, if you would only give me the chance."

"How delightfully loyal!" motioning him into a chair; "I have been longing to unburden my soul to someone, and you are the only living creature to whom I can speak. I have done a mean despicable thing!"

"Impossible!"

"Not at all. Unfortunately sometimes 'all things are possible.' But I will explain. When I fell in love with Adrian, I could not wait to see whether, in time, he would ask me to marry him. So I wrote a letter to myself, disguising my hand like his. I conceived the idea of acting a little comedy for my own amusement, laying my heart bare to the man who had only to ask to receive it. But ever since that night my deception has troubled me. The worst of it was, he determined to discover the mysterious correspondent, and finally attributed the deed to Julia."

"It is late to reproach yourself now."

"And you despise me?"

"I could think no ill of you," he replied, turning his face away. Alys fancied his voice trembled.

"Then give me a word of seasonable advice. Ought I to tell Adrian?"

"Your wedding is to-morrow?"

"Yes."

"Then say nothing about it. You have left it too late."

"Why?"

"Mr. Arkell is not looking well, and is easily provoked. I do not want a cloud to hang over your marriage feast. He probably would love you more, but possibly might love you less. Why own to a man that *you* sought *him*?"

Her cheek paled, and she trembled slightly. "I wanted a man's opinion," she said.

. . . . . .

It was the morning of his wedding-day, when, contrary to custom, Adrian rushed into the house and inquired anxiously for Miss Fergusson. He was hot with running, and carried an open telegram and letter in his hand.

"Read these," he exclaimed. "Read! read! read!"

Alys glanced at the telegram first.

"Mr. Arkell passed peacefully away this morning."

"Your uncle?" she asked.

"Yes."

"I am sorry," she began, but Adrian interrupted her.

"The letter is from him to me," he continued, thrusting it into her hand, "dictated last night with his dying breath, during an hour's consciousness after a paralytic stroke."

She scanned it slowly.

"Before daybreak I shall have gone. You will get this letter on your wedding morning. I have loved you, Adrian, as a son, and it is to you I leave my entire fortune. Accept it as a wedding gift, and use it well."

Alys touched the paper reverently, gazing at it in solemn silence. Adrian waited for her to speak, then pointed again to the pages with fingers trembling from excitement.

"Don't you take it in? Look! It is as clear as daylight: '*To you I leave my entire fortune!*' I hardly know the amount, but it is something enormous, and I always believed he had bequeathed it to charitable institutions."

"Let us try to remember his last words," she said. "Use it well."

Adrian chuckled to himself as he mentally calculated the sum. Alys drew away from him with a sudden sense of disgust, for not a word of sorrow had passed his lips.

"How shall you like marrying a millionaire?" he asked. "We ought to be the happiest couple in creation. I love filthy lucre." He laughed loudly and tried to kiss her, but she withdrew from his embrace.

"After the ceremony," she cried, with an attempt at merriment. "It will be all the sweeter for waiting," and with these words she left him.

As he wended his way down the drive he picked up a handful of shingle and tossed it in the air. "As I throw these pebbles to the wind," he cried, "so shall I be able to scatter my money broadcast. How easily we shall glide through the world, since we can pave our path with gold."

IV.

A CERTAIN gloom overshadowed the wedding ceremony owing to the bridegroom's bereavement; and the bride looked deadly pale as she left the church on her husband's arm.

"How strangely his countenance had altered!" thought Alys. His eyes glistened with a feverish light, and there was a look on his face that she had never seen before. Half inclined to cry, she made a dash for the carriage, turning to Adrian with a deep-drawn sigh of relief as it whirled them away.

"So it is all over!" she said, toying with her flowers; "the crowd of gaping faces and the solemn service, and we are man and wife."

To her surprise, he did not answer, but gazed before him, wrapt in meditation.

"What are you thinking of, Adrian!"

Still no reply. Alys grew alarmed.

"Are you ill? Why do you not speak to me?"

He looked up, smiling, as though he had only just heard, and, snatching at one of the flowers of her bouquet, pressed it to his lips.

"You shall have beautiful flowers like these every day of your life," he said. "Our money shall flow like water. You see that beggar—I will fling him my gold watch and chain, for it is no more to me than a copper yesterday."

Before she could stop him, he had let down the window, and thrown the trinkets in the street.

"Adrian! Are you mad?" she exclaimed, biting her lips with vexation, as the carriage dashed on, leaving the astonished tramp clasping his prize.

As she left the church on her husband's arm.

A horrible

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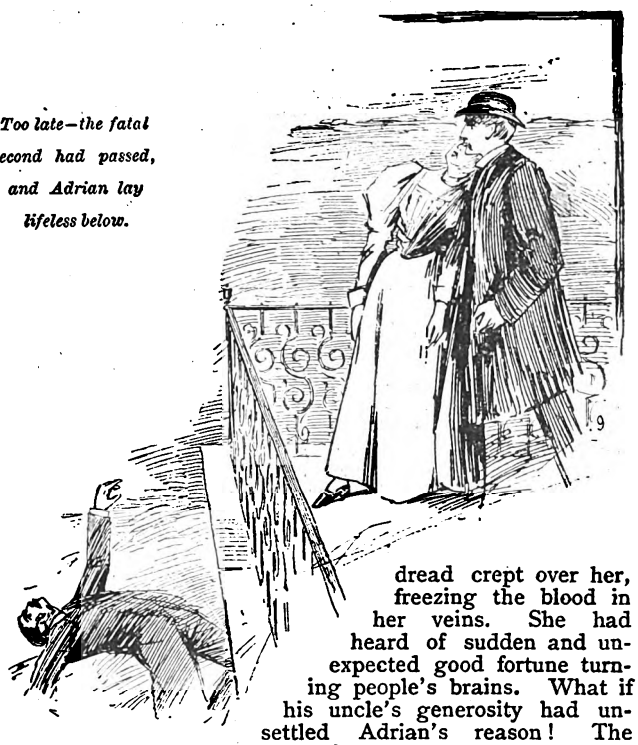

Too late—the fatal second had passed, and Adrian lay lifeless below.

dread crept over her, freezing the blood in her veins. She had heard of sudden and unexpected good fortune turning people's brains. What if his uncle's generosity had unsettled Adrian's reason! The thought turned her sick and dizzy, but she had no time to dwell upon it. The door was flung open, and a moment later she had entered her old home.

Alys uttered no word of the suspicion in her heart as loving hands adorned her for the journey. They were bound for a country seat in Wiltshire, lent for the honeymoon.

"I must speak with Doctor Musgrave alone," she said, "before I go."

Julia was her confidante, and carried the message with unusual good humour.

"Have you noticed anything odd about Adrian, Doctor Musgrave?" she asked, as he joined her.

"Yes," he replied reluctantly; "Mr. Arkell seems rather strange."

"I am frightened to death of him," Alys declared. "That money has turned his brain. How shall I dare go away with him?"

"You *must* now," he answered, almost sternly. Then, seeing her terror, added, "Heaven help you, poor child!" and, taking her hand, kissed it reverently. They had no time to linger, for her mother came between them, and escorted the bride downstairs.

Though Doctor Musgrave did not speak to her again, he kept his eye on Adrian with professional keenness, alone knowing her trouble as the carriage whirled away.

The newly-made husband talked wildly on the journey; but not until they found themselves in the old family mansion, with its gardens bathed in the glory of sunset, did the bride's heart sink with the bitterness of desolation. She felt entirely alone in her distress. They were standing together in the library, a room paneled with dusky pictures, old books, and wrinkled tapestry, relics of a former age.

"Come into the boudoir," she said, "this place is so gruesome."

She led the way to a more cheerful apartment, where lounges embroidered in damask roses blended with brocaded chairs and tall flowering plants.

"Do you see that shadow?" he asked suddenly. "It has a death's head, and there are gold coins in its mouth falling out as fast as rain and rolling across the floor." As he spoke he dropped on his knees and groveled at her feet.

"Adrian, if you talk like that I shall send for a doctor."

He did not notice her remark.

"I am going to look for gold in the attics," he continued, with a nod of satisfaction. "I shall not be long, Alys, and you have the shadow to keep you company."

She tried to follow him, but the effort proved fruitless. Helpless and terrified she gave way to her grief, sobbing bitterly in the silent room. As the tears coursed down her cheeks, she fancied she heard the sound of footsteps on the gravel path without. She clasped her hands over her heart to still its beating, and strained every nerve to listen. Her attitude was one of despair as the window leading to the garden opened gently, and Doctor Musgrave walked in. He made no apology for his presence, nor betrayed surprise at Alys' condition. If the circumstances had been of everyday occurrence he could not have appeared more thoroughly at his ease. At first she feared that her eyes deceived her, doubting the balance of her own brain. Then the revulsion of feeling was too great, and, with a cry of joy, she rushed towards him.

"You have come to save me," she whispered eagerly, grasping his hands.

"I foresaw events, and dared not leave you unprotected, so I have strolled about the grounds like a spy ever since your arrival, waiting my time. He is standing now at an upper window, and the look on his face is unmistakable."

"The worst seems over now that you are here," she murmured.

"Poor girl!" he thought, "you do not realise your life-long misery has only just begun."

"Listen! Adrian is calling."

"Alys! Alys!" His voice resounded through the house.

"Let us go to him," said the doctor gravely. "He must not be left for a moment."

Adrian beckoned them as they appeared on the upper storey.

"Come out upon the leads," he cried, "and examine the treasure; you will see it better there. I have found a wonderful ladder of solid gold, with rungs inlaid with precious stones."

Alys shrank back, and covered her face with her hands.

"There is no such thing, Adrian," she cried. "Do you wish to kill me?"

He shook his head.

"I will prove the truth of my words," he shouted, dashing through the window. "See!—it is there—strong and firm. I will descend to the garden below."

For the moment Alys remained rooted to the spot. She felt her own senses deserting her, though she took in the situation at a glance. Adrian was hanging over the balcony, unknowingly courting his death, while Doctor Musgrave rushed forward to catch him. Too late—the fatal second had passed, and Adrian lay lifeless below. Above stood the man who would have saved him, tenderly clasping the fainting form of the woman he loved.

THE FRESH-AIR FUND.

In order to get ahead with the necessary arrangements, I think it is quite time to begin asking once more for subscriptions to the Fresh-Air Fund. The programme that I have decided upon for the coming summer will be carried out upon precisely the same lines which proved in every way so satisfactory last year. That is to say, I shall aim at taking a definite number of children for a country holiday from London and every provincial centre with a population of over 200,000. If the money still continues to come in towards the end of the summer, as I expect it will, the balance is to be spent on the metropolis. There is no limit to the number of little children thirsting for a breath of fresh air, for one day's freedom from the dust and heat and pestilence of the slums.

Ninepence is sufficient to pay for each little one's outing, including the double railway or tram fare and two substantial meals of large meat pies, and cake, and milk, and bread, and jam, and butter.

Subscriptions, however small, will be gratefully acknowledged by the editor of Short Stories, Pearson's Weekly Buildings, Henrietta-street, Covent Garden, London. Collecting forms may also be had by application at the office.

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AN IMPORTANT LETTER.

JOHN FORMBY, of the firm of Formby and Wilton, was walking down Piccadilly on his way to see a colleague in Chancery Lane. He was a decidedly striking-looking man, and not at all like the usual type of a respectable family solicitor. He was considerably above the average height, and very dark. His forehead and nose were quite of the statuesque order; the rest of his face was hidden by a black, bushy beard. He was about forty years of age, and unmarried.

This morning the traffic seemed greater than usual, and blocks occurred every two or three minutes. John Formby noticed a private brougham, which drew up at the pavement close to where he was standing. It had scarcely stopped when the window was opened quickly, and a young girl leaned out, and thrust a letter into Formby's hand, exclaiming as she did so, "For God's sake, post this."

John Formby took it. A few strides led to the pillar box, and he dropped the letter in, just as a burly, coarse-looking young man hurried up as though to intercept him. This individual looked hard at Formby, who surveyed him coolly from head to foot, and then, with a muttered execration, went back and jumped into the brougham, which presently moved off.

Prompted by an influence he did not stop to analyse, Formby jumped into a hansom, and with a brief direction to the driver to follow the brougham he whirled after them down the Haymarket, and along the Strand and Fleet Street, into the heart of the City.

On and on they drove, until it began to occur to Formby that a hansom was rather an unusual object in this neighbourhood, and that he was beginning to be observed by the passers-by. Just as he had realised this, the cabman attracted his attention, and remarked, "I don't know whether you have noticed it, sir, but the party in front has looked back at us twice."

John had not noticed it. He stopped the cab at once and took a hasty glance round. A baker's covered cart had stopped a few yards in front of them. In an instant his mind was made up. He paid and dismissed the cab, and went up to the driver of the covered cart. "Did you see that brougham pass just now?" he asked.

"Yes, sir," the man replied, looking at him in some surprise.

"Just drive me after it," said John, springing into the cart. "Follow wherever it goes, and I will make it worth your while," he added.

For some minutes they rattled after the brougham, which finally drew up before a dingy looking house in the street, and John saw a woman come out and aid in assisting the man he had seen at the pillar-box to half drag, half carry a young girl into the house.

"Well, that's a rum go," observed the driver of the baker's cart.

"Do you know who lives there?" demanded John.

"Yes," replied the man; "a very respectable party. I leave bread there every evening."

"Will you try and find out for me who that young lady is, and where she comes from?" pursued John eagerly.

"Well, I'll try, sir. But how am I to let you know?"

"Where is your shop?"

"Oh, a long way back."

"I will be there at eleven o'clock to-morrow morning. Can you drive me there now?"

The man assented, and they returned the way they had come, and finally stopped before a small baker's shop. John gave the man a sovereign, much to his amazement, and walked off, hoping to find a cab a little farther on. He was very late for his appointment, a circumstance which very much surprised his friend, who had never known John Formby unpunctual before.

At about four o'clock he got back to his office, where he found a letter awaiting him, the contents of which were as follows:—

"Gentlemen,—My father died last night. Will you come down at once? My step-brother is here, and is causing me much annoyance.

"Yours faithfully,

"MARION HARRINGTON.

"Messrs. Formby and Wilton."

John Formby laid the letter down and reflected for a moment. Major Harrington had been a client of his for about four years. He was a widower with two children, one a son by his first wife, the other a daughter by his second wife.

A short time ago his son had offended him, and he came up to London and made a most extraordinary will, in which he left everything to his daughter, with the provision that she should allow her brother not less than three hundred a year. He had informed his solicitor that he had told his son that he intended doing this, and that he need expect nothing more from him.

John took up the letter and read it through once more. Then he glanced at the envelope, and saw to his surprise that it had been posted in London that day, although the letter was dated the day before.

He went into his partner's room, and consulted him.

"I should go down at once," advised Mr. Wilton, after perusing the letter. "You can just catch a train which will land you there in a couple of hours."

Accordingly, John set out, and reached his destination about half-past eight. He asked for Miss Harrington, and was informed that she had gone away that morning.

"But her father is just dead," exclaimed John in surprise.

"Yes, sir," returned the maid, tearfully. "He is lying dead upstairs now; and oh, sir! I am sure Miss Marion would never have gone away like this of her own accord."

"Just tell me all you know about it," said John. "I am the late Major Harrington's solicitor, Mr. John Formby."

Thus encouraged, the maid proceeded. Briefly, her story was as follows: Major Harrington had been taken very suddenly ill, and died within a few hours. His son was telegraphed for, but arrived too late to see him alive. He had a long interview with his sister, who came out of the room crying, and told her maid that her brother had been very violent, and that she was afraid to be left alone with him.

The next morning she ordered her carriage, saying she was going up to London to see her solicitor, and would return the same evening. "That was yesterday, sir," continued the maid, "and she has not come back, nor Mr. James Harrington either."

"Did he go with her?"

"No, sir; but we think that he must have followed her."

John was silent for a few moments. Then a sudden inspiration flashed across him. "What was Mr. Harrington like?" he inquired. "Have you a portrait of him or of Miss Harrington?"

"Oh, yes, sir," answered the maid, "I will get them for you."

She went out of the room, and returned a moment afterwards with two photographs, in which John instantly recognised the lady who had asked him to post the letter, and the man who was with her in the brougham.

"It is all right," he said to the maid; "I know where they are."

He hurried back to the railway station, only to find that the last train had departed. He spent the night at the hotel close by, and started off by the first train the following morning. He went straight to his office, and after taking council with his partner, they proceeded together to the baker's shop. Here John found his friend of the day before, who informed him that he had found out all about the young lady.

"The poor young thing is out of her mind," he said, "and her brother has brought her up here to hide her from those who wish to put her away in an asylum. He brought her up from the country the day before yesterday."

John and his partner waited to hear no more, but proceeded to

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the house without delay. The door was opened by a woman who looked at them suspiciously, and inquired their business.

"We wish to see Miss Harrington, the young lady who is in your house now," said John sternly.

"There is no such person here," replied the woman.

"You are telling me a lie," returned John. "Miss Harrington was brought here yesterday by her brother, who has tried to pass her off as a lunatic. We are her solicitors, Messrs. Formby and Wilton."

The woman hesitated.

"My orders were to let no one see her," she said doubtfully.

"You will get yourself into serious trouble if you try and prevent our seeing Miss Harrington," observed Mr. Wilton.

"The gentleman is out," said the woman, "and he has left the lady locked up in her room."

The next instant John Formby strode past her, and went upstairs, the woman following, and protesting strongly against this invasion.

He opened the doors of two of the rooms easily, but the third one was locked. The key, however, had not been removed, and John turned it, and then knocked.

"Come in," said a voice, and he entered.

Marion Harrington was standing near the window. She glanced at John with a look of alarm, which quickly turned to one of half-puzzled recognition.

"You are the gentleman who posted my letter," she said.

"Yes," answered John, "and, oddly enough, it was addressed to myself. If I had only looked at the envelope then, I might have spared you this disagreeable experience. I am Mr. Formby, and my partner is waiting below. We have a cab and, with your permission, will take you home at once, and deal with your brother afterwards."

On the way back, Marion related her adventures.

It seemed that her step-brother had tried to make her sign a deed of gift, investing him with half her property. On her refusal to do this until she had consulted her solicitor, he became very violent, and gave utterance to various threats. She then wrote the letter to Messrs. Formby and Wilton, but reflected after she had done so, that under the circumstances it would be better to go in person to see them.

Accordingly she started, intending to get them to come back with her by the next train, if possible; but at the London terminus, she was seized by her step-brother, and forced into a cab. He took her to an hotel, and announced that she was a lunatic, feigning great distress at her condition.

The next morning he engaged a private carriage and removed her. Fortunately she had the letter in her pocket, and when the block in Piccadilly arrested the progress of the brougham, she noticed John, and a sudden impulse prompted her to snatch the letter from her pocket, and ask him to post it, the result of which was, as we have seen, her ultimate deliverance.

The heiress of Mascot Hall made what her friends called a very bad match, for she married her solicitor, Mr. John Formby, about six months after the events just related. But, as she described herself in a letter to a friend, written some years afterwards, "the happiest woman that ever lived," we may assume that, as far as she was concerned, the union was a thoroughly satisfactory one.

The Two Fausts.

FROM THE ITALIAN.

CHAPTER I.

"GOOD evening, Giacomo; what is the matter?" The other sat down moodily on a chair and did not answer, but gazed with frowning brow on the floor. His friend did not disturb him, but went on calmly with his evening meal. At length Giacomo roused himself.

"Matter enough," he said, despondently, "I've just seen Valeria."

"Well," said his friend, "I shouldn't look so despairingly sad if *I* had seen her," and then relapsed into silence.

"You are a fool, Petruccio; I warrant you would be downcast if you were in my place. Why! she laughed at me!" he exclaimed, angrily, stamping his foot on the ground, and blushing at the remembrance. "She actually burst out laughing when I told her that I loved her as nobody ever did, or will. Sapristi! You are laughing too! It's too bad! I shall not be in a hurry again to confide in you, Petruccio."

"Tell me all about it," replied his friend, soothingly, and becoming grave again. "What made you tell her of your—love? No, no; I don't mean to laugh, upon my faith I don't!"

"She was singing her parts for her *début* in *Faust*, you know. Ah, what a voice. I went mad, and fell on my knees before her, and asked her to do what she liked with me—only to let me tell her that I adored her!"

"And——?"

"And she stopped in the middle of a high C to laugh at me! I implored, but she only laughed the louder. Such a musical laugh! But it felt like a hot iron on my heart. I got up and almost wept as I asked her just for a flower from her hand. But she would not give even that. It was too cruel, Petruccio!"

"What did you do?"

"Oh, I got angry."

"And told her that you would have your revenge. Was not that the way of it?"

"It was. I said that some day she would not refuse me a flower when I asked it—or my hand either, when I offered it."

"Yes; I thought that would be what must follow—the usual way. And how are you going to get her to your feet now, Giacomo *mio*?"

The other did not answer, but looked at his friend with an assured air, as if he had no apprehensions on that score. Then he changed the subject, and picked up a guitar from a chair beside him.

"You haven't been playing lately, Petro, have you?" he asked, using the familiar nickname for his friend.

"No. I have been devoting all my time to singing with the maestro, who says I may come out in two years or so. He can get me any part, but my favourite is Faust. I must get him to give me a primo in that."

"You may sing with Valeria."

"True; I look forward to that, I must say. Don't be jealous, you know. Somebody must be *primo tenore* in it, and surely you would prefer me to some greasy little man of forty to make love to Valeria. I can put in a good word for you while I seem to be wooing and winning her," he finished, with a twinkle in his eyes.

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"As you please," Giacomo answered, indifferently. "I must be going now, my friend. I am sorry to have interrupted you in your dinner. Thanks, no; I cannot join you in it to-night; I have another engagement. Good luck to you with Valeria. Good night."

Giacomo threaded his way out of his friend's apartments, and, wrapping his cloak around him, took his homeward road.

CHAPTER II.

ALL Florence was excited. The Italians are proverbially a nation of quick and changeful moods, and this mood was having full sway. It was no new opera, *Faust;* but then there was not always such a Marguerita as Valeria di Karro. Besides, she was a Florentine herself, and after earning the praise of all Europe, she was coming back to Florence to sing in her native city, and to charm her fellow-citizens as she had charmed the world. She was talked of in the streets, in the shops, in the palazzos. Her voice was discussed, pulled to pieces, put together again, and pronounced the finest in the world. Her dramatic talent was as great as her talent for singing, and she was *so* lovely! Even in her own sex she had unqualified worshippers.

It was more than four years since she had made her *début* in Florence, and she had simply taken her audience by storm from that hour. She had been constantly travelling from one capital to another, leaving glory and enthusiastic newspaper critiques in her track.

So that her reappearance in Florence was eagerly looked forward to, none the less so that the part of *Faust* was to be taken by their idol, who had first sung to them two seasons ago, and whose voice was familiar to every theatre-lover in Florence, namely, the young Petruccio Lalli.

He was congratulated in public, envied in private, and talked of in both. He was known to be devoting all his energies towards preparing himself for the momentous occasion. He was scarcely ever seen in the streets now; but a few strollers would occasionally group beneath some window, from whence they could hear the delicious, though faint notes, of the great tenor. Of course he still sang in the opera, but evidently he was reserving his powers for the supreme effort.

The day wore on, and at length the divine Valeria was seen in the streets of Florence, looking pleased and happy. Early on the night of the performance crowds assembled before the doors of the theatre eager to get a good seat at all costs.

On that same morning Valeria was visited by Petruccio, who was enchanted at the opportunity which he at last had got, and for which he had worked so desperately hard for the last few weeks, perfecting every note and fixing every aria in his mind to his own satisfaction. The cantatrice greeted him warmly.

"Ah, my friend!" she said, cordially, when he entered, "it is such a time since we have seen each other. I have heard of your success—who has not heard of it in all Italy?—and I assure you I was delighted when I read of it; and I am so glad that you are to sing with me to-night—it will be quite like old times, when we used to practise our solfeggios together, and bring down the maestro's wrath on our devoted heads at not opening our mouths enough."

They both laughed at the remembrance.

"The maestro couldn't laugh at you now, Valeria, could he? Those days are past."

"Nor at you. By the way, my friend, how is little Giacomo? He will be a man now."

Petruccio shook his head.

"He is not as he used to be. We seldom see each other now, and when we do, he is taciturn. I don't know what he is doing."

"Strange," answered Valeria, in a tone which meant that she didn't want to trouble over the matter.

After some light refreshment, Petruccio retired, after wishing Valeria all success.

From the opening of the doors of the theatre that night, till the rising of the curtain, there was a perpetual buzz of conversation and of excited whispers. The house filled to overflowing, and fashion and beauty were no less represented than the crowds of the middle and lower classes.

Behind the curtain the excitement was tremendous, though not so loudly expressed. Despair was visible on every countenance, and poor Valeria was as white as a sheet.

A message from Petruccio, almost illegibly scrawled, had told her that he had been struck down with a violent fit of sickness, which had utterly prostrated him! He had tried, he wrote, to prepare and pull himself together for the trial; but it was of no use. He felt ill in mind and in body, and would have preferred to die rather than live the wretched wreck that he found himself Giacomo had visited him that morning, and was *so* kind. He prayed Valeria to forgive him and to pity him, and besought her to try to get another Faust—he did not know anyone else to take the part though.

The consternation of the artistes at this letter could be imagined. Even now the angry calls of the audience told them that they were already behind time, and were being impatiently waited for.

The house wondered at the delay.

The calling ceased, and anxious whispers took the place of angry murmurs.

Could anything have happened? the people asked each other—could Valeria have fallen ill? Why didn't the manager tell them, then? It might be fire!

Loud voices were heard behind the scenes, and then a silence, and the curtain ran up. The house gave a sigh of satisfaction. All was well, then, and they would hear Valeria.

The first few notes of the opera was listened to with profound attention and silence, then a sensation ran through the house, and voices began here and there, the men looked at each other, and the women put their heads together and spoke.

It was *not* the voice of their idol, Petruccio, and the jealousy of the house at his place being taken by anyone else, expressed itself by angry mutterings and gestures. But these were soon hushed as the conviction forced itself upon them, that Petruccio's voice was but as nothing compared to that of the man before them. Full, rich, and glorious the notes fell from his lips, till the whole building seemed to be blendings of delicious harmonies. A dead silence of expectation reigned as the sage was about to appear as the young Faust.

He came. And the stillness of the house was broken by a short cry, and a name indistinctly pronounced. A woman fainted, and was carried from the theatre. Between the acts the excitement was tremendous. The face was familiar to all of them, and he was a Florentine. Yet who he might be they knew not. One woman could tell, but she was gone, in a faint; so they had to content themselves with speculation.

As the opera went on the excitement increased. Even Valeria herself proved a secondary attraction, though she seemed absolutely inspired, and played and sang as no one present had ever seen or heard before. She seemed almost frenzied, while Faust himself sang with passion rivalling hers.

His high notes were clear and full as those of an instrument, and his low notes rolled forth in perfect splendour. The audience was entranced, stupefied, and when the curtain came down for the last time, the thunders of applause continued for recall after recall.

Valeria retired to her room in the greatest agitation and exhaustion.

At last a step approached her door. She sat up in a tremor of agitation. "Would it pass?" she thought with a pang. No; it paused at her door, and a gentle tap asked admittance. It was granted; the door opened, and Giacomo entered, still in his costume of Faust. His face was pale, but firm.

"Can you refuse me just a little flower, now, Valeria?" he said, pleadingly, kneeling by her side.

She took one of the splendid bouquets which she had received that night, and tearing off a flower, pressed it to her lips and handed it with a trembling arm to Giacomo.

He stood up smiling, and, looking with a kind of bitter amusement at her face to mark the expression, began slowly to tear off the petals of the flower one by one, scattering them about the room. Then he lightly threw the broken and stripped stalk into her lap, again bowed, still smiling, and left the room.

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THE TENTH OF JUNE.

By John K. Leys, *Author of "In the Toils," "My Hindoo Friend," &c., &c.*

Illustrated by Raymond Potter.

SUMMARY.

Geoffrey Dundas, whose life is attempted on the 10th June, 1883, by a Hindoo barrister at the Law Courts, by means of poison, visits General Sir Arthur Chetwynd at Seacombe Towers, in May, 1884. The General explains that a serious danger threatens the household, and that it will come, if at all, on the tenth of June. The reason for this is that in India on this particular day, in 1853, Sir Arthur, together with Geoffrey's father (since dead) took part in the looting of a Hindoo temple, and every tenth of June afterwards one of the Englishmen concerned, or some member of their families, is assassinated. On the last day of May, Amavati, the Rajah of Nagore, visits Sir Arthur, who subsequently refuses His Highness's request for his only daughter Leila's hand in marriage, but gives him permission to repeat his proposal in a year's time. Geoffrey tells Amavati of the danger which threatens himself and the General's household.

CHAPTER VI.

GEOFFREY TAKES COUNSEL.

By half-past five Geoffrey was up, and dressed.

In the quiet morning hours he had thought over the matter again, and had resolved to say nothing to Sir Arthur of his conversation with the Rajah. It could only add to the General's alarm to let him know that the Rajah believed that the danger that threatened them was imminent; and obviously he could hardly consult the General as to whether he should take the Rajah's advice and leave the country for a few days; or remain at Seacombe Towers over the Tenth of June.

But he felt it to be a necessity that he should take counsel with some one. His natural instinct prompted him to remain with his friends. The idea of quitting the General's roof while the shadow of danger still hung over him was intolerable. But, on the other hand, he feared that his presence might be a source of peril rather than a safeguard. If he were to leave the place he might divert the attention of the invisible enemy.

Often, when one is in perplexity, one feels an irrepressible longing to open one's mind to a friend; not so much in the hope of getting new light on the subject, as from a natural impulse to seek companionship and sympathy. So Geoffrey had resolved, as he lay awake during the night, that he would at once go up to London, and talk over the whole matter with his friend Linton. He knew that Jack Linton had for him a more than ordinary friendship, and that he possessed that invaluable quality in an adviser—a stable, well-balanced mind, not likely to be led astray by fancies or prejudices.

Of course, before going, it would be necessary to see the General and make some excuse for his sudden visit to town; but he thought it better not to say anything of the object of his journey.

Knowing that Sir Arthur was an early riser, Geoffrey went, shortly before six, to his dressing-room door, and tapped lightly.

"Come in!"

Geoffrey went in, and found the General finishing his toilet.

"I beg your pardon, sir, for disturbing you," he said; "but I want to take a run up to town this morning, and I have just time to catch the early train. May I tell Davis to let me have the light dog-cart?"

"You had better take the mail-phaeton. But why this sudden start? You are not leaving us for good?"

"Oh, dear, no! I merely want to see a man on business. It is rather important; but I expect to be back to-morrow, perhaps, even by the late train, to-night. You will make my excuses to Miss Chetwynd?"

"Oh, yes. Don't stand on ceremony."

"Good-bye, then, for the present."

Geoffrey was in the act of leaving the room, when a sudden thought occurred to him. He closed the door, and went back.

"General," he said, "will you forgive me if I ask a very personal question, one which, under other circumstances, would be impertinent?"

The General nodded and smiled.

"It is this: Don't you think that, in view of the danger that menaces us, it would be as well to have everything in readiness for—for the worst?"

"In what way?"

"For example—pardon my asking you—have you made your will?"

Sir Arthur frowned, threw himself into a chair, stretched out his legs, and thrust his hands deep into his pockets. The subject was to him a very unpleasant one. He had a strong opinion that to leave a large fortune to a young girl whose future was uncertain was to do her a very questionable kindness. It was simply making her a target at which adventurers might aim their arrows. How could he feel sure that some unworthy fellow might not succeed in winning her heart after he himself had passed over to the majority?

He would infinitely have preferred to settle his property upon Leila by way of a marriage settlement, hard as it would be to part from his child; and a year before it would have given him great satisfaction to have seen Captain Byngham come forward and declare himself to be Leila's lover. But now he was not so sure. He had not much liked several things in the Captain's talk, and in his manner, during the present visit.

Found the General finishing his toilet

Unconsciously he had been comparing the Captain with Geoffrey, and Geoffrey had been appearing to great advantage by the side of the selfish, arrogant Byngham; he liked Geoffrey ten times better; but then, Captain Byngham was his own relative, and the idea of a marriage between him and Leila had been in the General's mind ever since Leila was ten years old. So he was by no means prepared to throw Byngham over. And yet he hesitated.

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"If you have not made your will," said Geoffrey, "let me urge you to make it at once. You can revoke it at any time, you know."

"I have not made my will," answered the General; "and the worst of it is, I don't know how to make it. But you are quite right. I'll take a run into Plymouth, and see my old friend, Quinton, the solicitor. I'll take his advice about it."

"Why not come with me now as far as Plymouth? To be sure, you will arrive rather early, but——"

"On the contrary, I shall just be in time for breakfast at the 'Duke of Cornwall,'" cried the General, starting to his feet. "Run and order the phaeton. I'll be with you in five minutes."

In less than ten minutes the two travellers were on their way to the railway station. At Plymouth they parted, the General going to the hotel, while Geoffrey, too anxious in mind to care for any breakfast beyond a cup of coffee, pursued his journey to London.

He reached town while the afternoon was yet young; and as he had telegraphed to his friend from Exeter, he was hardly surprised, though he was very much pleased, to see Jack Linton's face peering into the carriage as the train glided alongside the platform at Paddington.

"This is awfully good of you!" he cried, as he jumped out of the carriage and grasped his friend's hand.

"Oh, not at all. I got your telegram; so, as I had nothing particular to do, I thought it might save time if I came on here."

"You have done me a real favour. Now, instead of spending time running half over London, we can go to the hotel and have lunch. I can tell you what I've come up to see you about, and after having a comfortable rest I shall be in time to catch the five o'clock express back."

"You're not going back to Devonshire to-night, Geff?"

"Yes, I am. But come along. I've no luggage."

A cold bath, a good meal, and Jack Linton's society made such a difference in Geoffrey's inner and outer man that he was half inclined to think that he had given himself a good deal of unnecessary trouble in coming so far to consult his friend. The danger to be apprehended did not now seem half so great as it had appeared to be the night before. However, he felt it would be a comfort to talk the thing over.

Throwing himself on a couch by an open window, he took out his cigar case, invited Linton to select one, and then lit one himself.

"Do you remember," he asked, "how I was nearly poisoned—as I supposed—about this time last year?"

Linton stopped in the act of striking a vesta, and looked at his friend curiously.

"I remember it very well," he returned. "You don't mean to say that you have reason to dread another attack of the same kind?"

"Not exactly. But listen."

Geoffrey then went on to tell his friend the whole story, everything that he himself knew, including all that the General had told him, and his conversation with the Rajah. He did not even conceal the fact that he was in love with Leila, in order that his friend might understand that her safety must be the paramount consideration. And he also told him that Captain Byngham, as well as the Rajah, was his rival.

"By Jove!" exclaimed Linton, when the narrative came to an end, "it is difficult to believe that such things as you dread could take place in England at the end of the nineteenth century!"

"You forget that we have to deal with Orientals," said Geoffrey. "Centuries count for little in India."

"True."

"And since I have no evidence against any one—no proof even, that we are in danger, except the anonymous letter—if you can call that proof—I cannot apply to the police."

"No; and they could be of no use if you did apply to them. You can't arrest a man simply because he is a Hindoo, even if a Hindoo did try to murder you twelve months ago. Besides, you say you believe this Rajah to be friendly?"

"I believe so."

"I wonder what he wanted with that letter?" said Linton meditatively. "He can't have touched it up with some chemical, which would destroy the writing in time? Have you it with you?"

"Here it is," said Geoffrey, taking the letter from his pocket.

"It seems all right," said Linton, after closely inspecting the writing. "Besides, I don't see how it could help the conspirators to destroy it, now that you know its contents. No doubt they are very sorry it ever was sent. The writing of it was quite 'too previous,' as the Yankees say."

The train glided alongside the platform.

"It would have come in pretty effectively if I had been lying dead in my chambers, as they naturally thought I was," observed Geoffrey. "But the main point is this—ought I to take the Rajah's advice, and clear out of the country while there is time, or stay with the General and his daughter. Of course I would rather stay with them; but I confess I felt inclined to trust the Rajah, and he seemed to know what he was saying; and then, I thought that perhaps my going away might cause a diversion in the General's favour. They can hardly intend attacking us all this year, unless we are all together under one roof."

Linton took one or two turns up and down the room before replying.

"No," he said at length. "I advise you to follow your natural instinct, and stay at Seacombe Towers—isn't that the name of the house?—till the Tenth of June has gone by. *If* the Rajah is to be trusted, your staying won't make it any more dangerous for your friends. If he is *not* to be trusted, obviously his advice is not to be taken.

"Besides, it seems to me that the General, rather than you, is the man in peril—supposing always that they know him to be one of those who destroyed their temple and killed their priests, and that danger is to be apprehended from the Rajah. It was for *his* sake, certainly, not for yours, that the Rajah went to Seacombe Towers. His visit had been planned before you were so much as invited to stay at the house this summer. No; if I were in your place I should remain in the General's house till the Tenth of June is over."

"Good!" cried Geoffrey, springing to his feet, and throwing the stump of his cigar out of the window. "That's what I should like to do. But it has been a great comfort to me to talk the thing over with you. I'm awfully obliged to you. How long shall you be in town?"

"Till the beginning of August, at all events."

"Then I shall look you up as soon as I get back from Devonshire."

Soon after this the two friends parted, and Geoffrey set out on his return journey.

It was midnight before he reached Plymouth, and there were no local trains that night; but the traveller did not feel inclined to go to a hotel. He had been asleep the greater part of the time since he left London, and felt he should enjoy a long walk in the cool night air. The distance to Seacombe Towers was about fifteen miles, and, by taking a cab for the first four or five miles, he could make sure of reaching his destination in time to finish the night in bed.

To be sure, there was the difficulty that he would have to rouse someone in order to get into the house. But Geoffrey knew that one of the grooms slept in a small room over an out-

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house in the rear of the house, and that there was a communication between his bedroom and the interior of the main building; so he felt sure that by awaking the groom he could gain admittance without disturbing anyone else.

The night was fine, and there was a full moon, so Geoffrey found his ten-mile walk delightful. When at last he entered the General's grounds it was broad daylight. By dint of throwing pebbles at the groom's bedroom window, he managed to wake the lad; and in a few minutes he found himself inside the house.

He was passing along one of the corridors on the first floor, his footsteps being quite inaudible on the thick carpeting, when he distinctly saw a shadow flit across the stairs which led to the second floor. Someone, he understood, must have passed before the window which lighted the staircase, or some window above.

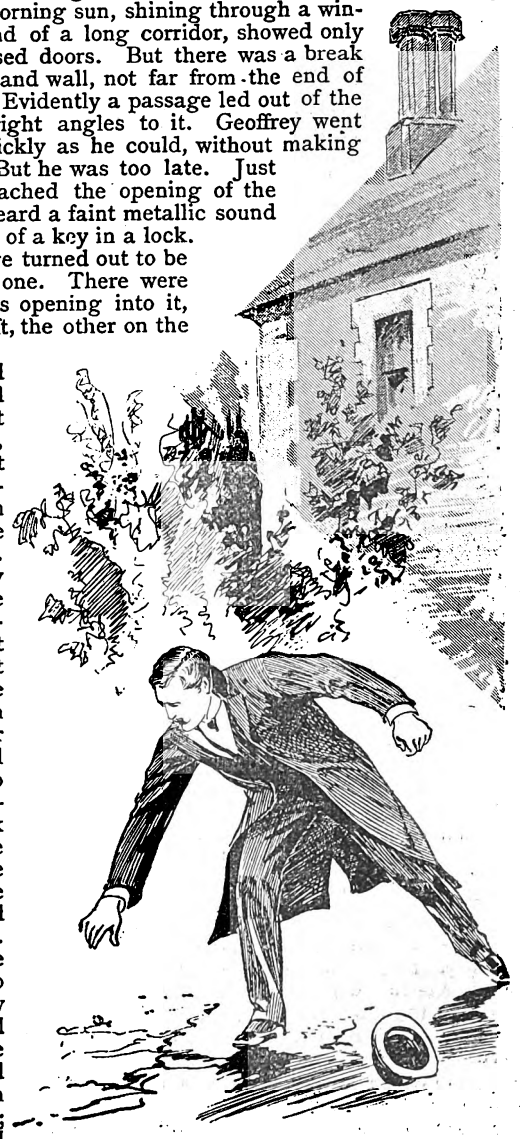
Geoffrey's first thought was that burglars must be in the house. But the idea had barely entered his mind when he saw that it was absurd. He had seen no sign that anything was wrong when he approached the house; and no burglar would be likely to seek the upper floors, where there must be little worth stealing.

With rapid, noiseless steps Geoffrey sped up the stairs.

No one was in sight when he reached the upper landing. The bright morning sun, shining through a window at the end of a long corridor, showed only a row of closed doors. But there was a break in the right-hand wall, not far from the end of the gallery. Evidently a passage led out of the corridor at right angles to it. Geoffrey went along, as quickly as he could, without making any noise. But he was too late. Just before he reached the opening of the passage he heard a faint metallic sound—the turning of a key in a lock.

The passage turned out to be quite a short one. There were only two doors opening into it, one on the left, the other on the right.

Geoffrey had half a mind to knock at these doors, and insist upon the persons within giving some explanation. But clearly this would be an absurd proceeding. It would not take more than ten seconds for the nocturnal wanderer to get into bed—not to speak of the time that might be gained before the door could be opened. Besides, there were two doors. How could he tell which was the one which had just been closed. No; nothing could be gained by making a disturbance at present. But the young man determined that he would be awake and watching at the same hour on the following morning.



By dint of throwing pebbles.

He did not feel quite certain whether he should mention this little incident to the General. It was suspicious, certainly, yet capable of a perfectly innocent explanation. One of the servants, for example, might have been awake, and hearing the noise made by admitting Geoffrey, might have gone downstairs to see what was the matter, and then gone quietly back to bed. On the whole, Geoffrey came to the conclusion that it would be better to say nothing to the General, but content himself with keeping a good look-out next morning.

He met one of the housemaids.

He went to bed, and in three minutes he was fast asleep.

Tired out with his long journey and his walk, Geoffrey slept till late. He was on his way down to breakfast when he met one of the housemaids coming down from the second floor.

"Just come upstairs for a moment," he said to her. "I want to ask you a question about one of the rooms."

Leading her to the end of the short passage which opened out of the corridor, he pointed to the door on the right, and asked:

"Can you tell me whose room that is?"

"That's a lumber-room, sir," answered the girl with a look of surprise. He went on a few steps, and opened the door. The room was quite empty, but for some empty boxes and disused furniture.

He next pointed to the door on the left.

"And do you know who sleeps there?"

"It's one of the Indian gentlemen."

"You don't mean the Rajah?"

"Oh, no, sir; it's the one they call Mr. Sen."

CHAPTER VII.

SIR ARTHUR VISITS HIS LAWYER.

MR. SILAS QUINTON, Sir Arthur Chetwynd's solicitor, might have been taken for the head of a large and prosperous retail business, for an auctioneer or a horse-doctor, or a minister of an unusually cheerful type—for anything rather than a lawyer. His little, sunburnt, beardless face was perpetually wreathed in smiles.

He wore a suit of rather shabby black clothes, an old-fashioned stuck-up collar, and an enormous gold watch secured by an antique watch-ribbon. His hat was always inclined towards the back of his head, sometimes towards the left as well. He was fond of standing with his small legs pretty far apart, his hands under his coat-tails, and his head stuck on one side.

But with all his oddity, and with all his simplicity of character, Silas Quinton was a first-rate man of business, and an excellent lawyer. Some few men were able to boast that they had got the better of Mr. Quinton in a business transaction; but no man was ever heard to say that he had circumvented him twice.

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As the General was aware, Mr. Quinton kept early hours. Soon after nine he called at the office; and he had not to wait long before the solicitor made his appearance.

"You are very early in town, Sir Arthur," said he, as he shook hands. "Nothing wrong, I hope?"

"Nothing whatever. Only, I have been reminded that I have never yet made my will; and I have decided to get it done at once."

"Quite right, my dear sir. Better attend to all those things while we are in full health, and have plenty of time to attend to it."

"I don't know that I *have* much time, Mr. Quinton. I have a particular reason for wishing to get the thing done to-day, or to-morrow at latest."

"I daresay it can be managed," said Mr. Quinton, as he took a sheet of foolscap from a drawer, and made a memorandum in one corner of it.

"My chief difficulty," said Sir Arthur Chetwynd, slowly, "is that, having no sons, my daughter must be my heiress; and yet I have made up my mind not to leave the bulk of my property to her by will. That means, in all probability, adopting some man whom I have never seen as my heir. My idea is to provide a small annuity to my daughter in any event, and to leave the bulk of what I have to her, on condition that she marries a man of my choosing or remains unmarried. Can that be managed?"

"In an indirect way it can. But, my dear General, suppose your daughter were to meet with a perfectly eligible suitor some time after your death?"

"Then I should wish her to have a moderate income—say five hundred a year. Don't begin protesting, my dear sir, my mind is quite made up. If the eligible suitor who turns up after I am gone is a rich man he won't want money with his wife. If he is a poor man, he will think five hundred a year a very fair dowry."

"Perhaps. But Miss Chetwynd? Won't it be rather hard upon her?"

"If she does not think the eligible suitor worth the sacrifice she needn't have him," said the General.

It was plain to Mr. Quinton that the old campaigner was absurdly jealous of this supposed husband who was to step into his shoes some day.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," said he after a pause. "I'll authorise my trustees to pay my daughter a yearly sum equal to any independent income her husband may possess beyond five hundred a year. If she marries a man of substance she will keep the bulk of her income; if she marries a poor man she will have a small but sufficient income. In either case there will be no great temptation for fortune-hunters."

Mr Silas Quinton.

"Unto him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance," was the quotation that occurred to the lawyer, but he did not utter it.

"And the bulk of the property — in case your daughter marries a poor man or dies without issue?"

"I should like it to be spent in building and endowing schools for the sons and daughters of officers in the army," said the General, after a pause.

The lawyer answered by a bow. He was busy jotting down the General's instructions, and there was silence in the room for some minutes.

"I suppose," said Sir Arthur carelessly, "if I write to any one who may ask for my daughter's hand, and give my consent to the marriage, that would be sufficient to secure to them the whole of my property?"

"Yes, it would. But, to prevent misunderstandings, it may be as well to give notice of your approval to the trustees. By the way, who are to be the trustees?"

Bumpus.

"Yourself, for one, if you will accept the trust. I couldn't have a better man."

Mr. Quinton bowed gravely, but with a very pleased look in his eyes.

"For the others, Lieutenant Stoddart, of the Royal Navy; and my neighbour, Lord Lavington. I got his consent in joke one evening after dinner; but, by Jove, I'll keep him to his bargain."

"This will be an awkward will to draw," said Mr. Quinton, regarding his sheet of instructions with his head very much on one side, and a look of dissatisfaction on his jolly face. "However, I daresay Mr. Bumpus will be able to put it into shape for us."

"Who's he?"

"Bumpus? He's a clever conveyancing counsel, who does most of my London agent's work."

"Then you mean to send that will to London?"

"Certainly."

"And how long will that take—I mean, how long will it be before it can be ready for signature?"

"Oh, ten days; perhaps a fortnight."

"But that won't do at all, Quinton," said the General earnestly. "I have a particular reason for having my will made in the course of to-morrow, or next day at farthest. I would prefer that it should be to-morrow."

"But it's impossible. Who's to draw it?"

"Draw it yourself."

Mr. Quinton shook his head.

"I've drawn plenty of wills," he said, "but in a case of this importance—— However, I will draw it myself in the meantime. You can sign it, and then it can be submitted to counsel; and if he doesn't think it carries out your wishes beyond the possibility of a doubt, he can draw it over again."

"Very good. Please yourself about that. Only I want to sign the thing to-morrow."

"It would be easier," said the lawyer in a jocular tone, still looking at the memoranda before him, "to deal with the matter by way of marriage settlement; but I suppose that is impossible?"

The General fidgeted in his chair.

"The fact is," said he, "I delayed making a will partly for that very reason. I would prefer greatly that my daughter should be married before my death; but my cousin——"

He stopped himself.

Mr. Quinton looked at him curiously; but the General said no more.

The solicitor considered for a moment, and then put the question he had in his mind:

"As I am to be one of your daughter's trustees, Sir Arthur, I confess I should like to know whether these elaborate pre-

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cautions have any special aim? In a word—is there any person whom you object to Miss Chetwynd marrying?"

"No," answered the General, pulling his moustache thoughtfully; "I can't say that there is. I had long thought my cousin, Captain Byngham, and she might make a match of it——"

"Captain Byngham!"

"Yes. Why not?"

"I am glad I spoke; otherwise I might have misunderstood you altogether. The fact is, I was under the impression that you particularly wished to forbid or prevent, as far as was in your power, your daughter from marrying Captain Byngham. Or, at least, that you wished to prevent his getting any considerable fortune if he succeeded in persuading Miss Chetwynd to have him."

"That was not in my mind. But what made you imagine such a thing? Do you know Captain Byngham?"

"No; I do not. But the provisions of your will seemed aimed at someone who might wish to marry your daughter for her money. You know, I suppose, that your cousin will have to part with his estate in Yorkshire?"

"What!" cried the General, starting, and bending forward in his chair.

Mr. Quinton nodded.

"I know it for a fact," said he; "for the solicitors for the third mortgagees——"

"My cousin never mortgaged the Crosdale property!"

"Indeed you are mistaken, General. As I was saying, the solicitors acting for some of the mortgagees tried to get a client of mine to pay them off, and take a transfer of their mortgage; but as it was only a third mortgage, I advised him to have nothing to do with it. That was some time ago. I believe all the mortgagees have given the usual notices; and the property must be sold shortly. My belief is, it won't realise the money advanced, with interest and costs."

"What!" cried the General.

"So my cousin, Captain Byngham, is practically ruined?"

"Unless he has other resources, of which I know nothing."

The General's face had grown very dark within the last minute or two, and not without reason. More than once since his arrival at Seacombe Towers, Captain Byngham had spoken as if Crosdale were still his own in every sense of the word. He had deliberately thrown dust in Sir Arthur's eyes; and the General had no doubt that his intention had been to conceal his difficulties till he could get married to Leila, and then pay off his mortgages with his—the General's—money.

Now, this scheme did not at all recommend itself to Sir Arthur's mind. And it was not merely the fact that his cousin was poor that weighed with him. If the Captain had become penniless through no fault of his own, Sir Arthur might have hesitated about giving his consent to the match, but he would hardly have forbidden it (considering the relationship) if Leila had been bent on marrying her cousin. But Sir Arthur was convinced that Captain Byngham must have been recklessly extravagant, if not worse. And, besides, his sense of honour revolted from the deception (as he considered it) which the Captain had practised.

"My mind is made up," said the General abruptly, sitting bolt upright in his chair, and folding his arms across his breast. "I see that Captain Byngham is no fit husband for my daughter. He has never asked her, so far as I know; but it is well to be prepared for what might happen after my death. Please strike out what you have written—all these troublesome precautions—and put this down:

"All my property goes to my trustees. If my daughter remains unmarried, or marries with my consent or that of my trustees, the income is to go to her for her life, and to her husband if he survives her—the capital to her children, or, if she has none, to the founding of the Schools. But if she marries without my consent, or yours, she is merely to have an annuity of three hundred a year."

"That won't be enough temptation for a man like Byngham."

"And you had better put him down for an annuity of two hundred, paid quarterly. He may come to poverty, poor fellow. I shouldn't like him to starve. But the annuity is to cease if he marries my daughter without my consent, or that of my trustees. That's plain enough, I think?"

"Perfectly clear and plain; and, if I may say so, a very sensible will to make. But, if you desire your trustees not to consent to a marriage between your daughter and Captain Byngham, you had better give us these instructions in writing."

"Very good. I will write the letter now, and date it to-morrow. Can you let me have a sheet of paper? It is, as you say, advisable to have it down in black and white."

The letter was written; and then the General added a few instructions for legacies to servants and to local charities, besides a thousand pounds to Geoffrey Dundas.

"When can you let me have the will for signature?" he said finally, rising as he spoke.

"It will be ready by noon to-morrow."

"Then you had better send it by train to Torwyn—that's our nearest station. If you will let your clerk give it to the guard of the 1.40 train, I will send over to Torwyn for it. Then I can sign it the same afternoon, and send it back to you by post. I had rather you kept it in your safe."

Mr. Quinton promised that the will should be despatched by the specified train without fail; and the General, having finished his business at Plymouth, went home by the next train.

(To be continued.)

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A HALT at DAWN.

MARGARET DANVERS stepped into the Edinburgh express one stormy March evening, and as she walked composedly to her seat in the middle of the corridor train, the eyes of every person present were riveted upon her. She wore a closely-fitting garment of Russian sable, which enveloped her completely, and a large beaver hat with drooping plumes, and from the single fine diamond flashing at her throat to the tips of her dainty Suéde boots she looked the model of a fashionable beauty.

She was the only woman in the carriage, and before she had settled herself comfortably, all the men had mentally pronounced their opinion of her looks and style, and hazarded a conjecture as to her age. Her attendant, a florid man of middle age, received the slight degree of attention justified by his seeming only an adjunct of the moment. As he left her, he put into her hands a bunch of costly roses, which she received with a smile, and laid upon the opposite seat the instant he was gone.

Of the score of passengers, two or three knew her by sight, for she was, in a way, a public character; but, as it happened, none were really acquainted with her, and before long, even those most deeply interested in her appearance yielded to the apathy peculiar to railway travellers at night, and subsided into their newspapers or their rugs, preparing to wear out the evening hours.

Margaret amused herself in watching the flying snow, and in reverie. Too used to travelling to even care to look about her, she yielded to the prevailing somnambulistic influence, just enough to dream without sleeping.

At first, there was in her mind a confusion of events—past, present, and to come. Incidents of no importance mingled with greater ones, and her reflections became mixed with little fanciful suggestions of things long since forgotten, or, rather, voluntarily put out of mind.

She tried to think of her career, to recall her triumphs, and to dwell upon the possibilities of the future. She told herself that music was her life, that all she had to do with was the beautiful and the divine in art, and that the every-day existence she had struggled to rise above was, henceforth, nothing more than an unpleasant memory.

At twenty-eight she was her own mistress, earning an independent income through the use of her beautiful voice. The teaching days and the drudgery of the class-room had passed, and as a concert singer she was already famous. After a successful winter in London, she was now upon her way to fulfil several provincial engagements, which promised more than anything in which she had yet engaged. She was in the heyday of her powers; admired, in radiant health, conscious of her beauty and talent, and entirely satisfied with life.

What did it mean that, as she looked from the window with a proud smile upon her lips, some tantalising thoughts would intrude themselves, and the mind, so entirely self-poised, should feel, for the first time in years, the weakening influence of some emotional fancies? It was her boast that she was never lonely, never sad; that her whole heart was in her work.

In front two men were talking.

"Never saw a promise of a worse storm," said one. "Shouldn't wonder if the line was blocked as we go farther north."

"Comes from the north-east," suggested the other. "If necessary, they'll put on another engine. We're bound to go through on this train, that's one comfort."

By nine o'clock Margaret, enveloped in a downy wrapper of dark red, lay back on the cushions courting sleep. Over her was spread the fur ulster, none too warm above the rugs, even for her warm blood. The thermometer outside was standing below zero, and whiffs of icy air found their way every now and then into the carriage.

Everything was quiet save her thoughts, which began to utter themselves with loud, importunate voices, as if answering some call without, independent of her control.

"I have happily been able to say all my life that I didn't know what nerves were," said Margaret to herself, "but I begin to think that from some inexplicable cause I am nervous."

"Richard Allen!"

She started as if the words had been spoken in her ear. Swiftly memory flew back ten years, and she saw herself standing bareheaded at the gate of her father's house in the Highlands, where her childhood had been passed; and beside her, bending tenderly to catch her lightest word, the form of her first lover, then a poor, obscure young lieutenant in the army.

With an indifference scarce tinged with pity, since it hardly occurred to her in those days that men could really feel, she had met his pleading affection with an enthusiastic outburst of her ambition to lead the artiste's life, to spend her energies in self-development, and show what a woman wholly devoted to an intellectual and artistic life might become.

"You must not think that I am deficient in womanly sensibility," she had said to him, with one of those soft glances, of the meaning and effect of which she was entirely careless and unconscious. "But some women must remain spinsters, you know, and I think I am meant to be one of the sisterhood."

"You do not know yourself. The day will come when ambition will seem nothing to you; then the homely things, the real things, will take on their true value to your eyes, and a 'career' will seem a mere artificiality that has nothing to do with what is best and sweetest in life."

The words had passed her by as an idle phrase, evoked from disappointment. And she and Richard Allen had parted, he going to his post on the line in India, and she to Italy to study. And yet nothing passes from us entirely.

Here, without warning, without her intention, the little scene came up before her eyes; and she saw again the apple-orchard in blossom, the red brick chimneys of the school across the way looming up in the moonlight, the hills in the distance, the strong, proudly-carried figure at her side. And then scene after scene came up before her, always with the two figures present—the manly, devoted lover, the self-absorbed girl.

She tried to be cynical, to laugh, to think of something else; she tried her best to get to sleep, but only her will could sleep, and fancy still rioted. Richard Allen had had the making of a fine man in him: what had become of him—why had nothing been heard of him? The woman whose religion was success, had little patience with patience; it seemed to her that all virtue was embodied in some sort of action.

A man, who at forty—he must be forty—was still obscure, was not worth a thought. And yet he had possessed a sort of strength she had been forced to admire in old times—a suggested moral superiority—a higher point of view than she considered practical. If he had brought himself to live up to his own standard, he must have been unable to make necessary concessions.

And then, as Margaret recalled some "concessions" she

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had herself made to success, she felt her cheeks burn in the darkness. How often she had traded upon her own attractions; how often made use of the influence of her personality to bring about certain ends! If she had not lied in words, she had in acts. Her present status had not been attained without some sacrifice of scruples.

Long after midnight she lost consciousness, and passed an hour in fitful slumber. It was cruel that she should have to dream of Richard Allen; dream that they were together in an open boat drifting out to sea, and that his arms were round her, his eyes looking into hers. And she cared for nothing, thought of nothing, but that he held her close—how strangely sweet it was!——

A jar, a shock, a sudden stop, as if the train had run against a wall of rock, and Margaret started up and drew the curtains aside instinctively. A fall through space—what was it, oh, where was she? Had the train fallen down an embankment?

After a minute she realised that she had been thrown from her seat across the corridor; that other persons lay about, some groaning, some hastily picking themselves up. She shut her eyes; there was a sharp pain in her left arm, and a weight upon her side. A falling lamp had struck her, and from some cause she could not rise; her leg must be broken. There was a terrible confusion, much talking, and half-a-dozen people bending over her pityingly and asking her questions.

"What has happened? Is anyone killed?" she asked.

Several persons answered at once. They had run into a goods train. The engine driver on the express was killed; no one else. Many were hurt. Could she bear to be moved?

"I must," she returned, setting her lips, for agonising pains began to shoot through her foot, and the thought of being touched was suffering.

"Fortunately we are just on the outskirts of Frith—there are houses near."

It was the guard who spoke now, and he at once took charge. She was lifted carefully, wrapped in rugs, and carried out. Their carriage had sustained less damage than any other, being in the rear, and there was no difficulty in getting free.

"If she could stand it to be taken over yonder," said someone, pointing to a house some distance away, "she'd be more comfortable, I think."

"Where are we?" asked Margaret, bravely, suppressing her pain.

"Somewhere across the border—a little town called Frith," a man answered her.

"If she could stand it to be taken over to the doctor's house," said the persistent first speaker.

"I can stand it," she interposed. "Take me there quickly."

They improvised a sort of rough litter of carriage seats, and carried her across a field in the open country. The dawn was just breaking, and the pale moon was slowly fading out of sight before the great coming light.

The air was clear, cold, and crisp; and, though there had evidently been a heavy storm during the night, it had cleared completely, and the first ray of sunlight glittered upon banks of frozen snow.

The house before which they stopped was a plain, two-storeyed structure of brick, which seemed at first sight, peculiarly barren-looking. Clean white curtains hung in straight folds at the windows.

The door had been drab in colour; but the paint had been so assiduously scrubbed that one now took its presence on trust. There was a brass knocker and a rush door-mat, on which lay a large black cat with bristling white whiskers.

The door was opened by a girl, whose starched cap and apron suggested careful housekeeping, as her suspicious countenance suggested inhospitality. She made no objections to admitting them, however, and Margaret was carefully deposited upon a couch in the sitting-room, to wait the coming of the doctor, who, the maid said, had just left the house to go to the scene of the wreck.

"We'll send him back to you, ma'am," one of the men assured her. "You ought to be 'tended to first."

The ungenial-looking maid proved herself to be not deficient in skill, even though sympathy was, in a measure, lacking. She made her guest as comfortable as she could. The shoe was cut from the swollen ankle, which was bathed and bandaged, and the hurts upon the shoulder and side were pronounced to be only bruises, which "the doctor would soon make all right." And then Margaret was left to herself while the girl went to make the inevitable "cup of tea" which was to set everything straight.

At first she lay perfectly still, seeing nothing and caring for nothing. Her mind was full of vexation and impatience over an accident which must delay the fulfilment of her engagement. It did not occur to her that it might have been worse; anything was bad enough.

After a while her eyes began to wander idly round the room. It seemed half sitting-room, half study. Folding doors divided it from the consulting-room at the back. There was a book-case, well filled; some good engravings on the walls; a few easy-chairs, covered with raw silk of a dull hue, much worn; and a writing-table between the windows, half covered with books and magazines. There was something agreeable to her taste in the air of the room. She could imagine it the abode of a man whose very poverty would never become squalid.

Upon the mantelpiece were a bronze clock and a pair of fine vases, dainty in tone and finish; they were the sole womanly touches about the place. Noting these details half indifferently, she lay back again and closed her eyes.

When she opened them again, they happened to glance directly over to a corner of the room which had before been dim, but was now illuminated by a shaft of sunlight. A carved bracket hung there, and on the shelf lay a singular-looking little instrument, shaped like a dagger, of Moorish device, the handle inlaid with gold, left rough and unpolished.

When Margaret saw this small object, she gave a little cry and tried to rise, but finding that impossible, she dropped back upon her pillows as if she had been shot, her eyes fixed upon the little instrument with a look of recognition that was half pleasure, half alarm. What strange trick was fate about to play her? How could this thing be possible?

There was a noise; the front door opened, and someone came along the hall with a firm, measured step. Margaret's heart, that well-regulated organ, beat to suffocation. She hardly dared listen or look. She threw her arm up over her forehead, nearly concealing her face. Someone entered the room, and paused beside her.

A well-remembered voice, graver, deeper than of yore, yet with a cheery ring in it, said, "Let me see what I can do to help you, madam." A chair was drawn up to the side of the couch, a gentle hand took her own. Her pulse was beating furiously; the hand was held rather long, as if something perplexed him. She felt searching eyes bent upon her face, and suddenly threw down her arm. The doctor drew back, his face turning pale, and the two looked at each other for a minute in silence. She spoke first, putting out her hand timidly.

"Richard, don't you remember me?"

"Remember you? As if I were likely ever to forget you."

She softly touched his empty left sleeve, pinned over his breast, two tears standing in her eyes.

"In Afghanistan," he said. "I have got over minding it. Don't cry."

"You left the army?"

"Yes, four years ago. My health gave way. I studied medicine in India, was invited here by an old friend to become his assistant, and shortly afterwards he died. That is all."

"You never—never——"

"Yes; I married."

The words were an unexpected stab. Margaret gasped, amazed that she should care. Her face suddenly became suffused with colour, and she turned it away.

"She only lived a year, Margaret," said the doctor, bending down to study the fair flushed face suddenly pain-smitten.

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"My arm!" said Margaret faintly, drawing his attention to the lesser hurt.

He was the doctor again at once, and for the next half-hour all professional gravity, and as impersonal as the sphinx; yet the woman felt through every nerve, like a musical vibration, the thrill of his firm warm fingers, the scrutiny of his eyes.

He was changed, worn through suffering rather than years, his face lined, his hair grown grey; with nothing young about him but his eyes, which sparkled with a cheer and brightness no grief could dim, for they mirrored a mind above all personal considerations, concerned with those large loving interests belonging to humanity.

The doctor came and went quietly, her eyes following him. When he intercepted the look she blushed like a school-girl. Too busy all that day to give her more than necessary attention, he yet lost nothing that passed, and she had a sense which was oddly pleasant that he understood something of what was passing in her mind. It was terrible too.

There were moments when she wished herself miles away. Besides all the physical pain which she endured that long day, Margaret's soul was the battle-ground of a struggle far more exhausting. Ambition, pride, and love of the world fought hard against a tender, newly-born impulse, which it seemed that a single breath of reason ought to chill to death.

The coals burned red in the grate; a little tea-table was set in the middle of the room, and in the easiest chair in the house, piled with all the available cushions, the doctor placed Margaret, taking his position opposite her. The solemn girl brought in supper, which was well cooked and served with a scrupulous cleanliness that almost atoned for the absence of a more dainty service.

The doctor's face shone with satisfaction, but his manner although genial, was ceremonious. Margaret felt that, in the few feet intervening between them, there lay years of care and grief and disappointment. She felt a yearning to bridge the chasm, to draw nearer to him, even though she herself had to take the hard steps towards understanding.

Thought the woman: "Does he love me still?" And, thought the man: "Is she tired of the world, and could she learn to love me now?"

But they spoke of music; of camp life on the Eastern frontier; of what they had seen, what they had read. Not a word of what they felt. A few hours later, the doctor stood in his bare soldier's bed-room, and looked in his glass. For five minutes he studied himself, and then he turned away, resolved to let no new hope spring up in his heart But Margaret slept to dream of him, woke through the night, thinking of him, as she could not have thought in the old days, when he wooed her in the confidence of his fresh, hopeful youth.

There was no hotel in the village, and the few scattered houses were crowded with the wounded passengers, waiting until they were well enough to proceed with their journey. Margaret was not sorry that there was no other place for her, than the refuge she had been taken to. "I am thinking that I am singularly fortunate in being in the doctor's house, where I get special attention," she said to him, with a little fluttering smile.

In time these shy looks wrought upon the doctor, and his stern resolution wavered. He found himself sounding her preferences and attachments, with the unconfessed design of extracting some unguarded word that might indicate a change in her old convictions. Carrying on together these two processes—determination to refrain and resolution to pursue, which often accompanies some course of action embraced in accordance with a natural, unworldly judgment, he managed to betray to the eager girl all he wished to conceal and she wished to know.

She had telegraphed to Edinburgh that she would be there in ten days. Four of them had passed, and she was free from pain and able to put her foot to the ground. The doctor persisted in helping her from the couch to the chair and back again.

"But I can walk alone now," she objected.

"We must be careful. Not until to-morrow."

She protested with greater earnestness.

"True, I have but one arm," he said, with the first accent of bitterness she had heard from him. Her lips parted to give utterance to a sudden rush of words, but she only looked at him, with eyes so eloquent that he answered the look.

"Margaret, do you care? Dear, I have always loved you, I love you now—can you care?"

She drooped her head on his shoulder, but said nothing. The doctor held her close for a minute, and then, leaving her, began to walk up and down the room.

"It is impossible."

"It may be impossible," murmured Margaret, with a little blush, "but it is true."

"It is cruel to ask it, dear. You are young, beautiful, brilliant—with success at your feet, and I——"

She put up her hand imploringly. It was caught and held. "And I am poor, obscure, and—old," he finished, his eyes upon her face.

"I have come to you, Richard. It seems strange to me, I cannot explain it; but it seems as if everything the world has to offer me is nothing beside——"

"Beside my love?" he bent on one knee beside her chair and put her hand to his lips.

"I want to share your life," she said, and a new expression grew upon her face; a high, devoted look which was half heroic, all womanly. "I want to learn something of the great things, the true things."

"You have had greater things than I can give you. Think of all you are leaving!"

She made a gesture of renunciation. "It does not seem much to leave——for you."

"Ah, my darling, I am afraid you will regret it. The work-a-day world will be a trial to you. And mine is a veritable work-a-day world."

He kept his eyes on her face, half dreading to see her shrink away. But what woman is not won by an appearance of self-renunciation? Richard could not have let her go now. At the last instant he would have snatched her to his breast, had she drawn away. But the misgiving that rushed over him so fiercely was a real one, a sensible one. He felt it profoundly, and tried to read in her eyes a shadow of this coming regret. But her eyes were clear, loving, radiant. She pressed herself against his breast, and gave him the great gift of her life and her future. Would the shadow ever come?

The moon looked softly in an hour later, and, finding the lovers in that delicious dream which once in a lifetime comes to most men and women, drew over her face a grey cloud-veil, and left them to dream on.

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PRICE ONE SHILLING.

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FAR beyond the lights of the château, where the Countess de L—— was receiving the tributes of the most noble families of France, stood two persons. One was Mme. D'Abrant and the other Louis Condrac.

"Thank heaven, Clarette, we are alone for a moment. I began to think you could never get away."

"So I thought also; my husband grows more and more suspicious every day. I have hardly been out of his sight for a week."

"Oh, my poor, poor darling! How you can stand it I could never see. Clarette, why don't you do as I have wished? I have asked you, begged you, again and again, to leave this man who is so odious to you. Come with me. Surely, you love me enough to dare to attempt this?"

"Yes, Louis, I love you," she answered, taking both his hands in hers; "love you more than words can tell, and you know it, dear. Yet when I think of this—of leaving him—my husband—oh, I don't know——What was that?" she whispered, breathlessly. "I thought I heard a step on the gravel."

"There is nothing there," answered Condrac. "See, the whole path lies bathed in the moonlight."

"I could have sworn—but perhaps there was nothing. It is too late for me to stay longer; we shall be missed——"

"Promise me, Clarette, before you go, that you will leave this hateful man, and become mine for ever. Darling, will you promise?"

She extended her arms and whispered:

"Yes, Louis, I will."

"Scoundrel!" shouted a hoarse voice, as, white with passion, M. D'Abrant sprang into the pathway confronting Condrac "Rascal! Villain! Dog!"

There was a short struggle; the two men fell to the ground. Then came a flash, the report of a pistol, and Louis Condrac rose pale and trembling, with the perspiration rolling in great drops from his forehead.

. . . . . .

The celebrated trial was ended at last, and Louis Condrac was found guilty. There had been but two witnesses, Mme. D'Abrant, who swore that she had heard the pistol shot, and hastening to the spot had found her husband alone and dead; and the officer of the police, who had seen Condrac leaving the grounds of the château.

Other evidence than this there was none; no sound had been heard by the guests at the château. The weapon used could not be identified as Condrac's, and all through the trial Condrac had protested his innocence. Popular sympathy was with him, for D'Abrant was disliked by everyone; but justice could not be satisfied by this, and Condrac was condemned to die.

. . . . . .

The first faint beams of light gilded the sombre walls of the huge prison-house. The day will pass quickly, and when the sun rises again the massive gates will be thrown open, and Louis Condrac will walk forth for the last time on earth.

In his cell the prisoner paced rapidly to and fro in great mental anxiety. Then, stopping, he looked round at the huge walls and unyielding bars, at the heavy locks, at the convict who had been placed in the cell to bear him company in his last hours—and then—throwing himself upon his cot, fell into a troubled sleep.

Waking suddenly he rushed to the bars, and shouted loudly to the keeper:

"Tell M. le Commandant that I must see him at once—that I have important news to tell him."

It seemed to Condrac, sitting on the edge of his cot, almost an eternity before he returned.

"Well, M. Condrac," exclaimed the commandant as he entered, "is there anything I can do for you this morning?"

"Sir," began Louis nervously, as he started up, "you know that I have always asserted my innocence. It was true that I loved the wife of M. D'Abrant, yet, knowing this, what possible benefit could I achieve by killing him? None at all. You have yourself believed me to be innocent, and for that I thank you.

"All last night I paced my cell in despair, as yonder poor wretch can testify.

"Wearied with the exertion, I threw myself on the bed and fell into a deep sleep. I thought that I mounted the fatal scaffold; the sea of faces surrounded me.

"Suddenly, a man standing at the foot of the steps cried out, in a loud voice: 'Look! Behold the murderer of Monsieur D'Abrant!' so vivid was the dream that I can see him as well as if he stood before me now.

"He was of a very pale complexion, wore a light grey suit, with a pink and white tie. In his button-hole was a flower, which was white. He had a silk hat, gloves and gaiters; his hair was dark, and he had a trimmed beard tinged with grey. It was so real that I cannot rid myself of the impression that it made."

"Still, M. Condrac, I am unable to aid you. Although I do not believe you guilty, I see no way to save you. If you wish to see me again during the day, or if there is anything more that I can do for you, let me know."

As the cell-door closed heavily behind him, Louis Condrac breathed a sigh, almost, one would think, of relief.

. . . . . .

The morning of the execution! The bell has already begun to toll, and the spectators are getting impatient. Ah! the prison doors swing open, and the crowd peers forward eagerly to get a view of the prisoner. At each side walks a gendarme; a clergyman in his robes precedes him, reading the last petition for mercy.

As Condrac mounts the platform he turns, staggers backward, and almost shrieks out:

"Look! Behold the murderer of M. D'Abrant!"

The commandant, though not a superstitious man, turns pale as he hears the words of the dream.

"There! He stands before you! The murderer!"

At the foot of the scaffold stood a man, dressed in grey, exactly as Condrac had described. The commandant leaped down from the platform, and seized the stranger roughly. The man, who was white and trembling at the words of Condrac, broke down.

"It is true," he cried, "all too true, that I, and I alone, am the murderer of M. D'Abrant. See! Here are the letters and papers saturated with blood, that I had only time to secure. Hearing steps, I turned and fled. What fatal impulse has led me here I know not. But I pray you have mercy on me, a poor, guilty wretch!"

And the miserable man fell upon his knees, tears streaming down his face.

A great shout came up from the excited crowd. "Let Condrac go! Condrac is innocent! Free him! Release him!" One, more agile than the rest, sprang upon the scaffold, and with a single thrust cut the bonds.

Pressing his hand to his head Condrac walked down into the crowd as one dazed. They, more interested in the new prisoner than the old one, let him pass by unmolested and he disappeared. Nor was he ever seen again. Three days later the self-betrayed criminal was examined before the officers of the police.

It was Mme. D'Abrant.

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Curious Experiments IN CORPULENCY

"A Mr. Russell, author and specialist in obesity, has experimentally tried the effect of administering large doses to moderate lean persons of his well-known herbal discovery, which is so marvellously effectual in reducing superfluous fat, with the result that there is not the slightest alteration or diminution of weight recorded, thereby proving conclusively to our minds that it is only the unhealthy adipose waste tissue which is destroyed, for after dispensing a few fluid ounces of his remarkable vegetable compounds he succeeds in destroying the diseased fatty mass at the rate of from 2 lb. to even 12 lb. in seven days. There can be no ambiguity about it, for any persons can test this for themselves by standing upon a weighing machine. He explains that all lean persons carry a certain amount of fat necessary for the natural production of heat in the body, but Nature has only stored up her requisite stock in the healthy system, which she most zealously guards, and thus declines to part with an ounce to the persuasions of Mr. Russell's vegetable tonic, however immoderate the dose may be, which testifies abundantly to the fact that it is only a chemical solvent of insalubrious adipose tissue. There is no doubt that the inventor of the composition must have possessed a profound vegetal knowledge in selecting this simple but peculiar combination.

"Those who resort to the pernicious products of the mineral kingdom, or even the deleterious sections of the vegetable world, doubtless can decoct something powerful but injurious in its action; such, however, require no laudatory commendation; but Mr. Russell (we herewith append his address: Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., the author of 'Corpulency, and the Cure,' 256 pages, price 4d. stamps) makes no secret of the simplicity of his treatment, and avers that the decoction can be drank as a refreshing summer drink, pleasant to the palate, yet having sufficient effect, although perfectly harmless, to remove generally 2 lb. or more in twenty-four hours. We think stout persons would do well to send for his book, which can be obtained through booksellers, or at the address given above."—*Leeds Times*, December 1, 1894.

TO METAMORPHOSE FAT PERSONS

"We were reading in the 'Penny Illustrated Paper' how to reduce obesity, wherein it says in that very excellent publication: 'The corpulent will be glad to learn how to lose two stone in about a month with benefit to health, strength, and muscle, by a comparatively new system. It is a singular fact that the patient, returning quickly to a healthy state with increased activity of brain, digestive, and other organs, naturally requires more food than hitherto; yet, notwithstanding this, he absolutely loses in weight one to two pounds daily, as the weighing machine will prove. The Book, "Corpulency and the Cure" (256 pages), containing the "recipe," can be had gratis from Mr. F. C. Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., by sending cost of postage, fourpence.' He has discovered a simple herbal remedy, most pleasant to the taste, which entirely disposes of the necessity of starving oneself in endeavouring to be rid of all superfluous matter. An interesting point, which goes to prove that the almost magical compound is beyond doubt harmless, is that in prescribing it in a tentative way to lean persons, or rather to those who carry no superfluity of fat beyond that which is required as fuel for Nature's furnace, the medicine is absolutely inoperative, attacking only that unhealthy, disease-creating waste accumulation which is the burden of the fat creature's existence. In many cases where people take decoctions reputed to be new medical discoveries to cure some specific disease, they may recover by the action of the medicine, or Nature may have effected her own cure. In the case of corpulency, if a simple remedy undertakes to reduce a person, say, 7 lb. in a week, all that one has to do is to get weighed, and thus prove it conclusively. So it is with Mr. Russell's compound, but he asks you to prove it in twenty-four hours only."—*Coventry Standard*, January 18, 1895.

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ALL THROUGH ONE GATE.

LET us fancy a state of affairs like this: Suppose that nothing to eat could be raised or produced in England; suppose a war, in which all the ports of England were so effectively and continuously blockaded that no food whatever could be imported for a year. What would become of the people? At best only a few could leave the country; the vast majority must remain. The question answers itself. Such a situation is not likely to occur; God forbid that it ever should, but the grim fancy may teach some of us a lesson that we can use to advantage.

For example, a lady is speaking of an occasion when she was very ill. What her ailment was she did not know. It first appeared in November, 1890. Up to that time she says she had been healthy and strong; never needed a doctor. At that time she felt, not so much that she had been *attacked* by illness as that she had *lapsed* into it. She was languid, tired, and weak, without perceiving any reason why she should be so. "At first," she says, "my appetite failed me, and I had no desire for food. I could partake only of liquids, and after the simplest diet I had great pain at the chest. Sometimes I was seized with giddiness, and had pain across the forehead and temples.

"I became so low and weak that I was confined to my room for a fortnight, and could barely walk across the floor. I continued to grow worse, losing strength daily. In the early part of December, 1890, I thought I would try a medicine that had greatly benefited my two daughters, one of whom had suffered from weakness and indigestion, and the other from poorness of the blood.

"The name of the medicine is Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup, and I procured it from Mr. Shirtcliff, the chemist, in Goldhawk Road. After I had taken the Syrup two days I found myself a little better. My appetite returned, and what I ate digested and gave me strength. By the time I had taken two bottles I was completely cured, and have since been in the best of health, not requiring medicine of any kind. I have recommended Mother Seigel's Syrup to many of my friends, and they have found benefit from its use If by publishing this letter other sufferers may come to know of the curative powers of this medicine, you are at liberty to make it public. I will answer any inquiries. Yours truly (Signed) Mrs. S. Buckingham, 23, Oaklands Grove, Shepherd's Bush, London, September 16th, 1892."

The reader will notice that Mrs. Buckingham speaks of her two daughters, one of whom had been cured of weakness and indigestion, and the other of poorness of the blood, by the Syrup. On this point we merely desire to suggest that both the young ladies were (as their mother knew) troubled with the same complaint—one perhaps in a stage a trifle more advanced than the other. Poverty of the blood means simply a lack in it of the vital elements, which food alone can supply; and no food can supply them unless it is perfectly digested. Thousands of women are thus afflicted, and are being constantly saved by the effect of Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup on the stomach and the other digestive organs.

Then, what do we make of the illustration which introduces this article? This: The human body is like the population of a great country—it must be fed. Every muscle, bone, and bit of flesh is merely food altered into that form by the digestion. Yes; even more than this. Our illustration goes deeper than we thought. While it is not supposable that England could fail of assistance from her own soil, the human body *in no way helps itself.* All its support must come from the outside, and all pass through *one gate*—the stomach.

We thus see the great work done by the Syrup in keeping this gate always open and available.

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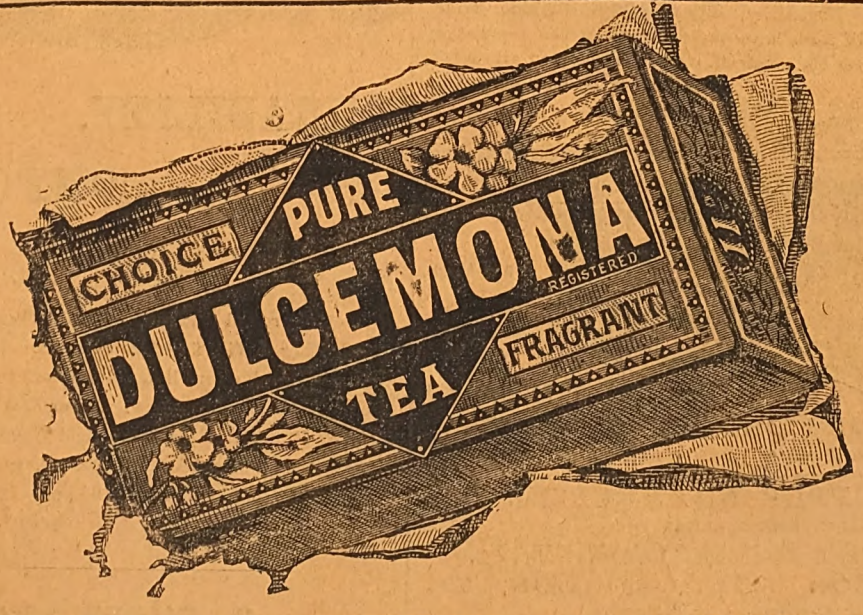

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 329.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING APRIL 20, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

Only a Story

NO one would ever have imagined that the Hon. Douglas Shilletoe, author, humourist, raconteur, and cosmopolitan that he was, loitered on at Eastbourne for the express and only purpose of telling a young lady that he loved her. His intention at first was to remain only two weeks, and then go back to town. He was introduced to the Dinsmores, and promptly fell in love with Mabel Dinsmore, and stayed where he was.

Miss Dinsmore's manner indicated that she tolerated the Hon. Shilletoe's attentions, but that was all. He was a general favourite in the hotel, and his anecdotes and good-humour always made him a most desirable guest at one's table. He was never at a loss for something appropriate to relate. His stories were generally introduced with this short preface, "That reminds me," &c. Everybody would crowd round him except Miss Dinsmore, and evince by hearty laughter genuine appreciation of his anecdotes.

Mabel Dinsmore, however, had ideas which her parents considered more romantic than practical. These ideas had the effect of driving away young men. She measured them by her romantic standard, and invariably found them wanting.

"The men of to-day are negative, and never achieve anything great," she said in sadness to her parents. "Why should I be sacrificed to the modern society men? He knows how to lead a cotillon and how to drive tandem. But how few of them would do anything heroic? and least of all such a man as the Hon. Shilletoe."

However, our hero was in a gay humour the evening he called at the Dinsmore cottage to challenge his fate. The cold hauteur of Miss Dinsmore as she entered the drawing-room did not check the exuberant feeling in him. He related an anecdote of club life, but the young lady did not smile.

"I fear you do not understand me, Miss Dinsmore, any more than you appreciate my poor jokes," he said, rising and looking out of the window.

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"I belong to a Browning Club, and have assisted in unravelling many alleged riddles," she replied, half laughing.

"I hope I am not as complex as Browning?"

"Oh, no; your anecdotes are all newspaper prose. They are for the masses. I confess that my father and mother often recall your jokes after you are gone and laugh heartily. They will miss you when you go."

"Will you miss me?"

"No."

He was silent for a moment and began in a broken voice: "I came to tell you that I loved you. I shall go away and never speak to you on the subject again. Once I thought of relating to you something——"

"That reminded you, no doubt, of this episode in your career; I really begin to appreciate your humour. It is equal to any occasion. For once I desire to hear your joke, and when the climax is reached I trust you will give me the proper cue so that I can join you in laughter."

He left his position by the window and sat down by the centre table. A bouquet of roses in a china vase filled the room with sweet fragrance. Carelessly picking out a large rose he held it in his right hand, slowly turning it round between his first and second fingers.

He began to speak in a low voice: "There is a page in every man's history which he wishes to conceal from the public. Miss Dinsmore, I was once almost as melancholy as Manfred. I was born in America, in an unhealthy locality, and my boyhood was one of chills and fevers. I shall pass over the vain struggle I engaged in to acquire health and education.

"At the age of nineteen I was thin, almost emaciated, and my parents had been told by the doctors that only the most drastic remedies would restore me to good health. It was finally decided that I should go West and lead the life of a cowboy. I was perfectly reckless, and it did not matter to me where I went or what I did. In a few weeks I found myself at Santa Fé, New Mexico. An Englishman, Major Randall, who owned a ranch some distance from Santa Fé, engaged me to herd cattle at the munificent salary of £5 a month in gold."

"Then you really went to work on the ranch, Mr. Shilletoe?" she asked in a tone that seemed less sarcastic than her usual way of speaking to him.

"Yes; but do I bore you by my recital?"

"Oh, no, not at all, for you have not come to the anecdotal part of it yet."

He did not notice, or pretended not to, the cut in her remark. Still holding the rose in his hand he continued his narration:

"The Major had eleven cowboys, I made the twelfth. They were disposed to guy me; but when they saw that I was a good rider and could handle a revolver quickly they soon accepted me as one of them. They mistook my reckless dash for true courage. In a week or so my health began to improve rapidly, and at the end of two months I could ride all day and all night, rope cattle, and swear fluently in Spanish. I talked of shooting vacqueros, if the chance should occur, in a way that raised me in the estimation of all the cowboys.

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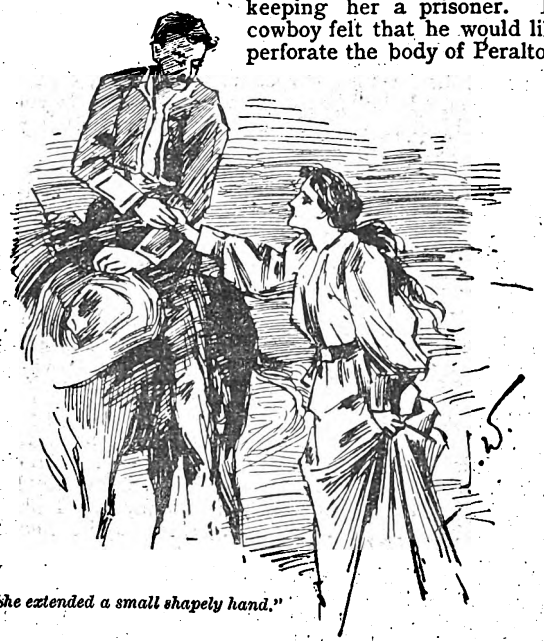
"Little did I dream then that I should play a part in a tragedy, the recollection of which, at times, almost drives me mad. For years I have cultivated the art of relating anecdotes in order to cheat myself into the belief that I possessed a jovial nature. The world knows me as a jester, and thinks I am laughing with it. If I could forget, I would laugh until my heart swelled with joy. But I am wandering.

"The nearest ranch to Major Randall's was Peralto's, five miles distant. He was a rich Mexican bachelor, thirty-five years old, and noted for his hatred of Americans. He had some forty vacqueros, Mexican cowboys, or greasers, and many cattle. After I had had an experience of four months on the ranch, Peralto, our hated neighbour, journeyed to Monterey and married the daughter of a proud, but poor Mexican.

"It was said that Inez did not love him, but her parents persuaded, or, to be accurate, forced her to marry the wealthy ranchero. Instead of taking her on a bridal trip to the City of Mexico, he brought her to his bleak ranch. The Major was a widower, and there was no woman at our ranch to call on Mrs. Peralto. She was never seen out riding, and it became current rumour that her husband was maltreating her, if not actually keeping her a prisoner. Every cowboy felt that he would like to perforate the body of Peralto with



"She extended a small shapely hand."

bullets, and rescue his unfortunate wife. But they could not act upon rumour.

"Returning from a round-up one day I had to pass Peralto's ranch, and, being in a hurry, I spurred my horse to a fast gallop. When I was directly in front of the ranch a great Danish dog leaped the fence, and in a few bounds was at the side of my horse, ready to spring up and tear me from my saddle.

"I drew my revolver, and, without a moment's hesitation, shot the dog dead as he was preparing to leap. It was all done in a second, and the loud report of my revolver seemed to echo for miles round, the afternoon was so quiet and dreamlike.

"I reined up my horse at the gate, kept my smoking revolver in hand, expecting to see Peralto appear and exchange shots with me. I knew he was a dead shot, and my idea was to shoot first, if he had a weapon in his hand.

"A fiendish, diabolical joy took possession of me, but it was short-lived. An apparition of loveliness opened the door and advanced down the walk to the gate. Instantly my pistol was in its holster and my sombrero was doffed. Mrs. Peralto's dark hair was somewhat disarranged, but that did not detract from her beauty. She was young, not over eighteen, and, to me, she seemed a Hebe.

"I saluted her in Spanish, but my pronunciation was bad, and much to my delight she said she spoke English. My apologies and regrets for killing the dog were profuse. I told her I would buy her another dog at Santa Fé, the boys would join with me and purchase anything she wished. She said the dog did not belong to her, but to her husband. She asked me how far I lived from her husband's ranch and the direction. Then she wished to know my name and by whom I was employed.

"Her voice was low and sweet, and seemed to vibrate chords in my soul that had never been touched before. I leaned over the pommel of my saddle and gazed in admiration upon her. She saw and felt that I was sincere. She knew that I would be devoted to her cause from that time. She also knew that if her husband arrived before I departed it meant death to him or me. In a few hurried words I told her that should she ever need protection and friendship to come to our ranch.

"She extended a small, shapely hand; and leaning far over from the horse, I took it in mine. A gentle pressure and asking her not to forget that she had friends near by, I rode away, her soft spoken 'Adio, señor,' sounding in my ears."

The Hon. Shilletoe paused and bowed his head as if he saw and was communing with a departed spirit. He seemed to be thousands of miles away from the woman he had only a few moments before tried to tell that he loved. But she was nearer to him than she had ever been before. His story was a revelation to her. He was not the man she knew when she greeted him so coldly that evening. She almost felt jealous of the Mexican woman.

He appeared handsome to her for the first time. She was dimly conscious that she was excited, and longed, but almost feared, to hear the rest of his story. She moved nearer to him, and though his face was bent down, she imagined he looked sadder than the picture of "Sorrow" she had once seen in an art gallery. And yet the face in the picture of "Sorrow" was that of a hero's, a man who had loved and lost.

"Mr. Douglas," she said softly, "I hope you do not suffer?"

The voice recalled him, as if from a sad reverie, and not answering her question he continued his narration: "I informed Major Randall of everything that had occurred when I arrived at the ranch. In his bluff, hearty way he said I had done the square thing. It was not my fault, he added, that I had not killed Peralto as well as the dog. It was Peralto's luck not to draw up at the right time for a funeral. The Major swore a big oath to the effect that if Mrs. Peralto should ever crook her little finger for aid, she would get it.

"In a week's time the Major was not in a condition to help anyone. His horse fell with him and hurt his left leg. His limb was not broken, but his ankle was sprained, and had swollen to such an extent that he could not leave his bed. He had been in bed a week when the time came for him to make good his promise to Mrs. Peralto.

"It was a moonlight night in August, just such a night as this, when I heard the clatter of the horse's feet on the prairie. I was sleeping on the piazza, my saddle for my pillow, but being restless I lay awake thinking of her. She had been in my thoughts ever since I had seen her and held her hand in mine. I wondered whether I should ever see and speak to her again.

"The galloping horse came nearer, and soon I was up with my weapon in my hand, ready for any emergency. Several of the other cowboys had also risen. I recognised a fine iron-grey horse owned by Peralto, but at first I did not know the rider. He was a boy attired in a Mexican guerilla costume, with a red serape twined loosely round his neat waist. Dismounting at the gate he hurried to the piazza. Lifting his sombrero, the moonlight shone full upon the lovely face of Mrs. Peralto. In an instant I was at her side, leading her up the steps.

"'Señor, I have come for aid, for protection,' she said quickly. 'I must fly, and this very night. My husband will kill me. I have escaped from prison.' In brief, her husband had kept her locked in a room since the day I had killed the dog. His treatment of her was cruel and malicious.

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Mrs. Peralto.

"He had tied her to the post of her bed, and lashed her bare back with his heavy riding whip. He had deprived her of food and drink for two days, and had then offered her the cooked flesh of the dog I had shot.

"The inhuman brutality of his conduct had aroused the sympathy of even old Emanuelo, a grim servitor of Peralto; and his compassion being even more deeply affected by a heavy bribe, he had given her the means of escaping in such a way that no blame was attached to himself.

"We all of us gathered round her to hear the recital of her story. As she rapidly pointed out the facts, each of us gripped his revolver, and muttered a resolution that Peralto should never pass him alive when next we met.

"The suit she wore was one her younger brother used to don on festal occasions. Several years before she married he died, and his request was that she should keep his gay brigand clothes. She desired an escort to a point on the Pecos River where she had a relative living, who would protect and see her safely home.

"Major Randall was roused, and the situation hurriedly explained to him. He sat bolt upright in bed, a sheet round his shoulders, and invited Mrs. Peralto to come in. In a few seconds twelve cowboys stood in line in the Major's room. He asked her to select five of us, and said we would accompany her or die in the attempt.

"She selected me first, because she knew me, and then she picked out Utah Bill, who had been a scout and was noted for his bravery and his kind heart. Utah Bill had killed eight or ten men, but always in self-defence or in a fair fight. Three others, all experts with the revolver, were selected and Utah Bill was made the captain.

"It required only a few minutes for us to saddle our horses and mount. The Major thrust his head out of the window and said: 'Boys, I do not ask you to take an oath that you will see Mrs. Peralto safely to the Rio Pecos, because I know you will, if you are alive.' As the cavalcade started Mrs. Peralto thanked the Major, and said, 'Adio, señor.'

"We rode three abreast, Mrs. Peralto between Utah Bill and myself, and the three other cowboys were in the rear. We dashed along over the rolling prairie, the bright moonlight making it easy for us to follow the trail. Over an hour had passed when Utah Bill turned in his saddle and muttered: 'Carambo, the greaser devils are coming.'

"Far in our rear, black specks could be seen moving rapidly. They were Peralto's greasers in hot pursuit. They kept gaining on us, and yet Utah Bill did not ride faster. Soon we could hear their yells, and we knew that something had to be done. Utah Bill said three of us would have to stop and face the gang. The three cowboys volunteered and Utah Bill told them that they knew what to do.

"One of these cowboys, a superb specimen of manhood, rode up to me and handed me an envelope, with the request that I would open it and write to someone named therein if anything happened to him. Our farewells were short, and a second after we parted they dismounted, shot their horses, and got behind them for breastworks.

"In a little while we could hear the yells of the greasers, and the quick discharge of firearms. It was a fight to the death. They were all three slain, but not until they had killed ten Mexicans, and wounded five or six. They died game, neither asking nor giving quarter.

"Our only thought was to save Mrs. Peralto, and spurring our horses we rode for our lives. As our steeds, in a long, sweeping gallop, carried us swiftly from our cruel pursuers, Inez leaned over towards me and said she had a favour to ask. She desired to fight and die with Utah Bill and myself. I had two revolvers buckled round me, and taking one which had a pearl handle I handed it to her. I could see tears in her eyes, and she said that she had been saying prayers for the brave boys fighting her battle. She did not know then that they were dying to save her.

"I hardly know how far we had gone, but we felt that we had escaped. We checked our horses to a slow gallop, when suddenly, right in front of us, two well-mounted horsemen barred our way. I knew Peralto's horse, with a big white blaze in his forehead, and his chief vacquero, a cruel, murderous greaser. Utah Bill commanded Mrs. Peralto to check her horse and ride close behind us.

"In a cool, matter-of-fact way he said to me: 'You shoot Peralto and I'll kill the greaser.' Four reports, almost together, rang out, and down went Peralto's horse, carrying him with it. The greaser fell from his saddle, shot through the head, and his horse dashed away. Peralto's bullet passed through my coat, and mine, aimed for his heart, lost its mark by penetrating the quickly raised head of his horse. I hoped the bullet had passed through the horse's head and lodged in Peralto's body, for as we rode by he lay prone upon the ground with his dead animal. He was not hurt, but lay still to save his life.

"We had gone a mile or more, when Utah Bill said in a husky voice: 'The game is up, Doug, old boy, I'm done for.'

"He got off his horse, and I was at his side in an instant, just in time to save him from falling.

"Mrs. Peralto quickly came to my assistance. She tore her reboso from her waist, and with it I did my best to staunch the blood flowing from his breast, already covered with the scars of many encounters. Mrs. Peralto put his head in her lap, kissed his brow and wept.

"'Bill, brave old boy, don't give up,' I said, holding the reboso to his flowing wound.

"'Doug, I am on my last round up, and it ain't no use to hold on any longer,' he said. 'I never thought I'd go out with a woman's kiss and tender arms about me. I ain't a bad man, Doug, and I never shot any one in the back. Promise me that you will not let those greasers get my pistols. And Doug, swear to me that you will see her safe. I know you will. Pray! No one has asked me to pray since I was a boy, and she was my mother. Ah! listen! Doug, they are coming, the greaser devils! Shoot Peralto! Aim

"I was at his side in an instant."

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for his heart! Ah, my boy, he is dead! But what is this that I feel? It is my mother's kiss, . . . the last one she ever gave me when I said good-bye.'

"The sun rose, but Utah Bill saw it not. We placed the serape over his body and rode away carrying his weapons and leading his horse. We reached the Rio Pecos and I remained a day, leaving Mrs. Peralto with her relatives. We parted with many promises and vows for the future.

"She was to write to me often, and in a month's time I was to join her. I thought then she was a widow and my affection for her was not concealed. She kept my pearl-handled revolver and she gave me a lock of her hair, and the crimsoned reboso which contained some of Utah Bill's life-blood. Why should I go over that last day of parting love?"

"Oh, don't go over it, brave boy, my Douglas," said Mabel Dinsmore, in tears, and touching the sleeve of his coat. "I know there is a barrier between us. That—that Mrs. Peralto is somewhere in this wide world claiming your first love. But, see, I am calmer now. I am ready to hear the worst."

The Hon. Shilletoe looked at the rose he held in his hand, and in a faltering voice began:—"We buried Utah Bill and the other brave cowboys in one grave, and each of us on the Major's ranch took an oath to shoot Peralto on sight, and also the greasers who pursued us on that fatal night. Peralto never returned to his ranch. He sold it to an Englishman, and we learnt that the Mexican had become a professional gambler.

"I waited in vain for a letter from Inez, but the weekly post brought down from Santa Fé contained nothing for me. I wrote to her that Peralto was not dead, and urged her to come to the States and get a divorce.

"Weeks passed, weeks of anxiety to me, and no line came from her. At the end of two months I could stand it no longer, and I resolved to go to her, if I had to travel the wide world over. I suspected that her parents had somehow prevented her from writing to me.

"I held in my arms Inez Juarez."

"Major Randall accompanied me to Santa Fé, where we were to part, perhaps for ever. The cowboy instinct to see the town got the better of us, and when evening came we visited the gambling places. With me it was anything to pass away the time until morning, when I should begin my journey to Monterey.

"We entered several gambling dens, where Spanish monte was dealt, and lost a few dollars in careless betting. Late in the evening we started to our hotel, when the sound of music from a large gambling saloon attracted our attention. The familiar strains of 'Auld Lang Syne' caused us to pause, and with one impulse we entered. Away at the end of the long room a piano, violin, and flute were making the music, while cowboys, vacqueros, and teamsters stood round the tables betting.

"We passed several tables, when suddenly my eyes fell upon a face that caused my heart to bound into my throat. I had seen that face before. It now belonged to a man with a small black moustache, who sat behind one of the tables, dealing Spanish monte. The Major was startled, too, and whispered, 'Be patient.'

"We stood at the side of the table because a small crowd in front was betting. Suddenly, from the centre of the crowd, a man pushed his way to the front of the table, and sat down by one of the chairs reserved for those who were staking heavily. In an instant my hand was on my revolver, but the Major caught my arm, and said in an undertone: 'Shoot him when he goes out, but not here.'

"Peralto's dark hair had streaks of grey in it, and his face showed signs of dissipation. His fierce black eyes, though, were as bright as ever, and when he contracted his eyebrows, he resembled a fiend. He bet heavily, and, for a time, luck was with him. Then his good fortune deserted him. He grew nervous, and occasionally putting both hands under the table, rolled cigarettes, and smoked them.

"His pile of twenty gold-pieces dwindled until only £40 was left. In the next deal, he staked all his money on one card, and lost. The dealer pulled the pile of gold to his side.

"Peralto put his right hand under the table, and when it came out a stiletto gleamed in it. In a second he leaned over the table and plunged it into the bosom of the youthful dealer. The latter seemed to have anticipated the attack, and quick as a flash exploded a pearl-handled revolver in his face. He fell backwards dead. I sprang to the youth and caught him, as he fell sideways from his seat, the stiletto to the hilt in his bosom. The false moustache on his face was brushed away, and I held in my arms Inez Juarez.

"Looking up she recognised me and whispered my name. 'Will you forgive me, dear Douglas?' she said. 'I could not drag you down with me. I was driven from home. They called me a murderess. I have prayed for you night and day. When I am gone think of me, dear, and forgive me.'

"I held her close to my bosom and kissed her white face. Tears filled my eyes and grief choked my utterance. But she knew I had forgiven and loved her still. Her head resting on my breast, her hand in mine, she muttered with her life's breath, 'Death, after all, is sweet.' Do you wonder now, Miss Dinsmore, why I make my life a jest, a mockery?"

The young lady had both hands to her face and was weeping. She did not answer his question. He stood up for the first time since he began his story and said: "I know that my past will stand between us as a shadow. You will turn from me and think only of my bloody record. I have opened my soul to you as a book, and you have read my heart-words. Again I throw away happiness as easily, it seems, as I fling this rose from me."

Suiting the action to the word, the rose described an arc and fell against the long lace curtains just as an idle gust of wind through the open window swayed the curtain forward. The rose was borne back to his feet.

"Happiness has come back to you, Douglas, just as the rose has?" cried Mabel, and rushing to him threw herself into his arms.

"Mabel, I feel for the first time a serene holy joy. Are you mine, all mine, even after my confession?"

"Yes, Douglas, I shall marry the joker, the common-place man, after all. No one could say anything against you now to shake my faith in you, my hero."

In a week after the engagement was announced the brother of Mr. Dinsmore visited Eastbourne. He was delighted with the choice Mabel, his niece, had made, and told her he knew of no other man he would rather have marry into the family than the Hon. Shilletoe. Late that evening when the two brothers, who had been discussing the Hon. Shilletoe at length, were about to part for the night, Mabel's father said: "I hear that Mr. Shilletoe is a well-known man about town."

"Yes, he is president of the celebrated Storytellers' Club," replied the brother, "and when he marries Mabel and has an interim from love-making, you induce him to tell you the story that elected him president of the club. It is called 'Peralto.' He thought it out one night when he had the toothache."

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THE OTHER WAS HANGED

IN the little town of Oxbridge everyone knew the business of everyone else. And everyone assumed the right of criticism in connection with all the acts—so far as known—and all the plans—so far as guessed—of all his fellowtownsmen. That sort of thing involves heart tragedies in many unfortunate cases.

When Frank Laddon became engaged to Belle Brandon the gossips were pleased to accord what was practically unanimous approval. But when they learnt that Frank and Belle had quarrelled—learnt that she had torn up and burned his letters before his eyes; learnt that she had flung him his ring, in anger and scorn, across the great Brandon drawing-room, and screamed that her voice had become so loud and passion-filled as to reach the ears of curious passers-by in the street—they had nothing to say.

Frank Laddon went home from that stormy interview about as angry as the woman he had left. He couldn't quite recall how the quarrel commenced; he believed that it was commonplace and trivial. The way it had ended was quite enough; memory could never dismiss the disgrace of that.

He should never forget the bitter things she had said. He must always remember the look of hate that had usurped the place of love in her face as she bade him begone. He wasn't quite sure he could endure living in the same town, the same world, with her. He got his revolver out of his dressing-case, and sat down and looked at it.

I don't believe he had any actual intentions of making use of it. If he had—if moodiness had drifted so far as that, in the direction of madness—the touch of the cold metal against his fevered fingers recalled the wandering senses. He was safe—safe against self—when Arnold Ashley knocked at his door, waited a moment for the words of welcome that were not spoken, and then turned the handle, unbidden, and came in.

But the weapon was still in his hand.

"See here, old fellow," said Ashley, hoarsely, "that will never do, you know! Better let me take this thing for a day or two, until you get so that you can see more in the world than the whims of one woman."

He reached over, took the pistol from Laddon's unresisting fingers, and put it in his own pocket. Then, uninvited, he sat down.

"I happened to be passing by Brandon's," he said quietly, "and I couldn't help hearing some of the things the lady said. Laddon, I am sincere in saying I am sorry for you."

He reached out his hand, and Laddon, though he had never quite liked the fellow, took it in the spirit in which it seemed offered.

"I'm sorry," said Ashley again, when Laddon had concluded his unpleasant narrative; "but, after all, it won't make any difference a thousand years from now, and——"

"A ruined life! A blasted future!" cried Laddon impulsively.

Ashley drew his chair a little nearer that of Laddon, and lowered his voice.

"Easy, easy, man!" he cried. "Don't be so great a fool as to stake all the good of life on the love of woman. Love, I grant you, is good; but he who calls it *all* is a liar. Laddon, your confidences incite mine. I am going to tell you two or three things that I have never mentioned to any other person. You wouldn't marry Belle Brandon after what she said to you this morning. Wise conclusion. Who would? I wouldn't marry her myself, vixen that she is, after the fragments of her frenzy that came down as far as the pavement where I stood and listened. And yet, Frank Laddon, I loved Belle Brandon as well as ever you did!"

"You! You loved her? I did not know you were even acquainted with her. I never thought of you as a rival."

"I hadn't the honour of her acquaintance," Ashley said slowly, "but why should that matter? I had never spoken to her, nor she to me. I had never touched her hand—much less her lips," and a red flush ran slowly across his pained face.

"But love needs no voice, no personal contact. I had seen her, and that was enough. As for being your rival," and he laughed bitterly, "I am too much of a philosopher for that. I have long ago ceased to worry myself with efforts in a losing game. Besides—it will make no difference a thousand years from now."

Ashley rose, and walked up and down the room two or three times. He seemed even more agitated just then than Laddon. But he had won peace for himself before he seated himself again.

"Laddon," he said, very slowly and solemnly, "I've long wanted to find some one to whom I could tell the story of my life, my existence—the mystery and horror of it all. Listen, and remember it's all true—every word of it.

"You've doubtless read the theories of the theosophists, with their strange ideas of multiple lives and reincarnation. Well, they are true. The most absurd of all the guesses they make are verities; the most vague of their surmisings, the most shadowy of their imaginings, are facts. The great multitude scoffs and denies; the few believe, and hope; while I—I know! I know! for I have lived and died a hundred times!

"No, Laddon, no—I am not mad. I could thank God if I were. Sit down and listen. For pity's sake, listen! I shall not harm either you or myself. But the mood is on me. The time is ripe. I must speak—I will!

"I can remember almost a hundred earthly existences, almost a hundred physical deaths, and recall each one as clearly and definitely as I can remember the events of the last year of life here in prosaic Oxbridge.

"I've been every sort of man you can imagine—wise and ignorant, saint and sinner, monarch and slave. I have a theory that a man must live, in a general sort of way, every kind of life there is before he reaches the goal of eternal rest. I am full of a belief that my experiences have touched almost all phases of the many-sided possibilities of the life of man—Ah, well! Life is pleasant. Even the loss of love, the death of friends, the biting touch of a master's scourge—a man can endure any and all of these so long as he has the precious priceless boon of life left.

"But death—death! How horrible it is! How terrible! Short, shadowy, transitory. You may call it any and all of these things. But I tell you I'd rather keep a beggar's life, far rather, than go down through the dusky silence of Death's door, and up to the golden glory of the throne and sceptre of absolute dominion.

"Keep still, Laddon, and listen. You've nothing more to do than that. I'm not insane—not now. I never shall be again. I died once, though, raving mad! and once—long, long generations ago—I grew so melancholy I killed myself. You see, old fellow, I've a theory, and my own experiences go far to confirm it, that a man will die a given sort of death only once. I've never had a variety repeated; and I've pretty nearly exhausted the category, I can tell you.

"Let me see—mad once, and I don't quite know, even to

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this day, just what did happen at the very last; suicide once—you don't care to hear the particulars, do you? I was drowned once—that's an easy sort of death, except that the victim finds himself fighting against the inevitable; but I guess no one meets the end gladly, or gives up life happily.

"I froze—with Sir John Franklin. I lost my head—in France. I burned—when Nero destroyed Rome. I was drawn down into a quicksand. I was strangled by a great serpent in a South American forest. I was torn to pieces by a tiger in an Indian jungle. I was slain by a bayonet-thrust, just as I went over the last defences the enemy had raised against us, first in the front line of a gallant band of devoted heroes; and I was shot to death as a deserter and coward!

"An enemy poisoned me, and was never suspected. A friend—a surgeon—labouring to save my life, let his hand falter and his knife slip. I died before him, on the operating table, and the memory of it killed him. Cholera, consumption, small-pox, yellow fever, leprosy——

"You needn't draw away, Laddon; on my honour you needn't. This body, in which I am at present ensconced, is as good and strong, as pure and as clean, as your own. And the real ego—the actual entity—can hardly carry contagion, unless of a moral sort.

"I rode after the hounds in Sussex; the horse stumbled at a hedge—and broke my back. I was driver on a fast train not so many years ago, and I kept my place, held to my duty when some fool blundered with the signals, and sent us into an empty goods train; and so I got a chance to begin my life as Arnold Ashley!

"In '49," he continued, retrospectively, "I started overland for California. The savages ambushed us, and I was one of those so unfortunate as to be taken alive. They——"

But Laddon sprang to his feet. "I can't hear any more of this," he cried, "and I won't. Go home and sleep, Ashley. You'll be clear-headed, sensible, sane, in the morning, I hope."

Ashley rose too. "Thank you for the interest you manifest. I don't doubt I shall be. Thank you, too, for the patience with which you've listened, to what, I don't doubt, you have regarded as horrible—and false as well. I'll spare you further details. I understand how unpleasant you find them. I might say, however, that I believe I've died in almost all possible typical ways—except two—I never died of old age; I was never hanged."

He went as far as the door of Laddon's room, but paused there. "Men who study those abstruse subjects that interest me," he said, "reach queer conclusions sometimes. We find lives drawn together, paired—their interests pooled as it were. Do you know, after to-night I shall feel reasonably certain that our lives are intertwined—one's fate tangled in that of the other; one's powers welded in with those of the other—because of the happy warmth of mutual confidence and confession. One of us, dear old fellow, will die of old age; I'm as confident of that as I am that I ever lived. *The—other—will—be—hanged*!"

He gave Laddon a queer look, something that you might have called an attempted smile of a strangled scowl. "Good-night," he said cheerfully, and went downstairs.

The next evening Laddon was in his room. He had his door locked and bolted. He made no answer when Ashley knocked. It was not until his caller said he had a message from Belle Brandon that he opened the door.

"When I left you last night," said Ashley, without waiting to be seated, and with his shifty eyes looking anywhere but on Laddon, "I met the young woman at the foot of the steps. She asked me if I was your friend. You can guess what I told her. And then—then I walked by her side and saw her safely home.

"It was hard enough to listen to her praises of you, her condemnation of herself. I found it hard to remember that I was a philosopher. I found it dangerously easy to forget that it will make no difference a thousand years from now. She sent a message to you—a loving message, Laddon. 'Tell him,' she said, 'to come to-morrow night!' Laddon, will you go?"

"Go!" cried Laddon. "I'd go through fire itself, and——"

He had risen to his feet as he spoke, and had his overcoat and hat ready. But Ashley's quiet and exasperating voice made him pause.

"Precisely," said that individual. "And perhaps you may. But she said you were not to come till ten. Will you wait, Laddon? Can you?"

"I can—I will, too, since I must. But it's only eight now. Sit down and talk, and——"

"And help you kill time? Sorry, Laddon, but I really can't do it. I have another engagement." So saying he betook himself from the room, and went slowly down and out.

"Eight from ten is two," he said slowly, his speech even more leisurely than his gait. "That gives a long hour for thought, and a short one for action." He filled his lungs with a great sweet draught of the keen and frosty air, and exhaled it vigorously. He drew himself up to his greatest height, laughed softly to himself, hummed a part of some lively tune, and took a step or two that would have been more seemly in a ball-room than in the street.

"It's worth it," he continued doggedly to himself, much as he might have done had someone offered denial to an assertion he had made. "Long life in so good a world as this, and the privilege of dying from no speedier cause than age. And he had his chance. He might have known no woman would have asked him to wait one little hour.

"Heigho! How shall I manage to see Belle Brandon? How shall I secure an interview with her—an interview for the first time—and the last? A message from Laddon will do me the same service with her, I fancy, that a message from her did with Laddon. And as for him and the time, I may safely feel confident that he will be prompt."

"Pshaw!" said Frank Laddon to himself when he was alone, and he shook himself vigorously as if to throw away something unpleasant that had fallen upon him. "I mustn't allow the fellow's words to haunt me so. I have love again, and long life. What could be more absurd than to think of Ashley's fate and mine having any necessary connection? And as for hanging"—he smiled to think how mild and inoffensive a man he had always been.

It was 9.59 when Laddon turned the corner near the Brandons' house. A pistol shot rang out upon the air. He would have thought it came from within the house had not such a thing seemed impossible. But in a moment fear had made him half mad. The door opened. Someone flung himself down the steps, dashed up the street to the corner above, turned, and was gone—swallowed up from all hope or fear of pursuit—lost in the vagueness of the frosty night.

Laddon rushed in at the open door, paused long enough to close it behind him, but was first in the room where a most terrible tragedy had taken place. There, in the brilliantly lighted room, down upon the floor, at the farther side of it, lay Belle Brandon, fatally wounded. She could not speak. She gave him only one look from her tender, sorrowful, loving eyes before she wearily closed them for ever. He caught up the weapon with which the wicked work had been done, and stood there holding it in his hand, gazing doggedly from it to her, when the family and servants came hurrying in.

It was his own revolver!

Would you care for any more that I could find heart to say?

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THE TENTH OF JUNE.

By John K. Leys, *Author of "In the Toils," "My Hindoo Friend," &c., &c.*

Illustrated by Raymond Potter.

SUMMARY.

Geoffrey Dundas, whose life is attempted on the 10th of June, 1883, by a Hindoo barrister at the Law Courts, by means of poison, visits General Sir Arthur Chetwynd at Seacombe Towers, in May, 1884. The General explains that a serious danger threatens the household, and that it will come, if at all, on the tenth of June. The reason for this is that in India, on this particular day, in 1853, Sir Arthur, together with Geoffrey's father (since dead) took part in the looting of a Hindoo temple, and every tenth of June afterwards one of the Englishmen concerned or some member of their families is assassinated. On the last day of May, Amavati, the Rajah of Nagore, visits Sir Arthur, who subsequently refuses His Highness' request for his only daughter Leila's hand in marriage, but gives him permission to repeat his proposal in a year's time. Geoffrey tells Amavati of the danger which threatens himself and the General's household. In view of the condition of affairs, Sir Arthur visits his lawyer to make his will, and, learning from him that his cousin, Captain Byngham, to whom he had intended to marry Leila, is almost penniless, though representing himself to be rich, wills him but a small annuity.

CHAPTER VIII.

An Invitation.

On the following afternoon the General sent one of the grooms to the railway station at Torwyn to fetch the letter containing his will, which Mr. Quinton had promised to send by the guard of the 1.40 train.

"If the guard hasn't got the letter, wait for the next train. It may come by that one. At any rate, wait until you do get it, and don't come back without it." Such were the General's instructions.

Sir Arthur had a nervous anxiety to get the will signed, and he was tormented by a sort of presentiment that he would not be able to execute the document before the tenth of June. This presentiment turned into a feeling of certainty that it would be so when hour after hour went by and George, the groom, did not turn up. The General, who was accustomed to having his orders punctually carried out, was furiously angry with Mr. Quinton, his clerk, the guard of the train, the groom, and everybody concerned. The fact was that George, having met a comrade at "The Green Man," just missed the arrival of the train he had been sent to meet; and very naturally the guard, not being asked for the letter, forgot to deliver it. The telegraph was set to work, and eventually the will, in its big blue envelope, was arrested in its onward journey and sent back.

Met a comrade at "The Green Man."

Before it reached Seacombe Towers, however, a missive arrived there which made the General forget his will and his disappointment together. This was a telegram from Lord Lavington, dated the day before. It ran thus:—

"Yacht *Aurora*,
Plymouth
Sound.

"Can you and Miss Chetwynd join our party on board for a fortnight's run to West coast of Ireland? If you can please wire, and we will send boat ashore for you on Friday afternoon.—Lavington."

The General happened to be in the library chatting with Geoffrey when this message was put into his hand.

"Look at that, Dundas," he exclaimed, tossing the paper across the table to his friend. "If I could accept that invitation I should feel that we were perfectly safe, for this year at all events. No Hindoo could reach us on board Lord Lavington's yacht; and even if such a thing were possible the shortness of the notice would make it impossible for them to lay their plans."

"Surely you will accept this, sir!" cried Geoffrey.

"How can I, with my house full of guests?"

"It doesn't matter. Nothing matters, when weighed against Miss Chetwynd's safety. The Rajah does not intend staying beyond Saturday morning. He told me so himself. To leave one night earlier can make no practical difference. The Misses Stoddart, I am sure, would be very sorry indeed if they supposed that consideration for them had caused Miss Chetwynd to miss a delightful sea-trip—to put it merely on that ground. There remains only Captain Byngham, besides myself. He is a relative. Surely, if you let him see the telegram——"

"I'm afraid it can't be managed, my dear boy."

"Don't throw away the chance, Sir Arthur," pleaded Geoffrey. "Give me the telegram, I beg you. You needn't answer until quite late to-night; for if the reply telegram is sent off early to-morrow morning it will reach Lord Lavington when he sends a boat ashore for letters in the morning. At any rate, there is no need to answer at once."

Without saying another word to the General, Geoffrey went in quest of the Rajah. He found the prince leaning over the balustrade of the terrace, talking in a low tone to Leila; and as it would have been the height of bad manners to interrupt their conversation, Geoffrey retired to a little distance until they separated, Leila going into the house, and the Rajah beginning to pace the terrace with slow step and downcast eyes.

Geoffrey, as he drew nearer, could not forbear to admire the dignity and grace of the Indian's bearing. But for the fact that the Rajah was in blood, in religion, in habits, and sympathies, an alien, any woman, he felt, might be proud to love him. And a jealous pang shot through his breast as he wondered whether, supposing the prince to persevere in his suit, Leila might not learn to think little of the difficulties which had at first seemed to her insuperable.

But there was no time for such thoughts. Geoffrey advanced to the Rajah with a hesitancy of manner which showed that he was unwilling to disturb the prince. Amavati welcomed him with a smile.

"I have come to ask your help in a difficulty," said the young barrister. "I have just learned that Lord Lavington has asked the General and Miss Chetwynd to join a party of friends who are going to take a cruise in his yacht the *Aurora*. I am sure the General would give a great deal to secure this pleasure for his daughter; but, unfortunately, the yacht sails from Plymouth to-morrow evening."

No explanations were necessary for the Rajah.

"In that case we shall leave the Towers almost at the same time," he said. "You and I to-morrow morning, the General and his daughter in the afternoon."

This was said so calmly, so much as a matter of course, that Geoffrey fancied for the moment that there had been a mistake—that the Rajah had intended originally to leave on Friday morning.

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Talking in a low tone to Leila.

"I thought you were to stay till Saturday," he said clumsily.

"Not when our host himself desires to be elsewhere on that day," said the Indian proudly.

"It is awfully good of you," said the young man simply; "but I beg you to remember this, Sir Arthur has not the faintest notion that I am speaking to you on this subject. He would submit to any inconvenience rather than incur the reproach of seeming inhospitable."

The Hindoo answered by a bow.

"In fact"—went on Geoffrey, feeling hot all over—"I'm afraid the General won't thank me for telling you anything about it. I'm afraid both he and you will think me confoundedly impertinent."

The Oriental shook his head almost imperceptibly, and smiled faintly, but made no attempt to speak.

Geoffrey felt more than uncomfortable. His usual caution deserted him. He respected the Rajah so much that he was anxious that he should do him justice; and, forgetting his former resolution to keep silence about the danger which menaced Sir Arthur and himself, he went on:

"The fact is, Rajah, it is not merely a friendly wish that Miss Chetwynd should have liberty to join this yachting party that emboldened me to speak to you. I am before all things anxious that she should be in some secure place by Saturday."

"Secure!" said the Hindoo, "I hardly understand. Secure from whom? Is she not secure in her father's house? In what way is she not secure?"

Geoffrey wished he had not gone so far, but it was too late to retreat. He replied indirectly:

"You remember, prince, that you once advised *me* to withdraw myself from the country—to shut myself up in my house; to retire in some way from the world on the tenth of June in each year! It occurred to me that Miss Chetwynd would be safer on board Lord Lavington's yacht on the tenth of June, than she could be even in her father's house."

The young Englishman was looking straight at the Hindoo while he spoke. Amavati did not start; but an indefinable change came over his dark face as he listened. When he spoke his tone was low and measured, his words clear and penetrating.

"Do you mean that the same danger threatens Sir Arthur Chetwynd and his daughter that you believe threatens you?"

"Nay, how can I tell?" answered Geoffrey, with assumed lightness. "It is not every one who escapes and is warned as I have been warned. The danger is one that cannot be foreseen; one can only guess, and take precautions. But it is a fact that General Chetwynd was in India at the time this vendetta began. For aught I know he, like myself, may be a marked man. All I mean to say is, that I should be greatly relieved if I knew that Sir Arthur and Leila"—the name slipped out unawares—"were to be safe on board the *Aurora* to-morrow evening."

"Your wish shall be gratified as far as I can do anything to further it," said the Hindoo proudly, as he resumed his walk on the terrace.

Before dinner it was practically settled that Lord Lavington's invitation should be accepted, and that the party at The Towers would break up on the following day. Sir Arthur, however, remembered that the Rajah had once expressed a preference for travelling by night, and he insisted on Amavati and his suite spending the next day, Friday, at Seacombe Towers. It was arranged that they should all leave the house at the same hour, late in the afternoon.

After dinner that evening, George the groom presented himself in the dining-room, to deliver over the blue envelope which he had at last obtained, and undergo the dreaded cross-examination. Luckily for him the ordeal took place after the General had dined. Sir Arthur's anger had in part evaporated; and George managed to insinuate that the guard had been too busy to attend to him, and had suddenly started the train before there was time to speak to him a second time. At any rate, the will had arrived in time, and George's offence was forgiven.

"Step into the library," said Sir Arthur to him, "and wait there until I come."

He left the room with the envelope unopened in his hand. Geoffrey, not caring to sit *tête-à-tête* with Captain Byngham, went to the drawing-room.

"Dundas, would you mind witnessing my signature?" said Sir Arthur, suddenly opening the dining-room door.

"He is not here; he has gone to the drawing-room. But if it is only to witness your signature perhaps I could do instead."

"You—ah!—er—. No thank you. Not in this case," said Sir Arthur in some confusion.

He knew that if Captain Byngham were to witness the will the legal effect would be to strike his name out of the body of the will. Byngham knew this too. He had suspected that

The young Englishman was looking straight at the Hindoo.

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Drank three glasses of wine.

the blue envelope might contain the General's will; and he had offered his services as witness on purpose to ascertain the truth. His conjecture was now confirmed, and his face fell. Sir Arthur's tone had not been that of a man who should say—"No, my boy; I don't want to do you such a bad turn." Byngham remembered that the General had hardly spoken to him since his return from Plymouth. Could it be possible that he had heard there some of the rumours about him which were current in Yorkshire?

The captain's face grew dark. He poured himself out another glass of claret; and as he sat there thinking, with the wine untasted before him, his countenance grew blacker and blacker. He had so long considered himself as Sir Arthur's heir, so far as real property was concerned, that he had come to feel that the General had no right to make a change. He felt as if he would give half of all he had in the world to know the truth. But wishing would not help him.

He pushed aside the claret, seized the sherry decanter, and drank three glasses of wine one after another. Then he went out into the hall.

As he passed the library door he heard his uncle's voice exclaiming:

"The postman gone! I particularly wished him to take this letter! Confoundedly provoking! Well, see that you give it to him when he comes in the morning. I will leave it here for you. Don't forget!"

There was a slight click, as if a key were being turned in a lock.

The servant to whom Sir Arthur was speaking said: "I won't forget, sir," and the Captain walked on.

CHAPTER IX.

In the Library.

At one o'clock that night Captain Byngham left his room. He was fully dressed, and he carried an unlighted candle in his right hand.

Gently closing his bedroom door behind him, he went to the great staircase and stood for some seconds, listening. All was dark and silent as the grave. Softly he descended to the hall, his steps making absolutely no noise on the thick stair-carpet. Having reached the hall, he groped his way to a closet where, he had noticed, Leila sometimes deposited her basket of keys. Passing his hands gently along the shelves, he soon satisfied himself that the key-basket was not there However, he came upon a tool-box, and, selecting a stro chisel, he slipped it into his pocket.

Then he made his way to the library, and, having closed the door, he struck a match and lit his candle.

Captain Byngham had made up his mind that he must know the contents of Sir Arthur's will. It was impossible to stir a step without knowing how he stood in that respect. To inquire openly of his uncle was, of course, impossible. The information must be gained secretly.

Chance had favoured him in this, that for this night—for this one night only—the will was lying under the roof that sheltered him. It was next to impossible that the same chance should occur again, and he therefore determined to run whatever risk might be necessary in order to open and read the will.

He knew it was in the library. "I will leave it here for you," Sir Arthur had said when he was telling the footman to remember to give it to the postman in the morning. From that Byngham concluded that the letter containing the will was either lying openly on a table or locked up, not in a desk or cabinet, but in some drawer or cupboard of which the footman would have the key.

The Captain held up his light and glanced round, but no packet resembling the one he sought was visible. As he stood there searching the room with his eyes, the silence was so profound that imaginary sounds became audible to his fancy. He could almost have sworn that he heard someone breathing, and he glanced towards the larger window almost as if he expected that one of the dark shadows at that end of the room would move forward and confront him.

But rejecting these fancies, Captain Byngham turned his practical mind to the business in hand.

The letter with the will was necessarily too large to be easily overlooked. It was not on either of the tables, nor on the mantel-piece nor on the cabinet. It might be in one of the drawers of the writing-table. Byngham searched them one after another, for they were unlocked. The will was not in any of them. As for the drawers of the cabinet, it seemed unlikely that the General should have entrusted one of the keys of his cabinet to a servant. Anyhow they were all locked, and the Captain had no means of opening them.

But in a recess there was a cupboard, which seemed by far the most likely place for the General to put a document which he did not wish to lock away permanently. It had a door, and the door was locked; but the lock was of quite an ordinary description.

The Captain felt sure that he could force it, and replace the lock so that the damage would escape any casual observer. True, the footman would find the cupboard door open in the morning, instead of its being locked; but that was a risk that must be run. After all, the man might not notice that anything was wrong.

The Captain muffled the chisel in a rug, inserted the edge of it between the door of the cupboard and the door-post, and threw his weight on the handle. Something gave way with a crack; but the folds of the rug deadened the sound. A little more pressure, and, without any great damage being done, the door gave way. The cupboard was open, and Byngham pounced upon a blue envelope lying on a shelf.

Lit his candle.

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There could be no doubt that this was the will. The packet was perfectly fresh, free from dust, and without a crease; and it was addressed to Sir Arthur's lawyer. But, to the Captain's bitter disappointment, it was securely sealed.

He was standing with the document in his hand, considering whether he should break the seal or not, when a slight noise startled him. He looked up.

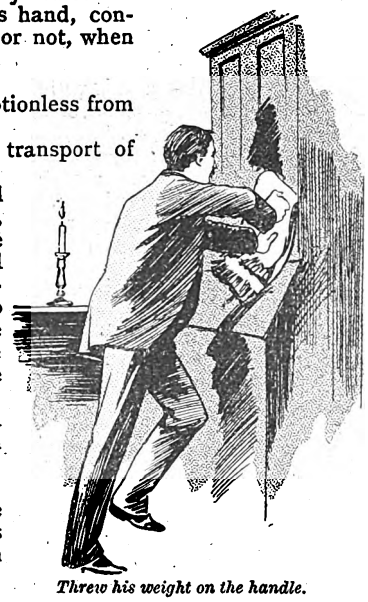
The Rajah's secretary stood before him!

For a second or two Byngham stood motionless from sheer astonishment.

"Confound you!" he cried, in a sudden transport of rage. "What do you want here?"

"Allow me to make it plain to you," said the Hindoo, with grave politeness. "I, hearing a slight noise, as of some one moving about, opened my bedroom door, and listened. I was sure I heard a stealthy footstep, the footstep of a burglar, as it seemed to me. I woke the Rajah's servant." Here Chunder Sen pointed to the door where the tall form of the cook was visible, "and we come quietly downstairs. We see a pale light. We hear a cr—r—r—ack! We enter; and we find the honourable Captain engaged in an act which seems to require explanation. That is all."

The Indian's voice did not vary by the thousandth part of a tone; his full dark eyes were like two spears. But Captain Byngham had plenty of courage. He assumed a lordly attitude.



Threw his weight on the handle.

"Explain my actions to *you!*" he said with a glance of contempt.

"Certainly not. To Sir Arthur Chetwynd," said the Hindoo sternly.

"Mind your own business!" cried the Englishman.

"I have the honour to be your uncle's guest," said Chunder Sen.

Byngham paused. It would be necessary, absolutely necessary, to do or say something to stop this fellow's mouth. But what could he say? What explanation could he offer? Would the fellow take a bribe, he wondered—a bribe simply to hold his tongue? It seemed unlikely. Besides Captain Byngham could not afford a bribe worth offering.

As these thoughts passed through his mind, Chunder Sen stooped and picked up the packet, which the Captain in his surprise had dropped on the floor.

"Give me that!" cried Byngham, holding out his hand for it.

"I imagine this belongs to Sir Arthur," said the Hindoo calmly. "I must put it into his hands. If, however," he added, "you can show me that you have a right to it, that would be quite a different matter."

Innocent as these words were to the ear, there was something in the Hindoo's tone as he uttered them, which made the Englishman throw a quick, sharp look at him. The expression in the Oriental's eyes confirmed the vague doubt. Byngham felt sure that he was not incorruptible. But on what side was the man open to attack?

"Perhaps the honourable Captain has some right, or, at all events, some powerful reason for wishing to look at these documents?" repeated the Secretary, glancing at the packet in his hand.

"You are right," said Byngham. Then a sudden impulse made him determine to confide in the Hindoo. As matters stood, the confidence could not do harm, while it might possibly do good. "The simple truth is," he added, "I wanted to know how I stand in my uncle's will."

"This is his will, then?"

"I believe so. In fact, I have no doubt of it."

"And you merely wish to read it?"

"Of course. What else do you suppose I would do? What the dickens do you take me for?" cried the Captain indignantly.

Chunder Sen paid no attention to this. He stood balancing the packet in his hand, pondering something in his mind.

"Suppose I stand your friend in this affair," he said. "Suppose I conceal this indiscretion of yours; suppose I allow you to read the will——"

"*You* allow me! I must say you have plenty of cheek! Besides, you can't show me the will. Don't you see it is sealed up?"

The Hindoo looked at the envelope again and smiled. Then he spoke a word or two in Hindustani to his companion; and the big cook vanished from the room.

Chunder Sen appeared anxious to take advantage of his inferior's absence.

"I advise you, make me your friend," he said to the Englishman in a low, earnest tone. "You will not be sorry for it. I can help you in this little affair." He held up for an instant the blue envelope; "and I may be able to help you again."

"An act which seems to require explanation."

Twenty-four hours before, Captain Byngham would have knocked any man down who should have suggested that he was capable of entering into a bargain of this kind. Even now he did not believe that the Indian could really help to remove his difficulties. But he reflected that if he accepted the Secretary's offer, he would secure the man's silence respecting his secret visit to the library. And as to any other demands the Hindoo might put forward, it would be time enough to think of them when they were advanced. Still, he hesitated to seem to fall in with the Hindoo's wishes, and thus secure his silence in the meantime. As to any future demand on the Hindoo's part, it might be met or refused when it was put forward.

"I will put your uncle's will into your hands," said the Secretary.

"I tell you it's sealed up!"

"Wait!" The Indian turned his eyes towards the door.

Kuttapani, the Hindoo cook, stole like a shadow into the room.

Chunder Sen advanced, and took from him a thick, soft

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towel which had been loosely wrung out of warm water. This he folded round the packet containing the will, and placed it on the table.

"That won't melt sealing-wax!" cried Byngham contemptuously.

The Hindoo made him no answer, but began to pace up and down the library with slow, cat-like steps, his eyes resting on the ground.

The Captain threw himself into a chair and waited. As he sat there, he asked himself what the Hindoo's motive could possibly be in aiding him as he was doing. But to this question he could find no answer.

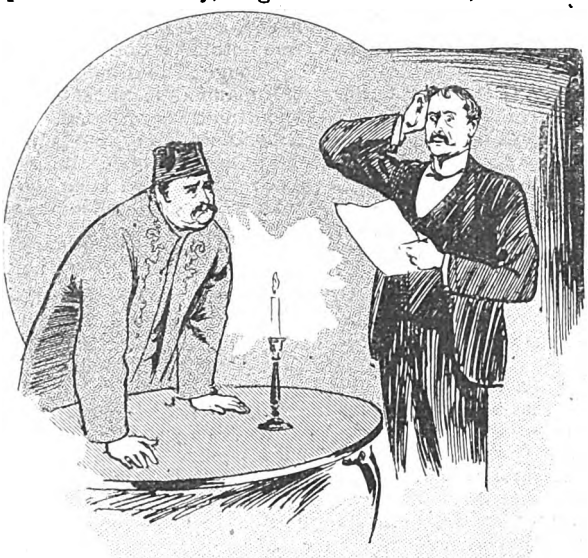
When some minutes had elapsed, Chunder Sen removed the towel from the packet. The envelope was an ordinary, long "official" envelope, opening at one end. This end had been sealed; and the seals remained intact. But the moisture from the damp, warm towel had dissolved the gum which fastened the body of the envelope together. It lay half open, showing the will inside. The Hindoo carefully drew out the document, and handed it to the Captain, who unfolded it with fingers that trembled with excitement.

As he read, the Hindoo busied himself in smoothing the envelope, and gently removing some of the moisture with a cambric handkerchief.

He was still busy doing this when he happened to glance at his companion. The look in Byngham's face positively startled him. It was the face of a man maddened with rage.

"So it is as you feared?" he said gently.

The answer was a muttered curse. Unconsciously the Captain was crushing the instrument in his hand. With firm hand the Hindoo took it from him, and quietly read it himself.



"So it is as you feared?"

"You are done with this, are you?" he said when he had finished.

"Yes—no," replied Byngham. "Let me see it again. I want to make sure."

He read once more the clause which had caused him such strong emotion—that in which the General bequeathed him an annuity of two hundred pounds, paid quarterly.

"If he had wanted to insult me he couldn't have struck harder," he muttered to himself. "But I can see what it means. Some prating fool has told him how hard-up I am; and 'kick him, he's down,' that's his motto. When I saw that about 'my consent,' I might have known the game was up."

It was as plain to Captain Byngham's mind as if the General had put his reasons into the body of the will. One country gentleman does not bequeath another a small annuity in the ordinary course of things. That, coupled with the provision that the annuity should cease if he married Leila without the testator's consent, was tolerably good evidence that such consent would not be forthcoming.

Yes, the thing was done. There was no doubt of it. There was the General's signature, firm and unbending as the General himself, and witnessed by Geoffrey Dundas.

At a sign from the Secretary Kuttapani went to the door of the cupboard; and in a few minutes removed the traces of the Captain's violence and refastened the lock. Meanwhile Chunder Sen replaced the will in the envelope which he carefully adjusted, and placed the packet under some heavy volumes.

"You are in trouble; perhaps I can help you," said the Hindoo to Byngham.

"How can you help me?" said the Englishman rudely. "If you could burn that will! But no; of course he could easily make a new one."

"I may be able to help you," repeated the Hindoo, his dark eyes fixed on the Captain's face. "But now it grows light. Suppose you meet me on the terrace after breakfast?"

"What can you do for me?"

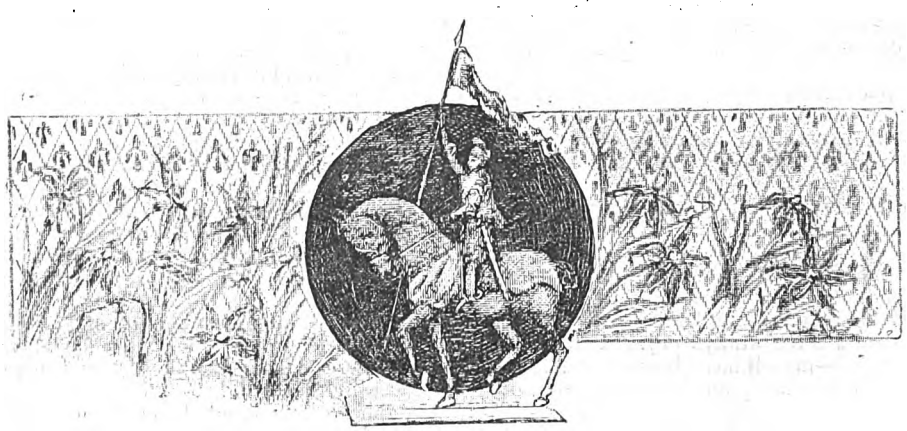
"That is for me to discover when you confide to me the extent and the manner of your loss," said the other gravely.

"All right," said the Captain with a bitter laugh; "I'll meet you on the terrace. But I fancy you'll find my ailment beyond the power of your physic."

The packet restored to its former appearance, was replaced in the cupboard; and Kuttapani deftly turned the bolt of the lock with a bit of wire.

Chunder Sen, with a polite inclination to the Captain, bent forward and blew out the candle. Then all three silently left the room.

(*To be continued.*)



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"ONCE more, Mr. Elmore, I repeat I cannot entertain your proposal for my daughter's hand."

"But, consider, Mr. Bulsale, Ethel and I love each other to distraction."

"Pshaw!" contemptuously exclaimed the unrelenting father of the dear girl I fondly adored.

I, Edward Elmore, had been for a good half-hour doing my very utmost to convince the old gentleman that it would be utterly impossible for him to discover a better way of inaugurating the new year than by receiving me as his son-in-law elect, and by doing so cause two fond hearts to beat with joy; for why should I desire to conceal the fact that I had the very greatest cause for believing that my darling Ethel fully reciprocated my consuming passion?

That I had signally failed to make the old gentleman see the interesting subject in the light I wished him seemed only too plain.

I was tolerably alive to the reason why Mr. Bulsale did not look with favour upon my suit. My financial position was certainly not of the strongest, and there was a certain Mr. Sowerbutt, a middle-aged individual, short (not of cash) and fussy, and proprietor of "Sowerbutt's Sauce for the Million."

As the very particular crony of Mr. Bulsale, the condiment concocter was naturally a frequent visitor at the former's residence at Brixton. I half suspected that Sowerbutt had a silent regard for Ethel, having, on more than one occasion, caught him furtively casting 'sheep's eyes' at my darling, when he had doubtless imagined himself unobserved.

How I had obtained a footing in the Bulsale mansion was in this wise. I was a clerk in the office of a fine old-crusted firm of family and conveyancing solicitors. Mr. Bulsale was an "eminent" auctioneer, and revelled in the satisfaction of possessing an extensive and lucrative business, and, as he had many transactions with our firm, he and I were in consequence thrown much together. After a while Mr. Bulsale seemed to take a fancy to me, and invited me to dine with him at his house, and that visit proved to be the forerunner of many more.

The keen man of business, who ever had his eye on what is termed the main chance, found me useful to him in many ways, especially in what may be called the literary part of his calling. I refer to the composition of those enticingly flowery advertisements setting forth the varied attractions of charming country retreats and the delirious delights appertaining to magnificent mansions, which from time to time Mr. Bulsale received instructions to offer for sale to a yearning public.

I reflected that to keep a watchful eye on Simon Sowerbutt I must remain on good terms with Mr. Bulsale; so with this laudable object in view, I said, with an air of apparent resignation:

"I trust, Mr. Bulsale, that, although you cannot bring yourself to look upon me in the light of a possible son-in-law, you will not prohibit my occasionally looking in upon you as before?"

"Come and see us whenever you like, young man; but mind, don't let me catch you making love to Ethel."

I thanked him and then remarked, "I think I may with truth say, Mr. Bulsale, that I have always enjoyed the little music that your daughter and—myself have been in the habit of—of providing. Those little duets, for instance—you will not——"

"Well, no," the unsuspecting Bulsale said slowly. "I see no reason why you should not as before indulge in a little music, especially as I like it so much!" Of course, Bulsale was nothing if not a little selfish.

Thought I to myself, if two fond hearts, with the assistance of a piano and a sheet of music, cannot make good use of the opportunities presented, and at the same time bamboozle the unbending parent, my name is not Edward Elmore.

Again I thanked the old gentleman, and then addressed him: "You have been candid enough to indicate that you have no personal objection to me, only you consider my means inadequate to maintain a wife in the manner you would deem satisfactory."

"That, young man, is precisely the state of the poll."

"And a very unsatisfactory condition it is for me," I answered ruefully. "Now, would you mind telling me under what conditions or circumstances you would be willing to bestow your daughter's hand——"

"And fortune," put in Mr. Bulsale quickly.

"That, sir," I answered quietly, and, I trust, with dignity, "was not my thought; I should be willing to take Ethel without a penny. Try me."

Mr. Bulsale said nothing, but took a silent pinch.

"Under what circumstances," I repeated, "would you consent to Eth—your daughter, becoming my wife?"

"I should be willing to listen to you," he said, "when you possessed an income of, say, seven hundred a year."

My heart sank to zero. Bulsale might just as well have stipulated for a million.

"Or," added the old gentleman, a curious smile diffusing itself over his somewhat broad visage, as if he had just thought of something which mightily tickled him, "or Ethel might be yours, to have and hold, when I knock her down to you;—once—twice—for the third and last time, going—going—gone!"

I nearly lost all patience with the old fellow for making so absurd, not to say vulgar, a joke upon a subject so sacred to myself. Then it flashed across me that I, too, but a few minutes previously had been guilty of similar flippancy, and I thought I had better bottle up my wrath and take my leave; so, wishing Mr. Bulsale good morning, I made for the door.

"Good morning, my dear sir," responded the eminent salesman blandly.

That evening, as the clocks were striking eight, I was on Mr. Bulsale's front doorstep, armed with a new piece of music, over which, a few minutes later, Ethel and I were bending our heads in delightful proximity, while papa, in his favourite chair, took alternate whiffs at his churchwarden and sips at his glass of mountain dew.

In soft whispers, through the music, I informed Ethel of all that had transpired during my interview with her revered but unbending father. The darling girl quite agreed with me regarding the untimeliness of the pleasantry her father had indulged in, though at the same time she devoutly wished she could be "knocked down"—to myself, of course.

During the evening Sowerbutt put in an appearance and the piano had to be closed. Then followed a discussion over a sale of a small but valuable lot of antique furniture, which Mr. Bulsale was going to hold in a few days at his extensive mart. There was also the proof of the advertisement to look over, to which, as usual, I added a little embellishment.

Mr. Bulsale descanted eloquently upon the beauty and value of several of the articles which would very likely go into the

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broker's hands for a mere song; "particularly," he observed as he warmed up professionally, "a large cabinet or wardrobe beautifully carved, and very substantial, no gimcrack work."

"Just the very thing I should like," exclaimed Sowerbutt. "It would come in handy in case—if ever—I should get married, you know." And the man of sauce cast a look at Ethel, which no doubt he intended should convey a world of significance.

At eleven we broke up, Sowerbutt and I going part of the way together to our respective homes. The purveyor again intimated his fixed determination to secure the large cabinet, provided the figure was not run up too high. Sowerbutt was a very careful, not to say stingy, man, considering the pot of money he had made with the "Sauce for the Million," which by the way, candour compels me to admit was a very relishing condiment, and deserved the enormous sale it enjoyed.

As I was seated at my modest morning meal on the day of the sale of the antique furniture, I fell to musing on the probable amount old Sowerbutt would bid up to for the ancient cabinet.

"Tallygraff, sir!" said Mary Jane, bursting in upon me.

I could never get that handmaiden to say telegram. Opening the buff-coloured despatch I read: "Purchase at sale this morning Lot Number Eleven at any cost. Do not fail your Ethel."

"So, Mr. Sowerbutt," I murmured, "you are going to be done out of your contemplated purchase. But what on earth can Ethel want with the cabinet, and at any cost, too?" However, I had little time to lose in vain speculations, so set off to the scene of operations, looking in at the office on the way to make excuses for my absence. I arrived at the mart just as the third lot was being knocked down. Bulsale seemed surprised on seeing me enter, while Sowerbutt, who was close to the rostrum, looked as dark as his own sauce; as though, in fact, he had intuitively guessed the cause of my presence there.

Lot ten was quickly reached and disposed of. The auctioneer then, clearing his throat, assumed an air of extra importance, and commenced to eulogise "Lot Number Eleven in the catalogue," speaking of the "noble piece" of antique furniture in terms so feeling, that any one might fairly have been excused for imagining the article offered had belonged to a long line of Bulsale's ancestors.

When Mr. Bulsale had apparently exhausted his category of laudatory phrases, he actually wound up by the way of peroration:

"The article, ladies and gentlemen, needs no words of mine to convince anyone of its uniqueness, there it is to speak for itself."

"A sovereign," bid a venturesome spirit.

The auctioneer remarked that it was rather too early in the day for joking; however, he would take the bid just by way of making a start.

"Let's see inside of it," suggested one of those swell wits often seen at auctions.

"Certainly, if you desire to, sir, though I may tell you there is nothing, not even a shelf: but should any one require shelves fixing, the cost would be only trifling. John, unlock the cabinet."

"The key isn't in it, sir," answered the attendant.

"It was an hour ago, I'm certain," remarked Mr. Bulsale. "However, it's of little consequence. Sorry we can't oblige you, sir, just at the moment, the key has evidently been mislaid."

"Supposing, after all, there is something inside, will it go with the article?"

"I pledge you my word," answered Mr. Bulsale, with mock irony, "that the fortunate purchaser of that work of art may justly claim anything that may happen to be in the interior. I trust everybody will now be satisfied, and allow us to go on with business."

There is no need to dwell on the progress of the bidding for Lot Number Eleven. Besides myself there were two or three other keen competitors, and so, even if I had not been there with such imperative orders, Sowerbutt would have failed to secure the coveted piece of furniture at what he considered a reasonable price; he retired from the field vanquished when the bidding had reached £12 10s. Eventually the cabinet fell to my bid of £37 15s., and a rather exorbitant figure I considered it. Of course, after all, I was but an agent in the matter.

As there were not many lots to be disposed of, I elected to stay till the sale was concluded, thinking that it was just possible I might learn something more respecting my purchase. I pushed my way through the crowd into Mr. Bulsale's office behind the saleroom and seated myself facing the doorway through which I had just entered, my eyes the while resting upon the antique cabinet, which had been so placed that the back of it was partly across the entrance to the private room.

I had been sitting a minute or so musing over the unusual events of the morning, when, to my amazement, I saw—there was no delusion—the back of the wardrobe slowly opening towards me, like a door, disclosing a space of four or five inches, and through this aperture there appeared a small, feminine hand, whose tapered fingers dangled invitingly a scrap of paper. Acting on the impulse of the moment, I rose and quickly transferred it to myself. The little hand was thereupon instantly withdrawn, and the opening closed.

I could scarcely believe my eyes as I read on the paper I had so mysteriously become possessed of as follows:

"So I have really been knocked down to you, dear. Now you will understand my telegram. You, of course, will know how to complete the stratagem begun by Ethel!"

"Whew! The clever darling!"

The next minute Mr. Bulsale entered, exclaiming:

"There, I've just finished. But where is Ethel?"

Before I could reply, the back of the antique cabinet again opened, but wide this time, and Ethel—looking somewhat flushed—stepped forth. Advancing towards us, she said demurely:

"Here I am, papa, none the worse for being 'knocked down' by you."

Papa Bulsale's face was a study, as he looked first at Ethel, then at myself.

"Explain?" he gasped out, as he sank helplessly into an easy chair.

"It is all my doing," Ethel quietly remarked. "Edward knew nothing of the actual fact till a moment ago. You see, papa, I discovered yesterday that the cabinet had a revolving back, and at once, as if by inspiration, the idea occurred to me to be sold along with the furniture, and so—well, you know the rest, dear papa, and I belong to the purchaser of the antique wardrobe, 'Lot Eleven.' Here is the key."

The ingenious damsel put out her hand to me, and, taking the dear little palm, I turned to the dazed Mr. Bulsale, saying gravely:

"I claim this lady according to the conditions of sale as well as by your own words, of which, I dare say, you do not require reminding."

As soon as the eminent auctioneer realised how beautifully he had been cornered, he stormed dreadfully; but the torrent of his wrath soon exhausted itself, and he calmed down wonderfully, even to go so far as to designate his friend Sowerbutt a mean fellow for not bidding above me.

On the auspicious occasion when darling, daring Ethel became my wife, the order of things customary at such times was somewhat reversed in the case of Mr. Sowerbutt. Instead of his making the bride the customary present, the latter sent him a handsome gift—Lot Eleven! He accepted it.

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A SAFE HIDING PLACE

MISTRESS BARBARA TREVETHICK walked alone upon the terrace. It was the close of a heavy spring day; the sun had gone down and a chilly evening breeze blew fitfully and moved the long grass of the uplands to and fro; the twilight was dark in the distance, and had already stolen all the colour from the fading day; it was cold—cold!—and Barbara drew her mantle tightly round her erect figure and pulled her hood closely over her forehead as she paced up and down and watched the dreary death of the day.

She had reached the end of the terrace and leaned wearily against the wall, when suddenly a whispered "Barbara!" reached her, and she started, all alight with life and love at once.

"Barbara—sweetheart!" and a shadowy figure swung itself up and over the low wall from the shrubbery below.

"Oh, Ralph, Ralph!" cried Mistress Barbara, joyfully. But she shrank back at her lover's pale face. "Where is my father?" she whispered, with a quick sob.

"I do not know, sweetheart—safe, I trust, but in good sooth I know nothing but that it is a marvel I have reached you safely, and that I am not here for long. The day is lost, and the Roundheads are after us all over the country. I managed to gain the shelter of the wood, lay quiet awhile, and then crept hither through the twilight, for I had sworn to see my sweet mistress's face again, if I died for it!" Sir Ralph's voice was hoarse and broken, his gay cavalier plumage was soiled and torn, and his long hair lay uncurled over his handsome face. "Can you hide me here this night?" he went on, "for I am too spent to go further, I fear."

"Hide you! Yes, indeed—I can put you in a hiding-place where all the Roundheads in the world will never find you," cried Mistress Barbara, looking lovingly up into the face of the cavalier as she hung on his arm. "Perhaps my father may reach home, too—God grant it!—there is room for both. But how can I get you in? The servants must not see nor hear. Wait here for me; crouch down in the shadow, and I will be here anon."

"Nay, Barbara," cried her lover, holding her back, "you must not run any risk for me; sooner would I go forth and face the Ironsides as I am." But Barbara turned, and for one moment pressed her face closely against his bosom.

"Dear heart, I run no risk—and if I did, what matter? You know well I would throw down my life gladly to please you but for a moment. I would do all—all for you, except"—with a sudden catch in her breath—"except give you up to another woman!"

Sir Ralph laughed—an easy, self-satisfied laugh. Even in the midst of his peril and bodily fatigue it was still a delicious tribute to his vanity to feel that beautiful Mistress Barbara loved him like this. He smoothed her thick, wavy hair, and murmured a loving word or two as he bent over her, and then she turned swiftly, and went quickly along the terrace and into the darkness beyond.

Sir Ralph, left to himself, looked carefully round him, to see if he had been followed. All was silent and safe, and he leaned back against the wall in the corner of the terrace, and folded his arms, to wait patiently. "I wonder," he muttered to to himself, with his easy smile, "I wonder whether little Lettice is thinking of me? By 'r lady, I must be careful; that black-browed goddess of mine will be giving me up to the Roundheads if she guesses I have swerved a hair's-breadth from her worship. And she is twice as handsome as Lettice. 'Tis hard to choose betwixt them, and meanwhile, I had best make love to both." In a few moments, Mistress Barbara returned stealthily.

"All is well," she whispered, "Old Marion and the others are all downstairs, and I must take you in by my own private doorway. Tread softly, and come after me."

Sir Ralph stepped after her as quietly and quickly as he could. The moon had now risen, and her silver light was as bright as day, but the shadows fell in heavy black masses, and, as they kept close into the wall, they were invisible. Barbara glided on until she came to a small, arched door, which stood ajar, and which she softly pushed open. It revealed a winding stone staircase, built in the thickness of the wall, and she ran up swiftly, pushed back a sliding door at the top, and they stood in a small chamber heavily hung with faded stuff, and furnished barely, with a few stools and tables.

"No one comes here but myself," panted Barbara, flushed and out of breath with the rapid ascent, as she turned to secure the door after them. Sir Ralph looked round and his face fell somewhat.

"Is this my hiding-place, sweet mistress?" he asked ruefully. "In truth, if the Ironsides come to seek me they will not have far to look."

"Nay, nay," smiled Barbara. "Be not so hasty. Look hither, and see if I cannot hide you safely for a while." As she spoke, she touched a concealed spring in the panelling behind the faded hangings—the wood slid creakingly back and revealed an iron door which she unlocked by a curious little key. It opened, and revealed another small chamber beyond.

"Ah, this is better, in good sooth!" said Sir Ralph, stooping down to look through the opening.

"Here you can remain in safety, dear heart," whispered Mistress Barbara. "No one knows of this place but my father and myself. I will bring you each day what you need, and when pursuit is over, there will be no need for hiding."

"'Tis marvellously well-contrived," returned her lover, stepping down through the narrow doorway and surveying his hiding-place. It was a small, vaulted room, and the small lamp Mistress Barbara carried shone upon the rough stone walls and on a couch in the corner, and a small stand or table which formed the whole of the furniture. "And I am your prisoner here, sweet Barbara, and the key that keeps me is in your hands; deal gently with me, sweetheart, for 'tis a pleasure to know my fate depends on the lady of my love only."

"Yes, you are indeed in my hands," murmured Mistress Barbara, leaning her beautiful head upon his shoulder with a loving gesture. "Are you content? And indeed, if you are true to me as I to you, what need have you to dislike it? See, I have placed some food on the table, and here is the lamp; to-morrow I will come again, and till then I must say farewell, for old Marion will be seeking me. Alack! you have no warm covering. Here, take my mantle—'twill serve you till I come again. And now—and now—tell me once more you love me well, and say good-night."

Sir Ralph stooped his lofty head and looked in her half-veiled eyes. "I will tell you that as long and often as you will, dear love. Foul befall my lips and my heart if ever they are false to the love I bear you! Sweet Mistress Barbara, good-night, and fair slumber to you—I shall look for your sweet face again to-morrow." And Mistress Barbara, glad and content, passed through the narrow opening, and, turning round once more before the heavy door fell behind her, breathed softly, "To-morrow."

II.

NEXT morning Barbara rose betimes. Joyful, and yet anxious was her heart as she woke to consciousness, for though her lover was safe, she had yet heard no news of her

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father. Stout old Sir John Trevethick had ridden out to battle for the King as gaily as any of the younger Cavaliers, and his daughter hoped to have news of him before the day was over. "God grant he may come home safe," she said to herself, "but at least I will not lament while there is hope!"

She wished to get a store of provisions for her imprisoned lover before the servants were about the kitchen and lower halls, and dressed herself quickly. Her sleeping room had two doors; one opened upon the main staircase, and one upon the little chamber behind the panelling of which lay the concealed room. She chose the latter way as being a quicker descent, and as she went down the narrow stair, her eye fell upon a small white packet tied with ribbon.

"He must have dropped it as he came up last night," thought she.

"'Tis well that none have been here before me." She stooped, smiling, to pick it up. "*My* letters, belike," she whispered, as she noticed the papers covered with writing, and then, as she held them, the loosely tied ribbon fell apart, and two or three letters dropped to the floor.

Mistress Barbara could read and write well, and with a sudden shock, that sent all the blood from her face, she saw that the characters were none of her tracing, though a woman's.

"Oh—oh!" she cried softly to herself, pressing both hands upon her bosom. Then she picked up the strange letters, went back into the little room, and sat down.

How long she sat there she never knew. There lay the fateful letters upon the table in the bright morning sunlight, and there she sat with her eyes fixed upon them and a furious passion rising in her heart. Who had written those lines? What woman dared to write letters to *him*—her lover? And why had he preserved them with such care and carried them with him?

"I will know all," said Mistress Barbara hoarsely, "'tis my right!" And she gathered up the scattered letters with hands that trembled strangely.

There were four or five of them, and they were all written by the same hand, and signed—"Lettice." Mistress Barbara read them all through, with one hand clenched upon her heart, which was like a burning fire. They were answers to letters written by her false lover—coquettish, frivolous letters, that yet had a burden of true love running through them. There were complaints of his absence, pretty messages of love, and little scoffs at his supposed entanglement with a country love.

"Did you not vow to me a hundred times," wrote the lady, "that you loved none but me, and that black-browed Mistress Barbara Trevethick had but served to while away your weary hours until you could return to me again? Out upon you; I hear that you are ever with her: and though I know full well that you love but me, yet I am not at ease till I hear from you. But I will believe none of it, dear love, for in truth I love and trust you well."

Then, again, in a later letter she wrote:—

"Sweetheart, right glad was I to receive your last letter, and yet more glad when I read your loving words. In truth I did wrong to doubt you, even for a time; but 'twas but through the love I bore you. Yet, in my joy, I can find some thoughts of pity for poor Mistress Barbara. Proud and passionate, she may be, as you say—yet, must she suffer the more for being so over fond."

"Now, by my faith!" burst out Mistress Barbara, with terrible eyes flaming out of her white face—"they shall see if I be 'over fond' or no!"

She dashed the letters to the ground, and walked up and down in a tempest of passion. To and fro, to and fro, she paced, and the love which had filled her heart turned to hate, and a consuming desire for revenge. And yet—"Oh, how I have loved him!" cried Mistress Barbara, wringing her hands in agony. "Over fond! Proud and passionate! Oh! —that I—*I* should be scorned like this!"—and all the jealousy and cruelty in her nature leapt to life in the depths of her slumberous eyes.

The storm of her passion had made her deaf and blind to everything beside, and there had been a knocking at her door for some minutes, while she swept up and down the little chamber with all her thoughts bent upon her wrongs, and the vengeance she must take for them. He should die! He should be given up to the Roundheads! Nay—that would touch her father's honour; there should be no treason in his house. She would face him herself, and tell him all, and then he should die!

The knocking grew louder, and she stopped and gazed vacantly around her. Her heart was burning like a red-hot coal and sickened her with pain; her dress was disarranged, and her beautiful hair hung loose over her shoulders; with haggard eyes she saw the letters lying on the floor, and mechanically picked them up and hid them in her bosom, and then cried hoarsely, "Who is there?"

"It is I, Mistress Barbara," cried old Marion, from outside. "Let me in, dear heart; I have heavy news for you."

Barbara drew back the heavy bolt and let in her old nurse—a withered, nut-brown old woman, down whose deep-lined cheeks the tears were running fast.

"Oh, my dear lamb!" she cried, "I have ill news for you —the Lord help you to bear it!"

Barbara had sunk down upon a seat in the window, and turned her eyes slowly upon the old woman without a word.

"There is one just ridden hither with news from your father, who is safe and well, God be thanked for it! but he sends word that he fears lest Sir Ralph be taken prisoner by the bloody Roundheads—a murrian on them—or else slain. He was last seen fighting among them, one against many; and now no man can find a trace of him. Alack! alack!" cried Marion, bursting out into renewed sobs and tears; "he was the properest gentleman my eyes ever rested upon; always gallant and gay, and a pleasant word and a 'God save you' for every one, and now to think he may be stark and stiff, with a pike-thrust through his brave heart!"

Barbara stared at her silently for a heavy moment. Thick and fast beat her heart—the quick throbs seemed to echo through the chamber. Lost! Dead! Yes, to all but her. What did he say yester eve? In *her* hands? Yes, he was her prisoner; and there before her lay the little key which alone would open the heavy door. Her stony face flashed suddenly into terrible resolve. "Yes, he is dead!" she cried, and, rising, she flung the key out of the window into the well that lay beneath. It fell with a splash into the dark water; one little splash, and a few ripples slowly widening out, and then nothing. Nothing to show that a man's life had been thrown away.

"Come, take something to eat," said Marion.

"I want nothing—leave me," said Barbara, turning away.

"You want nothing? Well, it will not be long ere you come and want your dinner. A young thing like you must eat, when all's said and done—and hunger is hard to bear." The old woman turned to go away.

Barbara stood as if stricken to stone. "Hunger is hard to bear." The consequences of her hasty deed rose up before her in all their horror. To die—that was just! But to be hungry—to starve! The lamp would go out. The darkness would be thick all round him. He would cry to her in the dark to save him and no one would hear.

"He would starve in the dark. I forgot!—I forgot!—I did not mean *that*," she cried in a hoarse whisper. She clutched at her throat, but her voice was husky and died away. Oh, the despair that shone out of her great eyes!

"Sweetheart, sweetheart, what is it?" cried old Marion, rushing to her side.

But Mistress Barbara suddenly found voice, and, with a heartbroken cry of "Ralph!" she fell upon the floor with a scarlet stream of blood staining her white skin and snowy linen.

And in the confusion that followed, and the mourning grief for the dead girl, all trace of Sir Ralph was lost for ever. He had disappeared from the face of the earth; and if cries, entreaties, or prayers echoed in that hidden vault, there were none to hear. And in a day or two, even while Mistress Barbara lay dressed for her burial, they must have grown fainter and fainter, and at last dropped into silence, in the dark and alone.

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My Dear Old Friend

I HAD just come out of the Army and Navy Stores, and was threading my way through the somewhat unnecessary collection of dogs that besiege the entrance to that otherwise excellently conducted institution, when I caught sight of a face that seemed familiar to me. It was that of a man about my own age, with bronzed features and a somewhat attenuated figure. As I was trying to recall when and where I had seen him before, our eyes met, and I immediately perceived that our recognition had been mutual; for he came towards me with a frank expression of pleasure and held out his hand, saying, "Halloa, old fellow, who'd have thought of seeing you here?"

I don't know why he said this, and of course I don't attempt to defend it; but it is a style of address affected by some men who are as profoundly astonished if they meet you in the Gaiety Restaurant as if they had run across you in the mines of Siberia or the exercise yard of Millbank Prison. I felt a little bit annoyed at his want of originality; however, I smiled pleasantly, and said, as I shook hands, "Well, if you come to that, who'd have thought of seeing *you* here?"

We stood opposite each other for a few seconds—I simpering somewhat emptily at the nature of our greeting, and struggling to recall his name; and he with his head slightly on one side and an expression of courteously suppressed amusement on his face, as if my presence on the steps of the Army and Navy Stores was one of those inexplicable freaks of chance for which it is hopeless to seek to assign any reasonable law.

I gave him a few seconds to digest his astonishment; and then, feeling that the silence was becoming a little embarrassing, I said, inconsistently, "Well, what have you been doing all this time?"

"Well," he replied, "I've been in India, you know."

"Oh, ah!" I ejaculated, as if it had for a moment slipped my memory. "Why, you went out"—and I hesitated, as though calculating the exact day of his departure.

"Three years ago," he put in shortly, "and quite long enough too."

I ran over in my mind my acquaintances of three years ago, but could recall no trace of a recollection of my new companion; so, to gain time and to gather fresh imformation, I asked "And what sort of a time have you had?"

"Oh, much about the same as before," he answered, with a slightly puzzled air.

I candidly admit that the sensible thing for me to have done would have been to have owned up and admitted that I had forgotten my friend's personality. Unfortunately I am one of those painfully constituted people who shrink with nervous horror from anything in the nature of an explanation; and, in addition, I felt that I had gone too far to cry off without some appearance of insincerity. Besides, he seemed to congratulate himself so warmly upon what he insisted upon looking on as our providential meeting that my lips were sealed, and I felt confirmed in the idea that if I let things slide a little longer his name would recur to my mind.

He had slipped his arm through mine, as we walked along, with an easy sense of goodfellowship, and said, "Of course, you'll dine with me this evening. Now, don't say you are engaged," he added, as I hesitated for an instant between my desire to have more of my companion and my disinclination to dine under false pretences; "you know they'll be awfully disappointed if they hear I have met you and let you off without a long jaw, and I join them to-morrow."

I felt constrained to consent against my better judgment, and added in a playfully solicitous manner, "And how are they all?"

"Oh! they are all tip-top—all except the Colonel," after a pause and with a slightly subdued air. "I don't think he has ever quite got over that affair." Then he added abruptly, "I hope you don't think he came badly out of that business?" His hand seemed to relax its pressure on my arm, as if he was preparing himself for some censure or coldness on my part.

I felt touched by this little proof of his sensitiveness to my good opinion, and pressed his fingers as I rejoined warmly, "I never heard any one speak otherwise than highly of his conduct in the matter."

He stopped and said shortly, "Why, who knows anything about it? I thought you and I had it all to ourselves."

"Yes, yes," I faltered; and added inconsequently, "You know you have been away for some time, old fellow."

It did not seem to fit in very well; but he accepted it as an argument, and said, "There is something in that; but don't let people talk about it. I know he relies upon you and me."

There was something so touching in the reliance of this unknown, that a glow of sympathetic affection warmed my heart, and I resolved on the spot that his confidence should not be misplaced. Come what might, the secret of that old man's life should never be betrayed by me.

We had turned into the Criterion Restaurant for a bit of dinner, and those thoughts passed through my mind as we ate our fish. My companion pondered sadly for a few seconds; and then, shaking himself together as though to throw off an unpleasant train of thought, said more easily, "Now tell me more about yourself and your wife and family."

Before I had time to reflect what might be the result of my disclosure, I blurted out the simple truth, "I have no wife."

He looked intensely surprised as he said, "My dear fellow, I am very sorry. I never heard——" He paused inquiringly, and again I blurted out, "I never had one."

A look of extreme pain spread over his face as he heard this. He leaned across the table, and, laying his hand on mine, said with infinite sympathy, "I see it all; I ought not to have asked you. Forgive me, old fellow, and forget that I have said those words."

I gave him a clammy hand and turned away, lest he should detect the conscious guiltiness of my face. I had become confirmed in a suspicion that had been gradually dawning upon my mind, that I had never set eyes upon my host before that day, and that I had been carried away by some inexplicable chance resemblance to some remote acquaintance and by his own apparent cordial recognition of myself.

There was no blinking the facts, however. Everybody that he mentioned was a total stranger to me; whilst every incident that I mentioned with a view to drawing him out seemed to find his mind a blank.

The dinner was good, the wine excellent, and my host geniality itself. We sat late, and drank freely, and over our cups I blush to think of the people I married, the old friends I buried, and the characters I took away. But he *would* have news, and what was I to do? Much of my information seemed to afford him matter for astonishment, and often he ejaculated, "You don't tell me so," as I conveyed some specially startling piece of news.

However, the time for departure came at last, and my mind was torn with conflicting desires to escape detection and to ascertain his identity. "You'll come and see me," he said cordially, as we parted.

"Yes, certainly," I replied; "but where are you putting up now?"

"Oh, the same old quarters," he returned.

"What is the best way to get there?" I asked as a last hope.

"You can't do better than take a cab," he said; and we parted, never to meet again.

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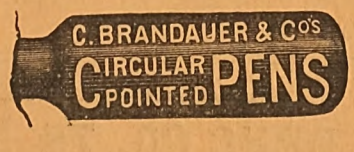

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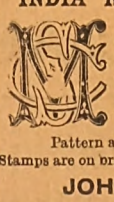

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 330.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING APRIL 27, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

A DRAMATIC REVENGE.

ABOUT eleven years ago I was in Paris for the first time. Louis Napoleon was at Chislehurst, and the many adventurers, good, bad, and indifferent in character, who had served him had not yet lost all hope of the return of their patron, and, consequently, had not yet thought it worth while to settle down into peace and quietness.

Young Alexis de Malladine, whom I frequently met at a *café* which I frequented, was an exceedingly nice fellow, and although he thought that France was the finest land on earth, and that his countrywomen were the best specimens of their sex, he had, by some means or other, become more attached to Alice Rae, a young American lady of my acquaintance, who, since the conclusion of peace with Germany, had, with her mother, taken up her abode not far from the house in which the ex-captain resided.

I was alone in the French capital, and had but few friends there save Mrs. Rae, her daughter Alice, and Alexis, and so it happened that I passed a good deal of my time in the society of these three.

If there was no formal engagement between the two, it was at least a perfectly well understood thing by all the parties concerned that, as soon as Alexis should get an appointment for which at the time he was a candidate, he was to marry Alice; and I, although only a few years her senior, was to give her away at the altar.

One night the opera-house was crowded more than usual. A great singer was to appear, and a new work, by a renowned composer, was to be performed.

Alexis de Malladine, sitting in the stalls, seemed scarcely to listen to the music or to notice the acting, and his eyes were much more often turned in the direction of my box than in that of the stage.

Struck Alexis in the face with his glove.

Alice and her mother were there with me; and, as the curtain fell at the conclusion of the first act, Alexis came up to us.

He was in high spirits, for he had just heard that the Minister had decided to give him the coveted post, and he expected to hear in a few days that his appointment had been agreed to by the President.

We congratulated him; and, as he left us to return to his seat, my box being very small, I said to him:

"You'll be a happy man in a month or two now, Alexis."

He smiled and shut the door.

We watched him as he threaded his way to his seat. It was in the centre of the second row from the orchestra, and he had left his opera-glasses on the fauteuil in order to show that it was occupied; but, during his absence, a tall, military-looking man had appropriated it, and had coolly put the glasses on one side.

Alexis approached the stranger with the utmost politeness, and, I suppose—for, naturally, I could not hear—requested him to move.

The interloper, however, did not deign to answer, but sneeringly looked up at De Malladine as though to ask him what he meant by his intrusion.

Alexis pointed to the opera-glasses; yet the stranger neither replied nor moved but appeared as though he did not hear.

I saw that matters were assuming a dangerous complexion, for in the new comer I recognised Louis de la Breton, an ex-officer, like Alexis; a notorious bully, and one of the most celebrated duellists in France.

But what could I do? I could only sit still, much against my will, and witness the inevitable consequences.

I thought that poor Alice would faint when De la Breton rose in the calmest way before the crowded assemblage and struck Alexis in the face with his glove; but she recovered herself, and, pale as a statue, watched her lover pick up his opera-glasses, bow to his insulter, and without a word leave the building.

There were some suppressed exclamations from the audience, but these were hushed when the duellist again rose, gazed around him, mockingly imitated De Malladine's parting bow, and with a smile resumed his seat.

This was too much for Alice. She could remain no longer; she must go home. And so, with some difficulty, I got her and her mother to a carriage, told the coachman to drive them home, and myself walked quickly, and with much misgiving, to De Malladine's lodging.

He had arrived before me, and was waiting when I entered his room.

"Of course," he said, as he saw me, and rose, "you, my

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With the name of Alice on his lips fell dead.

dear friend, will assist me. It is impossible to do anything save fight. Even Alice could not make me alter my conviction upon that point—the insult was so public."

"Why not leave the country?" I suggested.

"Then I should have to surrender my appointment and Alice, too. No, my dear fellow, I am a Frenchman, and I must fight; and, moreover, you must arrange the particulars for me. If he shoots me, it cannot be helped. If I shoot him, I shall have shot one of the biggest scoundrels in Paris. I beg you to call upon De la Breton to-night. I have already discovered his address. Here it is."

"But must you really fight? It is suicide to fight with a professional duellist."

"Ah!" he said, shaking his head, "I am afraid that it is suicide; but fight I must, so, please, do not try to persuade me that I need not. And I will fight, too, as soon as possible. You can arrange everything for to-morrow morning. I must have the matter over. In a day or two I might be a coward."

By his looks he implored me to go to De la Breton; and, constituted as French society was, and still is, I had no other course open to me than to do as he wished.

"If monsieur comes from Monsieur Alexis de Malladine," said a man-servant when I inquired whether I could see his master, "Monsieur De la Breton has sent to say that he does not propose to leave the opera until after the performance is over. He has, however, despatched this pencilled note, which I am instructed to give to the gentleman who came from Monsieur De Malladine."

"I tore open the missive, which contained two cards, one bearing the name of the duellist, and the other that of Monsieur Ferdinand de Jarnac, Rue Vivienne 18. Certainly, it was an off hand way of acquainting me with the name and whereabouts of De la Breton's second; but, as I wished to pick no quarrel, I walked on to the Rue Vivienne, and in a few minutes was ushered into the presence of Monsieur De Jarnac himself.

He did not strike me as appearing particularly warlike; but, after formally saluting me, he at once touched upon the object of my visit, and ere I had been ten minutes in his company had arranged to meet De Malladine and myself at a certain spot, dear to duellists, at an early hour next morning, and to bring De la Breton with him.

"I doubt if we shall need a surgeon," he said to me quite affably at parting; "but, if you please, you can bring one. In his last affair my principal shot his man through the temples. Death was instantaneous. I sincerely hope, monsieur, that your friend is as clever. Some men are such bunglers. I trust that we shall see a pretty piece of work in the morning."

"Confound the fellow!" I said to myself as I left the house and sought the residence of my own doctor. "I am afraid that poor De Malladine is not such a consummate murderer as De la Breton."

After seeing the surgeon, to whom I briefly explained matters, I hurried to Mrs. Rae's house. She was doing her best to comfort her daughter, who was in the greatest possible distress.

"Are they going to fight?" she asked me.

"My dear Alice," I said, "they are. I have done my best to dissuade Alexis, but he says, and I am obliged to agree with him, that he must fight. Let us hope for the best. He has a sure eye and a steady hand, and he has right on his side. The other man is a scoundrel."

"You are to be with him?" asked Mrs. Rae, looking as white as a sheet.

"Yes; they are to meet to-morrow morning, and by breakfast time Alice's suspense will be over. She must bear up."

"You must prevent the duel," sobbed the half-heartbroken girl. "Cannot Alexis let the insult pass? But no. It was so public."

"You can only hope," I said. "I will see you in the morning; but now I must go back to him and see that he gets some sleep."

"Tell him," cried Alice, "that if he is killed, I shall die. Come here directly it is over. Come even if he falls; you must tell me about him. I must hear everything."

She buried her face in her hands; and I, escaping from the scene, hastened back to Alexis. He was still waiting; and his hair was in disorder, and his face pale when he looked up at me.

"I am no coward," he said with a smile; "I am saying good-bye to her, for I shall die to-morrow."

"My dear fellow," I exclaimed, "you will shoot De la Breton, and be married next month. Finish your writing at once, and go to bed. I will sleep to-night on your sofa, for I must see that you turn out in time to-morrow morning, so be as quick as possible."

He wrote for another half-hour, addressed the document to Alice Rae, placed a lock of his hair within it, and, after sealing it up, gave it to me.

"Give that to her," he said, "if De la Breton kills me outright, and I know that he will. If it were not for Alice, I declare that I should feel quite glad to meet him. Now for bed."

He undressed, whilst I lay down on a sofa in the next room and lighted a cigar; for, upon reflection, I decided that I could not afford to sleep that night.

Soon all was still, and I stole in, to find Alexis lying as quiet as a child, with a smile upon his lips. Probably I passed a more uncomfortable night than he did. Only with the greatest possible difficulty could I keep awake, and the hours seemed to linger for ever.

At last, however, daylight dawned, and I called De Malladine, who awoke refreshed and in comparatively good spirits.

After a hurried breakfast, we muffled ourselves up. I placed a flask of brandy, some cartridges and a brace of pistols in my pockets, and we sallied forth into the cold morning air.

Scarcely anyone, save a sleepy *sergeant* here and there, was abroad; and through the silent streets we went for a mile or so, until we reached the meeting place in the Bois de Boulogne.

De la Breton and De Jarnac were there before us, and my friend, the surgeon, arrived immediately afterwards in his carriage, which waited near at hand.

The pistols were produced and loaded. De la Breton chose one, and I handed the other to De Malladine, and then the two men took up positions at a distance of ten paces from each other, and waited for De Jarnac to give the signal to fire.

"Stay!" cried the bully: "let the young fellow listen; I'm not trifling with him. Where would he like to be hit? I am generous, *parbleu!*

"If I do not kill you," said Alexis, quietly, "I prefer to die."

"Then I will shoot you through the heart," coolly observed De la Breton. "It will teach other fools not to challenge me."

There was something to me unspeakably horrible in the way in which these last words were pronounced. I shuddered and looked at Alexis. He smiled at me, and almost at the same instant De Jarnac gave the signal.

It was as I had feared. De Malladine missed his aim, and De la Breton's bullet told. Poor Alexis turned round towards me with fixed eyes and pale face, and, with the name of Alice on his lips, fell dead.

De la Breton sneeringly departed at once in company with De Jarnac, while I aided the surgeon in his hasty examination of De Malladine's body.

Surely enough, the bullet had passed through his heart. He

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must have died immediately, for he did not move after he fell, and the last smile with which he had looked at me was still upon his face.

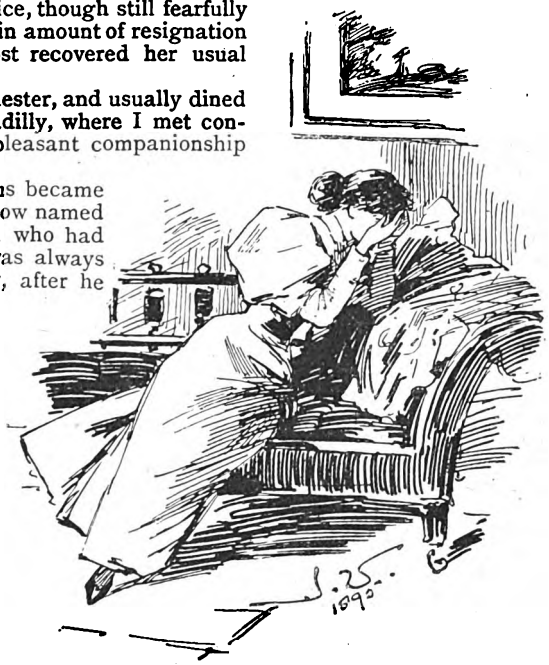
It was a melancholy business in every respect. I had to break the sad news as best I could to Alice and her mother, and the two ladies were so completely overcome that I feared lest the shock might have a permanent effect upon their health.

For my part, I was obliged to hurry home to England as soon as possible; and De la Breton, I heard, also got away, and remained out of France for a few months until the affair had blown over.

I kept up a correspondence with Mrs. Rae, and was glad, after a time, to hear from her that Alice, though still fearfully upset, had learned to look with a certain amount of resignation upon her misfortune, and had almost recovered her usual health.

Meanwhile I settled down in Manchester, and usually dined at one of the restaurants near Piccadilly, where I met congenial spirits, and was able to get pleasant companionship as well as good dinners.

Among the men with whom I thus became acquainted was a young Glasgow fellow named Bond, a dare-devil sort of a fellow, who had travelled all the world over, and was always thirsting for excitement. One day, after he had been dining with me, the conversation turned upon French manners and customs, and I happened to tell him the story of poor De Malladine's death—a matter in which Bond appeared to be much interested. He asked me a good many questions about all the persons concerned, and, finally, the subject having dropped, and, it being very late, we separated.



She buried her face in her hands.

Next day, at the restaurant, Bond did not appear. Weeks passed, and then months, and still he did not dine there; so I concluded that he had returned to Glasgow. And I confess that I had begun to forget him altogether, when one evening he dropped in and took his old seat, just as though he had occupied it regularly, and had seen me only on the previous day.

"Where have you been?" I asked, after I had heartily shaken hands with him.

"I have been over to Paris," he said. "Do you remember De la Breton? On my arrival I found out a little more than you told me about him; and when I had thoroughly convinced myself that he was an even greater blackguard than you had described, I took a course of lessons at a shooting gallery. Every day for a month I went and practised for an hour or two, until I was able to hit a sixpence every time at a distance of ten paces. I then took a box at the opera; it may have been the very same box that you had that night. It was the first performance of Verdi's 'Aïda.' De la Breton was pointed out to me. He sat in the stalls.

"Between the acts he left his seat in order to speak to a lady in another part of the house. As quickly as possible I descended and took his place. He returned, and asked me in a bullying tone to move. I refused. He persisted. I struck him. He sent me a challenge, and we met curiously enough in the Bois and upon the very same spot where he had killed your friend De Malladine.

"Before the signal was given, I said, 'Monsieur de la Breton, listen to me. I am not trifling with you. Where would you like to be hit? I am generous—as much as you were to Alexis de Malladine.' He turned a deadly white."

"'We will see,' he said, 'whether I shall not make a second De Malladine of you.' 'Never mind,' I returned, 'I will do my best and shoot you through the heart as you shot him. It will teach other bullies not to challenge me.' I suppose that upset him. His aim was spoilt, and I shot him dead, right through the heart and avenged your friend, at the same time ridding Paris of her biggest villain!"

"Well done, Bond!" I exclaimed.

"Wait," he said, "until I finish the drama. We managed to keep the matter very quiet; and before leaving France I was able to call on Mrs. Rae, who is now at Boulogne, for I had a letter of introduction to her from a Parisian acquaintance. When I first saw her, she knew nothing of the affair, but they read of the matter in the newspapers, and then they didn't know how to make enough of me.

"I found Alice to be a pretty girl, somewhat spoilt by her long mourning, and very little inclined to listen to me; but after three weeks, sir, of hard persuasion, she gave in, and she and her mother are now coming over next month. I believe you were to give Alice away at the altar. When she arrives you will have a chance."

"And," I said, shaking the chivalric fellow's hand, "I shall be delighted."

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AGAINST HER OWN SOUL.

I.

REGINALD HAYDEN slammed his door, and ran down the steps at full speed on to the pavement. He was always in a hurry.

A lady passing at the moment stepped back, stared at him, and pressed both hands over her heart.

He raised his hat apologetically.

"I beg your pardon, I am afraid I startled you."

He saw before him a blonde in black; to his masculine eye the most charming combination. Her pale face flushed scarlet, and her eyes glittered under her level brows, as they met his in the morning sunshine.

"My nerves are unstrung, or I should not start so violently at nothing," she replied, slightly bending her head, as she passed on rapidly. He watched the lithe young figure turn the corner of the Square, contrasting her with the insignificant and common-place foot passengers hurrying to and fro in the vicinity of South Kensington.

He wished he had not frightened her. It was abominable to startle a pathetic creature with blue eyes and a tremulous smile. Her face haunted him all that morning, and he found himself thinking again and again of the trivial incident on the pavement. Had he followed those quick, even footsteps, he would have seen them flag suddenly, and the graceful form stagger against the nearest railing, clinging to the iron for support. Janette Gilma felt numb from head to foot, as she stood with compressed lips and staring eyes—the victim of overpowering emotion.

"What a fool I am!" she exclaimed at last, loosening her collar, and breathing freely once more. "I see Douglas in everyone—and yet how like!" She glanced back meditatively. "Yes, it was his face, and yet not his face—poor comfort for a starving soul! Why seek the dead among the living?"

She clenched her hands. "No—not the dead!" She repeated the words to herself vehemently, and a strange gleam shot from her tearful eyes. "If he lives," she murmured, "then am I the most miserable among women; and if he is dead——."

Her face blanched with agony. There could be only a long, blank, hopeless "nevermore" in answer to that question.

"Oh, for one look—one word!" she cried pleadingly, renewing her walk under the prosaic shadow of town-built houses. Yet her mind was far away in the fresh air of a Swiss village, laden with the odour of pines. She could see the soft loveliness of tree-clad mountains, and, beyond those, cruel ranges of icy splendour, whose jaws had devoured the joy of her life; while below the white death pinnacles a winding river gleamed in a valley. Passers-by turned to look on the beauty of the girl's set face, but she saw only the eyes of the stranger who had startled her so much in Courtfield Gardens.

II.

ONE of the numerous underground trains had drawn up at Earl's Court Station, and a small crowd rushed down the steps to catch it. Just as the signal came for departure and the gate was closing, a man pushed his way through, springing into the train as it steamed from the platform. The man was Reginald Hayden, and the only other occupant of the carriage oddly enough—Janette Gilma.

As their eyes met they both remembered the incident of the morning, though it was now late in the afternoon.

The girl looked at him with a quiet steady gaze. She was still attired in simple black, and there lurked in her expression a presentiment of evil that he could not understand. Had she some strange mesmeric power in her sweet, grave smile? That unknown influence of the mind which one living being has over another. Could she bend men to her control? Was it personal magnetism, or merely the outward form of physical beauty which quickened his breathing and stirred his blood.

He started visibly as she leant forward and addressed him in a voice whose soft low accents fulfilled the promise of the fair face.

"Excuse me," she said, speaking with effort, "but are you related to Douglas Hayden?"

"Certainly. You know him?" replied Reginald, his interest now actively roused.

Her head fell back on the cushions, her fingers clenched. She was white to the lips, and after a moment's pause, spoke in breathless anxiety.

"Is he alive?" she cried, and her voice rang out through the carriage like the wail of a tortured soul.

"Oh! yes. Douglas is very much alive to-day," he replied. "Did you notice the resemblance between us? We are twin brothers."

"Twin brothers!"

"Yes. Where did you meet him?"

"I will tell you," she continued, passionately, a righteous anger nerving her, in spite of the dull sorrow at her heart. "Last summer I was introduced to him for the first time in Switzerland."

"Ah, I remember, he was away some months."

"We were staying on the borders of a blue lake, and in that summer paradise he awoke the first love of my young life. He won it fairly and honestly, and I confess to it without shame. When I love," looking searchingly at him, "I love *indeed!* There are no half measures. He must have wearied of my devotion—for we were to be married in a little church on the hill side at the close of the following month, when, as I believed, he met his death. He was desperately fond of mountaineering, and left me for a series of excursions, promising to be absent only a week.

"One day I received a letter saying he was just starting on an expedition—without guides, or ropes, or human aid—to see how far he could climb alone. It sounded foolhardy, and I was frightened, but tried to shake off the idea, and forget the danger to which he was recklessly exposing himself. He never returned, and, far up on the edge of a precipice they found his alpenstock, and below, on a sharp rock, his hat, beneath which lay depths unfathomable! The wanderer was lost.

"I tried to believe what they told me; I tried to think for my own sake that he had died on those bleak towers of silence, but I couldn't—I couldn't! Love was still burning in my heart, and again and again it whispered a doubt—a suspicion of the truth. But nevertheless the man I worshipped was verily and indeed separated from me for ever. He was either lifeless in his grave of snow, or else a shameless and hypocritical deceiver, who had cruelly wronged and deserted me.

"I cannot say which alternative was the worst. I have tried to feel resigned, but resignation with some natures is impossible. I have battled against my sorrow night and day, crying out for peace and self-control, but his face is always before me—your face, with the deep set eyes and clear cut features. For Heaven's sake, say if there is any hope for me in the future? What did I do to deserve such treatment?"

"Douglas was always the same," said his brother bitterly. "Changeable and evanescent!—a rolling stone from his boyhood. Forget him if you would hope to find the peace you speak of."

His tone grew suddenly tender and pleading, as the tears welled into Janette's eyes.

"Forget! Is there such a word?"

"Yes—when coupled with youth, health, and beauty."

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"Not till we reach the land where all things are forgotten!"

A touch of poetic dreaminess crept over the girl's face.

"He is not worthy of your remembrance!" declared Reginald, a hot flush upon his brow. "Will you still grieve when I tell you that this very morning I stood by him at the altar rails, and heard him swear everlasting fidelity to another woman?"

"Married—and to-day?" she almost hissed, tottering to her feet, while a horrible contortion passed over her face.

"Will you forget him now?" asked Reginald gravely.

"Yes," she replied with a sharp cry. "Yes, a thousand times yes!"

The man gazed appalled at the face of woe that confronted him. "I will find forgetfulness *here!*"

Her whispered words froze his blood, as an instant later Janette's hand was at the door-fastening. She flung it open, springing upon the step, ready to hurl herself forward into the darkness of the gloomy tunnel. Eternity yawned at her feet, but she only saw the end of misery within her grasp, while her hands, clinging a moment to dear life, relaxed their hold, as she surrendered herself to the pit of destruction and the dust of death. A rushing whirlwind was in her ears, the thunder of a hundred storms seemed booming and bursting in fury over her soul, but that moment's hesitation had saved her, and Reginald's arms were clasping the swaying figure, which now fought for freedom and eternity with almost superhuman strength. Yet Reginald was strong, and maintained his grip round the slim form, dragging her back with a mighty effort.

A convulsive shudder passed over her, as she sank half fainting upon the seat. A deadly snow sleepiness, such as befalls mountaineers, seemed to be creeping through Janette's frame. She fancied herself stumbling over ice-bound rocks, while before her eyes pinnacle upon pinnacle towered in the morning sun. Down a black rift a gleaming glacier hurled its shattered crystals over a deep precipice, in the depths of which a man's face smiled cynically upon the misery of a stricken woman!

Then her eyes opened, and she saw Reginald, radiant with compassion, bending over her. She doubted whether after all she had not been asleep and dreaming from the first, till gradually the sense of her injuries returned, and she started up, burning with indignation.

"Why did you do it?" she asked hoarsely. "I wanted to die. What right had you to stop me?"

A look of yearning stole into the man's face, as he took her little trembling hand with infinite tenderness. His strength in contact with her weakness broke down Janette's cowardly spirit, as he answered in quick unhesitating tones:

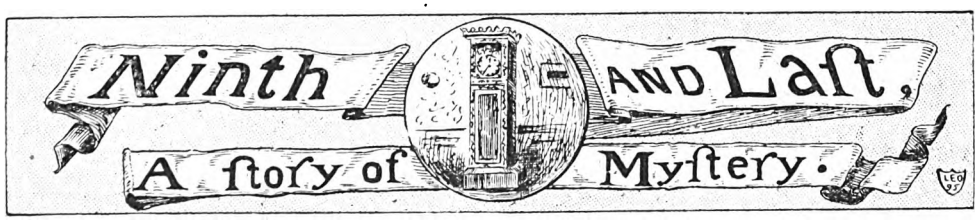
"*Live for me!*"

The three words vibrated with deadly earnestness and sincerity, while he read in her expression a sudden joyful submission.

He knew he could trust her then, and flinging wide the door, pointed to the outer darkness, and the filthy grime of an underground tunnel.

"Here is Life—there is Death," he said. "Choose!"

A sweet smile illuminated the stranger's face—and she chose!



WOULD it astonish you to meet a man who had stepped right out of the heart of the sixteenth century? Not an intangible ghost; but real flesh and blood, clothed in the garments of those far-away times, and trailing down to the present all the symbols and traditions of the Renaissance era of Michel Angelo and Aristo. I met that man and made him my friend. Some might call it a mere illusion; but, if seeing is believing, the touch of the hand, the sound of the voice, and the influence of a great wide-reaching spirit must surely convince me.

Five years ago I returned from four years of research in the furthermost parts of the globe. With my note-books filled with valuable scientific material, I settled upon Paris as a place of residence, and set up my modest *lares* in the cosiest of chambers overlooking a large square in a fashionable part of the city.

I had no more than started upon my solitary labours, when I realised the necessity of a companion—not one of flesh and blood, man or beast, for I was ever a solitary from my earliest days; but something whose companionship I could enjoy without the necessity of reciprocation. Selfish as this now appears to me, I was actuated by the most exacting jealousy of a student nature, ardent in research and zealous in the pursuit of every trifling detail. I ran through the catalogue of man's best friends in solitude, and finally hit upon a grandfather's clock.

I visited several curio dealers, easily finding what I wanted, but at a price beyond my reach. Then I hit upon the expedient of advertising; but for months heard nothing from my little "Want" in a metropolitan daily.

One day—whether in answer to my advertisement or through the kindness of friends, I cannot say—but I received a curious document written upon paper that might have been made during the dark ages; but the chirography was remarkably clear, and in old Italian word-print.

It informed me that a most remarkable clock was to be had at a house in a town thirty miles away. My eyes were riveted on the curious sheet. So quaint an epistle had never before come into my hands. How strange it all was! And what a queer and mystifying aroma clung to it! Naturally, I wondered a long time what manner of man it was that had sent it to me.

The next day I lost no time in making my way to the little town of F——. I took a carriage, for the house of which I was in search stood some distance from the station.

My driver was very taciturn till we reached it, and then he turned his inquiring face upon me, and said, "Sir, you cannot possibly mean there!"

"Yes," I replied; "why not?"

"Mon Dieu!" was all he muttered; then he stopped short, let me out, lashed up his horses, and was out of sight without once glancing back.

I smiled at the coward—partially, I confess, to still the beatings of my own heart—and then surveyed the surroundings. I stood before a bleak stone cottage, half hidden in a jungle of scrub, oaks, and undergrowth, and as bespeaking of life as a crater on the moon. Lest I should be awed by my own gathering chimeras, I leapt the fence—for the gate was secured with a chain of antique make.

Three times I went round that closed and barred house before I found a loophole that looked as if it had ever served a human footstep, and that sort of mantrap led into the cellar. I gave it a quick knock or two with my walking stick, a chill passing over me as the reverberations rumbled through the empty halls and chambers above, like the trump of Gabriel roaring through the catacombs.

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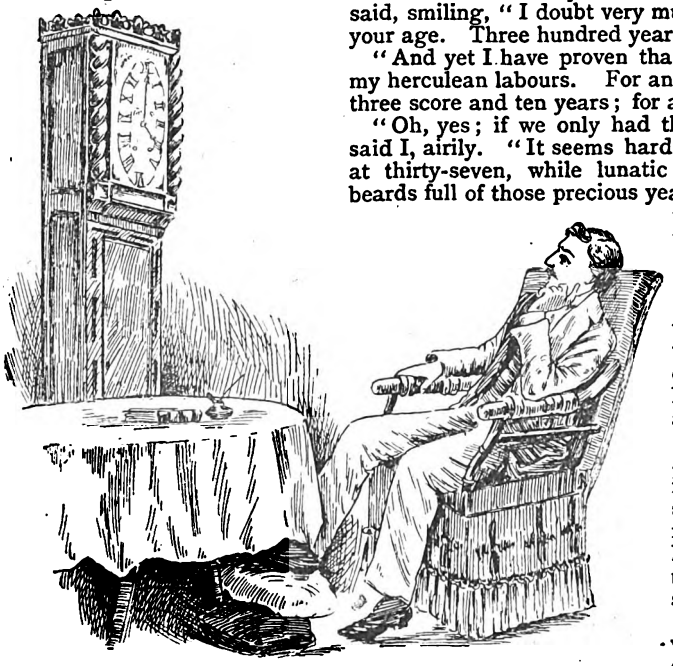
Ten minutes I waited, irresolute, wavering. What manner of being, mortal, or fiend was I to encounter? I was almost in such a state of mental turmoil as to turn tail and run; when, with a parting bang, I brought a step to the other side of the little door. Creaking out a harsh protest, a number of bolts slid back, the portal opened an inch or so, and I was confronted by the most wonderful face that ever man beheld. Never will the recollection of that strange, human, yet superhuman, countenance leave me, so startling was the weird feature, so vivid is the abhorrent memory.

I bore the ordeal of that glittering glance for a moment or two, then thrust the yellow sheet through the crack. A lean hand grasped it, and with a sign of recognition, parted the door to me, as a voice, high-pitched and tremulous with age, entreated, "Come in." Then, with almost trembling step, I passed into the haunted house, and heard the ancient bolts clang behind me.

What an awful transformation! I seemed to have entered another world, another age, another destiny. The very atmosphere was not that of my own clime. It was Italy, yet the Italy I had never known. There was the familiar smoke of Vesuvius mingling with the incense of wild flowers, pervaded still with that subtle spiritual atmosphere of the cloisters and the anchorite's cave temple.

For a moment I could not discern the objects about me with distinctness, and then, one by one, strange forms came out of the dense shadow—a mad confusion of antique missals, globes and retorts, ancient works of art, and implements of every kind of research. At last, in one corner, I beheld the object of my visit—the old clock, tall, gaunt, spectral, and hooded like a Benedictine almsgatherer. Its face was yellow with age, but strangely, startlingly human.

The old man, perceiving me silent and rooted to the floor, beckoned me to a bench, for there were no chairs, and instantly brought me a flagon of red wine, filling a glass and setting it before me. I raised the ancient flagon in my trembling fingers, the aroma of the wine recalling the lava-flavour of the rarest Chianti vintage. "To our bargain, sir!" I murmured faintly, pledging him good health, and draining the glass to the very dregs.



I could sit hours before it in supreme content.

"The clock;" said he, without further ado, as if he wished to rid himself speedily of an unwelcome intruder. "There it is!"

"It is a good specimen. What is its value?"

The old man winced as if the thought of money were an insult in connection with such a treasure. "More than you or any other man can pay," he said calmly, "I will give it to you."

"Give it to me!" I echoed in amazement.

"Yes. I no longer have any use for it here. It belonged to my father—Francesco Guicciardini, the philosopher."

"I know of but one great Guicciardini," I interposed, ransacking my memory; "It was he of whom Charles V. was kind enough to say that he could make a hundred Spanish grandees in a minute, but a Guicciardini comes only once in a century!"

"True! true! But you are a scholar, my friend," cried the old anchorite, his face illumined with a certain joy; "that man was my father."

"But he passed from this earth some three hundred and fifty years ago," I returned, with a smile of indulgence for his seeming error.

"Yes; he was, nevertheless, my father," was the calm and proud-spoken rejoinder. "But the clock; will you take it, my young friend? You will be serving God and man a great end."

I peered into his withered old face, trying to comprehend the mystifying remarks. Then for the first time I perceived the startling resemblance between the ancient heirloom in the corner and the face of this weird type before me. Whether the clock had been fashioned into the features of the man, or the man had grown to look like the gaunt old time-dispenser in the shadow beyond, I could not divine. They were alike as twins.

Half-an-hour later I had promised to take the treasured heirloom upon condition that it should be a loan, not a gift, nor a purchase; and that it was to be restored at the request of the owner. With that understanding I retreated to the door. There the tottering old man held out his lean hand to me. "Before you go," said he, "I want you to make me a solemn promise. It is reasonable."

"Then I will do so with pleasure," said I.

"That you will part with the clock to no one, no matter what happens; at least, till you are as old as I am."

"If it be true that you are the great Guicciardini's son," I said, smiling, "I doubt very much whether I shall live to be your age. Three hundred years is a long life."

"And yet I have proven that it is altogether too short for my herculean labours. For an ephemeris, a day; for a man, three score and ten years; for a philosopher, ages."

"Oh, yes; if we only had the adjusting of these matters," said I, airily. "It seems hard that we should lose a Raphael at thirty-seven, while lunatic asylums are filled with greybeards full of those precious years denied to genius. But as to the clock, I will part with it to no one."

"Upon your honour?"

"Upon my honour, sir."

"Thank you." And with that sepulchral sign of gratitude, spoken with fervency inexplicable, I made my retreat like one who had returned from a visit to shadow land.

Two days later, that tall and stately old treasure was standing in one corner of my own study-chamber—the grim witness of many lifetimes of labour, now ticking out the moments of this new era of a scholar's aspirations.

That night I resumed my work by its companionable chimes, but somehow I could not seem to collect my thoughts. A new spirit seemed to have entered this sanctuary of the muse, and entirely made me prisoner. I tried many expedients to collect and record my ideas; but they all baffled me.

I began to think that perhaps the old clock was my bane, and more than once I wished it back in the haunted house of F——. But when that dreary night had passed, the longer the ancient heirloom was my solitary friend through bleak days and wintry nights, the greater was its fascination over me. I feared it; yet that fear was not without a mingling of genuine affection. I found that I could sit hours before it in supreme content, completely hypnotised, irredeemably its captive.

With this strange spiritual influence, there came a certain unmistakable physical alteration which was too convincing to be waved aside as an illusion. I felt that I was growing old. Though not yet thirty, the years began to rain upon me, it seemed, with the very hours.

There was a perceptible halt in my walk after the first week, and crow-foot wrinkles began mapping the land of maturity over my forehead. My skin was drying up like parchment, and so positive was the change that even my best friends began to pass me in the street unknowingly. Doctors shook their heads; it was inexplicable. One night I sat by my

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hearth pondering upon this alarming state of things, when I looked up at the old clock as it chimed out the midnight hour. Returning my glance again, I caught the reflection of my own face in the mirror at my right, and my heart leapt up.

Heavens! I was growing to look like the old clock!

In amazement and dread, I bent down and covered my face with my hands. I had read that men will often grow to resemble animals, and even inanimate objects with which they are in daily contact; and that, after years of constant companionship, husband and wife, or brother and sister, grow to resemble each other to a wonderful degree.

Again I glanced furtively into the glass, and again the awful similitude staggered me. The old clock had then a very demon's power. It had made the former owner like its very self; now I was to be the victim. The venerable scholar and myself then were brothers in more than kindred sentiments.

After a sleepless night, I arose early, called the *concierge*, and told him that, as I intended to go out on the Seine that day, I might not return before nightfall. Then I started for F——, resolved then and there to compel the old man to take back his odious gift.

I found him there, alone still, just as if three months had not intervened since my last visit. The same chaos of scientific instruments, the same atmosphere of ancient Italy, the same hospitality. But when my host came closer to me, I found that he was at least twenty years younger in appearance. His step was more steady, his voice had lost that quiver, and he was like one brought back from the very verge of the tomb. I pledged him my health once more, then told him frankly that I was going to send back his clock the following day. He did not seem surprised.

"But your oath, Signore; your oath."

True. I had promised on my honour to part with it to no one under any circumstances, "till I was as old as he was." Then I felt the wrinkles with my finger-tips.

"Verily, it will not be long, then," I murmured.

Once more he filled the glass, and then I left him. I went straight home. It was raining hard. As I came into the lower hall, the *concierge* paused long enough in his lamp-lighting to inform me that "the old gentleman had just gone up ahead of me."

I looked at him blankly. "What old gentleman?"

"Why the old man who lives with you up there."

I stared at him a moment in silence, then passed up.

"Poor fellow! He is losing his mind."

Entering my chambers, I was astonished to see wet foot-prints near the door. I turned the gas up and examined them. They were not my own. Besides, there was only one key, and that was mine. No; there was another, when I came to think of it; it was in the little drawer of the cabinet. Hastily I drew the drawer forth, and took the mate-key in my hands. It was cold, and there was a spot of mud upon it. My brain whirled. Burglars!

Taking down a brace of pistols, I loaded them stealthily and with care, and started on the exploration. Every conceivable nook, that could hide an intruder, was ransacked; but no burglar could be found. Then I laughed away my fears, ate a light supper, and retired. The next day the old fascination, the old horror, and the dreaded yielding up of a something within me, was resumed, with now no power to escape or forfend it. The old clock was my Nemesis.

After another three months of this torture, I made a second call upon my old friend at F——. I say "old," but that is not by any means the truth. The vigour of a man in the very prime of life was in his veins. That sallow, parchment skin now blushed with the fire and zeal of youth, and he was the deformed transformed.

In consternation I gazed at him—I who had now long passed the prime of life in thought, feeling, and indeed in physical reality. I spoke of the old clock, my voice broken and tremulous; but he put me off with a jest, which sounded all the more horrible in that place dedicated to the severest meditations and pursuits. Sadly then I went back to my chambers, a dog whipped back to his kennel, and resigned myself like one of the Christian martyrs of old.

For four months longer I endured this ordeal. One night, after pondering before my fire till after midnight, I drew the cork from a bottle of my favourite port, filled a glass and tried to drink; but somehow, the old taste was gone. I laid it aside and tried to read; but my eyes watered like those of an old man.

"Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything!" Oh, how bitterly those words piped out in the still midnight! I no longer resisted. Like a child upon the swift-rushing waters of life, I was borne along, unknowing, careless of all the future had in store.

I went to bed; but sleep was not for me. An hour later, I arose and lighted the gas, stirring the dying embers. Oh, the beating of that hollow and mysterious heart in its worm-eaten prison-house—"tick-tock, tick-tock." Would it ever cease? Suddenly I stood before the table, staring at the glass and the dusty bottle. The wine was gone—all of it! I was stunned. My eyes turned towards the door. Had anyone come in? No; the bolts were fast. So—I had drunk the wine myself, and had forgotten it! I was losing memory—that last sweet friend of friendless age.

Resignedly I put out the light, and started to go back to my couch; but the ticking of the old spectre stayed me. Oh, had I but the power to still its awful pulse ere it silenced my own! What a triumph would that be! What a victory! Noiselessly I struggled over towards it, stood one instant before the gaunt spectre, and hesitated.

That moment of hesitancy was my defeat; for the old fascination stole over me, as if in tender homage to one I loved beyond earth and had given up my life to endure, I put my shrunken arms around it, and laid my head confidingly, resignedly upon its beating heart. Suddenly the blood shot into my temples. Heavens! What was that?—*Breathing!*

A wild moan broke from my lips, my limbs gave way beneath me, and I fell, half fainting to the floor. Then and there in the faint moonlight that streamed through the lattice, I beheld the form of a young man emerge from the very bowels of the old clock and approach me.

"That makes the ninth!" he ejaculated. I stared at him helplessly.

"What! You do not know me? Let me enlighten you;" and with the grim jest, he turned on the gas, full blaze; and I saw it was the mysterious old man of the haunted house at F——, but now a young man of thirty, glowing with health, radiant, daring. "You are the ninth, I say."

"What do you mean? Who are you, and what do you want here?" I cried.

"Did you yourself not ask me how it was that I could be the son of a medical philosopher, three hundred and fifty years of age, and still live? Behold! I have achieved it, as all great things are done in this world, by the sacrifice of the many to the triumph of the few. It took five million lives to make a Napoleon, ten million were sacrificed to make a Cæsar. Philosophy is not so exacting; but it requires a thousand life-times to achieve the absolute, a thousand in succession. My father's legacy to me was this great problem unsolved.

"But he also left me this clock of the Fathers, in which time runs backward at hundred-fold speed to one concealed within, providing there can be found a willing sacrifice. You were that sacrifice. But think to what greater good than all your little life could achieve, this sacrifice has been. Good night, my friend! You have done well, and have my blessing. I shall send for the old clock when you are dead. It must serve me many another lifetime yet. Good night."

I listened to his sprightly and familiar footsteps as they echoed on the stair. So! The last of youth and hope were gone, and only the hulk remained. Yes, but the ninth sacrifice shall be the last, though the absolute be near attained. Struggling to my feet, with almost superhuman effort, I raised the window to my right—wide, wide open. Then I began rocking the old spectre in the corner, till, with one mighty effort, I hurled the demon over against the window, where it wavered a moment, and fell out crashing to the pavement below, dashed to a thousand pieces.

Just then I heard a wild wail in the distance and the hurrying of feet; and when I leaned over the window-casement and gazed down, I saw a young man bending over the fragments, wringing his hands and sobbing.

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By John K. Leys, *Author of "In the Toils," "My Hindoo Friend," &c., &c.—Illustrated by* Raymond Potter.

SUMMARY.

Geoffrey Dundas—A young barrister.
Sir Arthur Chetwynd—A retired general and Geoffrey's friend.
Leila Chetwynd—His daughter.
Captain Byngham—An army officer, and cousin to Sir Arthur.
Lord Lavington—A friend of the General.
Amavati, the Rajah of Nagore—A Hindoo prince who visits Sir Arthur, and develops an unrequited love for Leila.
Chunder Sen—The Rajah's secretary.
Kuttapani—The Rajah's cook.

During the Indian Mutiny Sir Arthur, together with Geoffrey's father (since dead), took part in the looting of a Hindoo temple on the tenth of June, and on this day every year afterwards one of the Englishmen concerned, or some member of their families, is assassinated. On the last day of May, 1884, Amavati, the Rajah of Nagore, visits Sir Arthur, and Geoffrey tells him of the danger which threatens himself and the General's household. In view of the condition of affairs, Sir Arthur visits his lawyer to make his will, and, learning from him that his cousin, Captain Byngham, to whom he had intended to marry Leila, is almost penniless, though representing himself to be rich, wills him but a small annuity. Chunder Sen makes it possible for Byngham to surreptitiously examine the will, and promises to help him out of the difficulty.

CHAPTER X.

A Queer Mephistopheles.

It was the morning of Friday, the ninth of June, the day when the strangely assorted party brought together at Seacombe Towers, was to disperse.

Lord Lavington's yacht, the *Aurora*, was to sail at dawn next morning; and her owner had considerately telegraphed to the General to say that a boat would be waiting for him and Miss Chetwynd, so that they might come on board at any hour that suited them. This made it unnecessary for the General to hurry the departure of any of his guests.

Emily and Jane Stoddart were the first to go. They left soon after breakfast, highly delighted with their visit.

"I have enjoyed myself *so* much, dear!" cried Emily as she stood in the hall with one of Leila's hands clasped in both her own. "Good-bye!" [Kiss on right cheek.] "And so has Jane. And we hope you will have a *lovely* time on the yacht. I feel sure you will." [Kiss on left cheek.] "And you'll come and tell us all about it, dear, the moment you come back; now, *won't* you?" [Kiss on right cheek.] "Good-bye again, dear!" [Kiss on left cheek.]

The Rajah stood regarding this exhibition with an expression of mild interest. It was to him another example of the incomprehensible nature of the Occidental races. Probably he never suspected that the scene was partly enacted for his benefit.

"Good-bye."

He shook hands with Emily with a cold, grave politeness. Jane thought that when her turn came there was a look of respectful, and almost tender, regret in his fine, dark eyes. She herself was forced to drop her own eyes; and that blush which had been a plague to her from her early girlhood covered her brow and cheeks.

In the Hindoo's eyes the blush greatly enhanced the girl's good looks; and she felt that there was something like admiration in his look as he watched them depart. If Jane Stoddart had been accused of being in love with the Hindoo, she would have denied it with fierce indignation, and without any feeling that she was untruthful or deceiving herself. But the Rajah was the most interesting man she had ever seen. He was the most dignified, the most gentle, the best bred, not even excepting Sir Arthur Chetwynd. She felt some regret that his skin was not white, but she felt no repulsion from him because it was dark. "And after all," as she had said to herself more than once, "if he had been an ordinary white man, he wouldn't have been half so—not half so interesting."

None of the others were to go before lunch. An hour after breakfast, Captain Byngham, having finished his packing, went out on the terrace and began to walk up and down. He had a cigar in his hand, but he did not think of lighting it. He was too much agitated. His heart beat strangely as he glanced from time to time at the hall door, half desiring, half fearing the secretary's appearance.

He felt almost as though he were about to make an alliance with the Evil One. But he was a desperate man. His creditors had only been restrained by the expectation he had held out to them that he was about to marry an heiress, and that as soon as the marriage had taken place they would be paid in full. But of this he had little hope now.

Leila had been unaccountably cold to him whenever he had tried to "make the running," as he expressed it to himself. He had little doubt that he would have been able to overcome her coldness if, as he had hoped, Sir Arthur had been definitely on his side. But from the moment of the General's return from Plymouth, Byngham had been conscious of a change in his host's manner, and the will explained that clearly enough. The General must in some way have come to know of his embarrassments. It was vain to hope that he would consent to take a ruined man for his son-in-law.

It was more by a sort of superstition than by any exercise of his reason that Byngham had resolved to accept the Hindoo's offer of help. It would be a relief, he felt, to confide in some one. But, in addition to this, he had a vague feeling, natural to a man of his temperament, that Oriental cunning might do something for him.

He despised all dark coloured races; but there was something about the quiet reserve, the air of conscious, silent power that distinguished the Hindoos which fascinated him. He knew now that the Secretary was a thoroughly unscrupulous man, and at the same time clever, with a sort of supernatural cleverness. The incident of opening the envelope, simple as it had been, had impressed the Englishman with a strong sense of the Indian's power over difficulties. And that was what he wanted—a man who would face a desperate situation with cool confidence in his own power.

What the Hindoo meant to do for him he had no idea. He only knew that he would fight, if at all, by dark and underhand methods. Perhaps the Hindoo was gifted with the mysterious power of mesmerism. Perhaps he was prepared to suggest and carry out a forgery. What the means might be he could not tell. But something in the dark, inscrutable eyes

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The Hindoo was standing behind him.

had told him that what the will behind these eyes resolved to do would be done.

The time was passing.

Still the Hindoo did not come. The Captain glanced for the twentieth time at his watch, and stamped his foot impatiently. A muttered curse was on his lips, when he started, and the words died away half spoken. The Hindoo was standing behind him.

"What do you come stealing on a fellow like that for?" he growled.

The Hindoo smiled deprecatingly, and said nothing.

From the spot where they stood Leila's white dress was visible, as she stood in the garden talking to the Rajah.

"Come away from this public place if you want to talk to me," the Captain said impatiently. He felt as if he could not say what he had to say when Leila's pure eyes might any moment be turned on him.

Still without speaking, Chunder Sen led the way across the lawn to a bench which was sheltered by some thick laurels from observation. Here they sat down, and Captain Byngham, affecting a carelessness he was far from feeling, lighted his cigar.

"Very good of you to say you'd help me," he began, by way of making up for his recent rudeness. "But I don't think you can—unless," he added, with a laugh, "you are prepared to advance a good round sum of money on particularly poor security. The fact is, I have been looking forward to marrying Miss Chetwynd, who, of course, will have all Sir Arthur's money, and who, you are aware, is a cousin of my own. A marriage with her would have cleared off my most pressing debts, and in time I could have cleared my estates of incumbrances."

"Well, somehow or other Sir Arthur has heard of my difficulties; and his way of helping me is to cut me out of his will—confound him! Also his daughter gets nothing, or only a small annuity, if she marries without his consent, or that of his trustees. That means me. He won't give his consent now. I've seen it in his eye plainly enough these last two days; and you may bet that he will leave instructions to his trustees that *they* don't give their consent.

"Now you have the whole story. Simple enough, isn't it? I'm in a pretty hole; and if you can help me out of it, Mr. Sen, you'll be the cleverest man I've yet met with."

The Hindoo made no response. He sat, not looking at his companion, but at a tree that grew opposite, with a grave impassive look, as if he had been at church.

Byngham, watching him, saw his eyes gradually contract, as if he were concentrating his mental powers. At length he spoke.

"This is the ninth of June," he said, in his usual soft, even tones. "Would it be possible for you to keep the situation unchanged till this day twelve months?"

"Well," answered Byngham, after a pause, "to some extent, yes. I had a letter to-day from my solicitors proposing a scheme suggested by some of the mortgagees, which would practically have that effect. I might go and live quietly abroad, tell them I meant to retrench. I fancy it might be managed—why do you ask?"

"Because we go to the United States, my master and I. We go to Europe. But next June we shall be back here again. Then I may be able to help you."

"How?"

"That I cannot tell."

"Do you mean you *won't* tell, or that you don't know?"

Chunder Sen slowly turned on his companion a look in which there was something of contempt.

"I do not pretend to make plans twelve months in advance," he said.

"I don't believe you have any plan, or ever could have," burst out Byngham. "The thing is impossible. Sir Arthur won't give his consent as long as he lives. And even if—even after his death, you know, we should have the same difficulty with the trustees."

"I know," said the Secretary quietly.

"And you still think it possible that I may not only marry my cousin, but inherit the estates?"

"I do."

This was said with such calm confidence that Byngham was silenced—awed. The Hindoo spoke like a man who was conscious of possessing supernatural powers.

"The will," said Byngham, dropping his voice, "has been sent off by post. The lawyer will have it this afternoon, and it will be locked up in his safe."

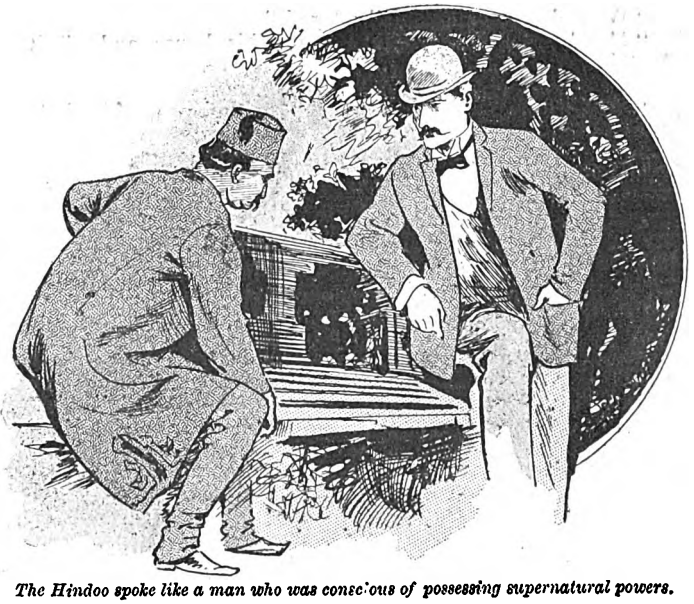
"And what of that?"

The Englishman's eyes fell. He had nothing to say.

"You had better not live abroad, at least for the first half of next year," said Chunder Sen, in grave, even tones. "You may live in London, or anywhere, so long as you visit with tolerable frequency at Sir Arthur's house. Can you preserve the entry, I mean the *entrée*, to his house for twelve months?"

"I suppose so," said the Captain sulkily. He did not relish being ordered about in this fashion.

"It is absolutely necessary that you should do so, and that you should keep me well informed of the General's movements. Without such information it would be impossible for me to make plans for the carrying out of your wishes."



The Hindoo spoke like a man who was conscious of possessing supernatural powers.

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"Shall we buy what is our own?"

"What plans?"

"Plans that may suggest themselves by this day next year," said the Hindoo, his eyes fixed full on the Captain's face.

"Bah!"

The Secretary gravely rose.

"If you do not want me," he said, "if you do not trust me, I can go."

"Heaven knows I want you badly enough. Sit down, man. Yes, I want you, and I trust you. At least, I'm sure if anyone can help me, you can."

"But you must see that in order to do so I must know something of Sir Arthur—more than I know already. I must know his habits, his temperament, his amusements, his visits, his movements. I must learn what people have influence with him; what his plans are concerning his daughter, and—and a thousand other things—everything you can tell me."

"All right."

"An address will be sent you, to which you can write as necessity arises."

"Very good."

"As the time for our next visit draws near, it may be necessary for me to see you. You will not object to meet me at a place I may appoint, as it may be impossible for me to call on you."

"No, I don't mind doing that."

"And in return for this service——."

"Ah!" sneered the Captain, "I thought that was coming!"

"The Captain," said Chunder Sen, "being a Christian, is no doubt accustomed to give and to receive important and difficult services out of pure love—pure Christian charity. With me it is different. I am only a poor Hindoo——."

"There, that'll do!"

"And, being such, I naturally expect some small return for my labour."

"What do you call a small return?"

"Merely your promise that when this house and all it contains, and all this land, and Sir Arthur's wealth——."

"Yes, yes."

"When it is all yours, you will permit me or my friends to search in Sir Arthur's desk and his drawers for certain stones—uncut gems, in fact—of no great price in money, but valuable to us from their sacred character. They were stolen some years ago from a shrine. I believe Sir Arthur has them."

"Why not ask him for them?"

"Do you think that if I did he would restore them? No."

"He might sell them."

"And shall we buy what is our own? No!"

"You'd rather st—— search for them yourselves. Very good. I've no objection. If ever I am master here, you may search the house for jewels, cut or uncut, and keep all you can find."

The Hindoo rose, ratified the compact with a quiet "We are agreed;" and walked a little further into the wooded part of the park.

And Captain Byngham, delighted to have secured the Hindoo's help at such a very moderate cost, stepped off rapidly in the contrary direction.

The interview with Mephistopheles had not been nearly so unpleasant as he had anticipated.

CHAPTER XI.

THE SECOND BLOW FALLS.

THE General drove his friends to the railway-station in a large wagonette. He was in high spirits; for the anxiety which had been weighing on his mind since he first heard that Hindoos were to be under his roof on the fatal Tenth of June was now gone.

"Another hour," he said to himself, "and I shall be free of them, for another year at all events."

The train in which Sir Arthur and Leila had to travel to Plymouth started some time before the one which was to convey the Rajah and his suite to London. Captain Byngham said he had to meet some man at Plymouth on business, and that he would see the General and Leila off.

The girl was wild with delight at the prospect of a cruise. She had never been on board a yacht in her life; and felt as if she could have sung a song at the top of her voice out of pure joy of heart. The last sight the Rajah and Geoffrey got of her, she was leaning a little way out of the carriage window, smiling farewell, and mischievously fluttering a tiny morsel of handkerchief.

The two men stood gazing after the train in silence. Neither of them cared to speak, for each knew that the other understood the feelings with which he was staring at the fast-vanishing carriages. To Geoffrey it seemed as if the brightness and spring of his life had suddenly been withdrawn.

"Shall I have the pleasure of your company to London?" asked the Rajah at length.

"No; I think not," answered Geoffrey. "The fact is," he added a moment later, "I have not yet made up my mind where to go."

Amavati looked at the young Englishman with his grave, dark eyes.

"To-morrow is the Tenth of June," he said almost in a whisper.

"I know. But now that I am warned I can look after myself," said Geoffrey. Then, thinking that his answer might seem cold, he added, "I am awfully obliged to you for your interest in me."

This the Rajah only acknowledged by a bow, as he turned away to speak to his Secretary, who just then approached.

Fluttering a tiny morsel of handkerchief.

Left to himself, Geoffrey began to ask himself seriously where he meant to spend the night and the following day. He had a feeling that he would be safer away from London and his old haunts there. Suddenly he formed a resolution to spend the next two days in some sequestered spot among the Welsh mountains. His nerves wanted

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rest. He needed the refreshment that contact with the everlasting hills alone can give.

He went to the booking office, and purchased a ticket for Bristol.

"I shall go some part of the way with you, at all events, if I may," he said, when he rejoined the Rajah on the platform. "I haven't yet settled where I shall spend the night, but we can travel together as far as Bristol, at all events."

"I shall be delighted to have your company," said Amavati quietly.

Even now Geoffrey could hardly tell whether he trusted and liked the Rajah or not. He felt at once attracted and repelled by him.

They travelled together as far as Bristol, very little being said on the journey. At that place they parted; and as Geoffrey took the Rajah's slender fingers in his own he was oppressed with the feeling that he had not done this man justice, nor given him a proper return in gratitude for the warnings he had given him. He felt sorry for the prince, he could not have told why.

From the western seaport Geoffrey travelled on into Wales, spent the night at a little railway hotel on the way, and found himself next morning at Llignfail, a small village among the Welsh mountains.

It was a glorious summer day. The hills lifted their blue heads into the sky, as if they were calmly rejoicing in the splendour of the sunlight, and in the deep peace which reigned among them. The very sight of them was invigorating.

Geoffrey finished his breakfast at the village hostelry, slung the small bag he carried over his shoulder—he had left his heavy luggage at Bristol—and set off for a long ramble among the solitudes beyond. In his bag there was a paper of sandwiches made up by the landlady, as well as some biscuits and cheese, so that he felt independent of inns for the time being.

He had a half-formed project of crossing the range of hills to the west and reaching a village called Aberyllis, which, the landlady had told him, lay beyond them. He might spend the Sunday there. It didn't much matter whether he reached Aberyllis, or some other hamlet, or merely a farmhouse where he could find shelter for the night.

He reached the highest point visible from Llanfail soon after noon; but higher peaks then appeared; and his heart longed, with a longing which only the young and strong can ever know, to set foot on the top of them. So he climbed on, till he reached the shoulder of one of the largest peaks.

Hitherto Geoffrey had not met a soul, but he had noticed that he was not quite alone, even in these solitudes. The figure of a man had once or twice been visible in the distance, sometimes behind him, but occasionally on his right or left. It seemed as if another tourist were trying, like himself, to cross the hills to Aberyllis.

For some time he had not seen the stranger, and he concluded that his fellow-traveller must have taken another route.

It was now one o'clock, and it occurred to Geoffrey that before beginning the ascent of the peak which rose, bare and grey, before him, he had better stop and have some lunch. He had just crossed a narrow ravine through which a mountain torrent dashed; but, being unwilling to retrace his steps, he went on, skirting the base of the peak, till he came to a small stream. This just suited him, so he sat down, unslung his bag from his shoulder, and began his meal.

He was sitting on the bare rock, which was of a crumbling character, and just there rather steep. A few feet below him was a pool of inky blackness. This pool was of considerable size, perhaps seventy or eighty yards in length. It had evidently been formed by the rainwater, which in winter rushed down the hillside, and it seemed to be tolerably deep. The black colour of the water was due, no doubt, to the peaty soil at the bottom.

The rock shelved right into the dark-coloured water. At the farther end of the pool there were a few islets, bearing tufts of rushes and of heather. At the margin, except at the side where it met the rock, the pool lost itself in marshy ground, half water covered with green scum, half peaty moss, among which great white boulders appeared at intervals.

Beyond the marshy ground, on the side opposite to Geoffrey, was an upland moor, which stretched downward to the lower slopes of the hills. Further away were the tops of low hills, the shapes of which were lost in the misty horizon.

The silence was profound. Not a bird chirped; not an insect hummed. The landscape was not beautiful; yet Geoffrey felt as if these sterile wastes had a meaning, and even a beauty, of their own. The very contrast between the black morass, the grey rock, the boulders bleached white by the storms of countless winters, and the green fields of fertile Devon, charmed and delighted his eyes.

The young man had finished eating, and was in the act of stooping down to the rivulet which flowed at his side, when he heard a slight noise behind him.

He looked up, and saw a gigantic figure towering above him—a Hindoo with swarthy face, and a look of malignant triumph in his staring black eyes. His arms were raised above his head as high as he could stretch them, and in his two hands was a piece of rock as large as a man could lift!

One instant Geoffrey was motionless, less from terror than

His arms were raised above his head.

amazement. The next he started to his feet, slipped on the smooth, steep rock, and in the fraction of a second was plunged into the pool! It was well for him that his foot had slipped. If he had retained his footing, that moment would have been his last. The Hindoo had been in the very act of heaving the stone. It came down with an awful crash on the very spot where the intended victim had been stooping to drink, and then shot into the pool.

Geoffrey soon rose to the surface, for he was a first-rate swimmer, and perfectly at home in the water. With one hand he dashed the peaty water from his eyes, and there he saw Kuttapani, the man who had been at the Towers in the position of cook to the Rajah, standing on the brink, an evil smile upon his face, and an eager look, like that of a beast of prey when he has fixed his quarry, beaming from his eyes.

Geoffrey was for the moment maddened with rage. To think that he, who had done nothing to deserve it, should be hunted down like a wild animal in this way! He saw the enormous advantage which his enemy possessed—standing in safety on dry ground, and ready to fall on him the moment he

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emerged from the water; but he did not think of that. He could think of nothing but his passionate longing to get within striking distance of that grinning, murderous wretch.

Three rapid strokes took him to the edge of the pool.

Quick as lightning the Indian stooped and sprang—not at him, but a piece of broken rock which was lying a few yards off.

Luckily Geoffrey's presence of mind returned to him. It was plain that long before he could drag himself up that steep slippery bank, out of the pool, his skull would be battered in!

He touched the rock with his foot as Kuttapani stooped for the stone, and shot himself far out across the inky surface.

Before the impetus he had gained was quite exhausted the stone came down. Geoffrey made a convulsive struggle to avoid it; but he could not quite get out of its way. The thing was impossible. The piece of rock struck the water which covered his right shoulder. A cry of pain burst from the young man's lips, as he was driven below the surface by the force of the blow.

Geoffrey at that moment gave himself up for lost; for the thought had darted into his mind—"What is to prevent the Hindoo from stoning me to death by degrees? I must come up to breathe; and as often as I do that I shall be struck down."

But the next instant hope revived. His left foot touched the bottom—soft spongy moss, it is true, not firm ground; but yet the mere contact rested his muscles, and gave him a sensation of having found a friend. He could hardly swim now, on account of his injured shoulder; but he thought he might contrive to walk under water for a few paces. And he actually did manage to struggle on for two or three yards before he was forced to rise for air.

He did so, fully expecting that as he gasped for breath he would be struck on the head by a stone. But the looked for blow did not fall; and ere he sank again Geoffrey glanced round. The Hindoo was still on the edge of the pool, but his back was turned towards the water, and he was stooping down—probably trying to find a stone of suitable size. Geoffrey sank without a sound; and as soon as his feet touched the ground he began to walk away towards the further side of the pool.

He scrambled round it.

He had hardly taken three steps when he heard a great splash behind him — then another, and another. He pressed on, and to his delight he found that the ground became firmer as he advanced, and —what was still better—it was rising. The water was getting shallower very rapidly.

Dashed on as fast as he could.

Suddenly he remembered that at that moment the Hindoo was in all likelihood stooping to gather more stones. He must rise to breathe soon. Better to rise now!

He risked it; and even in the few seconds his head was above water he noticed three things, all of them favourable to his escape.

In the first place, the Hindoo was busy trying to dislodge a large piece of rock—apparently only small stones were lying near at hand—and was not looking at the pool. In the second place, the water, naturally black from the decomposed peat, had become positively thick from being so much disturbed. For anyone standing on the shore to see into it was impossible. Thirdly, he was not very far from a large boulder which stood out of the water, and which he had hitherto taken to be part and parcel of the opposite bank. If he could only——

He looked back to the Indian. He was straightening himself up. Geoffrey sank in silence like a stone.

The breath he carried down with him lasted till he reached the boulder. He scrambled round it, and rose to the surface on the other side of it. He had hardly done so when he again heard the sound of large stones splashing into the water. It seemed as if the Hindoo had some vague notion that his quarry might be still alive, and that he wanted to drive him to the surface.

Geoffrey now rested his hands on the side of the boulder, and being able to breathe freely felt comparatively comfortable for a minute or so; then the leaden weight of his clothes became intolerable. He could not keep his hold on the stone, and he was fain to take a long breath and sink to the bottom for the sake of giving his muscles a few seconds rest. Then it struck him—this boulder cannot be the top of a pillar; on one of its sides there must be a slope, and that slope must be under water.

A few minutes' investigation proved that he was right. The top of the boulder was, in fact, like the nose of a great seal lying on the surface of the sea. Geoffrey got upon the back of the seal, as it were, and lay there at full length, his head being concealed by the top of the boulder, and his body by the black water. He was now able to examine his injured shoulder a little. He did so, and soon assured himself that no bones were broken. It was stiff and sore, but he felt sure that it would be all right in a day or two.

Next Geoffrey began to calculate his chances of escape. There were two chances against him. If the Hindoo took it into his head to walk round the pool, he could hardly avoid being seen; if he took it into his head to go higher up the hill and look down upon the pool, he would certainly be detected.

Would Kuttapani go round the pool, or would he climb the hill, or would he go quietly away?

Kuttapani did none of the three. He sat down where Geoffrey had sat a quarter of an hour before, drew in his

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feet till his knees were nearly up to his eyes, threw his arms round his legs, and sat there, staring at the black water, and waiting.

As minute after minute went by without the Hindoo moving, Geoffrey began to wonder whether he was only making sure that he had struck and drowned his victim, or whether the man was fascinated and unable to leave the scene of his crime. He sat there so long that Geoffrey feared that he must soon either betray himself to his enemy or perish of cold.

But at last there was a slight noise. The Hindoo had risen. Geoffrey waited a few seconds, and then peered cautiously through the heather that grew on the top of the rock that sheltered him.

Then, for one awful moment, the young Englishman was motionless from despair. Kuttapani was standing a little way from the pool, looking full at him. No! Though a stranger would have said that the two men were looking right into each other's faces, Geoffrey had remained invisible. The heather had been a perfect screen. The next moment the Hindoo had turned his back on the pool, and was striding rapidly away.

Geoffrey drew himself out of the pool, and, crouching behind a boulder on dry land, tried to wring the water out of his clothes. His teeth were chattering; he was shivering in every limb.

Suddenly, as he knelt there on the wet peat-moss, an idea flashed into his brain and sent the blood tingling through every vein in his body.

He had been deliberating with himself whether he should try to keep the Hindoo in sight, with a view of bringing him to justice; but now he asked himself—Why should I stoop to punish this poor, ignorant creature, who is very likely the mere tool of spirits more wicked than himself? At most it would rid us of one of our enemies.

Why should I not follow him, and make him my guide to the haunts of those murderers? I may be able to watch them unseen, and, it may be, learn their plans and baffle their designs.

I am safe from them now, for they believe me to be dead. Let the world, too, believe that I am dead. I have few—or none—to mourn me. But I will run those bloodhounds to earth yet! I will try whether I cannot shield Leila and her father by attacking their enemies!

A moment after his plan was formed Geoffrey strode out boldly on the moor, a new light in his eye, a new spring in his step.

Far down the hillside there was a moving figure.

"How did Kuttapani manage to get so near me without being seen?" Geoffrey asked himself. The answer lay before him. A ravine, which formed the bed of a stream, led straight up the side of the hill to a point not far from the spot where he had eaten his midday meal. The Hindoo must have crept up by the stream, sheltered at first by the over-hanging banks, and afterwards working his way through the boulders and tall heather.

By the time Geoffrey had wrung the water out of his clothes, Kuttapani was a long way in advance. So the young Englishman plunged into the ravine, and dashed on as fast as he could, running where the ground was comparatively smooth, and where it was rough leaping from one mossy stone to another.

The hunted man had become the hunter!

(To be continued.)

To me, at least, Roger Elbe was a very interesting character. He was the most systematic and accurate person I ever met, but there was an element of poetry in his nature which enabled him to tell a story so vividly as to make his audience feel that they were witnessing the events he related.

He might easily, I am sure, have secured and filled a much higher and more lucrative position than that of a division engineer, employed by the Canadian Pacific Railroad Company to superintend the construction of its line through some of the most difficult passes of the Rocky and Selkirk Mountains, but he chose this outdoor life because his physical condition required it.

His health was not vigorous. He had an excellent physique, but his nerves were unstrung. Usually he kept them under control, but any sudden surprise or prolonged worry caused him to lose command of himself. I have known him to drop a valuable instrument when a long silence was broken by the sudden caw of a crow over his head. Once, as he was quietly writing, he sprang suddenly to his feet and overturned the table before him when some snow dropped from a pine-tree down upon our tent.

One day it was necessary to make measurements and observations on the face of a high cliff, from a point about midway between its base and its top. Several of our men volunteered to go down, but Elbe said he wished to examine the character of the rock, and would go himself.

Fastening a rope about his waist, whistling loudly meanwhile, he bade the men lower him down the cliff, while I stood at its edge to watch for signals that he might make.

He stopped on a projecting ledge, secured a footing, and then set deliberately to work. After making a few measurements he took out his field-book, apparently to record the figures. A second later he reeled as though he had received a blow, and, dropping his book, grasped the rope, and shouted hoarsely to be drawn up.

In less than a minute he was drawn to the top of the cliff, but as we carried him back from its brink he appeared to be completely unnerved. His teeth were clinched, he glared wildly about him, and great drops of sweat stood out upon his pallid face.

However, he soon regained self-control, the colour returned to his face, and nervously untying the rope from his waist, he said, in a weak, hesitating way:

"Boys, I was not afraid of your letting me drop, but I can't keep my wits in a place like that. I'll tell you the reason when you get back to camp. Finish the work without me, but don't any of you go down there if you have the least objection to going. No, no, there is no need that any of you should go back to the camp with me. I am all right now."

After the work was finished the other men took the instruments back to camp, and I made a *détour* down through the gorge to get the book that Elbe had dropped.

Some of the leaves had become loosened by the fall, and in collecting them I noticed that it was evidently quite an old book. The first few pages were filled with ordinary engineering computations, observations about weather, vegetation, geological formations, and the like. Then there was a leaf on which the distance passed over by a falling body in five seconds was carefully calculated.

On one of the leaves I picked up was a computation which

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at first I thought had something to do with the velocity of a slow current of water that we had encountered, but soon concluded that the moving body, whatever it was, travelled even too slowly for that.

Ere long I found other puzzling computations, all of which appeared to have been made for the purpose of establishing the fact that something would occur at "ten minutes past four o'clock, p.m."

Next I found a leaf on which was a rough drawing of a little child, with curly hair and folded hands, lying in a coffin.

It dawned upon me that I must have been examining private papers instead of an ordinary field-book, and so, restraining my curiosity, I gathered what other leaves I could find, and hastened back to camp.

That night, as we were seated outside the tents around a blazing fire, Elbe told his story. So vivid was the impression made upon my mind that I think I can repeat it very nearly in his own words.

"Boys," he said, "I was in this region several years ago, long before it was definitely known that Kicking Horse would be the pass chosen to run the line through. We came up the Columbia in the summer, and spent the winter over in the Big Bend, making our usual observations, and preparing for a regular survey of the region.

"One morning early in April I started from our camp to spend part of the day hunting goats. I soon came upon the tracks of a small herd and followed them. At first the way led up a small cañon; then it turned towards some peaks and high cliffs that form a part of the south wall of the Illecillewaet Pass.

"About three hours of zigzag climbing brought me to the summit of the ridge, when the falling of a rock that I carelessly displaced alarmed the goats, and they bounded away. As they disappeared among the ice-drifts I fired two shots after them.

"The next moment I regretted this, for as the echoes rattled among the crags I was sure that every goat and mountain sheep within five miles would be on the alert the rest of the day. However, it was now nearly twelve o'clock, and I decided to find a comfortable nook for my lunch, and then return to camp.

"The lay of the land had much to do with my subsequent adventure, so that I recall it now with distinctness. I was on the top of a low ridge extending east and west along the bases of two peaks which rose up on each side of the ridge.

"At the end of this central ridge, some distance in advance of it, fell a precipice into the valley below. The hollows between the two higher peaks and the ridge were filled with snow and ice, under one of which, and at its side, flowed a shallow stream of water. In looking for a sheltered place in which to eat my luncheon I had noticed the space between the end of the central ridge and the edge of the precipice. It looked very pleasant, sheltered as it was from the brisk, cool winds, with the bright sun shining full upon it.

"The stream of water, or some other agency, had made an opening, or crevice, between the ice in the hollow on the western side of the ridge and the peak which rose near it, wide enough for me to pass through to the open space beyond, that looked so inviting.

"Following this crevice back a short distance, I found a jagged ledge, with projections of ice opposite, that would enable me with comparative ease to get to the bottom of the narrow passage. Using these projections, I succeeded in reaching the shallow water that flowed in the bed of the crevice, and thus easily passed on to the sheltered space beyond.

"There was no opening in the mass of ice and snow that filled the hollow on the eastern side of the central ridge, and the end of this ridge, encased in ice, rose abruptly forty or fifty feet above the open space in which I stood. The ice in both hollows also ended abruptly nearly on a line with that which inclosed the point of the ridge.

"The current of water that ran through the crevice covered only a part of the west side of the open space, leaving elsewhere the rock on which I stood comparatively dry. Here, with a fine view before me, I sat down to eat my luncheon.

"After eating it I sat for some time admiring the grand landscape before me. I remember wondering how long the water that was running near me had been cutting its way along the side of the mass of snow and ice that had accumulated in the western hollow. Then I speculated in a listless sort of way, that the rains and snows of many centuries had passed through this ravine.

"The view in front and below was especially fascinating, while the waters of the small stream poured over the edge, and fell, looking like a mass of falling pearls, down to a shelving rock, until it became only mist and spray long before it reached the base of the precipice.

"I had a curiosity to know the height of this precipice, so, taking a cartridge from my belt and wrapping a piece of white paper about it, I dropped it into the abyss, and noted that it reached the bottom in five seconds. So I computed in my field-book that it was about four hundred feet from where I stood to the base of the precipice. Then I sat down, and, wearied by my long tramp, stretched myself upon my side and involuntarily dropped asleep.

"On looking at my watch when I awoke I saw that it was two o'clock, so I reluctantly concluded to leave my cool retreat. I took my gun and walked back towards the point in the cleft where I had entered.

"Imagine my surprise when I found that it was so narrow that I could not pass through it. I looked, rubbed my eyes, and looked again. Yes, there was an opening, but it was not a foot wide. With a quickened pulse I began to investigate.

"The ice-wall was certainly nearer to the brink of the precipice than it had been when I passed through the crevice. A thin line of the alluvial-like dust which accumulates on the rocks of fresh-water streams was scraped up at the base of the ice-wall, and one of my foot-prints on this thin, soft substance was partly hidden by the ice.

"The truth was now perfectly plain! Had there ever been another man so inconceivably thoughtless as to walk into a trap like that?

"The mass of ice and snow behind me had begun to move downward. Already it had cut off my retreat. I was hemmed in before a slowly moving ice-fall, and should be resistlessly crowded down over the brink into the fearful abyss beyond.

"At first I was dazed by this awful discovery. Then I began nervously to look about for some way of escape; but neither the smooth walls of the sides of my prison nor the perpendicular face of the moving cliff offered any footing up which it would be possible for me to climb more than a few feet.

"Trembling in every nerve, and with a sinking heart, I went to the verge of the precipice. A few moments before I had looked with pleasure down into the abyss. How different it appeared now! A single glance made my head swim and my heart chill with horror.

"Time and again I paced up and down my slowly shortening prison, seeking some hitherto overlooked means of escape. I thrust my rifle in between the ice and the side of the channel, madly hoping that it would in some way check the movement of that awful mass. I might as well have tried in the same way to check the waters of the St. Lawrence.

"I struck my hunting knife into the ice to see if I could not cut steps for my hands and feet, and thus draw myself up the face of the ice-wall. At almost the first blow the blade snapped from the handle, which fell into the water and glided over the brink.

"Then I gave up hope.

"Still, with a sort of fascination, I wished I could know how much longer I had to live. I had a small tape line in my pocket. With it I measured the distance from the edge of the precipice to the base of the ice-cliff. It was just sixty-two feet.

"Then I took my watch and observed the mass while it passed over three feet. It seemed to move steadily at the rate of about six inches a minute.

"I did not need to put down the figures in order to know that—even if the movement did not increase with the heat—I had a little less than two hours to live; nevertheless, in a dazed way, I put the figures down in my field-book. It must have

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been purely the force of habit that led me to do so. I even reflected that I should be crowded from my position before the ice reached the brink, and so, as it was just fourteen minutes past two, I concluded that I could not hope to remain on the ledge longer than until ten minutes past four o'clock.

"Strange details, you think, for a man in such peril to busy himself with! But I believe that the horrible fear and suspense must at times have unsettled my mind, which seems to have gone from one extreme to the other, so that my imagination conjured up all kinds of strange and unexpected fancies.

"A breath of wind bore a delicate bit of moss to my feet. Then I remembered that I had seen moss of the same kind many years before at the funeral of one of the playmates of my boyhood. Loving hands had twined a mossy wreath and placed it upon the coffin. Every feature of the fair, peaceful countenance lying upon its snowy pillow came distinctly to my mental vision.

"Mechanically I began to sketch the dead face on a leaf of my book. But the consciousness of my awful peril did not leave me, and the rough sketch seemed to transform itself into a vivid picture of a mangled body lying among grisly boulders at the foot of a precipice, and buried beneath masses of snow and ice.

"It seems to me that I did not so much shrink from death, or even cling to life; but the thought of the horrible sensation of falling filled me with dread. It seemed as if my sensations would not end with death. I even felt that if I were to send a bullet crashing through my brain, I should still feel that horrible sensation of falling; and that if my body were ground to powder I should still be conscious of the crash of that great mass that would fall upon me.

"With these, and many other fantastic and terrifying imaginings, my mind was occupied until three o'clock. The mass of ice still moved with almost the precision of a machine. As I sat looking up at the sky, flecked here and there with gauzy clouds, a dark speck appeared circling above me. Then another came in sight following the first.

"As they came nearer I saw that they were vultures. When they were within thirty feet of my head, delicately poising and balancing themselves, they seemed, to my insane imaginings, to be exulting in their superiority and my helplessness. The thought exasperated me. I drew up my rifle and fired at the nearest bird. It disappeared downwards, with a wing broken close to its body. But as it caught with its claws on one of the long icicles that depended from the side of the precipice, and clung there, wildly flapping its one wing, I pitied the poor thing, and reviled myself for my cruelty.

"I saw that it had but a slight hold upon the ice, and resolved to try and reach it and put an end to its suffering. I made a noose in one end of my tape line, and having fastened the other end to my gun, I lay down and reached as far as I dared. I should have caught it, but the poor thing loosened its hold and fell, turning over and over until it struck the bottom, quivered, and became still. Here I beheld the rehearsal of my own approaching fate.

"My head began to swim and my eyes to blur. Just then a small bird, almost white, darted up past my face, and drew my attention. I sprang to my feet and looked for it, but it was out of sight. I half fancied that it was the soul of the dead bird flying away to heaven.

"Again I looked at my watch. The hands pointed to half-past three. I could not believe it. Still I dreaded to look behind me, as one might dread to look at a crouching tiger ready to spring upon him as he looked. Nevertheless, I forced myself to do it. My watch was confirmed, and I sank back, knowing that I had but forty minutes more to live.

"A newspaper that had been wrapped about my luncheon lay near me. I picked it up and began to read. It was an ordinary newspaper, though nearly a year old, of course. Some of the paragraphs held my attention, because in one way or another the expressions used suggested my situation:

"'A young business man of bright prospects had begun to speculate. Successful at first, he continued to speculate in a larger way. Finally, when he had become deeply involved, his losses began. 'On the Brink of Bankruptcy,' the paper said, 'he made a desperate struggle to bear up under his misfortunes, but his reputation was gone. He was overpowered by a mass of adverse circumstances, and crowded down to ruin.

"'Another article told of a handsome, intelligent boy, always successful in his studies, who had been so intent on developing his mental powers that he had neglected to care for his health, and was now lying 'on the verge of insanity, pressed down by a host of bodily ailments.'

"'Under the heading 'Death of a Drunkard' was told the familiar story of an intelligent, capable young man who prided himself upon his ability to throw off his habit of drinking a glass now and then whenever he should find the habit was becoming injurious to him. In time he became a confirmed drunkard. He then struggled to escape from his overpowering vice, but it was too late, and, as the paper put it, 'He was forced from the brink of respectability into a pit of degradation, and buried beneath an avalanche of shame.'

"So rapidly did my imagination work that I seemed to live over the temptations, struggles, fears, hopes, and disappointments of each of those unfortunate lives as it neared its respective brink.

"The sun was shining in my face, and I started to change my position. My hand struck something cold! The mass was almost upon me. Fifteen minutes more—and all would be over!

"I got up and placed my back against the eastern side of the advancing column, with my hand raised above my head and gripping the slight, icy projection.

"A thrill went through me as my gun, pushed by the moving ice, slipped and slid over the edge of the precipice. I heard it as it struck and bounded from the side of the cliff until it reached the bottom. I tried to close my eyes but I could not.

"Suddenly then the rock beneath my feet seemed to tremble. The icicles that hung from the ice on the other side of the open space snapped and fell. There was a rumbling sound that grew louder. Then the entire mass of ice in the hollow on the western side of the ridge, where the current of water flowed, shot out by me, and, pouring over the edge of the precipice, fell with a crash that seemed to make the whole earth quiver. This was followed by a rush of water.

"Almost blinded as I was, even in my insane fear I knew what had happened. The ice accumulations in the other ravine had been pushed forward by an avalanche of snow from the heights behind. Undermined by flow of water beneath it had moved readily, and thus had taken the whole force of the avalanche.

"Every moment I expected that the mass behind me would in like manner be pushed forward.

"But no! The echoes died away among the crags, the torrent of water that had shot down in the wake of the ice ceased, and I found myself standing as before with the brink of the precipice—the horrible precipice—yawning just before me.

"Then came a wild hope of escape.

"Starting from where I stood, I darted swiftly round the edge of the central ridge, pushed my way through the accumulations of snow that still blocked the channel, and then leaped and pushed ahead like a madman until I had reached a place where I could climb from the ravine to the level above.

"Here I remembered trying to laugh, pray, sing, shout, and weep all at the same time. Then, as another thunderous roar sounded among the crags, I swooned.

"It was nearly sundown when I came to myself. The moon rose so that I could see my way, and it was midnight before I reached camp.

"I have been trying to forget that experience, but it is impossible. My nerves that day received a strain from which they will never recover.

"To-day I thought I would discipline myself by going down over the cliff. I got along well enough at first, but when I opened my field-book to write in it I found that by some mistake I had put in my pocket the same book that I had used while imprisoned on that brink.

"Instantly that old scene came back to me, and I lost my self-possession. I think I dropped that book into the gorge, and I hope I may never see it again."

He never did.

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On the Battlefield

It happened during the siege: we had been fighting all day at the outposts, in the neighbourhood of Bourget.

That evening, after roll-call, just as I was preparing to take some rest, my captain came up to me and said:

"Lieutenant, I have got another job for you. Before you lie down take a few men with you and have a look round the field. Above all things be prudent, and go without lanterns; the night is clear; the reflection from the snow will allow of your seeing round about you for a good distance.

"Yesterday's reports indicated the presence of a band of night-prowlers. These birds of prey must be hunted down. A number of corpses have been robbed of their clothes, and were discovered lying in the grass this morning stripped. Here are the orders that the colonel has requested me to communicate to you. You are to bring into the camp any of these scoundrels whom you may capture, and let fly a bullet into the backs of any who attempt to escape. All's fair in war. No quarter is to be given the rascals. Go, and good luck go with you."

My little company set out silently with loaded rifles. An icy wind was whistling round us, whirling clouds of snow into our faces.

We crossed the lines and were soon in the open country. The captain had spoken truly; the night was splendid, and the moon shed her rays far over the fields, her pale light glinting here and there on the pools of blood. Not a sound. Away on the horizon we could distinguish the Prussian encampment.

For a quarter of an hour we marched along with stealthy footsteps, holding our breaths, mute and alert, when we saw moving about under a tree a black figure.

"There's one of them," murmured the corporal, bringing his gun to his shoulder.

"Let no one stir," I replied, and I advanced alone.

At the foot of the tree lay an officer of the Marine Infantry, his forehead shattered by a bullet. The blood had run down his face and soaked his uniform, and trickled on in a long rivulet over the snow. In his hand was still clasped a discharged revolver, and I noticed that he wore on his finger a costly ring. I can recall that ring now—a ruby surrounded by diamonds.

Bending over the dead man, and holding his hand, was a dark and withered form. It was an old woman, with masculine features and glaring sinister eyes. She was dressed in dark-coloured rags, and her head was covered with a fearfully dilapidated hat.

"What are you doing there?" I demanded, touching her on the shoulder.

She did not answer. Her silence exasperated me.

"You are afraid to answer, but I will tell you what you are here for. You are a 'night bird,' and you have come to rob the dead."

"No," she replied quietly.

"Well, then, you must come with me. I don't believe you. As you will not tell me why you are here alone at this hour, you must come to the camp and give an explanation to the colonel."

"No, I will not," she answered. "I am watching him."

"Watching whom?"

"Him," she repeated, pointing to the corpse.

"Nonsense! Do you take me for a fool? It is not the usual thing for beggars to be watching dead bodies on a field of battle. I don't believe in such noble sentiments! Especially when corpses wear such rings as that on their fingers!"

At this she drew close to me, and looked me straight in the face with her cold grey eyes.

"He was my son!" she answered, in a broken voice. "They have killed him; let me remain by him!"

Then, without waiting for my consent, she knelt down beside the dead man and began murmuring a prayer.

"As he is your son, you may remain," I replied, and moved away.

I rejoined my little company, and whispered this order in the corporal's ear, "Let us pretend to go away, and hide ourselves behind a clump of trees. I am not satisfied about that old hag over there, near that officer's body. We must watch her; if she does not stir, leave her alone; if she moves, fire."

Hidden by a turn in the road we could see without being seen.

The black dress of the old woman looked like a sombre blot on the dazzling whiteness of the snow; suddenly we saw her stoop over the face of the corpse; her head seemed to touch the head of the young man; then she arose, glanced two or three times round her, and fled in the opposite direction to that in which we were hidden.

"Fire!" I shouted.

Three shots were fired; the old woman had only time to run ten yards, then flung up her arms in the air, uttering a piercing shriek, and fell on her face.

"Potted!" cried the corporal, laughing.

I walked up to the dead woman when, close to us, a voice shaking with fear, cried three times, "Wer da?" (who goes there).

The third challenge was followed by a flash, and a bullet buried itself in the trunk of a tree against which I was leaning.

The alarm had been given, so we were obliged to retreat to our camp; but for a considerable time we heard behind us the cries of the sentries echoing through the silence of the night.

I slept restlessly; ever before my eyes was that terrible vision of the old woman spinning round before she fell.

On the following morning, whilst my brother officers and myself were snatching our breakfast, a young lieutenant of the Marine Infantry came up to our party. His eyes were full of tears.

"What's the matter with you, my boy?" cried Gachard, half-laughingly, half-anxiously.

"I have just seen a horrible sight," replied the officer. "I had a friend in my regiment; he came from my own part of the country—a capital fellow. He passed out of St. Cyr in the same year as myself. We went through our terms together at Brest, and were inseparable. Yesterday he was struck by a bullet in the head; I saw him fall, but, as we were retreating, I could not leave the ranks, not even to wish him farewell.

"He is over there, on the battlefield, lying under a tree. Last night his mother wandered about looking for her son; she was a poor old creature, who had none but him, and she worshipped him.

"Ever since the beginning of the campaign, insensible to fatigue and misery, and squalid as a beggar, she followed the regiment step by step, at the risk of being shot. She must have seen the face of many a dead man before she discovered the corpse that she sought; however, she succeeded at last, she knelt down beside him, bent over his sightless eyes, closed them piously, and cut off a lock of his hair.

"Did you notice the report of a rifle about midnight? Just as she was going away with her precious relic, a Prussian sentry must have espied her; he fired, and the poor woman fell, mortally wounded. She found strength, however, to drag herself back to the body of her son, and there she died, her head pillowed on his breast."

. . . . . .

I sank to the ground fainting.

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Curious Experiments IN CORPULENCY

"A Mr. Russell, author and specialist in obesity, has experimentally tried the effect of administering large doses to moderate lean persons of his well-known herbal discovery, which is so marvellously effectual in reducing superfluous fat, with the result that there is not the slightest alteration or diminution of weight recorded, thereby proving conclusively to our minds that it is only the unhealthy adipose waste tissue which is destroyed, for after dispensing a few fluid ounces of his remarkable vegetable compounds he succeeds in destroying the diseased fatty mass at the rate of from 2 lb. to even 12 lb. in seven days. There can be no ambiguity about it, for any persons can test this for themselves by standing upon a weighing machine. He explains that all lean persons carry a certain amount of fat necessary for the natural production of heat in the body, but Nature has only stored up her requisite stock in the healthy system, which she most zealously guards, and thus declines to part with an ounce to the persuasions of Mr. Russell's vegetable tonic, however immoderate the dose may be, which testifies abundantly to the fact that it is only a chemical solvent of insalubrious adipose tissue. There is no doubt that the inventor of the composition must have possessed a profound vegetal knowledge in selecting this simple but peculiar combination.

"Those who resort to the pernicious products of the mineral kingdom, or even the deleterious sections of the vegetable world, doubtless can decoct something powerful but injurious in its action; such, however, require no laudatory commendation; but Mr. Russell (we herewith append his address: Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., the author of 'Corpulency, and the Cure,' 256 pages, price 4d. stamps) makes no secret of the simplicity of his treatment, and avers that the decoction can be drank as a refreshing summer drink, pleasant to the palate, yet having sufficient effect, although perfectly harmless, to remove generally 2 lb. or more in twenty-four hours. We think stout persons would do well to send for his book, which can be obtained through booksellers, or at the address given above."—*Leeds Times*, December 1, 1894.

TO METAMORPHOSE FAT PERSONS

"We were reading in the 'Penny Illustrated Paper' how to reduce obesity, wherein it says in that very excellent publication: 'The corpulent will be glad to learn how to lose two stone in about a month with benefit to health, strength, and muscle, by a comparatively new system. It is a singular fact that the patient, returning quickly to a healthy state with increased activity of brain, digestive, and other organs, naturally requires more food than hitherto; yet, notwithstanding this, he absolutely loses in weight one to two pounds daily, as the weighing machine will prove. The Book, "Corpulency and the Cure" (256 pages), containing the "recipe," can be had gratis from Mr. F. C. Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., by sending cost of postage, fourpence.' He has discovered a simple herbal remedy, most pleasant to the taste, which entirely disposes of the necessity of starving oneself in endeavouring to be rid of all superfluous matter. An interesting point, which goes to prove that the almost magical compound is beyond doubt harmless, is that in prescribing it in a tentative way to lean persons, or rather to those who carry no superfluity of fat beyond that which is required as fuel for Nature's furnace, the medicine is absolutely inoperative, attacking only that unhealthy, disease-creating waste accumulation which is the burden of the fat creature's existence. In many cases where people take decoctions reputed to be new medical discoveries to cure some specific disease, they may recover by the action of the medicine, or Nature may have effected her own cure. In the case of corpulency, if a simple remedy undertakes to reduce a person, say, 7 lb. in a week, all that one has to do is to get weighed, and thus prove it conclusively. So it is with Mr. Russell's compound, but he asks you to prove it in twenty-four hours only."—*Coventry Standard*, January 18, 1895.

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STORIES SHORT. STORIES TALL.

SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 331. FOR WEEK ENDING MAY 4, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 331.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING MAY 4, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

FLORRIE BAKER was in a very bad temper. This was surprising, for she was usually a most sweet-tempered girl. Nevertheless, as she sat vindictively tearing into fragments the letter she had just been reading, she looked and felt, as she herself would have expressed it, like a "perfect fiend." The reason of her unwonted anger requires a little explanation. It was this. Some two years before, Florrie had been proposed to by a certain penniless young barrister, named Robert Carstairs, and had accepted him.

But Florrie's parents were cautious, and wishing to discover if the young man could earn enough at his profession to provide for a wife, with a margin in case of ill-fortune, they placed one obstacle in the way of the young people's union. That was, that the marriage should not take place until Robert could show at least £500 to his credit in the bank. This was rather a facer, but Robert pulled himself together, and, by March of this year, owing to good luck rather than to industry, he had acquired the necessary sum—all but £100. The remainder he said he hoped to obtain before many weeks were over, and so Florrie's parents allowed matters to proceed. The wedding was fixed for July, and everything was arranged, even to the printing of the invitation cards.

At the beginning of June there came a letter from Robert in which he explained that things had not turned out as he had hoped, and that, to his intense regret, the wedding must be postponed for another year at least.

"Oh! it is horrid and mean of him," exclaimed Florrie. "I did so want to be married this season, and what *will* people think of it?" So saying, she rushed for sympathy and advice to her sister Belle's room. Belle was a year or so older than Florrie, had studied at Girton, was very learned, and altogether despised such minor considerations as marriages.

"Well, my dear," she said, "if he can't manage it he can't, and you'll only have to grin and bear it till he can. However, I shouldn't make a fuss about it if I were you. Spilt milk, you know."

This speech was not calculated to soothe Florrie's ruffled feelings, and, seizing her hat and jacket, she rushed to seek relief in the outside world. But relief was not to be found, for no sooner had she left the doorstep than she saw, bearing down upon her, Miss Mackenzie, the bore of the neighbourhood. What should she do? She felt that she could not, in her present state of mind, bear the infliction of the old maid's platitudes. But how to escape them? Just then a hansom rattled down the street. In desperation she hailed it, and, by jumping into it, barely escaped the old lady's clutches.

"Where to, Miss?"

"Oh, anywhere!"

"Shall I drive yer down to Kempton, Miss?" said cabby, with an eye to business.

"Yes, yes, anywhere you please."

She settled herself comfortably on the cushions as the cab bowled swiftly through the streets, and was soon lost in thought.

Where was Kempton, though, by the way?

Oh, of course, she remembered now! She had once been to a certain pretty riverside village and recollected having seen written up at the station:

SUNBURY. ALIGHT HERE FOR KEMPTON PARK.

Yes, she would go and sit in the Park, and try and think matters out.

After an hour's drive, Florrie was surprised to find the cab draw up at some big white gates, through which a crowd of vehicles and foot-passengers was pressing.

"What are you stopping here for, cabman?"

"Why, Miss, this 'ere's Kempton Park, w'ere yer wanted to go to,"

"Good heavens, no! Why, it—it looks like a race-course."

"Lor, yus, Miss! Didn't yer know that?"

"Of course not! Drive me back at once, please!" exclaimed Florrie, sitting back in the cab, with as much show of indignation as she could manage.

"Well, yer may as well go in now yer *are* 'ere, don't yer think, Miss? It seems a pity not ter see the fun after coming sich a long way."

Florrie began to reflect. She had never been to a race-course in her life, and here was her chance. No one would be a bit the wiser, and she would find out if it really was such a wicked place as she had been brought up to believe.

Plucking up her courage she acquiesced in "cabby's" disinterested suggestion, and soon found herself within the enclosure, still, of course, seated in the cab, but facing a huge, ungainly erection filled with a shouting crowd. The horse had been taken from the shafts, which had been propped up against the railing in the usual way. This thing in front, cabby told her, was the grand stand. He proceeded to procure a card, showing what horses would run, but, as she found little in it to her taste, she amused herself by watching the curious-looking people round about, while her Jehu went away on some business of his own.

By-and-by back he came and said:

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"Well, Miss, what's your fancy for the first. I'm going to do a bit on *Verdigrease*."

Florrie stared. "Fancy! Do a bit!" Whatever could the man mean?

"Why, if yer cares to plank 'arf a thick 'un on 'im, I can get yer tens from a cove as I knows on. But p'raps you've got yer eye on somethink else."

"Really, I don't understand a word you are saying," replied the poor girl in amazement.

"Well, yer see, Miss, it's this way. If yer think *Verdigrease*, w'ich is a good 'orse, 'll win this first race, one o' them gents in white 'ats over there, as I 'appens to know, 'll bet yer five pounds to 'arf a quid that 'e wont."

"Will he, really? That's awfully kind of him. But I don't happen to know the gentleman."

"Never yer mind, Miss. If yer give me the money I'll work it for yer."

Just for the curiosity of the thing Florrie drew the coin from her purse and gave it to the man, who straightway vanished in the crowd. She looked on her card for the name of the horse she was now so suddenly and unexpectedly interested in, and found written beside it the following incomprehensible words, "*Puce, Strawberry Cap.*" Suddenly there was a commotion in the crowd, mounted constables cleared the course, and several horses cantered past, bearing on their backs men dressed in resplendent colours. The meaning of the words then flashed across her brain, and she instantly picked out *Verdigrease* by his brilliantly attired rider.

"Good gracious, Miss Baker!"

The crowd became quieter, and all looked expectantly at some distant point. Suddenly there was a cry of "They're off!" a bugle sounded, a bell rang, and almost directly, amid the wild yells of the crowd, all the horses dashed past her in a bunch. They were so mixed up, however, that for the life of her she could not tell which had won. In a few moments back came "Cabby," looking very jubilant, and informed her that their horse had won by a short neck, and greatly to her delight handed her five pounds along with her own half sovereign.

Just then a voice said:

"Good gracious, Miss Baker! whcever would have thought of seeing you here?"

Turning round to see who thus addressed her, Florrie saw, standing in front of the cab, Captain Wynford, of her brother's regiment. Greatly dismayed at being discovered under such circumstances, she hastened to explain, begging him to keep her secret. This, it need hardly be said, he readily promised, but laughed immoderately at her escapade, especially when she told him of the betting transaction with "Cabby."

"If you want to do anything more of that sort, though," said he, "you had better entrust the care of it to me. I think I can get you longer odds than 'cabby' can. Are you going to try your luck on this next race? I see they are putting the numbers up."

A wild idea rushed through Florrie's brain. Suppose she were to put a lot of money on and to win, and suppose she did it again and again and had great luck, why, she might make up that missing hundred pounds! What a surprise that would be for Robert! She looked again at her purse. There was in it now, counting her winnings, six pounds and a few shillings. She took the sovereigns out and said:

"Captain Wynford, will you do me a great favour? I want you to bet all this on a horse for me. It's for a special purpose."

Her friend smiled at the sudden increase in the stakes, and advised her to keep to smaller sums. As she persisted, however, he consented to do as she wished.

"You need not part with the cash, Miss Baker; I'm afraid I can't get you ready-money transactions in Tattersall's. I can settle with you to-morrow, anyway."

Florrie could hardly understand this trustfulness, much less the technical reference, but, presuming that it would be all right, asked him to back a horse which she picked out quite at random from the card. The race was run, and her luck still held, increasing her gains to £30 odd. All this she put on the next race, and, to cut a long story short, at the close of the meeting, owing to a wonderful continuance of good fortune, Florrie found herself the proud possessor of somewhat over the required £100. Captain Wynford saw her off in her cab, and congratulated her on her luck, promising to send her a cheque the next day.

On reaching home she dismissed the cabman with a tip that sent him on his way rejoicing, and slipped up to her room unperceived to write a note to Robert asking him to call that evening. When he came she informed him in an airy manner that she had a spare £100 of her own which she would add to what he had already in the bank in order that the wedding might come off as originally planned, carefully suppressing all details of how she happened to have such a sum to give away. She trusted that in his own interests he would not be likely to mention to her parents whence the sudden addition to his resources had been derived. Robert was greatly struck by her self-denial. Everything seemed to be turning out satisfactorily.

But, alas! it was not to be, for Belle suspected something, and, the next time Captain Wynford called, she wormed the whole story out of him under a solemn pledge of secrecy.

Needless to say, Robert soon had a highly coloured version of the affair given to him. Being, unfortunately for Florrie, of strict Puritanical up-bringing, he was greatly shocked at her unconventional behaviour. A painful scene took place between them, which we will pass over, and content ourselves with the bare statement that the engagement was broken off.

Regard for truth, however, compels us to add that Florrie soon recovered, and Captain Wynford, the partner in her "little gamble" had no great difficulty in persuading her to marry him in the Autumn.

Of Robert Carstairs it must be recorded that he rewarded Belle for disillusioning him regarding his first love by offering her his slightly damaged heart. But, as he had not yet succeeded in making that £100 himself, I am afraid Belle will have the humiliation of being married last, after all!

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His Little Whack

"I'm one-and-twenty, mother," said Charles Henry, "and I hanker after seeing the world, and——"

"Don't tell me," said his mother, "Don't tell me what you're hankerin' after. I know 'ithout tellin'. It's the fleshpots of Egypt! That's what you're after. You're about as fit as a spring chicken is to see the world. Jest about as fit to come up to the scratch, you poor innocent. You leave this foolishness and set to work cuttin' sticks. That's what Nature meant you to do, an' if you go agin Nature, she'll git even with you. Thar's a deal of solid religion in wood, especially when it ain't dry."

Charles Henry jingled his pocket suggestively. It was full of money. Then he walked to the window and gazed at the pretty English landscape, so familiar to him. "I'm sick of this old hen-roost," he said irritably, with a look of defiance in his ordinarily mild, blue eyes.

Mrs. Henry Hawkins reached over and jerked him back to the breakfast table. "While you're in this hen-roost, Charles Henry," she said, in tones which did not admit of dispute—"while you're in this hen-roost, I suspects you'll have to finish up the food set before you by the old hen."

Charles Henry meekly went on with his breakfast, but there was an obstinate look in the youth's face as he did so. Mrs. Henry Hawkins waited until he had finished, and then severely eyed him once more.

"It ain't no good, mother," said Charles Henry. "It ain't no good. It's time for me to go forth out of the wilderness, so to speak, and have my little whack. I want to see what's goin' on in the world, I do."

"You want to see what's goin' on in the world. Most people wants to shut their eyes to what's goin' on in the world. You let the world alone," said his mother. "It's been tumblin' about a good many years 'ithout your help. Your head's turned jest because your Uncle Jacob left you that twenty pounds."

Charles Henry again jingled his pocket.

"Well," said the old lady with subdued irony, "I reckon it's too much for you. You want to go and mingle with the fleshpots an' painted Isabels an' fleetin' joys of this world, an' spend all your money, an' then come back like the prodigy son. But you may jest make up your mind, Charles Henry, jest as sure as you're born, there'll be precious little veal on the premises for you when you git tired of running free an' comes crawlin' home full of husks after the manner of the Scripters."

Charles Henry had never before asserted himself. Now he had money in his pouch, and when a man has money in his pouch—especially a man of one-and-twenty—he is bound to assert himself. "Look here, mother," he said deliberately, "you've cooped me up all my life. I can't keep still any longer. I've got to move on. I want to see things for myself. What's it matter if I spend the money? What's anything matter? D'you want me to die because I'm tired of things? I hear voices calling me away into the world—the great, glorious world beyond this little village. I want to see it, taste it, to find out what it's like; and then I'll settle down and cut sticks and milk the cows, but I'm hanged if I'm going to do it till I've had my little whack."

"Go on," said his mother grimly. "Go on, Charles Henry. Have your little whack! Heap dust an' ashes on your sorrowin' parent."

"I don't want to heap ashes on anybody," said the literal Charles Henry.

"You're past praying for," Mrs. Hawkins ejaculated. "A whole army of parsons couldn't save you."

Charles Henry asserted himself. His tones were those of repressed passion. "You let me go my own way, mother. I dare say it's all true. But you can't understand—you can't understand. I must see it all. I want to go to London, and have a look round."

There was a momentary pause.

"Let me start, mother," the youth continued. "I'll have to. It's in my blood. I'll go mad if I don't. I see it all—feel it—hear it—dream of it nights. I must see what it's like. I'll come back again, mother; I'll come back. But I must go. It's a living grave here."

Mrs. Henry Hawkins gazed out of the window. The sun blazed fiercely down upon the little village which peeped out from among the trees across the swollen river.

There was a murmur of summer in the air, a rustle amid the growing grasses, the arrowy flight of a myriad of swallows over the roof of the barn, the bickering of innocent dickey birds as they flew about laden with straws and twigs for their nests. Over all was the wild, sweet joy of the sun-warmed air. The world was agog with life. Pulses quickened, the unutterable joy of it filled every heart—every heart save those of Charles Henry and his irate parent.

A young girl entered the room and stood carelessly swinging her sun-bonnet by its strings. Her blue eyes gazed questioningly at Charles Henry as he stood still, rattling the money in his pocket. She was clad in a pretty blue woollen dress, and looked about twenty. In addition, she stood three inches taller than Charles Henry, and could have lifted him up with one of her large, beautifully shaped hands.

Mary Jane leant against the door-post, her face paling a little as she realised the situation. "You needn't tell me," she said to Mrs. Hawkins; "I can see he's got the fidgets again. He'll have to go."

Mrs. Hawkins looked surprised. She had counted on an ally.

"Yes," said Mary calmly, "it's no use stopping him, Mrs. Hawkins. Let him go. He'll be glad enough to come back again."

Charles Henry did not meet his sweetheart's eye.

"Well," said Mrs. Hawkins resignedly, "if you say it, Mary, I s'pose he'll have to go. Don't cry out about it afterwards when he's seen some one else. Hasn't he said anything to you yet?"

The girl's cheeks flamed for a moment. She drew herself up with a superb gesture. "If he sees anyone he likes better than me," she said, "he's welcome to her." There was a touch of scorn in her voice which roused Charles Henry. What his mother's reproaches could not effect Mary Jane's had done in a second. "If you want me to stay," he said humbly, approaching her, as the sunlight played upon her hair—"if you want me to stay, I'll do it, Mary Jane."

There was an air of pathetic entreaty in Mrs. Hawkins' iron-featured face. The girl hesitated a moment. Then she laughed low and musically, displaying splendid teeth as she did so. She threw out her arm with a gesture of renunciation. "When I want you it will be easy enough to come after you. Go and see the world, Charles Henry Hawkins. You won't find anything like me in it."

And so it was arranged. Charles Henry started forth from the little homestead with twenty golden sovereigns in his pockets and a large bag in his hand. A procession of wondering villagers escorted him to the station, and one old lady gave him a bottle of raspberry vinegar to keep him from the refreshment bars as long as possible. Mary Jane declined

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to see him off. "You've got to go," she said, "and have your little whack, and get it over. Good-bye." And then she disappeared.

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Charles Henry roused himself from his couch and gazed apprehensively at the grey, grimy dawn as it streaked in through the tattered blinds of his simply furnished garret. Actuated by a desire to pass his enforced leisure in artistic pursuits, he had himself designed the mural decorations of his apartment with a piece of charcoal. The most stiking feature in the scheme of decoration was an effigy of Charles Henry, suspended from a branch of lofty elm by a hempen rope. Underneath this motionless figure were written the words, in Charles Henry's characteristic handwriting:

CHARLES HENRY HAWKINS,
Born 1st of April, 1873.
Did for himself, 1st April, 1894.
He was a PRIZE FOOL.

Charles Henry got out of bed and surveyed the effigy with grim satisfaction. As he gazed his sternness relaxed and a humorous twinkle took its place. "Well," he said with a sigh, "I've had a time and no mistake. Westminster Abbey, Houses of Parliament, Buckingham Palace, and the Tower—all the places I've read of at school—seen 'em all. They've been waiting for me ever since they were built, and I've seen 'em. What did I want to play cards for with confidence men and dissipate my substance—Uncle Jacob's twenty pounds—in riotous living? I dunno. I s'pose it was part of the time. But I ain't got a farthin' left. And I've had nothing to eat 'cept an orange for two days. I can't live on Buckingham Palace and Westminster Abbey and munch a slice out of the Tower. No, no, I've got to get something to eat or die. I can't wire to mother because nobody will lend me the money. Wonder if there is anything I can pawn?"

He felt in his pockets in a perfunctory way as if knowing what the result would be. "Waistcoat went last week," he said, addressing the effigy. "Last week. What am I to do now? There's a good deal in that prodigal son business of mother's. I reckon I'm emptier than he ever felt. But I have had a good time."

He dipped his curly head in a basin of water, and looked for his boots. They were not to be seen. "I couldn't have pawned them in my sleep," he said, staggering against the wall. "I'm beginning to see double. Wouldn't mother crow over me if she could see me now."

Suddenly his face brightened. "I promised her to get back a month ago, and she said if I didn't turn up in time she'd come and fetch me. Wonder if she'll do it. She'll have to come quick or there won't be enough of me to make a shadow."

He fell to counting the days. "She'd give me a week extra or a fortnight, and then come straight along," said Charles Henry reflectively. "Oh, yes, she'll come! But how am I to get along now?"

Then he looked round for his boots again, and someone knocked at the door.

Charles Henry reeled slightly as he opened the door. "It's you, is it?" This to the grimy slavey, an untidy girl, about sixteen, with tangled red hair and a profusion of blacklead and boot polish impartially spread over her expressive features.

"Yus, it's me," the girl said. "Who else did yer think it was?—the parish beadle! 'Ere's yer boots. Missus cribbed 'em when you was asleep last night and told me to lock 'em up."

Charles Henry received his boots with a forlorn attempt at jocosity. "She was afraid I'd spoil them with too much walking, I suppose?" he asked in a whisper.

"Yus," said the slavey. "And she says to Mrs. Parker wot lives next door, if you don't pay up to-morrer, she's a-goin' to chuck yer."

"She's strong enough," said Charles Henry, sighing.

The slavey produced a big slice of bread and butter, from under her apron. "You ain't a bad sort," she said. "Ketch 'old, and tuck into it."

Charles Henry was very hungry, but he was also proud. "It's your breakfast isn't it?" he asked.

"No," said the slavey, lying hard. "It's for you. I 'ad corfee and sassidges hours and hours ago."

"Do you think," said Charles Henry—"do you think, you poor little duffer, I'm going to rob you of the food you do get? Never. Don't lie like that."

With a dexterous movement the slavey repossessed herself of Charles Henry's boots. "If you don't eat," she said, "I'll lock 'm up again."

Charles Henry was forced to comply. He ate ravenously. "I should like to have the honour of shaking hands with you," he said solemnly when he had finished. "I have renewed my strength like the eagle."

"Orl right," said the slavey. "Your beak's gettin' very like an eagle's." And they shook hands.

That night after a long tramp in the streets, Charles Henry staggered heavily back to his garret. "I'll try to go to sleep," he said. "It will make the time pass quicker. It's a race between death and mother; but I've had a good time, a very good time; but when mother makes a start she generally wins." He slept for an hour. Then he again awoke, with that terrible craving for food. "I've had enough of the world," he said to the effigy opposite. "If I once get back to the farm I'll cut firewood for the rest of my days. Who's there?" Someone had knocked.

"It's me," said a well-known voice.

Charles Henry dissembled his emotion and tottered to the door. But Mrs. Hawkins could not dissemble hers. She drew him to her breast, cried over him, and patted his curly head, and nearly smothered him with kisses. Then she let him go, and Mary Jane shyly advanced. "I told you I'd come and fetch you when I wanted you," was all she said; "and here I am."

Charles Henry, with one supreme heroic effort, momentarily staved off the pangs of hunger. "I have had a time," he said, "a grand time: Houses of Parliament, Madame Tussaud's, Salvation Army, the Tower, and Zoological Gardens. Sit down on the bed, mother, and I'll tell you all about it."

Mary Jane looked at his thin cheeks for a moment, as Mrs. Hawkins glanced around the barren den.

"Well, you are a prodigy son!" said Mrs. Hawkins, ashamed to have let her feelings get the better of her.

"Hush!" said Mary Jane. "You don't understand. It's the fashion in London to get as high as you can, and the higher you get the more miserable you look. Charles Henry, you just go on telling your mother all about the sights, and I'll order dinner. Then we'll go round afterwards."

Mary Jane bustled about and achieved wonders. Ten minutes later a table and two chairs appeared in front of the diminutive slavey. Twenty minutes later Charles Henry sat before a somewhat rude but plentiful meal, suffering exquisite tortures as he waited for his mother to commence. It was with difficulty that he could restrain himself from tearing the food with his fingers—from rending it like a wild beast. Then he began to eat, and Mary's tears ran down into the potatoes.

Mrs. Hawkins was too short-sighted to notice this gratuitous but temperate addition to the meal. "Seems to me with all that money you didn't ought to be lodged up here," she said. "I reckon 'taint as good as our barn. How much have you got left?"

"More than twenty pounds, I think," said Mary Jane. "There's his purse lying on the bed half open."

Mrs. Hawkins was mollified. "Sakes," she said; "if I didn't oughter 'pologise. Charles Henry, I'm proud of you. You're real level-headed. An' it ain't taken away your appetite neither."

Charles Henry tried to explain, but Mary Jane put her finger to her lips, and Mrs. Hawkins never knew.

Charles Henry "hankered" after the flesh-pots no more. To cut firewood for Mary Jane was happiness enough, and when a man has grasped a truth like that, earth, air, and sky are his attendant ministers, who do his bidding and teach him all the joys of life.

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The White Lady of Machow

DURING the last Polish revolution, the artillery captain, Baron Greisenek, of Tornopol, where his regiment was stationed, was dispatched to Machow with a troop of Hussars, to guard the frontier, and prevent the insurgents from crossing over from Galicia into Russia.

It was a lovely summer's evening when he arrived; the full moon was rising above the horizon, and the stars shone clear and bright above the round tower of the castle, which lay on a gentle rise behind the village.

Baron Greisenek stationed his vedettes along the frontier line (so far, indeed, to the right and left, that they reached the next body of troops), saluted the Cossack in command, quartered his men in the surrounding villages, and then betook himself, with his old sergeant, Madorassie, and half a troop of Hussars, up the gentle ascent to the Castle of Machow. The latter was an extensive edifice, with high, moss-grown walls, and round, massive towers, which reminded one more of a castle on the Dardanelles than a German castle on the Rhine. The moon cast a blue light over it, rendering it more mysterious-looking. The gates were closed. It appeared empty and deserted; no sound was audible, save from time to time the melancholy cry of a nightbird.

The captain signalled to the trumpeter to blow a blast. The shrill, cheerful notes rang out in the still night, and aroused countless bats and owls in the ruined walls, which flew whirling round the heads of the Hussars.

At the third blast of the bugle, steps were heard, a bunch of keys rattled, and at last the door creakingly turned upon its hinges. An old man in the Polish dress of the previous century, with a weather-beaten face and a long white beard, stood before the captain, and greeted him respectfully. Greisenek demanded quarters for himself and his men.

"The castle, with all it contains," said the old man solemnly, "is at your orders, sir. I have only to ask you not to take it ill if your rest, and that of your men, is somewhat disturbed at night." He drew nearer the Baron, and added, in a whisper, "there are ghosts in the castle."

The White Lady raised a warning hand.

"What?"

"The 'White Lady of Machow' is seen now and again."

"Soldiers know no fear!" exclaimed Greisenek laughing, "and least of all are we afraid of pretty women, and the 'White Lady of Machow' must have been handsome indeed if she is doing penance for her sins to-day. Forward!"

The Hussars rode into the courtyard; the gates were shut; the horsemen dismounted and led their horses to the stables. The windows and corridors were lit up by the moonlight, but only a single light was visible, and that was on the ground floor.

"Is the castle uninhabited?" inquired the Baron, whilst the old man held a lantern to light him up the broad steps of the castle.

"My master, Herr Krosnowski and his lady and daughter are living in Lemberg; the young master, I believe, is in Paris."

"Or with the insurgents yonder?"

"It is possible. I am here alone as the castle steward."

The old man opened a lofty, iron-bound door on the ground floor, and led the way through a suite of empty rooms, the walls of which were hung with old pictures, to a spacious apartment on one side of which ran an open gallery, approached by a winding staircase. This great room was adorned with life-size portraits, mythological paintings, Dutch flower and fruit pieces, ancient Polish, as well as Turkish, Mongolian, and Servian weapons, and old damask-covered furniture. In the centre stood a round table, with a cover spread for one person, and against the wall was a four-post bed prepared for the night. It looked as though the soldiers had been expected.

The Baron made himself comfortable, ate and drank, and praised the culinary skill of the steward, who waited on him attentively.

"I was four years in Paris with my master," said the old man. "I learnt to cook there."

"After this soup I could believe," thought the Baron, "that the castle is not uninhabited as it appears. Evidently the inmates intend to have no dealings with imperial officers. Well, so be it."

Then, turning to the old man, he said:

"What is this story about a woman in white?"

The steward took a candelabra and led the captain to the picture of a strangely beautiful woman, whose tall figure was wrapped from head to foot in a fur mantle. From the dark background looked out a pale face with proud blue eyes and full red lips, from beneath the fur-bordered cap fell rich, red-gold tresses like fiery snakes.

"That is she," said the steward, "The Wojewodin Barbara Krosnowski. She lived in the days of King

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Segismund Augustus, and was a sinful woman. God rest her soul."

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When the steward had left him, Greisenek carefully examined the whole apartment, and with this object mounted to the gallery above. He could discover nothing suspicious. After bolting the two doors, he laid his loaded pistols on the bed and went to sleep. He was aroused at midnight by the hollow strokes of the castle clock, and sat up to look round him. The entire room was lit up by the moon; the high windows were sharply defined against the panelled walls, the weapons shone with unnatural brilliancy, the portraits appeared like living persons, and the beautiful Barbara Krosnowski seemed to gaze at him with a threatening look in her blue eyes, and a scornful smile on her full lips, and when a sharp current of air swept through the vast room, and fanned his hot cheeks, he fancied he could see the hair of her furs wave gently.

He fell back and lay thinking for a long while, the oppressive silence stimulating his imagination, until the portraits seemed to step from their frames and hold converse with one another. He could hear their regular breathing and their low voices as they talked together, looking towards him now and then, and pointing, just for all the world as if they were discussing his presence in the old castle, with his men.

He started up suddenly from his reverie, bathed in a cold perspiration. The phantom shapes were there no longer, and from their frames the ghostly faces of the strange people, illuminated by the sickly rays of the moon, looked down upon him.

"I am only angry that you should be already betrothed," replied the Baron, kissing her hand.

A slight jarring noise directed his attention to the upper part of the wall at the far end of the room.

And now he noticed that the wall high up at the end of the gallery had opened, and he saw a form clad in white flowing robes sweep through it. Half-terrified, half-curious, he rose and fixed his gaze on the apparition, as it stood a moment in the cold light of the moon, looking straight into the face of the beautiful Barbara. It was the same lovely face, with the same proud blue eyes, framed in golden tresses, only the blue eyes no longer smiled seductively, but wore a look of gentle, wistful gravity. He seized his pistols involuntarily and cocked the trigger, but the white lady raised a warning hand, and vanished silently and swiftly from the other end of the gallery, where the wall, at her approach, opened and closed in mysterious silence after her.

It was long before the Baron fell asleep. When he awoke in the morning he questioned whether he had been dreaming, or had really seen the strange apparition. Beside him lay the pistol, with the trigger still cocked. He had certainly in the night made ready to fire.

But might not the full moon have played him a trick? He had just finished dressing as his old servant entered and put an end to his doubts.

"I have to report, captain," began the sergeant, "that the guard on the frontier has remained according to orders, and nothing suspicious has been seen, and nothing particular has occurred, but 'tis all as it should be here in the castle, captain."

"What, have you, too, seen something?"

"Terenz, who had the stable guard at midnight, declares a woman was walking up and down the corridors of the castle; in the courtyard, and in the garden, steps and voices were heard; the horses were restless, and your bay mare, sir, broke loose. They say the horses scented the ghost."

As Greisenek rode off to inspect his guards in the vaulted gateway, he met the steward,

"I say, fellow," he cried excitedly, "I've seen her!"

"Whom, your honour?"

"The White Lady of Machow!"

The steward crossed himself.

"That means nothing good," he muttered. "May no evil befall us!"

"Bah! we're not afraid."

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That night the ghost appeared a second time. On the stroke of twelve the White Lady stood once more in the gallery, raised her hand in warning, and vanished. She was seen by the Hussars, and the horses were as restless as before.

On the third night the troops received an alarm. A small body of insurgents appeared on the further side of the frontier; the Cossacks drew back, shots were exchanged, and flames were visible on the eastern horizon. Greisenek returned home an hour before midnight, took a hasty meal, and threw himself dressed upon his bed.

It suddenly occurred to him that this time he would wait for the ghost and address her. He rose, bolted the door, satisfied himself that his pistols were loaded, placed them in his belt, and ascended the winding stair. In the gallery he chose a projecting pillar for a hiding-place, and then awaited courageously, but with some excitement, the apparition of the White Lady.

With the first stroke of midnight, the wall opened, and the lovely ghost appeared. The Baron's heart beat fast, and he held his breath. Only two steps removed from him, the White Lady stood still, and looked down into the room below. With sudden determination, Greisenek stepped out from behind the pillar and seized in his arms a slim, living form.

"Holy Mary!" murmured a sweet, woman's voice, and two large blue eyes looked beseechingly into his.

"Fräulein Krosnowski?" said the captain.

"You know me?"

"The resemblance to your ancestress, the White Lady, is so striking.

"I entreat you not to betray me," murmured the beautiful vision. "I am betrothed to one whom my parents refuse to allow me to marry, whom they will not even permit to enter the house. For a year I have played the White Lady of Machow, only that I might be able to see him and speak with him for a moment. Well, I am in your power."

"My dear Madame, what can you think of me?" replied Greisenek. "Never could I, to whom chance has intrusted your secret, betray your confidence! Go your way without fear. How I envy him who awaits you!"

The girl smiled mischievously. The same instant a hollow sound came from the courtyard.

"What is that?" exclaimed the captain.

"Nothing, nothing," replied Fräulein Krosnowski, hastily; "'tis only my faithful steward, who is in my confidence, and

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plays the ghost to your Hussars, in order that I may reach the garden unperceived. Farewell."

"Shall I never see you again?"

The girl hesitated an instant.

"Yes," she said, giving him her hand, "you shall see me again if you will promise not to follow me, and not to quit this room before morning."

"I give you my word of honour."

"Then, farewell."

She vanished, and Greisenek again threw himself on the bed. Early in the morning he was awakened by his servant. With the latter appeared a Jew, who brought news that during the night a large troop of insurgents had assembled in Castle Machow, and had succeeded in crossing the border. Greisenek struck his forehead. He had been betrayed by the White Lady of Machow. His general sent for him, and awarded him a month's arrest.

One day he found on his window-sill a stone wrapped in paper.

Opening it, he read:

"BARON,—I am truly grieved that you have to suffer for my delinquency; maybe the thought that you are suffering for me will console you. You kept your word, I will keep mine.

"THE WHITE LADY OF MACHOW."

The day Greisenek regained his liberty a Jew visited him, and informed him, with an air of mystery, that a good friend of his would be waiting for him at eight in the evening in the courtyard of the Castle Bakowza. There was nothing improbable in such an incitation. More than one former Austrian officer was fighting in the ranks of the insurgents, who, if brought back wounded across the frontier, would throw themselves on the mercy of their former comrades. So Greisenek rode unaccompanied to Bakowza, distant only about an hour from headquarters, and, at the appointed hour, dismounted before the castle. It was a fine but cool autumn evening; the sky starlit, and silence reigned around. A boy came out and led away his horse.

As the Captain approached the castle, a tall, slight figure, leaning on the baluster of the broad steps, rose before him.

It was Fräulein Krosnowski, who gave him her hand.

"Are you angry with me?" she begun.

"I am only angry that you should be already betrothed," replied the Baron, kissing her hand. "How gladly would I have been thy slave."

"I am not betrothed," exclaimed the girl, laughing merrily. "Not betrothed!"

Greisenek threw his arms around her, and this time her rosy lips did not refuse to meet his. The same winter, the White Lady of Machow became the Baroness Greisenek.

The Harmony Chime

MANY years ago, in a large foundry in the city of Ghent, was found a young workman by the name of Otto Holstein. He was not nineteen years of age, but none of the workmen could equal him in his special department—bell casting, or moulding. Far and near the fame of Otto's bells extended, the clearest and sweetest, people said, that were ever heard.

Of course, the great establishment of Von Erlangen, in which Otto worked, got the credit of his labours; but Von Erlangen and Otto himself knew very well to whom the superior tone of the bells was due. The master did not pay him higher wages than the others, but by degrees he grew to be general superintendent in his department in spite of his extreme youth.

"Yes, my bells are good," he said to a friend one day who was commenting upon their merits; "but they do not make the music I will yet strike from them. They ring alike for all things. To be sure, when they toll for a funeral the slow measure makes them *seem* mournful, but then the notes are really the same as in a wedding peal. I shall make a chime of bells that will sound at will every chord in the human soul."

"Then wilt thou deal in magic," said his friend, laughing; "and the Holy Inquisition will have somewhat to do with thee. No human power can turn a bell into a musical instrument."

"But I can," he answered, briefly; "and Inquisition or not, I will do it."

He turned abruptly from his friend and sauntered, lost in thought, down the narrow street which led to his home. It was a humble, red-tiled cottage, of only two rooms, that he had inherited from his grandfather. There he lived alone with his widowed mother. She was a mild, pleasant-faced woman, and her eyes brightened as her son bent his tall head under the low doorway, as he entered the little room. "Thou art late, Otto," she said, "and in trouble, too," as she caught sight of his grave, sad face.

"Yes," he answered, "when I asked Herr Erlangen for an increase of salary, for my work grows harder every day, he refused it. Nay, he told me if I was not satisfied, I could leave, for there were fifty men ready to take my place. Ready! yes, I warrant they're ready enough, but to be *able* is a different thing."

His mother sighed deeply.

"Thou will not leave Herr Erlangen's, surely. It is little we get, but it keeps us in food."

"I must leave," he answered. "Nay, do not cry out, mother! I have other plans, and thou wilt not starve. Monsieur Dayrolles, the rich Frenchman, who lives in the Linden-Strasse, has often asked me why I do not set up a foundry of my own. Of course, I laughed—I who never have a thaler to spend; but he told me he and several other rich friends of his would advance the means to start me in business. He is a great deal of his time at Erlangen's, and is an enthusiast about fine bells. Ah! we are great friends, and I am going to him after supper."

"People say he is crazy," said his mother.

"Crazy!" indignantly. "People say that of everybody who has ideas they can't understand. They say *I* am crazy when I talk of my chime of bells. If I stay with Erlangen, he gets the credit of my work; but my chime must be mine, mine alone, mother!" His eyes lighted with a kind of wild enthusiasm whenever he talked on this subject.

His mother's cheerful face grew sad, as she laid her hand on his shoulder.

"Why, Otto, thou art not thyself when thou speakest of those bells."

"More my real self, mother, than at any other time!" he cried. "I only truly live when I think of how my idea is to be carried out. It is to be my life's work; I know it, I feel it. It is upon me that my fate is woven inextricably in that ideal chime. It is God-sent. No great work but the maker is possessed wholly by it. Don't shake your head, mother. Wait till my 'Harmony Chime' sounds from the great cathedral belfry, and then shake it, if you can."

His mother smiled faintly.

"Thou art a boy—a mere child, Otto, though a wonderful genius I must confess. Thy hopes delude thee, for it would take a lifetime to carry out thine idea."

"Then let it take a lifetime!" he cried vehemently. "Let me accomplish it when I am too old to hear it distinctly, and I will be content that its first sounds toll my dirge. I must go now to Monsieur Dayrolles. Wish me good luck, dearest mother," and he stooped and kissed her tenderly.

Otto did not fail. The strange old man in his visits to the foundry had noticed the germs of genius in the boy, and grown

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very fond of him. He was so frank, so honest, so devoted to his work, and had accomplished so much at his early age, that Monsieur Dayrolles saw a brilliant future before him.

Besides, the old gentleman, with a Frenchman's vanity, felt that if the "Harmony Chime" *could* be made, the name of the munificent patron would go down to posterity with that of the maker. He believed firmly that the boy some day would accomplish his purpose. So, although the revolt of the Netherlands had begun, and he was preparing to return to his own country, he advanced the necessary funds, and saw Otto established in business before he quitted Ghent.

In a very short time work poured in upon Otto. During that long and terrible war the manufacture of cannon alone made the fortunes of the workers in iron. So, five years from the time he left Von Erlangen, we find Otto Holstein a rich man at twenty-four years of age. But the idea for which he laboured had never for a moment left his mind. Sleeping or waking, toiling or resting, his thoughts were busy perfecting the details of the great work.

"Thou art twenty-four to-day, Otto," said his good mother, "and rich beyond our hopes. When wilt thou bring Gertrude home to me? Thou hast been betrothed now for three years, and I want a daughter to comfort my declining years. Thou doest thy betrothed maiden a grievous wrong to delay without cause. The gossips are talking already."

"Let them talk," laughed Otto. "Little do Gertrude or I care for their silly tongues. She and I have agreed that the 'Harmony Chime' is to usher in our marriage day. Why, good mother, no man can serve two mistresses, and my chime has the oldest claim. Let me accomplish it, and then the remainder of my life belongs to Gertrude, and thou, too, best of mothers."

He loved his mother, but he seemed now to forget her in the feverish eagerness with which he threw himself into his labours. He had been a devoted lover to Gertrude, but he now never had a spare moment to give to her—in fact, he only seemed to remember her existence in connection with the peal which would ring in their wedding day. His labours were prolonged far over the appointed time, and meanwhile the internal war raged more furiously, and the Netherlands were one vast battle-field. No interest did Otto seem to take in the stirring events around him. The bells held his whole existence captive.

At last the moulds were broken, and the bells came out of their husks perfect in form, and shining as stars in Otto's happy eyes. They were mounted in the great belfry, and for the test-chime Otto had employed the best bell-ringers in the city.

It was a lovely May morning, and almost crazed with excitement and anxiety, Otto, accompanied by a few chosen friends, waited outside the city for the first notes of the "Harmony Chime." At some distance he thought he could better judge of the merits of his work.

At last the first notes were struck, clear, sonorous, and so melodious that his friends cried aloud with delight. But with finger upraised for silence, and eyes full of ecstatic delight, Otto stood like a statue until the last note died away. Then his friends caught him as he fell forward in a swoon—a swoon so like death that no one thought he would recover.

But it was not death, and he came out of it with a look of serene peace on his face that it had not worn since boyhood. He was married to Gertrude that very day, but every one noticed that the ecstasy which transfigured his face seemed to be drawn more from the sound of the bells than the sweet face beside him.

"Don't you see a spell is cast on him as soon as they begin to ring?" said one, after the bells had ceased to be a wonder. "If he is walking, he stops short; and if he is working, the work drops, and a strange fire comes in his eyes; and I have seen him shudder all over as if he had an ague."

In good truth the bells seemed to have drawn a portion of Otto's life to them. When the incursions of the war forced him to fly from Ghent with his family, his regrets were not for his injured property, but that he could not hear the bells.

He was absent two years, and when he returned it was to find the cathedral almost a ruin, and the bells gone no one knew where. From that moment a settled melancholy took possession of Otto. He made no attempt to retrieve his losses; in fact, he gave up work altogether, and would sit all day with his eyes fixed on the ruined belfry.

People said he was melancholy mad, and, I suppose, it was the truth, but he was mad with a kind of gentle patience, very sad to see. His mother had died during their exile; and now his wife, unable with all her love to rouse him from his torpor, faded slowly away. He did not notice her sickness, and his poor numbed brain seemed imperfectly to comprehend her death. But he followed her to the grave, and, turning from it, moved slowly down the city, passed the door of his old home without looking at it, and went out of the city gates.

After that he was seen in every city in Europe at different intervals. Charitable people gave him alms, but he never begged. He would enter a town, take his station near a church, and wait until the bells rang for matins or vespers, then take up his staff and, sighing deeply, move off.

Years rolled over the head of the wanderer, but still his slow march continued. His hair had grown white, and his strength had failed him so much that he only tottered instead of walked, but still that wistful seeking look was in his eyes.

One glorious evening in midsummer he was crossing a river in Ireland. The kind-hearted boatman had been moved by the old man's imploring gestures to take him over. "He's mighty nigh his end, anyhow," he muttered, looking at the feeble movements of the old pilgrim as he stumbled to his seat.

Suddenly through the evening air came the distant sound of a melodious chime. At the first note the pilgrim leapt to his feet and threw up his arms.

"Found!" he cried, "found at last!"

"It's the bells of the convent," said the wondering man, not understanding Otto's words spoken in a foreign tongue, but answering his gesture. "They were brought from somewhere in Holland, when they were fighting there. Moighty fine bells they are, too. But he isn't listening to me."

No, he heard nothing but the bells. He merely whispered, "Come back to me after so many years! Oh, love of my soul! Oh, thought of my life! Peal on, for your voices tell me of Paradise."

The last note floated through the air, and as it died away something else soared aloft for ever—free from the clouds and struggles of life.

Otto lay dead, his face full of peace and joy, for the weary quest of his crazy brain was over, and the "Harmony Chime" had called him to his eternal rest.

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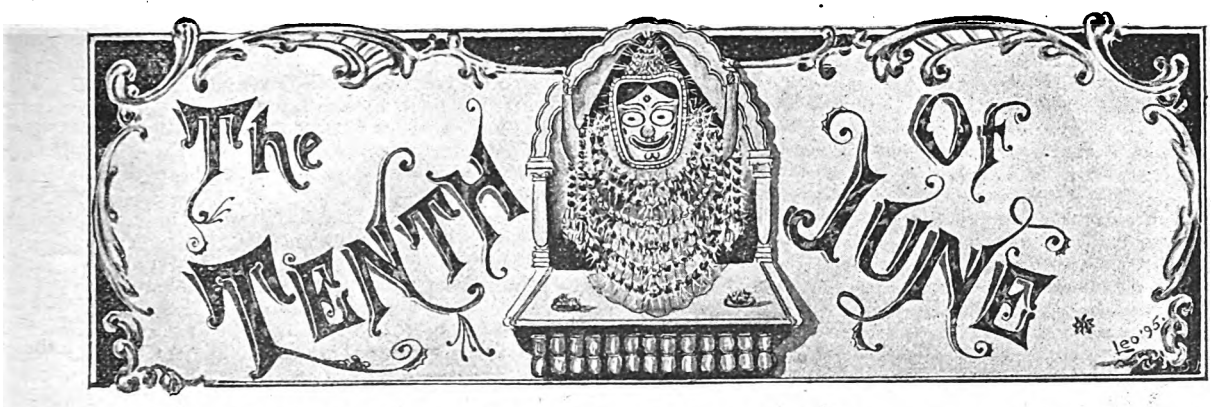

By John K. Leys, *Author of "In the Toils," "My Hindoo Friend," &c., &c.—Illustrated by* Raymond Potter.

SUMMARY.

Geoffrey Dundas—A young barrister.
Sir Arthur Chetwynd—A retired general and friend of Geoffrey.
Leila Chetwynd—His daughter.
Captain Byngham—An army officer, and cousin to Sir Arthur.
Lord Lavington—A friend of the General.
Amavati, the Rajah of Nagore—A Hindoo prince who visits Sir Arthur, and develops an unrequited love for Leila.
Chunder Sen—The Rajah's secretary.
Kuttapani—The Rajah's cook

During the Indian Mutiny Sir Arthur, together with Geoffrey's father (since dead), took part in the looting of a Hindoo temple on the tenth of June, and on this day every year afterwards one of the Englishmen concerned, or some member of their families, is assassinated. On the last day of May, 1884, Amavati, the Rajah of Nagore, visits Sir Arthur, and Geoffrey tells him of the danger which threatens himself and the General's household. In view of the condition of affairs, Sir Arthur visits his lawyer to make his will, and, learning from him that his cousin, Captain Byngham, to whom he had intended to marry Leila, is almost penniless, though representing himself to be rich, wills him but a small annuity. Chunder Sen makes it possible for Byngham to surreptitiously examine the will, and promises to help him out of the difficulty. On the tenth of June Geoffrey goes to Wales, and is followed by Kuttapani, who attacks him in a lonely spot and leaves him for dead. Geoffrey, however, recovers, and follows him.

CHAPTER XII.

On the Track.

There was no great difficulty in following the Hindoo down the slope and along the valley, for he never once looked back; and Geoffrey took care to keep a good way behind. Gradually, as the country became cultivated, and cover in the shape of trees and hedges became more plentiful, he ventured to draw a little nearer.

But when the sun went down and the shadows began to lengthen, the difficulty of keeping the Hindoo in sight without going too close to him became very great. By this time Geoffrey was greatly exhausted. He had walked continuously since daybreak, except for the short rest he had taken beside the pool; and the excitement which had sustained him when he was struggling to save his life had now died away. His injured shoulder, too, gave him a good deal of trouble. But the Indian glided on, stealing like a baleful shadow through the unfrequented lanes and field paths, as if he were incapable of feeling fatigue.

They were by this time a long way from the mountain which had witnessed the attempted murder; and Geoffrey had lost his landmarks entirely. Still he pressed on wondering what town or railway-station the Hindoo could be making for.

The country was now well wooded, but the farmhouses were few and far between, and the roads were nearly deserted. Once or twice, however, Geoffrey met a hay-maker, or a farmer's wife coming home from market; and he never failed to ask them whether they had met a dark-coloured man. The reply always was that the man was a little way ahead; and Geoffrey was content, feeling sure that Kuttapani had no idea he was being followed, and would not try to evade pursuit.

But when twilight merged into darkness Geoffrey felt that at any risk he must keep closer to the man he was "shadowing." He walked on rapidly, therefore, for some minutes, but to his surprise he did not overtake the Hindoo. Then he began to run, and ran on steadily for perhaps a mile. Still no one was visible.

Geoffrey was perplexed and vexed beyond measure. It seemed as if he must in some way have passed the man. Could he have been taken up in any vehicle and carried on? It was possible, but not likely, for no cart, gig, or carriage had come by for some time. Could he have gone out of the road to ask his way at the door of some farmhouse? That seemed the most likely explanation. But in that case the Hindoo would in a few minutes overtake his "shadow," meet him face to face. Clearly that would not do.

For the last mile and a half the road had been bordered on the right by a plantation of young beech trees. There could hardly be a farmhouse in that direction; but it was possible that some lane on the left, which had remained unnoticed in the darkness, might lead to one.

At any rate it seemed clear to Geoffrey that he had overshot his mark, that Kuttapani must be now behind him; and that the best thing he could do was to sit down and wait for him. So he pushed his way through the hedge that separated the plantation from the road, and choosing a position from which he could see any one passing along the road, he sat down with his back to a tree.

Worn out with fatigue and faint with hunger as he was, the mere rest was delicious. He found that he had to change his position constantly, or he would have fallen asleep.

A farmer's wife.

After waiting for half an hour he rose, feeling stiff and sore. No one had passed along the road. It was plain to Geoffrey that he had lost the trail. In all probability the Hindoo was camping out for the night in the very wood on the border of which he was standing. But to trace him was of course impossible.

There was just one chance left, and that was to make for the nearest railway-station. The next day being Sunday no trains ran on the little branch line which served the district; and it seemed probable that the Hindoo would wait in the neighbourhood till Monday morning. At any rate it was evident that nothing

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Sat down with his back to a tree.

more could be done that night. So Geoffrey limped on till he came to a small roadside public-house, and there, with some difficulty, he found shelter for the night.

Before going to bed he treated his injured shoulder and his swollen feet with the old-fashioned remedy—a mixture of melted butter and spirits—and found that next morning he was able to dress himself, and move about, without much inconvenience.

After breakfast he inquired for the nearest railway-station. It was only four miles off, so he walked over in the course of the day, and found beside the station a new red-brick "hotel." Here he rested for the remainder of the day.

On Monday morning Geoffrey rose at five and made a survey of the railway-station and its approaches. The one small waiting-room had a window which commanded a view of the road; and as soon as the place was open he took up his station at the window. His plan was to buy a first-class ticket as soon as the booking-clerk arrived; and the moment he caught sight of Kuttapani he would take his seat in one of the carriages—which were already drawn up at the platform—and pull down the blinds. The Hindoo would probably travel second or third class; and it was unlikely that he would look into the first-class compartments.

The minutes passed; and a bell rang. Still no sign of the Hindoo.

Geoffrey took out his watch, still keeping his eye on the road.

"Take your seat, sir, please," said the guard, putting his head into the room. "Are you expecting someone?" he added.

Geoffrey hardly heard him, so keen was his anxiety.

"No—that is, yes," he answered confusedly. "I expected a man I know will travel by this train."

"Any one in sight, Joe?" the guard called out to a porter who occupied a better look-out on the top of a truck.

"Not a living soul," answered the lad.

Geoffrey turned from the window in despair, and allowed the guard to hurry him into a compartment. His plan had failed! He could not even make up his mind whether it would be better for him to go on, or to remain where he was. The train had started before he had come to a decision. The only chance left, so far as he saw, was to go to Paddington and watch the arrival of the trains there; and that was a chance so slender that it seemed only one degree better than nothing.

At the third station the train stopped at, Geoffrey thought he might as well try to get a newspaper. He stood up, to let down the window, just as the carriages ran past the signal-box at the end of the platform. Before the window fell into its place he had passed before the Hindoo's eyes!

Kuttapani was standing by himself at one end of the platform, watching the train as it swept in.

"Has he seen me?" was the question that tormented Geoffrey for some time afterwards. On the whole it seemed most likely that the Hindoo had not seen the man he had gone out to slay.

Though about to stop, the train was running pretty fast at the moment. The Englishman's face was on a higher level than his enemy's; and, above all, the Hindoo was merely looking out for a vacant place; he was not searching for any one; least of all for the man who, he believed, was lying stark and cold at the bottom of a tarn on Penrhyllbach. Trembling all over with a curious excitement, Geoffrey resumed his seat.

Till the train reached Paddington he never left the carriage. Feeling certain that the Hindoo was on board the train, he contented himself with glancing out at each station at which they stopped, to see whether Kuttapani had left the train. As Geoffrey's carriage happened to be in the front part of the train, there was no great difficulty or risk in doing this.

At length they reached the Paddington terminus. Before the carriages were brought to a standstill Geoffrey had leaped out and was talking to the driver of the fastest looking of the cab-horses in waiting.

"There's a Hindoo arriving by that train," he said. "If you follow him quietly till he gets home, I'll give you five shillings in addition to your fare."

"All right, sir."

Geoffrey went round to the other side of the hansom, so as to be hidden from the crowd who were pouring out of the carriages on to the platform, and waited. The minutes passed, and the cabman made no sign.

"Don't you see him? He *must* be there!" said Geoffrey, in an excited whisper.

The man took a last long survey of the platform, and then bent down to say—"Not arrived, sir. I'll take my dyin' oath no gentleman o' colour has alighted from that there train."

Geoffrey was intensely mortified. He had been favoured by fortune to an unusual degree, and he told himself he had simply thrown his chances away.

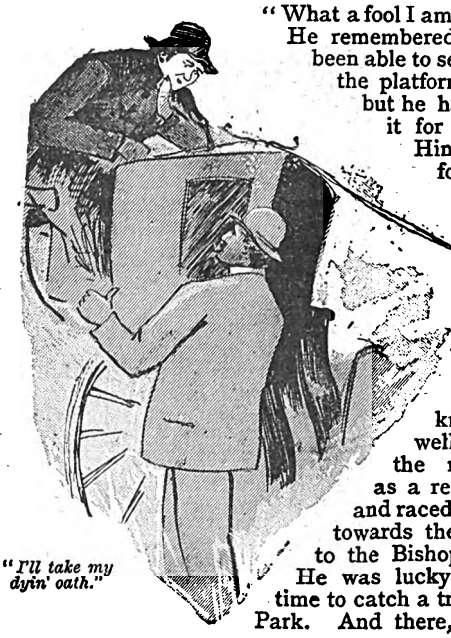
He handed the cabman five shillings, and walked moodily away.

The cab-driver called after him.

"Well?"

"Don't you think it's possible your friend may 'ave got out at Westbourne Park?"

"What a fool I am!" cried Geoffrey. He remembered that he had not been able to see all the way along the platform at that station; but he had somehow taken it for granted that the Hindoo would make for London itself.



"I'll take my dyin' oath."

The cabman smiled superior. "Jump inside, sir," said the man. "I'll take you there quicker than the train." But Geoffrey knew London too well for this. He gave the man half-a-crown as a reward for his hint, and raced along the platform towards the bridge that leads to the Bishop's Road platform. He was lucky, arriving just in time to catch a train to Westbourne Park. And there, to his great joy,

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One of the passengers was the Hindoo.

he came upon a trace of the Hindoo. The ticket-collector at the exit had noticed his colour. But the man could give him no further information beyond the fact that he did not think the Oriental had taken a cab.

"We pretty often has these Indian gen'l'men come this way," said the man; and that was all he could tell.

To search for a man who had had twenty minutes' start in the wilderness of North-West London seemed to Geoffrey a mad undertaking. Yet he did not quite give up hope. If Kuttapani used the Westbourne Park Station, and walked home from it, he must live within—say, two miles of it. He must use it occasionally. It would only be necessary to watch the station and the roads leading to it in order to come upon him. There was, to be sure, the risk that he might meet the Hindoo face to face. That would spoil his plans altogether; but it could not be helped. The risk must be run.

At any rate, there seemed nothing more to be done that night. It was hardly to be expected that Kuttapani would return to the railway-station just after a long and fatiguing journey.

Geoffrey was pacing aimlessly back and forwards near the exit from the down platform, when a train arrived from the City; and the passengers who had alighted swarmed out of the narrow passage past the ticket-collector.

He stood back to let them pass him.

Suddenly he gave a start. *One of the passengers was the Hindoo who had tried to poison him in the refreshment room just twelve months before!*

The young Englishman knew him at once, and drew back further into the shadow—for by this time it was dusk—lest the Indian should catch sight of him. But it never occurred to the Hindoo barrister to look behind him. He gave up his ticket, declined a cab, and walked off in a north-westerly direction. Geoffrey Dundas followed on the other side of the street, not twenty yards behind.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT THE ENEMY'S HEADQUARTERS.

FOR more than half an hour Geoffrey followed the Hindoo barrister through the streets. The thoroughfares they passed through were so empty of traffic, that he had some difficulty in keeping the Indian in sight without awakening his suspicions.

At length a district was reached which had evidently been at one time a respectable, not to say fashionable, suburb. The houses were detached or semi-detached, often surrounded by gardens of considerable size. But they all had a forlorn, neglected appearance, looking as if they knew that the days of their prosperity were gone for ever. Some were let at low rents, others stood empty, their blank windows and grass-grown walks giving a melancholy aspect to the neighbourhood.

Down a street of such houses the Indian turned, Geoffrey still following a short distance behind. He entered a garden gate, and Geoffrey, stopping short suddenly as if he had lost his way, went back some yards. He wished above all things to hide from the Hindoo the fact that he had been "shadowed." For the greater part of an hour Geoffrey loitered about, keeping an eye all the time on the gate through which the Hindoo had passed. Then he ventured to approach the house itself.

By this time it was as dark as it could be at that season of the year. There was no moon. She had not yet risen.

The gate through which the Hindoo had disappeared led to a front garden, small, but planted thick with overgrown shrubs. The house itself was large and semi-detached. The nearer one of the pair seemed to be empty, but no notice board was visible. Geoffrey tried the gate. It was padlocked, so the young man placed his hand on the top of it and vaulted lightly over.

The house the Hindoo had entered was now on Geoffrey's right, almost hidden by the thick shrubs of both gardens. Each house had a large bow window on the first floor as well as on the ground floor. The street door of each was at the side farthest from the adjoining tenement; so that a casual observer might easily have supposed that the building formed but one residence.

Geoffrey walked across the grass-plot which lay between him and the house, and soon assured himself that no one was living in it, not even a caretaker. A large board, which bore an inscription to the effect that "This Desirable Family Residence" was to be let or sold, lay on its back inside the neglected laurel hedge. The wind had blown it down, and no one, apparently, had thought it worth while to stick it up again.

Geoffrey now passed through a screen of lattice-work to the back part of the house. Dark as it was, he could see that an out-building of some kind had been erected against the back wall. It was a large greenhouse. The builder had, from motives of economy, built one large square room, and then divided it in two by a partition, making one half the conservatory for one of the two houses, while the other half served the same purpose for the other dwelling.

Each house had a basement flood, so that in each the ground floor was raised some feet above the level of the soil. In the empty house—that is, the one Geoffrey was now exploring—a French window opened out of one of the ground floor rooms into

Vaulted lightly over.

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the conservatory, with a short flight of steps leading down from the floor of the house to the floor of the conservatory.

On the side of the greenhouse, next to the adjoining house—that is, the one the Hindoo had entered—the space was covered with shelves for flower pots, mostly empty. The roof and a great part of the partition-wall were covered with a creeping plant which had spread over half the wall-space the conservatory afforded.

All this Geoffrey saw at a glance as he stood outside the greenhouse, and looked through the lower part of the glass door which led from it to the garden.

It occurred to him that perhaps he might survey the premises more effectually if he could find his way into the empty house; and it struck him that he might gain an entrance by the French window leading from the conservatory. To enter the conservatory was easy, since a pane in the glass door was broken and nothing more had to be done than to put one's hand through the hole and turn the key.

Passing quietly through the conservatory to the end nearest the house, where a miniature fountain rusted in slimy neglect, Geoffrey mounted the steps which led to the French window and tried it. It was securely fastened.

A low cry all but burst from his lips.

He was in the act of turning to come away, when the sound of voices fell on his ear with startling distinctness. It was as if some one were talking at his elbow. He wheeled rapidly round, listening eagerly.

Soon he understood where the sound came from. The partition-wall between the two conservatories was merely of wood. A plank had fallen out; and the creeper which clothed the shabby wall covered the deficiency. There was, as it were, a natural communication between this deserted greenhouse and the conservatory belonging to the adjoining house.

With cautious steps Geoffrey moved nearer to the partition. The voices sounded loud and clear, but he could only understand a word here and there. He could make out that the language spoken was Hindustani; for at one time he had thought of going out to practise in Calcutta, and had mastered a little Hindustani as a preliminary step. But as for following the conversation, that was impossible.

Very gently—for he well knew that a creaking board might mean discovery, and that discovery might mean instant death—he mounted the shelves in front of him, till his head was on a level with the hole in the wall. Then, gently parting the foliage with his fingers, he looked through.

A low cry all but burst from his lips, so great was his astonishment.

A floor had been laid down in the greenhouse, on a level with that of the adjoining room in the house itself, so that the two together formed one large irregularly shaped apartment. The walls of this oddly formed room were hung with coloured silk draperies, which were gently stirred by the breeze admitted through the windows of the conservatory. The place was kept at a tropical temperature—Geoffrey could feel the stream of heated air on his face—and the air was not merely warm, but laden with the perfumes of some strange gum which was being burnt.

Plants, bearing large bright blossoms, and palm leaves lined the walls. The floor was covered with Indian mats and rugs. Part of it was raised, as if it were meant to serve for a couch. Silk cushions were strewn about on this dais; and on the lower floor were some bamboo tables. Such ornaments as could be seen were of brass, silver, or ivory. In a word the apartment looked as if it had been carried by some genie from an Indian palace, and transported to that grimy London suburb.

Geoffrey was more than surprised—he was astounded.

Though he heard voices plainly enough, he could see no one. The speakers (he judged from the sound of their voices) were seated close to the wall behind which he was standing, and therefore out of sight. But he could form a very good guess as to who they were. The hereditary priests of the Temple at Churruckpore—that undying body whose ancestors founded and consecrated the temple in far-off ages, and whose vengeance seemed insatiable—they alone could be the masters of this house. It was plain that they had made this house their headquarters, the centre from which they could carry out their schemes of revenge.

Nothing more was to be learned in the meantime. Geoffrey returned by the way he had come, and made his way to the street by vaulting a second time over the padlocked gate.

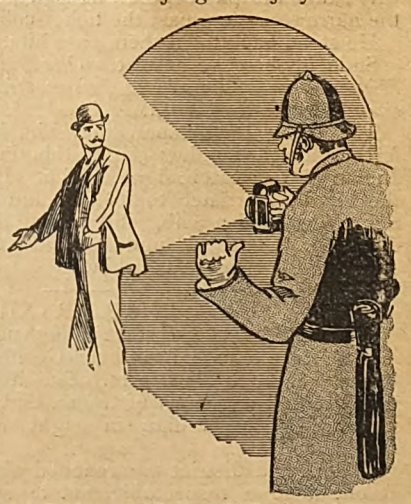
As he did so a burly policeman, passing along the opposite side of the road, called after him in pompous tones of authority, and wanted to know what he had been doing. The man was—or pretended to be—highly suspicious of Geoffrey's conduct; but a shilling judiciously introduced went a long way to quiet the good man's scruples, and he finally touched his helmet civilly, and walked away.

Geoffrey looked after him a moment or two as he marched solemnly, with rhythmic swing of his body and clank of boots, down the echoing street. The man seemed a perfect representative of British law and British justice—grave, honest, inflexible; but, oh, how slow, how stupid, when confronted with motives or methods foreign to the sphere of his experience!

What sort of reception, Geoffrey wondered, would he meet with if he went to any police-station in London, related his experience, and claimed the protection of the law? Why, they would laugh at him, and send him about his business—set him down as crazy. Unless a fact is patent to the meanest intelligence, proved up to the hilt, it does not exist for the police authorities any more than for a judge and jury.

What—Geoffrey asked himself—what complaint could he make? That an attempt had been made to poison him? The police would say it was pure imagination. That the Hindoos had visited the General with murderous intent? Mere unfounded suspicions! That Kuttapani had tried to kill him, and had all but succeeded?

Ah! That is another matter, the police inspector would say. Find Kuttapani, as you call him, and we will have something to say to him. Or, we will



Highly suspicious of Geoffrey's conduct.

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even try to find him for you. But as to these respectable householders, what is there to connect them with Kuttapani's attempt?

Indeed there was nothing. There was not a tittle of direct evidence against any one of the gang except Kuttapani. None. Absolutely none. And, even in his case, would not a jury ask what the motive for the alleged attempt at murder could be, and laugh at the idea of a long-standing vendetta actuating a few mild Hindoos?

Would they not say that it was very strange that Geoffrey had not made any complaint at a police-station in Wales? The chances were that they would finally remember that they "had only the prosecutor's word for it," and give the accused the benefit of the doubt.

No. Geoffrey was convinced that the law, and her ministers—the police, could do nothing to help him. And, in any case, he did not seek to revenge himself against Kuttapani. It would do him small good, and afford him no satisfaction, if that ignorant, tiger-like creature were to wear out his days in penal servitude.

No. He wanted to protect the General and Leila from Kuttapani's masters; and he was convinced that in order to do this he must adopt the methods of his enemies, and meet cunning with cunning. Merely to baffle one attempt after another would not do. Sooner or later an attempt would succeed, and another murder would be done.

But if the Hindoos were met and baffled on their own ground, if they found that their schemes were unravelled, and their most sudden attacks anticipated, they might be compelled to abandon their infernal schemes of vengeance.

Geoffrey still felt confident that when he allowed the Hindoos to suppose him dead, and began to play the spy upon them, he was pursuing the right path. But he felt utterly uncertain as to what his next step should be. To have found the right path was a great point. But, alas! the way was so dark that it was impossible to see a yard in advance. He felt like a blind man, groping his way through the streets of a strange city.

Passed from room to room.

Before leaving the street Geoffrey ascertained that the house the Hindoo barrister had entered was called Lancaster Villa, while the one he had tried to explore was named Chester Villa. Having fixed these names and the name of the street—Hartwell Road—in his memory, he went to an hotel, and after a hearty supper in place of dinner he went to bed.

Next morning Geoffrey's first care was to find lodgings in a quiet street not far from the road in which the Hindoos had fixed their abode. He then telegraphed to his friend Linton, asking him to call upon him at his new quarters that evening.

In the afternoon, after making necessary purchases, he called at the local house-agents and ascertained that the house next to the one occupied by the Hindoos was to let. Geoffrey explained that he did not wish to become a tenant, but that he was willing to pay a small sum for the use of the empty greenhouse.

This was arranged, and Geoffrey thus acquired the right of entering the greenhouse attached to Chester Villa at any time he pleased. The agent's clerk also promised, for a small consideration, to give him timely notice of any one proposing to take the house—an event which was far from likely—so that he might secure it if need be.

Linton turned up at the appointed hour, and listened with the keenest interest, while his friend told what had happened during the last few days. But when Geoffrey told him of his determination to conceal his existence from every one for the next twelve months, Linton felt inclined to smile.

"Seems an absurd sort of thing to do, doesn't it?" said Geoffrey quietly, answering his friend's look.

"Well, yes. I confess it seems so to me."

"Linton, it is the only thing to do. Next year, as sure as you live, these human bloodhounds will attack the General. I believe they would have done it last week if he had not got out of their way. But now that they suppose me to be dead I shall be free from their observation. I will keep a watch on them, and I hope not only to save the General, but to catch them in the act, and choke out this accursed conspiracy."

Linton shook his head.

"I hardly think you were cut out for an amateur detective, my dear fellow," he said. "And at any rate, I see nothing to prevent your living in the Temple as usual."

"No, Linton. You forget that the first attempt on my life was made in the restaurant belonging to the Law Courts, and I more than suspect that it was made by a Hindoo who has got called to the bar. If I went to the Temple my enemies would hear of it next day. But I don't mind shamming dead for a time. My practice won't suffer, seeing that I have none to speak of. My friends may suppose that I have gone on a yachting expedition, or anything they choose.

"What I want you to do is to go to my chambers now and then, and bring me my letters, making the best excuse you can to my clerk. He can tell any one who asks for me that I am out of town. Very likely I shall take a run on the Continent, for I am convinced that those queer murderers will lie by for another twelvemonth. I hardly expect to find them taking any active steps till next spring."

"And Sir Arthur?"

"I will write to him and say that I shall be invisible for the next twelve months. Of course, he can write to me if he likes. And that reminds me—would you mind addressing a few envelopes to the General? You know the address—Seacombe Towers, near Torwyn, South Devon."

"With pleasure. But why all this precaution?"

"Suppose that next year one of Sir Arthur's servants were to mention in Kuttapani's hearing that I had been writing to his master during the year?"

"Well you can't be too careful," returned Linton; and after smoking several pipes, and promising once more to carry out all the instructions given to him to the letter, the young barrister took his leave.

Geoffrey was now fully prepared to begin his watching campaign. But it is not given to man to foresee the future, even for a day. No sooner had he resigned himself to the distasteful life of seclusion and espionage, than an event happened which upset all his calculations.

After dark on the following evening he went to make a reconnaissance at Lancaster Villa. From the street no light was visible. He went into the conservatory of the adjoining house as he had done before, but could hear no sound.

Unwilling to run the risk of being seen by the Hindoos, as he probably would be if he were to come in the morning, yet resolved to examine the house by daylight, Geoffrey spent the short summer night in the conservatory.

As soon as it was light he climbed up to the place where the board was missing from the partition-wall, and looked through the aperture.

The flowers and creepers were there; for the rest—bare boards! Silken hangings, rugs, furniture, luxurious appointments, had vanished like a dream! It almost seemed as if the Hindoos had been made aware by some enchantment that their lurking-place had been discovered, and had stolen silently away in the night.

Geoffrey went into the garden, made his way without much difficulty into the garden of Lancaster Villa, and finally succeeded in entering the house itself.

There was something eerie in the very echo of the young man's footsteps as he passed with stealthy step from room to room in the dim, ghostly morning light, thinking that behind every door there might be an enemy waiting him, with murder in his heart. But he found no one. From cellar to garret the house was empty and bare.

(To be continued.)

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CARMELITA'S SPRINGTIME

THE rain came down so suddenly that Lackland had to jump to it to reach the porch of the nearest house. When he got there, he took his position near the wall, that the big drops falling so heavily on the dusty street might not reach his immaculate flannel trousers as mud.

Not that Lackland was strongly averse to a wetting. He had often been drenched to the skin when sailing his boat, and always took it with the most matter-of-fact composure. But he did object to a draggled look or to getting just enough moistened to make the necessity of a change doubtful, despite a certain unpleasant feeling from clinging raiment. That was discomfort bought by no pleasure void of all compensation.

Showers in Nice are often of this unheralded kind. But violent effusions, whether of the heart or sky, spend themselves quickly. The rain subsided after some moments. Lackland came forward, and, leaning against the slender column bereft of paint, but brown with years, he put his head out to reconnoitre, raising it slightly to see if he might venture forth with the rest of himself.

Something that was not a raindrop fell upon his straw hat. He saw a snowy gardenia tumble into the mud; and, alas! lose its virginal whiteness. Evidently it had come from the top of the porch, for not even in Flora's capital does a spring sky rain flowers.

He twisted his head round and looked up. As he did so, a second blossom smote him softly on the cheek. He caught it as it fell, and also caught a glimpse of a hand quickly drawn back—not so quickly but that he got an impression of its brown, tapering slimness.

He picked his way out into the street a few paces, holding the gardenia in his hand, and then turned, with equal deliberation, to scan the top of the portico. It was overrun with flowers, which tumbled in a wave of bloom over the worm-eaten ledge. Seen through this glowing mass was a young girl, not more than sixteen. Her small, white teeth showed through lips faintly smiling, while her long eyes, narrowed with twinkling merriment, looked indolently down upon him. Lackland smiled in frank good-fellowship, and held up the gardenia.

"Did you drop this?" he asked gaily.

The girl, leaning her vivid face on her crossed hands, said not a word, but continued to regard him with easy amusement. He was there, and it was mildly entertaining to see what he would do.

"Well, I shall keep it," he said, tucking it into the lapel of his coat.

"I threw it away," said the girl, with mild disdain.

"You threw it at me! I captured it, and so I have a right to it," he retorted.

He raised the lapel of his coat, and kissed the flower. After this extravagance he raised his eyes again to the girl.

"The rain has stopped," she said mockingly.

"Yes, I believe it has. I wish it would begin again. Then I would have to wait for it to blow over once more," he returned coolly.

"But it has stopped," she repeated insistently.

"And I am going, if that is what you mean. You are not very hospitable to a poor, wet stranger. Good-bye!"

He did not look such a distressful object as he gracefully raised his hat and bowed, a good-natured look in his dark-blue eyes and a smile on his full lips. Her eyes followed the well-built figure of the young fellow as he retreated, her lips still parted in a half smile. As Lackland turned down a side street he looked back. She did not change her position, nor move when he again raised his hat.

The next morning, after his late breakfast, Lackland lit a cigar and strolled through the public gardens. As he neared the sea he saw a graceful figure in front of him; *petite*, but with a light elastic carriage, and a manner of holding the head which recalled the maiden of the gardenia. He quickened his steps till he overtook her. It was she.

"Good morning," he said blithely. "You see I have your flower still." He indicated a slightly drooping gardenia which adorned his button-hole.

"Your flower," she said at once, without any sign of surprise. "I threw it away."

"So you did," he replied. "But it is withered. I should like a fresh one. Throw one of those away. Won't you?"

She glanced down, with great demureness, at a bunch of them tucked in the bosom of her gown. Her small daintiness was well set off by the simple white muslin dress. Lackland thought she looked as fragrant and as cool as one of her gardenias. She raised her head and, with her narrowed eyes, glanced at him nonchalantly.

"I want them all. You can get plenty of them. I threw that one at your hat. I didn't know what was under it," she explained with great dignity.

"Well, my hat is just the same target with me under it that it would be with anything else. And I should like one of those you have got. Throw one away," he pleaded.

"Oh, no! I want them all." The smile of quiet mischievousness played on her lips again.

He could not induce her to give the flower to him. But with some tact he managed to prolong the conversation, and discovered in the course of their talk that she sometimes walked on the sea-front after tea.

That evening was a warm one, and Lackland met the little muslin-gowned damsel serenely taking the soft air on the parade as if in pursuance of this occasional habit. After this they chanced to meet frequently, and it got to be a very natural thing for them to walk together. The dainty prettiness of the girl, her demure piquancy, the perfect confidence in herself, joined to a child-like *naiveté*, aroused his easy-going interest. He loved to cross swords with Carmelita.

They got to be quite good friends in those soft spring days beneath the pure azure of the sky. There was never any boldness in her assurance, and a touch of subtle dignity which often flavoured her sprightliness was never without its charm to Lackland.

It chanced that one evening, full of the chastened tenderness of a spring day waning into dusk, they had paused near the cathedral steps on their return from a stroll through the market-place. He took her hand on some playful pretext, and held it in his own bronzed palm. Carmelita allowed it to rest there for a moment, gently, and then withdrew it. But not before a very stiff old lady, who was bowled swiftly by in an open carriage, had taken in the picture.

Two days later Mrs. Lackland declared that if she stayed any longer in Nice she could only hope to have her ashes reach England; and that as she did not certainly incline to an ante-mortem cremation, they would go to Paris, and sail a little earlier than they had planned for America. The old lady watched her son sharply over her fan as he assented, non-committally, to the proposition.

This was a month since the day when he had fled to sanctuary in a certain portico, and had been pelted with the gardenia.

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That evening he again walked with Carmelita by the sea. He proposed after a time that they should sit down. The dusk was stealing over the water and down upon the trees along the roads. The waves broke on the beach below them, with an indolent splash.

"Carmelita," he said, slowly, and placing his hand upon her waist, "I am glad you threw that gardenia at me."

She made some faint movement of protest as his fingers clasped her waist, but suffered it. At his remark she retorted, with a contented smile: "I threw it at your hat. I didn't know who was there." There was a world of girlish coquetry in her bright eyes as they rested on him.

"We have had such pleasant times that we might not have had but for that flower. I shall remember them when I go away. Shall you think of me when I am gone, Carmelita?"

The girl raised herself and slowly pushed away his arm.

"Are you going away?" she asked, with a subtle change in her manner.

"Why, of course. It is not everyone who can live in this delighful country always, as you do," he replied in his comfortable tones.

"When are you going?"

"Saturday."

"How long have you known this?"

"Since this morning," There was a slight pause. He met the look from beneath her arched eyebrows negatively.

"Do you want to go?" The question was almost imperious, and the girl covered him with her bright eyes, round enough now.

"Well, I don't know that I want to, but I don't object. I knew it would have to be pretty soon. It is my mother's move. She says it is so hot here."

The girl turned her face sharply away and fixed her gaze on the sea. The soft wind blew the hair about her smooth forehead and stirred it gently on her slender neck.

"Aren't you sorry I am going away, Carmelita?" he said cajolingly, as he would to a child.

"Are you sorry to go?" She turned her head and arched her eyebrows as she looked at him.

"Why, yes," he replied slowly. "I like being here well enough; I like any place where I can sun myself."

She turned towards the sea again for a moment, as if measuring the force of a rival. For a few moments she seemed lost in deep reverie. Then she got to her feet. "I want to go home," she said. "I would rather go alone. Good-bye."

"It isn't a real good-bye, you know," said Lackland, more briskly. "I am going to Monte Carlo to-morrow, but shall come back on Friday. I shall see you again then, Carmelita. Won't I?"

"Good-bye," she repeated, and left him standing, with a touch of melancholy on him that he had not bargained for. She had looked so slight, so childlike, sitting there, with the sea air lightly moving her hair. He watched the little white figure disappear in the shadows. He pulled himself together and walked off musingly. She was such a child. Half his amusement in her was seeing her grow.

When he came back on Friday, Mrs. Lackland had more than he expected for him to do, and was fretful with her health and touchily exacting in her demands. The time came to go, and he had not been able to see Carmelita as he had promised.

"I can write to her and tell her," he thought, and shrugged his shoulders.

It was eight years before Lackland was in Nice again. He had passed two years in England with his mother and he did not write to Carmelita all that time. He did not know what to say, and he hated writing letters. It had been diverting to have the little girl to talk with and to study the light emotions and thoughts that swayed her. The dark eyes, the small white teeth and play of the lips had coloured her conversation. But he couldn't imagine how or what she would write. Probably her letters would be childlike; possibly, dull.

Sometimes when he recalled the firm little figure sitting by the sea, and the wind so lightly stirring the dark hair, in what had really been their parting interview, he wondered what impression that month of spring had made upon Carmelita. He had never known quite how she took things, and the unexpected sentiments she sometimes expressed had been part of her charm for him. He had always thought that it was a very pleasant springtime. He had thought of it several times, generally with a half-smile on his lips.

Nice was unchanged in all that time, and one day as he was passing through St. George Street, he stopped and looked up at the flowers, which still fell rankly over the ledge of the portico.

"Eight years ago," he mused as he leaned for a moment against the slender pillar, as if he could conjure back the rest of the scene, and a slender hand would throw a gardenia at him again. But, no! the house seemed very quiet, and he saw no young slim figure looking down.

He sighed impatiently. He must ask someone about Carmelita Godardo. She must have grown out of her slim girlishness. Perhaps she was living in one of these little houses, a demure young matron, with a young Carmelita who called her "mother." Yes, he must inquire about her.

He turned on his heel, with another sigh, half-weary, and strolled listlessly up the street. As he walked on he saw a line of children trooping along towards him, in pairs. He drew to the side to let them pass. Then he saw a slender figure in black, with linen bands about her face, at the end of the procession, shepherding it. As the nun passed, with downcast eyes, he saw the clear, olive tint, and the quiet, sweet expression of her face.

How little she was changed, and yet, how much! This was a woman with a soul, and Carmelita was a child, an artless girl, and he had not thought of her soul. He gave another quick sigh as he reflected on how he had lived those eight years. How swiftly he had ruled them off, and what had he achieved!

The next day he called at the convent. He would like to see her, to hear her voice again, with the soft sweet accent. The sister-porter took his message and name. After some moment's withdrawal she returned, and said that Sister Philomena would rather he would see the Superior, as her duties kept her engaged.

When Lackland turned to go out of the hard, oppressive bareness of the convent parlour he felt older than he was. There was a touch of loneliness on him, as if he had parted with some portion of his being to which he had not before adverted. He lounged down to the promenade, his hands in his pockets, straining his coat tightly about him. A small yacht lay a few hundred yards out in the motionless sea. At a sign of his hand a small boat put off with a thin weather-beaten man in the stern. He looked up at Lackland as he got in, who nodded without speaking.

"Well, she's ready," said the man, "and I think you'll find her a handy little craft. Only she ain't got no name. What do you intend to call her? I'll paint that on her and she's done, and you can take her out whenever you like."

Lackland raised his head and looked out at sea a moment. Then he said slowly: "*Sister Philomena.*" That night the name in slim black letters was drying on the stern of the little yacht as she tossed lightly on the water, as pure and white as a gardenia.

For a week Lackland almost lived upon the sea. He would take the *Sister Philomena* out beyond all sight of land, and then cruise about according to the wind. This tired young man loved the sea with an endurance of affection greater than aught else could command him.

Then he received a note from the Bishop on the subject of his boat's name: "I am sure that when I tell you that giving the name of one of the good nuns at the Convent to your pleasure-boat is creating talk among people, and that Catholics feel somewhat indignant at it as a sort of scandal; while the Sister Philomena herself would deprecate such a use of the name by which she has consecrated herself to God, you will feel it right to find some other name that will not be open to such objections."

A day or two after this the *Sister Philomena* disappeared on the horizon and never touched shore again.

What that month had been to Carmelita Godardo neither he nor others ever knew.

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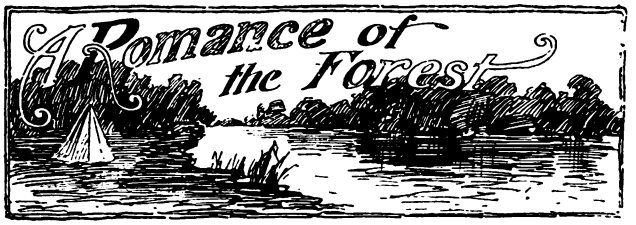

WE landed at a picturesque little spot up the Thames well above Windsor, just as the sun went down, and rigged up our tent for the night. After supper we lay on our backs round the fire, for the nights were chilly, and smoked. Neither Fred Palmer nor I did much anecdoting, but we made an excellent audience to Arnold Vokes, and he, much travelled man that he was, had a fresh yarn ready whenever we were in a mood for listening. This night he was in particularly good form, and crossing his legs, with his head propped up on the cushioned stern seat of the *Water-Witch* which we had brought ashore, he began, just as if he were reading the words on the star-studded heavens :—

"The eight o'clock train on the Duluth, South Shore, and Atlantic Railway takes you away from the beautiful town of Marquette on Lake Superior, climbs slowly up to the iron hills, passes through Negaunee, Ishpeming, Michigamme, rival cities of the 'Northern Peninsular,' and, bowling along at twenty miles an hour, brings you at noon to Sidnaw, whence a short branch line extends to Ontonagon; and if you have to change carriages, may Providence help you in your sorry plight, for you must wait four hours in a dreary place.

"The main feature of Sidnaw is silence—the awful silence of the great surrounding forest; but it is broken at intervals by a dog fight or an explosion of invectives from the saloon district, where red-shirted, slouch-hatted woodsmen from the lumber camps play cards, just visible within the darkened doorways.

"I had changed carriages at Sidnaw once, and I was on my way thither again, depressed and low-spirited at the prospect before me, when, all suddenly, I was invited to attend a wedding while I waited, and once more the world looked rosy. The bride-elect occupied the seat behind me in the car. I had not noticed her particularly until she bent forward, and, touching me on the arm, asked if I could inform her at what time our train was due in Sidnaw.

"Then I turned, and beheld a lady of some forty summers, wearing a flowery gown of white and green, with black gloves, and having beside her one of those big black travelling bags that circulate so freely in the West.

"The ready politeness with which I answered her question encouraged her to ask more, and eventually I found it necessary to sit sideways that I might more conveniently keep up my end of the conversation, which shifted from one topic to another with wonderful rapidity, and finally merged into a romance of which she was the heroine, and to the completion of which I was cordially asked to lend my presence.

"'It's eighteen years,' she said, 'since this Mr. Prince left Kaukauny and came up here into the lumber camps. Him and me was young folks then, and kep' company together a spell; but when he asked me to marry him, I said "No; I wouldn't marry nobody." Then he went away, and I never heard of him till three years ago he wrote, and said somebody'd told him I was single, and he was waitin' for me. Wouldn't never marry any other woman, he said, nohow, and he hoped I'd take him into consideration again.

"'That letter made me feel kind o' queer—to think he'd been so faithful all these years. I never believed he set so much store by me as all that. I had a good mind to write him a favourable letter right then and there; but when it came to the point, I couldn't make up my mind to do it, so I just wrote him I wanted a year more to think about it.

"'Well, I never heard a word from him no more than if he was dead till the year was up; and then he wrote again, and said he was still waitin'.

"'I put him off till Christmas, then till spring—and so it's been a-goin' up to two weeks ago, when it come over me all at once that I wasn't treatin' the man right. He'd been dreadful long-sufferin' and patient, and deserved his reward, and I set down and wrote him I'd have him.

"'He wanted to come down to Kaukauny after me, but I wouldn't have it. I told him to save his money, and I'd come up. So we fixed it that way, and to-day the weddin' comes off, and I want you to be there. Mr. Prince's got a minister from Ontonagon, and he's invited a few of his friends to witness the ceremony, and I guess it'll be a pleasant, sociable little gatherin'. Anyhow, it'll be better than waitin' for the train with nothing to do.'

"I agreed with the lady, and eagerly accepted her invitation. I had a curiosity to behold this faithful old lover who had waited eighteen years—waited with infinite patience until the girl he loved had lost all of the attractions of youth.

"Of the half-dozen passengers in the carriage we were the only persons to alight when the train reached Sidnaw. I helped my companion with her big valise, and she, carrying a large strawboard box and a parcel tied in a newspaper, followed me.

"Two or three woodsmen, standing about the station, gazed idly at us as we stood, undetermined which way to go. And one lean, sandy-whiskered man, who had been sitting on the platform at the further end, jabbing his knife into the boards, slowly rose and advanced. She was eyeing him.

"'Is this Miss Birtchet?' he asked, with a sheepish smile.

"'That's my name,' she answered—'Artemisia Birtchet; and I must say, Abe Prince, that you seem dreadful glad to see me.'

"He held out his hand; but she couldn't take it on account of the parcels, and he scratched his head with it.

"'This ain't Wednesday,' he suggested, after an interval of thought.

"'I know it ain't,' she answered; 'and it ain't Tuesday or Monday; but it's Thursday, August 13th, and I was to come on the 13th, if I remember rightly, and I think I do.'

"He shifted his gaze to me, and he looked at her again.

"'By gosh!' he said, in a hollow voice, 'I've lost my reckonin', somehow; I thought the 13th was a Wednesday, and I had that minister here yesterday.'

"'Well, where is he now?' asked Miss Birtchet quickly.

"'He went back. I kinder thought you might have changed your mind again, and——' he struck himself on the leg. 'I don't see how in thunder I got off on that date. Are you sure *you* ain't made no mistake, Artemisia?'

"'I'm sure I *have* made a mistake,' answered Miss Birtchet, with withering sarcasm. 'I've made the mistake of comin' 'way up here in the woods to marry a pesky fool; but, thank my stars, I ain't done it. If you'll be so kind and obligin' as to hold that bag a minit longer,' she continued, turning to me, 'I'll just step in here and buy a ticket for Kaukauny.'

The down train was approaching, and when Miss Birtchet appeared with her ticket I followed her into the carriage.

"'Aren't you a little hasty?' I asked.

"'Little nothin'!' she snapped; and I saw that it would be of no use to argue with her. I left the valise and bade her good-bye.

"When the train was gone I went over to the hotel to get my dinner. Mr. Prince was sitting on the verandah, with his legs crossed. His aspect was grave.

"'That was rather a bad mistake of yours,' I ventured to remark.

"'It's just as well,' he answered. 'I knew 'twas just as well the minit I set eyes on her.'"

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Now the human stomach—but hold on. Let's have our story rightly put together; the facts first, the comment afterwards.

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"After eating I had great weight, and a sense of fulness at the chest and around the waist; and, however light the meal, all my food turned heavy as lead. In spite of the most scrupulous care as to diet I continued to suffer in this manner; and as time passed I became very weak and nervous. I consulted doctors from time to time, who gave me medicines, but I obtained no real benefit from anything I took.

"Now better and again worse, yet never well, I continued until January of this year (1894), when I was persuaded by my brother to try a medicine which he said had done so much for him. I allude to Mother Seigel's Syrup. I had, before this, been advised by many friends to try this famous preparation, but declined because I had no faith in advertised medicines.

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 332.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING MAY 11, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

A Remarkable Episode

WHY shouldn't I look back on that night long ago? There are some bits of memory that gladden the waste of years; one can't help dreaming of them now and then in a foolish, haphazard sort of way. No matter what that night led to (for it was then we met her), I cannot hold it accountable for evil, it was just a compound of delights, forming one delicious whole.

We were young then, and I think I can say without egotism that both of us had excellent dispositions—frank, ardent, devoted.

That row on the river by moonlight, and the dance afterwards! There was a waltz of Strauss so divinely rendered that the memory of it electrifies the subtle machinery of these legs that now, alas! dance no more. I whistle it bar for bar; I shut my eyes, and hold again in a light embrace my fair young sylph in blue. Her golden hair escapes from its silken mesh, floats down upon her white shoulders, her little ungloved, gem-covered hands softly rest in mine, and round and round we whirl to the measure of that waltz.

Ah, me! The adolescence of passion for poor Phil began also upon that night, and it is with that we have to do. I saw him, dimly of course, and with that reflected light that glances from one's own happiness sometimes to that of another near and dear to him—I saw him walking through the corridors, lingering in some alcove, or appearing and disappearing through the arches of the masonry upon the balcony, always with the one Juno-like figure, tall and pliant, yet free, rich, mature.

Even with the fascination of whatever fair one shared the moment with me, I could not help noticing the seductive beauty of Phil's partner, and acknowledged to myself she surpassed any of the beauties there.

Not like my fragile blossom, the nymph in blue, or the pale, delicate, lily-like creature in white that seemed my second fancy, these were in the first bloom of youth, and naturally lacked many of the charms that would come to them after a succession of seasons in society.

The graceful ease of her manner, the wonderful skill in imparting this ease to those brought in to the magnetism of her presence, indicated that the lady who hung upon Phil's arm, and whom he introduced to me as Miss Diana Davenport, was an acknowledged queen in society.

It was plain to be seen that Phil was completely subjugated, enthralled. There was a subdued rapture in his voice, a latent passion in his eye, an abstracted tenderness in his manner, that told me at once it was a serious case with Phil.

Thus began this important era in the life of my friend, and before a fortnight it had reached a grand climacterie, a state of subdued frenzy, which rendered everything subservient to it.

He walked with her, rode with her; the pleasant and capacious house owned by her widowed mother in the suburbs became haunted by his presence. Hosts of people went there and enjoyed the genial hospitality graciously dispensed, but it began to be acknowledged that Phil was the favourite visitor. It was noticeable that Miss Davenport took the trouble to invent excuses to enjoy Phil's society and that was a rare, in fact, an unknown thing in the catholic proclivities of the heiress.

Phil began to wear that toned down, domestic mien that augured ill for our bachelor aspirations. He cut off the ends of his moustache, and religiously shaved himself every day, while his toilet occupied twice as long. He took an interest in investments, and watched the market as behoved a family man.

Smoking one night in my room, with my feet raised to a comfortable altitude on the window-sill, pondering upon many things, and last of how I should look as best man at Phil's wedding, I was suddenly startled by the entrance of Phil himself.

He burst into the room, flung his hat in one corner, his cane in another, and sinking into a chair, covered his face with his hands and gave vent to a groan of half-suppressed agony.

"Why, Phil," I said, hastening over to him, "are you hurt? Has any accident occurred?"

I looked at him from head to foot, half expecting to see the blood flow from a recent wound.

"There are no limbs broken, Hal," he said looking up with a face so distorted and pale I scarcely knew it for his own:

Miss Diana Davenport.

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To enjoy Phil's society.

"only the heart. Hal, I have got my death blow. Diana belongs to another!"

"Married!" I gasped.

"Just the same. She's been engaged to a colonel in the army for two years. They are to be married this autumn."

"Why, what a monstrous——" But Phil put his hand on my arm.

"Don't, Hal," he said, pleadingly. "I can't bear it; besides I think she scarcely knew the danger we were in till it was too late. I believe she loves me, Hal, as I love her; as I shall always love her to the last moment of my life. It is more than I can bear, old fellow."

"Can nothing be done?" I asked.

"Nothing," he answered, with an accent of despair. "Only let us get away from here as soon as possible; let us hasten our old plans for travel. I beg of you, Hal, put as many miles between me and her as you can."

A fortnight afterwards we were upon the ocean. I had, after all, reached my old desire to be out of sight and sensation of land, and watch with Phil the sun rising upon a boundless, trackless waste of water. But half the delight of it was gone. I was defrauded of the symmetry and fulness of a communion with Phil because of his imbecile idolatry for a woman I could not admire.

I could have forgiven a chit of a girl, like my nymph in blue or the little lily in white; I might have reconciled myself to the thought that it was a mistake of impulse and feeling; but I could not be brought to believe that a beautiful veteran, with campaigns of stratagems and spoils for her experience, could be unconsciously guilty of murdering the heart and soul of a being so devoted to her.

I accused her in my heart as a cold-blooded, detestable coquette, who revelled in this prey as a gourmand delights in his *pâté de foie gras*, unmindful of the agony of which it is composed.

We went direct with a party of hunters and explorers to the heart of Africa; but, lost amidst this wilderness of nature, forcing our way step by step through dense forests of underwood, camping upon verdant prairies, or galloping over the desert, with its burned-brown grass and desolate monotony, ever and always there rested upon Phil's brow the melancholy mien of one absorbed by a bitter memory.

One night we sat outside the tents, Phil and I, and smoked long and contemplatively. It was oppressively hot, and, as the hours wore away, the southern constellations came on in such force that the vast extent of country was illumined as far as the horizon, and Phil, picking up an old newspaper dropped by one of our companions, declared he could read it word for word.

He held it to his eyes for a moment, then dropped it, and started to his feet, looking about him as if bewildered.

"What is it, Phil?" I cried.

He sank back upon the smooth bit of alkali that served him for a seat, picked up the newspaper again and read, in a trembling voice, that Colonel John Talbot had been killed in the hunting field by a fall from his horse.

"That's rather unlucky for Talbot," I remarked; "but I can't really see how it affects us."

"Colonel Talbot," repeated Phil in an impressive whisper, "is the man whom Diana was engaged to."

"A widow," I murmured.

Phil looked at the date of the newspaper and found it had been printed only a fortnight after we left England.

He dashed his hand to his forehead; a malediction escaped his lips.

"I might, after all, have been best man," I remarked.

Nothing now would do but to take up the thread of life for Phil where it was so rudely snapped asunder.

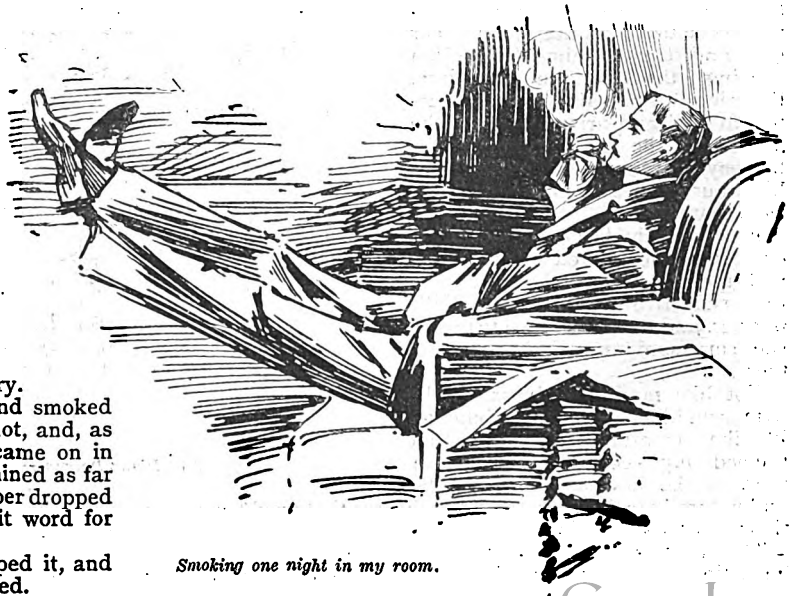
"All these months of travel, Hal," he said, with the peculiar selfishness of a lover, "have been merely existence for me, not life. Let me go back, my friend, to the air that is shared by Diana."

This was all very well, and would have been extremely apposite had we been upon any common or even distinguished line of travel. We might have put ourselves upon the lady's trail in the twinkling of an eye, taken a night train, embarked in a steamer, or even joined a caravan upon the desert. But our companions had not started with any such clog as an unsatisfied passion.

To go to them and relate this pathetic story of Phil's, and the vivid importance it was to him to breathe another air, would only be to subject ourselves to ridicule and defeat. They would shrug their shoulders with disdain, and stolidly refuse to understand; perhaps they would tell us that, in the following week, there would be a hunt for hippopotami from eight to ten feet long, and that, although there were plenty of fish in the sea and lovely women at home, all ready for the snare of the fowler, pachyderms of this description were wary in the extreme, and desperate when brought to bay; therefore the hunt and subsequent capture held the peculiar and irresistible charms of danger and rarity.

Phil was obliged to submit to destiny. Life was dearer to him than it had been of late, and he was not prepared to strike off into the wilderness alone. I noticed he was, for the first time, prudent in the hunt on the following day, and that he began to make a virtue of patience. For my part I was sorry for Phil, but, nevertheless, the pachyderms had a wonderful fascination about them.

After the pachyderms came lions, which were not quite so interesting, for various reasons. In the first place I had seen



Smoking one night in my room.

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so many lions in menageries and shows of all kinds, and a lion isn't half so nice in some positions as in a cage.

For instance, suppose you are idiot enough to join a party of madmen who track these animals to a defile in the mountains, and attack them, as you might say, with their foot upon their native heath, and get just a little simple tap with one of their claws that breaks your collar-bone, lays open your cheek, pulls down the skin of your forehead over your eyes, and smashes your right arm in two places. It seems to me natural to prefer looking at them from behind a good stout railing, with the demoralisation of captivity on their side.

At all events, poor Phil had to nurse me for many a long month after that lion hunt, and it was well into the following year when we at last found ourselves on a P. and O. steamer, bound for home.

Phil and I were old travellers by this time, and the wild freshness of enthusiasm that seized upon some of our fellow-voyagers as they neared their native shore was with us toned down to a calm but profound conviction that England was the only country in the world worth the rational affection of an experienced and cultivated mind.

I had been looking through the glass for some time and was just handing it over to a fellow passenger, who had eyed me with devouring envy the while, when a big steamer, outward bound, glided close by our side, and I could see the faces of the party nearest me.

One fleeting glance of mine contained a revelation. I glued my eyes to the glass again. Exactly opposite me there shone two glowing orbs wonderfully familiar. The face was one not easily forgotten, the form full, shapely, with a peculiar serpentine grace about it.

"Phil," I said, putting the glass into his hand, "look over there at that group of ladies."

He took it languidly, but, having looked, a quick, eager gasp escaped him; he dropped the glass into the hands of our envious fellow passenger, and seized my arm with a sudden frenzy.

"She is going out," he said.

"While we, alas! are going in," I added.

"But this is monstrous," he added in dismay. "We can't go in, we must follow her."

Here again was the absurdity of a foolish passion. It would have been useless to relate to the captain that my friend, seeing a person he was interested in on the passing steamer, would like to join her. It was impossible to throw a plank across the ocean; besides, she was already vanishing out of sight, and Phil rushed below like a madman. All we could do was to enquire her destination from the Company's offices, take an outbound passage once again, and sail as soon as possible.

I confess it began to wear the aspect of a chase to me, and appealed to my taste for hunting. Then, I suppose, beauty such as hers, seen through a strong glass, had an effect of nearness upon me. At all events I began to take a keen interest in the passion of my friend. When we reached Cairo, however, we learned she had gone back to Europe via Brindisi.

All we could do was to travel about the Continent in the hope of encountering her or hearing about her party.

One fine autumn morning we lingered on the heights of a mountain resort in Saxony. We leaned over the railing that incloses the plateau on the top of the mountain, and looked admiringly down upon the stretch of country beneath. Upon the river Elbe, that looked to our eyes like a trout stream, we saw one of those little Dutch steamers that continually paddle up and down, and suddenly the view became intensely interesting. I looked through the glass again; yes, there she was, without doubt more graceful and enchanting than ever, upon the deck of that lumbering little tug, fathoms below us. I called to Phil. He bent, he looked, and stretching over with a yearning, unsteady movement, he lost his balance and fell.

Fell down the sheer edge of the rock, grasping as he went at every tuft of lichen and grass, at every shrub that rapidly shot out of his reach. I watched him with agonised suspense, when suddenly his coat caught upon the jagged wall of the precipice, and held him suspended over the chasm beneath.

"She is going out," he said.

He was partly supported by a frail ledge beneath him, and to this bit of rock I was determined to descend if in the endeavour I lost my life. There was no other way of saving Phil—none whatever; it must be done immediately, and he who has risked his life in mad encounters with savage beasts can surely afford to do so in behalf of the friend of his soul.

Round me flocked a crowd of sturdy Germans anxious to help me in every possible way. A stout rope was brought, fastened firmly about my waist; and I was lowered, a hand-breadth at a time, by my honest friends above. At last my foot trembled upon the thin piece of slate upon which Phil rested.

Grasping the rope with one hand, I disengaged his unconscious form from its perilous resting place, slipped slowly into the position he had taken, and binding the rope about my poor Phil, I had the joy to see him finally lifted into the arms of my comrades above.

Loud shouts arose from the plateau, and were echoed from the little steamer below, from the deck of which my perilous undertaking had been watched with intense interest. With difficulty I succeeded in keeping my hold upon this ledge of the precipice until the rope came back for me, and when I bound it about my waist I had already experienced that fatal giddiness that precedes unconsciousness.

Reaching the top, I escaped from the embrace of my Teutonic friends, and made my way to the chamber in the hostelry where they had taken Phil. A doctor was already with him, and declared that, although there were no bones broken, his system had received a nervous shock, and that he would need careful nursing.

So I took my place by the side of Phil, and nursed him in Germany as he had ministered to me in Africa. He got well sooner than I did, but modesty compels me to say it was not because of better nursing. His collar-bone and right arm were not smashed, neither had he the skin torn direct from the scalp over his eyes—which leads me to the opinion that a collision with a rock is less formidable than one with a lion.

Then there were better facilities for nursing in the pretty Saxony town than in the heart of Africa, and besides, I wasn't the only nurse he had; a lady travelling in the vicinity kindly aided me. She was not altogether a stranger to Phil—nor to me, for that matter.

She was very gentle and beautiful, with that winning way

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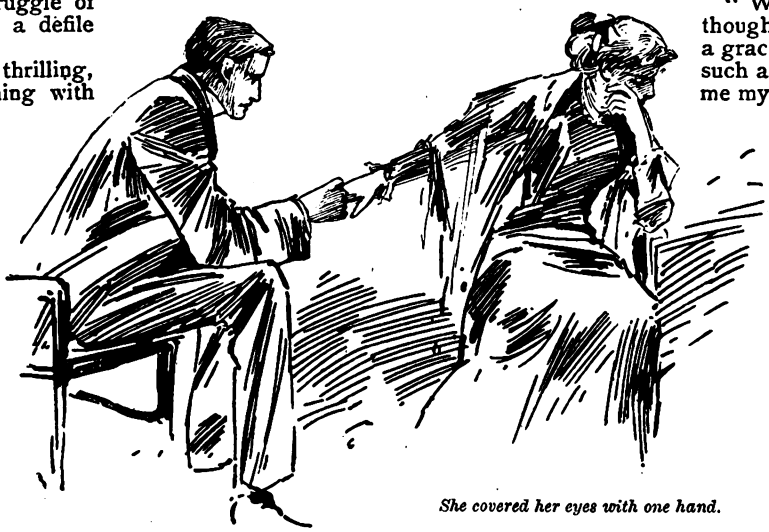
about her that reaches the heart, magnetises it, enthralls it, without the exact knowlege of that organ.

There was something in the slight pressure of her hand upon Phil's forehead, the floating of her diaphanous drapery about his bedside, the melody of her voice, the soft gleaming of her luminous eyes through the dimmed light of the sick room, that made her presence consoling, healing, divine.

Then when Phil had fallen into a slumber she came to me, her fellow-watcher, and ministered to my comfort through the dark watches of the night. She listened with tender interest to my relation of our adventures in Africa, and was especially never tired of a terrible struggle of mine with a male lion in a defile of the mountains.

She declared that it was thrilling, grand, heroic, and, touching with her slender fingers the scars upon my face, pronounced them beautiful; while I, alas! caught and kissed those gentle fingers and wished that Phil's convalescence were not so rapid, and that we might for ever—we three—rest together upon the verdure-crowned heights, "like gods together, heedless of mankind."

On one of those occasions I was relating to her a desperate encounter of ours in the jungle with a panther, and had reached the most thrilling part of it; she covered her eyes with one hand, as if to shut out the terrible scene, and the other she stretched in sympathy with my relation to the combat.



She covered her eyes with one hand.

Absorbed with my story, I just touched the white finger to my lips with a caressing movement, when suddenly Phil stood before us. He was pale to ghastliness, and my heart smote me, for I saw in his face a bitter hatred and reproach. He glared at me with hollow, burning eyes. But Diana rose to her feet. Taking the light shawl from her shoulders, she threw it about the shivering form of Phil, and gently forced him to the seat beside her.

"You wicked boy!" she said, looking upon him in tender reproach, "how can you be so imprudent? We want no relapses, you know, for I must leave you to-morrow. The Colonel will be here."

"The Colonel!" stammered Phil. "What colonel?"

"Why, *my* colonel," said Diana, "Colonel John Talbot, my husband!"

Phil seemed to have lost all power of articulation, and my own voice sounded strange and hollow, as I remarked that we were under the impression Colonel John Talbot had been killed years ago in the hunting field.

"Why, what a horrible thought!" said Mrs. Talbot, with a graceful shudder. "There was such a report, and it nearly cost me my life, but happily it was an exaggeration. He was badly bruised and carried home for dead. But you know," she added, turning to me, "how much a manly, athletic physique can stand."

"Yes, yes," I murmured, and as she bade us good-night and glided away, Phil and I looked at each other with an emotion that was impossible just then to analyse.

We remained in sombre silence, watching the jagged snow-covered peaks of the distant hills. At last our hands sought each other, a shiver of recollection passed over the weak form of Phil, his head sank upon my shoulder.

"Let's go home, Hal," he whispered. "Let's get back to England."

We left Saxony the next day, travelling by easy stages to the coast. And it is somewhat remarkable that, although both Phil's and my experience with women was limited and unsatisfactory, we never sought to extend our knowledge or ameliorate the paucity of it.

We never married, nor saw Diana from that day to this.

THE CABMAN'S STORY.

—o—

IT was a fearful night!

All the evening the rain had been coming down in torrents—at times whirled by the wind into perfect sheets of water—forming big puddle lakes in the road, and miniature rivers in the gutters.

The two miserable cab horses on the rank looked soaked through—the steam rising from their reeking sides—as they stood nodding in the downpour, the harness shining from excess of moisture. In the corner public-house the two drivers were seated at a small table—smoking, drinking, and chatting with a few of the "regulars" who had defied the elements, rather than go without their usual nightly jorum.

Rum hot was the "complaint" of the cabbies, and the soothing liquor had opened their hearts and set their tongues wagging.

"Dooky Jim," the acknowledged "smart-un" of the rank, was in good form, and rattled off anecdote after anecdote to the pleasure and careful listening of the select few.

The rain still continued to pour down, and, unmindful of the poor beasts out in the wet, the glasses were replenished and Jim started on one of his long yarns.

"I'll tell you a story," he commenced, "of what happened to me when I first started on the road. I was a young chap then, but I drove my own lot, and a good show it was. I remember it was in the afternoon of a day something like this one, raining blessed hard, and no chance of clearing up, and, what was worse, I hadn't earned a bob all the time.

"I was getting pretty sick of it, and had just made up my mind to take the horse home, when I saw a gent coming down the road full pelt.

"'Are you disengaged?' said he coming up to me.

"'Yes, sir!' says I.

"'Well, then, jump up, and drive sharply to Alcester Square,' and in he pops out of the rain.

"Well, I reckoned the bad weather meant a bit extra, and

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the fare looked one of these pasty faced swells with brass, so off I goes in good spirits.

"At the corner of Alcester Square he got out, telling me to wait, and then went into one of the big houses; and, d'ye know, I thought he had a strange look on his white dial. But I got down and waited in the rain, and after about ten minutes, out he comes again, looking whiter than ever, and stops me from mounting the box.

"'Have you change for a sovereign?' said he.

"'No, sir,' says I; but that wasn't true, chaps, for I always held a bit of ready in those days.

"'Well, do you mind getting the change for me?' said the gent—'I'll stand by the horse while you're gone.'

"Well, it seemed a funny thing to ask a cabman to do; but I went round the corner with his quid—where he couldn't see me—and counted out the silver in my pocket.

"I knew I mustn't go back too quickly or it would give me away—so, after a bit, I just popped my head round the corner to see how my nag was going on.

"Well, what I saw gave me a bit of a turn!——

"Two men were carrying somebody in their arms down to my cab, the gent holding the door open.

"I waited until they had got the person in and shut the door, and then, seeing my fare lay hold of the reins, I guessed he meant going off without me, so round I came like lightning and stood at my horse's head.

"'Ah! there you are, cabby,' said Mr. White-face—which was now turning red—'we are quite ready, and I want you to drive as quickly as possible to Merton Fields,' and he stood waiting for me to get up before he went inside the cab.

Here "Dooky Jim" shifted his position, recrossed his legs, and then commenced slowly filling his pipe.

"Well, chaps," he went on in jerks, "I tell you it was a funny-looking job, and I didn't much care about it, but I remembered he hadn't asked for his quid's worth of change—and I hoped he'd forgot it—and I give you my word I wasn't a-going to remind him.

"So I started off down the Alcester Road, through the rain, which was still coming down.

"Once, going across the common, I heard the sound of voices from inside, and something like a muffled scream, that gave me a bit of a start, but I thought I'd better go on and see it all out.

"After about three-quarters of an hour I arrived at the Fields, and pulled up sharp, intending to get down and ask for directions.

"But Mr. White-face was too smart for me, the window came down with a bang and out popped his head.

"'There's no need to stop, cabman,' he shouted—'drive straight over to that large house with the tall trees in front, go straight inside the gates,' and up went the window again, but not before I had time to hear a gurgling sound come from inside.

"'Well, what game's this?' thinks I; but don't you see, chaps, I had to think of the merry quid inside my pocket—and, besides, what could I have done?

"Over I went to the house with the big trees, and drove through the gates into the grounds, pulling up at the door, on which there was a big plate with the name 'Dr. Thurston.'

"I tell you the sight of that plate gave me a little relief, so I jumped down to open the cab door, but the gent was again too sharp for me, for he was outside, and holding the handle.

"'Stand at your horse's head, cabman,' he said sharply; 'and don't let it move. You understand?'

"At that moment the doctor's door opened, and out came two porters, and a woman dressed like a nurse, so off I hurried to the nag's bridle.

"But as they brought the person out of my cab I had a good look, and saw it was a pale young lady, with such a haggard face! She was a-going on and crying out loudly, 'Cabman, cabman, don't let them take me in!'

"The sight fairly upset me, but I felt the gent's eyes were on me, as the porters carried the lady into the house, he looking back as he followed with the nurse.

"I didn't quite know what to do—whether I should wait or skip it with the brass, but somehow I waited on.

"In a few minutes out came one of the porters and gave me another quid, telling me as how the gent wouldn't want me any longer.

"I suppose I must have looked a bit scared, for the man grinned at me, and whispered in my ear, 'You needn't be frightened; this is a private madhouse; but I suppose the gent didn't tell you, in case you wouldn't take the fare'; and he went in, grinning more than ever."

. . . .

The narrator made a big pause here, looked mysteriously at his interested audience, and finished up his glass, which was immediately replenished by one of the company.

"Look sharp, and get on with it, Jim," said his pal, "blow'd if it ain't like a detective story."

"Dooky Jim" cleared his throat, had a turn at the fresh liquor, and got on with it.

. . . .

"Well, chaps, I tell you straight, it didn't take me long to get away from that hole. I put the nag at it, all across that common; and how he did go, just as if he'd only just commenced the journey. He was a good-un, and no error; but there, I always reckoned I knew a bit about cattle, and you can stand on me to put you right at the game.

"Well, on the way back I kept on thinking of that poor girl, and wondering why, if she was mad, that she could know I was a cabman, for she did say right out, 'Cabman, cabman, don't let them take me in.'

"When I had come about halfway home, I felt somehow as if I must have a look inside the cab, so I pulled up in a quiet spot, and got down and opened the door.

"It seemed all right inside—and, mind you, I don't know what made me do it—but I pulled up the cushions, and there was a piece of paper slip'd down at the back On it was written, 'To the coachman.'" (Here Jim dived down into his breast-coat pocket, and brought out a big letter case, from which he extracted a dirty bit of paper, creased, and yellow with age, which he held up to the company.) "And here, chaps, is the very note to prove to you that I'm not telling lies."

He read:

"DEAR SIR,—I am writing this by my bedside, with the hope that it will be found in your conveyance, for I know they are going to take me away to-day to an asylum. They will tell you I am mad, but, for the love of Heaven, do not believe them. Listen to the prayer of a poor woman, and find out Captain Hall, telling him that I, his wife, am detained by these wretches. Go first of all to No. — Wigmore Street, but don't trust a soul—they are all in league against me. See the Captain in person, and tell him what they have done with me. And may heaven bless you for your kindness."

Here the letter was carefully refolded and placed in Jim's letter case.

"Well; this note kept me awake all that night," he continued, "but by the morning I had decided to find out Captain Hall, at any cost.

"So about 11 o'clock I started off to Wigmore Street, and knocked at the door of the house.

"A servant answered me, and finding that I wanted the Captain, asked me to walk inside and wait in the hall. Soon she came back and told me to walk upstairs, so up I went after her, stopping at a back room which she asked me to enter.

"You can guess I was a bit nervous about the job, but I was fairly flabbergasted to find, not a stranger, but the white-faced gent inside and waiting for me.

"'Well, my man,' said he, pretending not to remember me; but I knew that was a lie by the uneasy look on his face—'What can I do for you?'

"'I want to see Captain Hall, and nobody else,' said I straight out.

"'Well, I am Captain Hall,' said he, and then seeing the door was open he crossed the room and shut it, and do you know I thought I heard the rustle of a woman's dress outside, as if someone had been listening.

"Then he came back and sat down by the window, and I noticed his face was whiter than ever.

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"'Now, then, what is it you want to say to me; come, speak out,' said he.

"'I tell you I don't want to see *you*. I want to see another Captain Hall, and if he isn't in I'll go away,' said I.

"'Not so fast, my friend,' and he got up and stood against the door. 'Now, then, tell me the meaning of your coming into my house and the business you want, or I'll send for the police and have you locked up.'

"Well, here was a pretty go! I was in a fine mess, for sure, but I didn't budge an inch, you bet. I simply told him I was quite ready to go to the station, and perhaps there they would tell me if he really was Captain Hall.

"That made him wince a bit, chaps. He stood there and gnawed his moustache with rage; then he went back to his seat, his body trembling, his face like death.

"'I recognise you now,' he said; 'you are the cabman who drove my poor sister over to Merton Fields, and you have come here to get money out of me—to blackmail me—or let everybody know that insanity is in my family, in fact to disgrace me. Well, I must buy up the secret, at any price, so let me know what you want——'

"'Your sister!' I said, and then I remembered that I might do harm by letting my tongue run, so I simply added, 'Look here, sir; I've not come for your money, and if you gents do such scurvy things, we honest working men are above it,' and then I made my way downstairs, and out of the house as fast as I could go.

"I had just turned the corner of the street when I heard somebody running after me, and a middle-aged old girl, dressed like a servant, came panting up.

"'I must have a word with you,' she gasped out. 'Come anywhere, so long as they don't see us together.'

"Well, I didn't know what to make of it, but I dropped into the first pub handy and called for some brandy for the woman, and a drop of beer for myself.

"The stuff seemed to pull her together, but I noticed she was still very excited, and crying fit to break her heart.

"She told me she had listened outside the door and heard me ask for Captain Hall, and then the white-faced gent said he was the Captain.

"'But it's a lie,' said she, 'don't believe him.'

"'You bet I'm not going to, missis,' said I, and then I thought to myself, supposing the gent had set this woman after me to pump me. So I was on my guard at once.

"'I was hoping you had news of my dear mistress, Captain Hall's wife, and I hurried after you to find out,' said she. 'They say she ran away with another man, but I know it ain't true, I know her better than that. But the Captain believes it, and is going abroad, and I feel sure that brute, Mr. Mearns, is the cause of it all. If the Captain dies, and my mistress is put out of the way, that wretch comes into all the money, because he is the only cousin. Tell me, oh, do tell me, if you know anything about my poor, young mistress!'

"Well, this sounded straight enough, but I thought I'd better hold on a bit, so I said to her:

"'Look here, what I know I'm not agoing to tell anybody, but mean well, trust me. Just you give me the Captain's address, and I'll go and see him myself.'

"'That I will, and with pleasure,' said she; 'but do please go quickly, or it will be too late. He starts to-night from Southampton to join his regiment in India; anybody on board will point him out to you; he went away last week to stay with a friend who is living at Cowes.'

"Well, I took all this down very carefully, and then said good morning to the dame and started by the first train to Southampton—landing there in the evening.

"Now, thought I, what's the best thing to do to find my man? So in I turned to a little pub to think matters over.

"As luck would have it, there I came across an old pal of mine, who had enlisted when I was a youngster.

"'The very man I want, Jack,' said I, as soon as we'd shaken hands and had a drink together. 'Can you help me to find a Captain Hall, who sails to-night for India? I've got something very important to say to him; I can't write it, I must see him.'

"'I can put you on to that gent, at once,' said he, 'he came over this afternoon from Cowes, and is up at the Hotel with some other officers.'

"Well, Jack Summers, my soldier pal, and I went down to the Hotel in quick time, and sent up word to the Captain, who was with his friends in a private room. Down came the message that the Captain could not be disturbed, and I was to tell the servant what I wanted.

"'Please tell Captain Hall I *must* see him for a minute before he sails'; and this time I didn't mean to be done, so I quietly followed the man up the stairs, and waited outside the room door.

"I heard my message given, and then a voice, which I immediately recognised as belonging to Mr. White-face, say, 'Tell the man to come again to-morrow morning.'

"'Don't be absurd, Lionel,' said another voice, 'you know I shan't be here then.'

"Well, I didn't wait to hear any more. I pushed open the door and went straight into the room, and shouted out 'Captain Hall!'

"'What the deuce do you mean by coming here and shouting out my name like that?' said a gentleman standing over by the fireplace.

"'Captain Hall, sir,' said I, 'I have a message for you; it won't take a minute, but it is very important, sir.'

"'Look here,' said the white-faced gent, 'we object to this intrusion, get out of it, or I'll put you out——'

"'You put me out?' I shouted, 'a scurvy thing like you!' and I pushed him bang up against the wall, and went over to the gent at the fireplace.

"'I've got a message for you, Captain Hall, from your poor wife. Let me tell it you, and then you can have me thrown out if you like.'

"No sooner had I said that than the Captain laid hold of me by my collar—his eyes glistening with excitement and his teeth set.

"'Tell me what you mean. What do you know of my wife? Come, tell me quickly, or I'll break every bone in your body!' and he shook me as he nearly screamed the words out.

"I told him all—of the carrying off of the poor girl to the mad-house; of my finding the letter in the cab, and my visit to Wigmore Street; and then I brought out the note she had written and which I showed to you chaps to-night.

"He recognised her writing at once, and then seemed to believe my story, for he sat down and cried just like a child. Well, the sight upset me and all the other gents there, and I couldn't stop a tear that trickled down my nose.

"After a while he pulled round, and then he asked me if I knew who had done this work.

"'That man there,' said I, turning round to point at the white-faced gent, but he had cleared out quietly, while I was talking to the Captain.

"Well, chaps, to cut a long story short, the Captain didn't go to India after all—I suppose officers can do as they like in the Army—but went straight up to London with me and on to Merton Fields.

"I shall never forget the sight when those two people met each other; it turned my heart over and over again.

"Of course, I wasn't forgotten, and, in fact, every Christmas I always receive a big hamper and a bit of 'oof,' with their united love."

HOME NOTES.

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JACK DAVIS—A BAD LOT!

A STORY OF THE INDIAN MUTINY.

WHETHER it had been born in him or whether it was the fault of an obtuse fate they never knew; but one and all agreed that Jack Davis was "a bad lot."

Certainly his surroundings and life—in a small back street in the East End of London—did not tend to improve his civil or moral character, but he had a mother who worked hard for him and would willingly have laid down her life in his cause. Poor old soul, hers had been a life of care and trouble, with a bad husband who spent his life in low public-houses, and was never capable of a generous action till he killed himself with drink and left his widow with one less to keep.

The blood of the father seemed to flow in the veins of the son, and the grief-stricken woman saw, as years went on, the gradual development of the "virum," until one day she knew the worst—"her son was a thief," and the prison doors closed upon him.

This was the brimming of her cup of sorrow, and within a week the grave received the mortal remains of what had been "Jack's mother."

At the end of his term Davis returned to his old haunts with stolid indifference written on his features. Even the death of his mother did not seem to touch his hardened heart. But fate, now aroused to a sensibility of its obligations, cut him short in his evil career, and, directing him into the company of a recruiting sergeant, he was induced, while under the influence of drink, to accept the shilling and a soldier's uniform.

. . . . . .

Jack Davis's regiment had not been stationed in India many months before the Mutiny broke out.

This was a time when Englishmen were called upon to defend themselves against a more than ordinary foe—not men, but demons. This they did, with honour to themselves and to their country.

But the privation and misery was fearful. A terrible drought had set in, and, hemmed in on all sides, the British soldiers suffered that awful scourge—never properly realised in England—thirst.

Relief seemed to be far away, and the situation became so serious that short rations of water were allotted the men.

Still things went from bad to worse, and a guard had to be placed at the watering-places to prevent supply running out.

The consequence was hard fights—between men parched with thirst—the stronger robbing the weaker. One sultry night the surgeon-major, going through the place, found Jack Davis on duty at one of the water wells, and, recognising him as one of the "worst characters" in the regiment, took the trouble to examine the vicinity, with the result that a flask, half filled with water, was found under some rubbish.

The stealing of water was an unpardonable offence at those times, and the young soldier received full punishment for his crime before the eyes of his comrades.

But his Captain, a humane man, was ready to take over the care of the poor, suffering fellow, and visited him in the prison cell, forcing upon him the responsibility of each true soldier, and the fact that, in stealing water, he was robbing helpless women and children.

The kind way in which the words were put seemed to touch the man—unused to such treatment—and, before the officer left, Jack had promised to try and amend his ways.

Then came weeks of continuous fighting, wherein the young men showed bravery equal to that of the older soldiers.

Exposed to the heat of a tropical sun, scores dropped dead at their posts—sunstroke, the destroyer of men's reasons, dealing havoc among the ranks.

To add to the misery the water wells became exhausted, and plague set in.

One night Davis learned that his Captain was the latest victim, and lay near to death's door. The doctors were in constant attendance, but could lend no assistance—and this for want of water.

At midnight a form crept from one of the tents, looked stealthily around, and then disappeared in the darkness.

Not a soul had seen Jack Davis go.

The morning broke, and with it the light revealed the Captain on his hospital couch tossing with fever. He had laid in the sweltering heat for three long days, and the doctors knew that it was only the matter of a short period for the brave man to live.

A door was suddenly thrown open, and Private Davis appeared carrying a large can of water.

The stricken man clutched at the vessel and drank eagerly of the contents, while the medicals stood looking on with eager interest. With a sigh of relief the Captain's head slipped back on to its pillow, an inquiring and imploring look in his eye.

Jack seemed to read the look, for he dropped down on his knees and almost sobbed out—"No, no, Captain, don't think that; I did not steal it, as God is my Judge!" The words seemed to assure the officer, for a faint smile came to his lips, and then he closed his eyes and sank into sleep. The young fellow remained kneeling, his face buried in the couch—but the surgeon stepped forward, and touching him lightly on the shoulder, asked him to leave the Captain to rest.

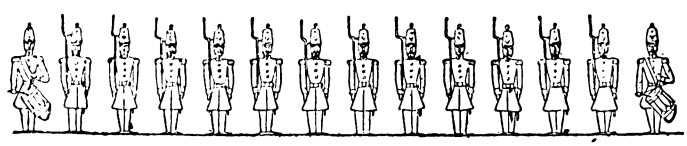
Jack raised himself at the bidding, but suddenly seemed to swoon, falling prostrate by the bedside.

At the same time a large pool of blood stood revealed; while a dark crimson stain on his tunic showed where an Indian bullet had struck him, after he had gone through the English lines to the river for water. This, then, was the reason of his sudden disappearance from camp the night previous. With a feeling of reverence the doctors lifted the body of the young soldier on to a couch, and attempted to staunch the flow of blood.

But he was dying fast—beyond the help of earthly power.

Once he opened his eyes and gazed around him. The kneeling surgeon moistened his lips with a little water.

A look of thanks was flashed back, and then came the low words, "Don't tell—the Captain—I disobeyed—orders—I'm glad to die—for him." A pause, and then, "Mother—mother—I'm coming." The poor, tired eyes again closed, and the brave spirit winged its flight.



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By John K. Leys, *Author of "In the Toils," "My Hindoo Friend," &c., &c.—Illustrated by* Raymond Potter.

SUMMARY.

Geoffrey Dundas—A young barrister.
Sir Arthur Chetwynd—A retired general and a friend of Geoffrey.
Leila Chetwynd—His daughter.
Captain Byngham—An army officer, and cousin to Sir Arthur.
Lord Lavington—A friend of the General.
Amavati, the Rajah of Nagore—A Hindoo prince who visits Sir Arthur, and develops an unrequited love for Leila.
Chunder Sen—The Rajah's secretary.
Kuttapani—The Rajah's cook.

During the Indian Mutiny Sir Arthur, together with Geoffrey's father (since dead), took part in the looting of a Hindoo temple on the tenth of June, and on this day every year afterwards one of the Englishmen concerned, or some member of their families, is assassinated. On the first of May, 1884, Amavati, the Rajah of Nagore, visits Sir Arthur, and Geoffrey tells him of the danger. Sir Arthur, on learning from his lawyer that his cousin, Captain Byngham, to whom he had intended to marry Leila, is almost penniless, though representing himself to be rich, wills him but a small annuity. Chunder Sen makes it possible for Byngham to surreptitiously examine the will, and promises to help him out of the difficulty. On the tenth of June Geoffrey goes to Wales, and is followed by Kuttapani, who attacks him in a lonely spot and leaves him for dead. Geoffrey, however, recovers, and tracks him to a house in Westbourne Park, named Lancaster Villa, which transpires to be the headquarters of the Hindoos.

CHAPTER XIV.

"GOOD-NIGHT—AND GOOD-BYE."

On receiving this unexpected check, Geoffrey went back to his lodgings, and sat down to reconsider his plans.

It was clearly impracticable for him to trace the Hindoos; and even had such a thing been possible, he could not see what was to be gained by it. He could do no good, he said to himself, by hanging round these men for twelve months. He thought he would find out in the first place, from the house agent, whether they had definitely given up the house. If they had not, he would be pretty sure to find them there again in the following May.

The only thing he had to see to was to make arrangements for keeping the adjoining house, Chester Villa, from falling into the hands of strangers. He must rent that house, or at least secure the refusal of it.

Then the question arose:—Should he simply return to his usual life, or should he absent himself altogether, so as still to leave the Hindoos under the impression that their attempt on his life had succeeded? There still seemed a chance that he might be able to thwart his enemies' designs on the General if they believed that they no longer had him to deal with. And another thing that helped to determine the young man to stick to his original plan was that he wanted to put the sea, for a time, between himself and Leila Chetwynd.

He had but a small private income; and his professional income was as yet in the clouds, and gave every sign of staying there. He could not, in honour, make love to Leila, and win her heart, knowing that he had no home of his own to bring her to, without her father's formal and willing consent. And he felt sure that if he were to be in Leila's company again—as he could hardly fail to be if he remained in England—he must betray his feelings to her. He would not be able to help it.

On the other hand, if the matter were already settled—if she were destined to become the bride of Captain Byngham, a man he had never liked, he would wish to be out of the way till it was all over. He could not stand by and see Leila plight her troth to another. The very thought tortured him.

No; he would leave England. He would go and see if he could shoot bears in the Rocky Mountains. But before he went, he would see Sir Arthur, tell him what had occurred since they parted, and at the same time find out, if possible, whether there was any hope that the General would accept him as a son-in-law.

He awaited, therefore the General's return, spending the interval in making all arrangements necessary for his departure. Among other things, he paid a visit to the house-agent. He was told that the tenants of Lancaster Villa had *not* given up possession of the house; and he had no difficulty in getting the agent to say that he would communicate with Mr. Linton (who had promised to look after Geoffrey's affairs during his absence) before letting Chester Villa to anyone else.

After waiting a fortnight, to allow the General time to return home, Geoffrey wrote to him, begging him to let him know when he would be in town. To his surprise, the General's reply was dated from a quiet hotel in the West End, where he usually put up when he came to London; and his delight may be imagined when he read the postscript:—"L. insisted on coming up with me—to see the Row, she said. Can you dine with us on Thursday? Seven-thirty sharp."

The happiness of meeting Leila was enough to drive every other thought out of Geoffrey's head for the time. The dark shadow that had come over his life, even the hopelessness of his love, was forgotten.

Time went on crutches with him next day, but the longest day comes to an end; and by half-past seven Geoffrey was shaking hands with Leila in her father's private sitting-room at "Mather's."

"How well you are looking!" he cried involuntarily, as he gazed, with eyes that spoke his admiration all too plainly, at the bright, happy face before him. Leila was radiant that night. She never looked more lovely; her cheeks were glowing with health; her eyes sparkling with innocent enjoyment of her life.

"We are both very much the better for our sea trip," said the General. "In fact," he added, with a significant look at Geoffrey, "I think I needed a change more than Leila. Too much of the country is not good for a man who has spent an active life. The Atlantic breeze scattered the cobwebs that had begun to cluster round my old head. Nothing like a breath of the sea air for dispelling morbid fancies."

Paid a visit to the house-agent.

This was said in rather a low tone, so that Leila might not hear it. She was busy removing the lid from a huge pasteboard box, which a waiter had just brought in. Geoffrey understood him to mean that he had ceased to believe in the reality of the dangers that menaced him. "I shall have to undeceive you persently, my good sir," said the young man to himself; but he thought it better to say nothing just then.

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"What have you got there, Leila?" called out the General.

The girl had raised the large lid, and was gazing at the contents of the box with a look of serious but intense satisfaction.

"It is my new ball-dress, papa," she answered with a little blush. "I couldn't resist taking just a peep at it. It *is* lovely!"

The General laughed at her earnestness.

"Send someone to take that box to Miss Chetwynd's room," he said to the head waiter, who just then entered the room. "Discipline must be maintained, my dear. This isn't the place for inspection of dresses. My daughter is plunging into the gaiety of the London season with all the ardour of youthful folly," he said to Geoffrey.

"Papa! What a shame to speak in that way. When you know that this is my first season, and I have been out for years and years!"

"If you *had* been 'out' so many years, you wouldn't care to call attention to the fact, my dear," said Sir Arthur. "But here is the soup, and I'm very glad to see it. Sit down, Geoffrey, my boy. I thought it would be cosier to dine here than downstairs. I hate eating among strangers, though Leila seems to prefer it."

"Papa, you are simply unbearable to-night," said the young lady with an air of offended dignity, as she took her seat at the head of the table.

"I needn't ask you whether you enjoyed your cruise," said Geoffrey.

"Oh, Mr. Dundas, it was simply delicious! I felt as if I could have sailed on for ever, past those lovely islands, and fairy headlands, and great cliffs where the sea birds swooped round and round, sailing in the air, as we sailed on the sea! The delightful freshness of the mornings—and the moonlit nights on deck! Oh, Mr. Dundas, if you have never been for a cruise you have simply no idea how delightful it is! Then all the people on board were so nice; and Lord Lavington was so kind and thoughtful for our comfort."

"Were there many people on board?"

"About a dozen. You would never think, to look at the yacht, that she could hold so many. But Lord Lavington is going to buy a larger one next year; and he is going to ask us——"

"Hey! What's that?" asked the General sharply.

The girl stopped short in some confusion.

"I heard nothing about an invitation for next year."

"It wasn't an invitation, papa. Only, one night when we were talking about the new yacht—she is to be a steamer, Mr. Dundas, quite a large vessel—he said he hoped we would be able to judge for ourselves what she was like, or something of that kind. It was only a polite speech."

"And what did you say, puss?"

"I said we meant to spend next season in London," said Leila saucily, with a little glance at Geoffrey.

"The dickens you did! And who told you that? You know I hate the racket, the long formal dinners, the crushes—ugh! I wouldn't stay a day in town but for you getting that promise out of me."

"Well, papa, when Lady Churchwood asked us to her dance we couldn't very well refuse, could we?"

"We could have refused perfectly well, but nothing would serve you but to accept. However, my dear, I am very pleased that you should have a little pleasure, and see a little of the world."

"Thank you, papa! Lady Churchwood is Lord Lavington's sister," Leila added for Geoffrey's benefit. "She was our chaperon on board the yacht."

"Isn't Lord Lavington married, then?" asked the young man, with an absurd, jealous pang at his heart.

"Oh, no."

"I fancied, somehow, he was an elderly man."

"Not at all."

"Quite young," broke in the General. "Just at the time when a man is at his best."

"I thought he was rather old; he has grey hair," said Leila simply.

"That's because you are so unsophisticated, my love. Some men are grey at thirty; some are bald. Wait till you have gone through a season in London, my dear, and you will change your ideas on these subjects."

"Then we *are* going to spend next season in town?" cried Leila, her eyes beaming with the pleasure of anticipation.

"I can't say yet. Part of it, perhaps. I haven't made my plans—time enough to ask me eight months hence."

"Mr. Dundas," said Leila suddenly, "couldn't you manage to get a card for Lady Churchwood's dance on Monday evening?"

"My dear, how can he go if he is not asked?" asked the General almost tartly.

"But people do angle for invitations in London, papa. Flossie Chamberlayne told me so. And you know so many people, Mr. Dundas. I am sure you could get an invitation easily if you wished."

Geoffrey glanced at the General before replying.

"I don't think it is at all a dignified thing to angle for an invitation, as you call it," said Sir Arthur. "I may be old-fashioned, but I confess I should think it an impertinence for anyone to invite himself directly or indirectly to my house. And I should never dream of seeking an invitation to another man's house."

Geoffrey could hardly forbear smiling at the General's antiquated notions; but he was at the same time pained at his attitude. He seemed to be saying, almost in so many words, "It would suit my plans better if you were not to appear at Lady Churchwood's on Monday night." But Geoffrey showed nothing of this in his face.

Gazing at the contents of the box.

"I don't think people in society mind in the least if an intimate acquaintance asks for a card for a dance for a friend," he remarked quietly. "These dances are really semi-public affairs. But I hardly think I shall be able to go," he added, turning to Leila.

"Oh, very well. I'm sorry," said the girl. She was of opinion that her father had snubbed her, and that Geoffrey had not taken her part as he should have done. And Geoffrey was thinking that he would gladly give a hundred pounds for the pleasure of one waltz with Leila.

For the moment, he almost determined to break through the rule he had laid down for himself, and go to the ball. But the next moment, he saw that to do such a thing would be absolutely fatal to his schemes, for it was quite likely that if he were to go, next day his name would appear in the list of guests in the *Morning Post*.

"The fact is," he said, "I am thinking of going abroad, for some months——"

"Going abroad!" cried the General. "What has put that into your head?"

"I want to see life in the western States, and I want to shoot a bear or two, if there are any left."

"But your profession, my dear boy!"

"That's just it. At present I haven't any practice to speak of, so I can afford the time. Later on, I hope I may have so much to do that I may not be able to get away."

"Humph! When do you start?"

"Almost at once."

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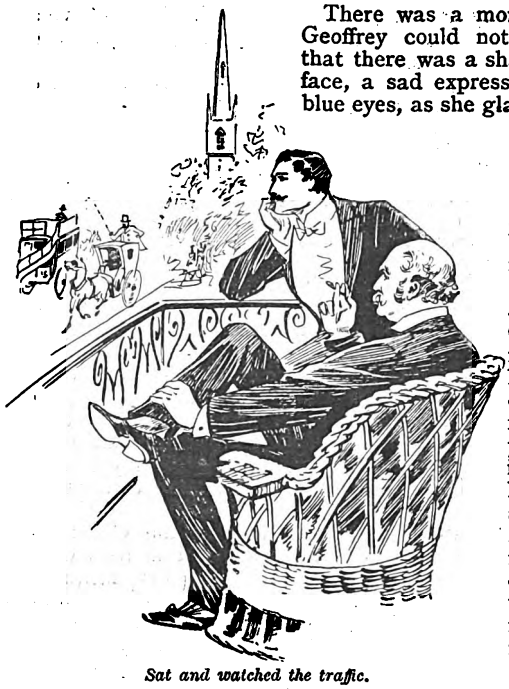

Sat and watched the traffic.

There was a momentary silence. Geoffrey could not help fancying that there was a shadow on Leila's face, a sad expression in her frank blue eyes, as she glanced at him.

"Have you heard from the Rajah since you returned?" asked Geoffrey, by way of changing the subject.

"Oh, yes," answered the General. "A most polite letter, full of courteous, old-fashioned phrases, thanking us for our hospitality, and so on. The Rajah's manners are decidedly superior to those of many modern Englishmen."

"Yes, indeed," cried Leila. "I like the Rajah. I think he is delightful. And I am so glad he is coming back to us next June. I quite fancy it will be a match between him and—somebody."

"Leila, my dear, you ought not to say such things," said her father. "The Rajah is by birth a prince; and yet—well I consider that a marriage of the kind you allude to would be most undesirable, in fact almost unnatural."

Leila said nothing; but there was a mischievous look in her eyes, which Geoffrey understood.

The conversation now drifted in the direction of the plays and pictures of the year, and it did not return to more personal topics while dinner lasted.

When the dessert was on the table the General and Geoffrey went out on the balcony to smoke, while Leila sat down to the piano, and began playing snatches from various composers as the fancy seized her. The two men sat and watched the traffic as it flowed ceaselessly on past the corner of the quiet side-street in which they were sitting.

"What is the real reason of your going to America?" asked the General abruptly.

"I will tell you when Miss Chetwynd leaves us for the night," answered Geoffrey.

That moment soon came. Coffee was brought in; and when, shortly afterwards, the General said:

"Now, my love, early to bed and early to rise, you know," Leila obediently rose.

Her father was busy shutting the French window, as she offered her hand to Geoffrey. He held her fingers a moment in his own.

"I will bid you good-bye now," he said; "it is hardly likely that I shall see you again before I sail."

"Confound it! I've left my cigar-case outside," said the General, opening the window as he spoke. He was only absent for a few seconds; but these were just the few seconds Geoffrey had been hoping for all the evening.

"I don't see why you need go away at all," said Leila, in a voice that was hardly quite steady.

"I am running away," said Geoffrey, and his voice was low and husky—"from myself. I cannot stay in England any longer at present."

"Why not?" was on the girl's lips; but just then the young man raised his eyes, and she read something in them which not only checked the question, but made a soft blush steal over cheek and brow.

She turned hastily away, and busied herself with the loose music on the piano; and, by the time her father had come back, closed the window, and turned round to bid her good-night, the blush had died quite away. Indeed, her face was pale as she offered her hand to Geoffrey for the last time.

"Good-night—and good-bye," he said softly. And she answered, "A pleasant trip, then, and a safe return;" and, as she spoke, she smiled.

Many a time afterwards, as he lay on his bed of fine twigs and snow, gazing on the stars that peered through the branches overhead, or watching the sparks as they whirled up from the red camp fire, Geoffrey remembered that smiling look.

CHAPTER XV.

"YOU LOVE MY DAUGHTER!"

"AND now, my dear fellow, what is the reason of this sudden freak of yours?" asked Sir Arthur, when Geoffrey had closed the door behind Leila.

For answer the young man told the General what had happened to him since he left Seacombe Towers. As he spoke, the ruddy, well-satisfied look which Sir Arthur had worn, the look of a man well content with himself and the world, left his face. His cheeks lost their colour; a hard, stern, *set* look came into his eyes. He continued gazing at the speaker in silence, till the last word had been uttered. Then he drew a long breath, and, throwing himself back in his chair, began gnawing the ends of his moustache.

"You had a squeak for it, Geof," he said. Being an Englishman, that was all.

Geoffrey nodded. "At one time I really thought I was done for," he said; "but one good thing is that you have now a capital excuse for refusing to receive the Rajah next June."

The General slowly shook his head.

"It would hardly be fair to hold the Rajah responsible for the acts of his servant," he said.

This seemed to Geoffrey to be straining the obligation of hospitality. However, he contented himself with saying that the existence of a conspiracy was now beyond question; and to this the General gravely assented.

"But there is another reason why I should wish to leave the country for a time," continued Geoffrey.

"Yes?"

The General was hardly listening. His thoughts were busy with the Hindoos and their conspiracy. Geoffrey was piqued into saying:

"I hope you will pardon my abruptness, but may I ask if Miss Chetwynd is engaged to marry her cousin?"

The young man had calculated that the question would "wake up" the old campaigner, and he was right.

"What, sir?" he cried in a voice of thunder, starting from his chair.

Geoffrey felt that he had gone too far; but nothing was to be gained by retreat.

"The question would be an impertinence, sir," he said, "if it were not that my own welfare and happiness are so closely bound up with your answer."

"What is that you say? Do you mean that you have the audacity to tell me that your happiness is bound up with my daughter's?"

Geoffrey also started to his feet. It was his turn to be angry.

"Good-night—and good-bye."

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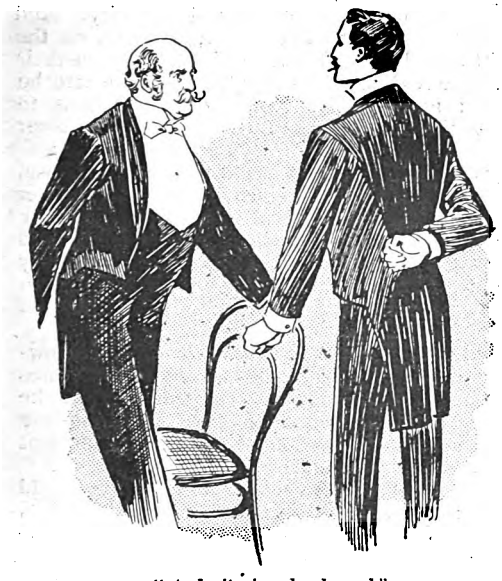


"Audacity is a hard word."

"Audacity is a hard word, sir, in that connection, for you to use to my father's son," he said proudly.

The General frowned, but remained silent.

"Yet you mistake me," went on Geoffrey. "I did not presume to bracket my name with your daughter's. I was excusing myself for putting what seemed an impertinent question by saying that my happiness depended on your answer. The fact is, Sir Arthur, I am leaving the country rather than stay to witness your daughter's marriage."

"My daughter is not going to be married."

"I thought it was settled that she was to marry Captain Byngham," said Geoffrey, his heart beating fast with hope.

"Well, she is not. Captain Byngham is—not the sort of man I would choose for a son-in-law. But I don't see that it is any concern of yours."

"Nor would it be, except that—that I love her."

"*You!* You love my daughter! How can you speak in that way? You know that your income——. I need not say more. It is quite out of the question."

Geoffrey was silent.

"It is quite out of the question," repeated the General.

"I cannot answer you," said the young man. "And yet it seems hard for us poor 'detrimentals,' as we are called. You invite us to your houses out of pure kindness, and we are allowed to sit by your daughters, talk with them, dance, ride, sing with them. Outwardly, we and they are on a footing of perfect equality. Yet the moment one of us dares to show himself a man, and not a mere talking, dancing, shooting machine, you cry out as if he had done something unnaturally wicked."

The General's stern face relaxed. He even smiled.

"You are an impertinent young puppy, sir," he said. "But you are your father all over, so I forgive you. Sit down, now, and let us talk over things in a rational way."

Geoffrey stared at the old man in surprise. He did not understand the General sufficiently to know that he was often the first to blame himself for his hot-headedness, and the first to regret it. He had already been quite subdued by the young man's spirited self-defence.

He sat down, with Geoffrey opposite him, lit his cigar, and for a few minutes smoked in silence.

"I suppose you are in earnest about this affair," he said, at length.

"In earnest? As much in earnest—more in earnest than I ever was in my life!"

"Have you said anything to my daughter about this—given her to understand the nature of your feelings?"

"No. Except——to-night. In bidding her good-bye I allowed her to know that I was going to America in order to put the sea between us."

"Humph! You needn't have done that. However, there must be no writing, you understand."

"Certainly not, Sir Arthur," said Geoffrey stiffly.

"Personally," went on the General, after a long pause, "I have no wish that my little girl should marry at all. I dread the parting with her. But I am not so selfish as to stand in the way of her happiness."

Another long pause. Geoffrey's heart began to beat faster. He could not help hoping that the General was going to give way. The General's next words undeceived him.

"But if she marries it must be suitably. There is nothing to prevent her occupying a very exalted station. I may tell you, for I wish you to see that I treat you with confidence, that Lord Lavington is a suitor for her hand. He came to me, and asked my permission, as a gentleman should. And I told him that I wished him success, but that in my opinon it would be better for his interests that I should not interfere at all.

"So the matter stands. He has been a good deal with us since we have been in town, and I have no doubt he will propose to her shortly. Now, my dear fellow, I have no objection to you personally—none. But really, you know, with your slender income, and your uncertain prospects——"

"Say no more, sir, if you please," said Geoffrey; and even in his own ears his voice sounded hoarse and strange. "I was mad. I see it now. It is best for me to go to America. I will carry out my original plan. I shall be away for nearly a year, and perhaps by that time it will be all over. Good-bye."

He rose, and held out his hand.

"Good-bye, my dear fellow"—(Geoffrey wished he would keep his affectionate phrases to himself). "Think of me as kindly as you can. This time next year things will look very differently to you, and you will see that I was right. But just at present, I agree with you, you will be the better for a complete change of scene."

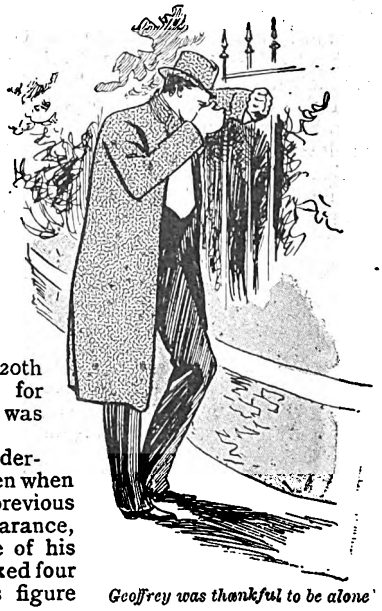
And so they parted.

Geoffrey was thankful to be alone, to be out in the cool, quiet summer night, under the stars. For hours he wandered on, through street and square and park, till the dawn broke, and the sparrows chirped loud, and the gas-lamps burned yellow and dim.

Not till that night, it seemed to him, had he realised how passionately he loved Leila Chetwynd. To leave the country and allow her to become the wife of another man was like tearing the flesh from his bones. But he saw there was no help for it. To depend on the general's purse after what he had said would be worse than meanness—it would be the action of a cur. And to marry Leila without his consent, even if such a thing were possible, would be to condemn her to a life of squalid hardships.

There was no help for it. But Geoffrey never forgot the bitterness of that hour. He must be more or less than a man—probably less—who can resign himself to the loss of one who is dearer to him than life itself, without many a wild and bitter thought, many a cruel pang. Geoffrey Dundas was young and strong, and able to suffer; but for many and many a day he carried on his heart the scars of that night's agony.

Three days later he was at sea.



Geoffrey was thankful to be alone

CHAPTER XVI.

AN UNEXPECTED MEETING.

TEN months went by; and among the passengers who embarked on the *City of Madrid* on the 20th of April at New York for Queenstown and Liverpool was Geoffrey Dundas.

He was changed considerably from what he had been when he left England the previous summer—changed in appearance, and changed also in some of his mental qualities. He looked four or five years older. His figure

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was more upright, his movements more free and vigorous. His face was bronzed with exposure; it had lost the delicacy, the look of smart, precocious puerility, which is characteristic of the Londoner. His muscles were now as hard as the fibres of an oak. His eye was calm and strong, as the eye of a man must be who for some time has habitually faced danger.

Distance and time had done something to heal the smart of his wound—something, but not much. It was only by constant movement, constant excitement, that he could forget the pain that gnawed continually at his heart.

Sport had done much for him—not the "sport" of betting on a horse-race, or firing at a partridge or a rabbit, but the grim sport of risking his life in ridding the earth of beasts of prey. He had learned to face danger, not merely with the courage of a naturally brave man, but with the cool confidence of one who has more than once looked death in the face without flinching.

Through all his wanderings, the *Times* had followed him; for he had ordered that it should be sent to him regularly, that he might learn whether Leila Chetwynd had become Lady Lavington. Many a time had he tramped scores of miles to reach the little outlandish post-office, where he knew the bundle of newspapers would be waiting for him; and then felt such a horrible dread of reading the death-sentence of his love that he could barely find the courage to tear off the wrappers. But, so far, he had seen no announcement of the wedding.

Look death in the face.

He could hardly understand it. Leila, he knew, was heart-whole; she had openly said that she liked Lord Lavington, and had accepted without hesitation the attentions his sister had offered her, no doubt at his instigation. There was no reason why she should not be pleased and flattered by the viscount's preference; no reason why she should not return his love. Yet no announcement of the marriage had appeared; and Geoffrey was forced to clench his teeth to keep down the storm of emotion that threatened to overwhelm him if he had allowed himself to think what that might mean.

On arriving in London Geoffrey sent a telegram to Sir Arthur Chetwynd to advise him of his return, and received an answer by post. Both the General and Leila were at home at Seacombe Towers, and he understood from this that Leila was not married.

There was no invitation for Geoffrey; and from this he understood that the General was unwilling that he and Leila should meet. Unconsciously he had hoped for an invitation, and the disappointment was keen and bitter. If the young man had ever imagined that he was in any degree cured of his love for Leila that moment would have undeceived him.

But there was something, he told himself, that he could yet do for her. Her own life might not be threatened, but her father certainly was in danger; and for her, a motherless girl, to lose her father, would be a frightful calamity. And Geoffrey was convinced that by keeping up a watch on the Hindoos he might be able to defeat their plans, and save their intended victim. He resolved to take up the work where he had laid it down; and the first point, obviously, was to ascertain whether the Hindoos had returned to Lancaster Villa.

It was growing dusk when he paid his first visit to the house. Once more London had decked herself, as it were, in her spring raiment, and adorned herself with garlands. The air was cool and fresh, for it was still the first week in May; and Geoffrey was passing carelessly along one of the half-empty streets, not far from Lancaster Villa, when he saw a figure in front of him that he thought he recognised, the figure of Amavati.

At first Geoffrey literally could not believe his eyes. Knowing the Rajah's ideas, and the customs of his life, it was incredible that he should be found in this out-of-the-way corner of London at that hour, on foot and unattended.

Geoffrey drew nearer him. There could be no doubt it was he.

The young Englishman was about to step up to him and accost him, when he suddenly drew back.

What could this mean? he asked himself. Was Amavati after all in league with these murderers? If not, what was he doing here, without an attendant, contrary to the etiquette he adhered to so rigidly?

All the dark suspicions which Geoffrey had at one time entertained of the Rajah, and which he had afterwards dismissed as unworthy and unfounded, recurred to his mind.

Here was proof, something whispered to him—proof clear and unmistakable—of his alliance with the men who had twice attempted his life!

"I will not condemn him till I am certain," said Geoffrey to himself. "He *may* be going to some other house in the neighbourhood. I will wait and see."

Keeping a good way behind, Geoffrey followed the Rajah. Amavati made straight for Lancaster Villa. When the house came in sight, Geoffrey decreased the distance between Amavati and himself, so that, in the declining light, he might make no mistake as to the house he entered.

At the gate, leading to Lancaster Villa, the Rajah stopped short, carefully read the name of the house on the gate-post; and then put his hand on the latch.

In doing so, he turned half round, and, with a start, drew back his hand. He had seen Geoffrey Dundas.

In an instant Geoffrey had formed his plan.

He walked slowly up to the Rajah, and looked him in the face.

(*To be continued*)

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FORGIVEN

MISS Dalton paced the library with a restless step, glancing at the clock every now and then with anxious eyes. She was gowned, garlanded and gloved for a ball, but her escort had not arrived, and growing impatience was fast sending little ripples of frowns over her pretty face and mobile features. No man had dared to keep her waiting before, and the tender appealing eyes were losing their softness in the dusky gloom of indignation that was gathering in their depths.

There was a ring at the bell, and she prepared a volley of reproach to fire at her *fiancé* when he entered, but the well-known step did not echo upon the polished floor, and she knew he had not come. She pulled off her gloves impatiently, and threw them upon the table. She will not go now, even should he come. It is nearly half-past ten, and her toilet looks disarranged already, for she has a trick of running her fingers through her hair when she is restless, and the flowers on her bosom have begun to droop in the heat of the room.

"He should have sent me a note," she exclaimed between her teeth, as she flung herself into a chair.

A violent peal at the bell makes her start and prepare again to give her lover a warm reception, but, after the door closes, she sees Walters going towards the study with a telegram for her father, and her heart sinks into a sickening heaviness with the growing pain. The fire is getting lower, the carriages in the street roll by farther apart, and the great hall clock, tolling out the hour, seems to ring a funeral knell in her heart.

"Turn out all the lights, Walters, and admit no one to-night," she says, as she goes up the broad staircase, with her long white robes trailing behind her and the crimson wreath of flowers in her hair dimmed by the flush of anger on her face. There has been a fierce combat within her breast, a battle between love and pride, and the latter has conquered. She loves this man, but she loves power also, and she wishes to make him feel the weight of her power.

Before she retired she gathered together all the letters he had written to her, all the mementoes of the engagement, and bound them in a package with the ring, whose pure light had scintillated on her finger for months. These are to be given to him on the morrow—he will surely come then—and she prepares to put her heart in armour against the man to whom she had given her life and into whose care she had intrusted all her future happiness.

The next day he does not come, and her wrath deepens as the hours creep by. At mid-day the rankling bitterness is somewhat allayed by the burning of two of Graham's photos, and tearing from a doorway a mass of Eastern embroidery which he had sent her from Damascus.

She knows no accident has befallen him, else she would have learned of it at once, and that evening, at dinner, when her mother timidly inquires if Graham is ill, Tom replies that he had seen him just two hours before, driving rapidly in a cab. Miss Dalton turns the drift of the conversation to Melba's marvellous voice, and proposes the opera next evening.

"The Wilson girl is the cause," she concludes. "She has made every effort to ensnare him, and now her designs are accomplished." Her resolutions not to see him when he calls are swept away by a desire to exhibit her scorn, to show her contempt for his treachery.

"Mr. Graham," announces Walters very soon after the others have departed for the theatre, and Miss Dalton is left alone in the library.

"Ask him in here," she said quietly, as she glanced round to ascertain if her package was within reach. He held out both hands in greeting as he advanced, the joy and gladness in his face showing that no idea of dismissal had entered his mind.

"Estelle," he began at once; "did you think I would never come? I have been ——"

The words die unuttered as he notes scorn in the curl of her lips, the flash of anger in her eyes, and the uplifted hand that warns him not to continue.

"What is the matter? You surely are not angry! You know that only a matter of the utmost importance could have kept me away from ——"

"Here are your letters, Mr. Graham, together with the ring and other tokens of our engagement, which you will now consider at an end. I wish no explanations—I will not listen to them."

"Good heavens! You will not dismiss me this way—without a cause? You will, at least, allow me to vindicate myself in your eyes! I cannot go like this—have you think me a traitor to my vows! Last night ——"

"I cannot hear your story—leave me! Here is the ring—your letters. You have had no consideration for me, why should I for you? Only two events could exonerate your behaviour. You were not ill?"

"No."

"You met with no accident?"

"No; but there is something far worse——"

"I will accept no apology. No man shall think he can slight me, and then, at his pleasure, return and be reinstated by a few words of atonement. Our engagement is broken; it can never be renewed."

"Very well, Miss Dalton. I accept your verdict"; and taking the package from her hand, he continued, "Do not fear that I will annoy you—one dismissal is sufficient; but, before I leave you, I wish to tell you something—a story told me by a dying man; it will interest you, as it concerns someone you know—a woman." She did not ask him to be seated—did not seat herself, but stared at him in a pathetic, stony way, as though she would never look on his face again.

"I will never forgive you; so if it is for your sake that you tell the story, you may spare yourself."

"It is not for my sake," he answered coldly. "I do not ask your pardon—do not expect it."

She said nothing, but leaned lightly against the mantel-piece, while he continued slowly, as though each word was of vital importance, and he wished to use as few as possible: "Last evening at six, while bidding Carroll good-bye at the station, I noticed a poor drunken wretch, whose ravings were gathering a crowd round him, and I knew that he would soon be in a policeman's clutches unless some one cared for him. He had just come off a city train, and asked the way to Vernon Street, which I know well. In his hand he held a package of letters, which he waved through the air in a threatening manner, and assured the bystanders that they would bring him a fortune.

"I foresaw an excellent newspaper paragraph for some reporter, and determined to nip it in the bud. The man said he had letters for which the writer would pay, and as I think the dissection in the newspapers of everybody's business should be discouraged, I rescued him in time and offered to conduct him to his destination."

Graham paused, passed his hand acros his brow, while Miss Dalton frowned angrily, and exclaimed, "Really, Mr. Graham, perhaps you have forgotten that I do not belong to the

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Temperance Union, neither am I interested in any society for the reformation of inebriates." She had always admired his philanthropy, but upon this occasion she failed to comprehend his interest in a man debased by liquor when he should be overwhelmed with losing her.

"A few words dropped from this man's lips prompted me to take him to my rooms," he continued, ignoring her interruption. "I learnt there that he had made his escape from a retreat into which he had been put for treatment; that he held a woman's reputation in his hands; that his hatred for her treatment in former years made him long to injure her in some way. He had been out of the asylum long enough to revert to old habits, and was reckless."

Graham looked straight at Miss Dalton, and saw that she was becoming more interested. He took a long breath, and continued in louder, clearer tones:

"It seems that he met her while she was at a boarding-school. She eluded the mistress's watchfulness, and met him often, wrote him constantly, became engaged, and gave him her photograph. When she bade farewell to school books and college days, he learned that she had simply amused herself at his expense, that she had entered into this flirtation to beguile the tedium and monotony of school life.

"He reproached her with the fact that he had given up everything for her sake; that he had allowed splendid business opportunities to slip by that he might remain in the town that sheltered her. He told her, with all the fervour and earnestness of a broken-hearted man how she had come into his life to stay, and that to give her up would make a wreck, morally and physically, of him.

"She only laughed in his face, assured him that he would soon forget, demanded all her letters and the velvet case containing a face that had been his guiding star. He insisted upon keeping them as a reminder of his happiness, never intending to use them in any way; but drink had maddened him until he felt that he had been wronged and she should be made to suffer for the destruction she had wrought.

"His family had placed him in a retreat for inebriates, and for over a year he had watched his chance to escape, and when it came he journeyed to this, the city where she lives, and it was his desire to face her and let her see what she had made of his life, and to proclaim this schoolgirl episode to the world in which she moved."

Miss Dalton's face had grown so white that even the dancing fire-flames did not light it up, and she sank into a chair, where she watched with bated breath Graham's lips as he ended the story.

"Where did this man live?" she asked in a trembling voice.

"In Chelford. There is a convent there."

She screened her face from the fire-light as she asked again, in a scarcely audible tone, "Did he tell you the name of the woman—he loved?"

"Yes; and I have brought her the letters, together with her photograph." He laid a package in her lap, and added, with a sigh at the recollection of the journey, "I have taken the man back to the place whence he came—that is where I was last night—and put him in the care of keepers who will see that he does not leave them again. He is dying of some cerebral congestion, and can live but a few months. You have your letters, Miss Dalton, and I beg that you will not allow this affair to give you one moment's unhappiness, as your secret is safe with me. I wish you good evening."

"Geoffrey!" she cried, putting out her arms as she saw him striding towards the door. "Come back, my love, come back. Forgive me for not telling you all this before; forgive me for treating you as I did this evening. I never understood your noble heart, your generous nature before." And as Geoffrey Graham laid the dark head against his big, strong shoulder, looked down into the tear-bathed eyes and felt two soft, white arms about his neck, he did not wonder that a man's life was wrecked after loving and losing this woman.

THEY were talking about mesmerism in the green-room of the Arundel Theatre. Cordyl, the manager, was there, and did not believe in it at all.

"Mesmerism! it is simply another word for trickery," he said, confidently.

"Pardon me, but have you ever witnessed any mesmeric phenomena?" asked a man with dark, penetrating eyes. He was a journalist, a friend of one or two of the actors at the Arundel, and haunted the green-room. Cordyl had seen him there before, and did not take to him—perhaps because Tom Hallam, the journalist, had bothered him to accept a play of his. However, a manager cannot afford altogether to offend the press, so Hallam was not interfered with.

Cordyl answered him now rather curtly, however.

"Thousands of times," he said. "What they call phenomena: men eating candles and all that sort of nonsense; but it is all pure trickery."

"Mind, Mr. Hallam is a mesmerist himself," put in the leading lady.

The manager shrugged his shoulders.

"Would you like to see an exhibition of what I can do?" asked the journalist quietly.

Cordyl shrugged his shoulders again.

"Would you care to wager that I can't stop your play to-night by mesmerising the company?" went on Hallam, as quietly as before; and they all laughed, Cordyl with the rest.

"I am quite serious," said the mesmerist, "and if Mr. Cordyl does not object to my making the experiment—as he hardly can do after his assertions—I shall be happy to show him how easy it is to rule the wills of the subjects whom I have been allowed to bring a little under my mesmeric control."

"What should you do to us?" asked the leading lady.

"Simply make a few passes before you went on. I should not, of course, send you into the mesmeric sleep, or you could not go on at all, unless I willed you to, and directed your actions."

She turned to Cordyl.

"Oh! do let him try. There's a dear."

The manager frowned.

"I cannot have my plays humbugged about even for your sake."

"But, according to you, I cannot do anything," said Hallam. "If there is nothing in mesmerism, I cannot affect your play in any way that I can discern. Will you agree to a wager upon it?"

"Come, Mr. Cordyl," said everybody, "you cannot refuse to back your assertions."

"It is too absurd," said the manager.

"But there is no harm in having a little money on it," said Leon Kay, the comedian. "Suppose the experiment is made on the monologue. Mr. Hallam is welcome to make as many mesmeric passes on me as he pleases, but I don't think he will be able to prevent me going through with my piece."

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Leon Kay was acting a monologue, called "The Old Letter," as the first piece every night before the drama. "The Old Letter" had been written to order by a well-known dramatist. Cordyl never under any circumstances risked a play not written by a well-known man, and it was not much of a success. Leon Kay made as much out of it, of course, as anybody possibly could; but it did not go very well for all that.

Perhaps this is why the manager allowed himself to be cajoled and bullied at last into wagering £10 that Hallam could not, while sitting in a box on the following night, prevent Leon Kay from performing the piece, or make him act in any unusual manner during the performance of it.

The wager was put into writing, and both Cordyl and Hallam deposited their £10 with one of the company.

Cordyl called upon Leon Kay to give his promise that he would not play any tricks, but Kay shook his head.

"No, Mr. Cordyl; I know perfectly well that if I did, I should quit your company on Saturday night. And I cannot afford to do that, even if Hallam offered me all his £10 as an inducement."

Cordyl laughed.

"How well you know me," he said.

. . . . . .

Next night every member of the company who had not to be dressing for the drama, was in front of the house, anxious to watch Tom Hallam's experiment. The journalist had made a few impressive passes over Leon Kay after he was dressed, and then went with the manager into a private box a few minutes before the curtain went up.

"Does Kay play nothing but light comedy?" he asked carelessly when they were seated.

Cordyl laughed his rather unpleasant laugh.

"He does not get the chance. They all think they are taking the wrong parts. Kay thinks he has the making of a serious actor—comic men invariably have; but it is lucky for the public that we managers keep them to the parts that they can really do."

"I think I'll make Kay play a serious part to-night," said the journalist thoughtfully; and, as he spoke, the curtain went up.

Everybody who had heard of the experiment to be made glanced up at Hallam, who, as the curtain rose, fixed his dark, penetrating eyes, with a concentrated look of command, on the face of the actor.

Half way across the stage, Kay seemed suddenly to feel the effect of his commanding glance. He had come in, as usual, with the little skip of a comic old man, but now he suddenly stopped dead. The members of the company in front ceased to look at Hallam, and fixed their eyes, full of attention, on Leon Kay. His pause was only for a moment—the ordinary spectators could hardly notice it—then he walked to the seat that he had to take by a small table, but he staggered as he walked with uncertain steps, and, when he reached his place, sank down with his arms on the table and his face on his arm.

"Why, the man is intoxicated!" said Cordyl.

And when Kay spoke, his voice sounded as though the manager was right. Worst of all, he was not speaking his lines, but something quite different. The audience, however, noticed nothing wrong, for the words were coherent and intelligible, although they certainly were not the words of "The Old Letter." The apparent intoxication seemed part of the play. The words were even interesting, and there was a listening hush over the place, which was not usually noticed when "The Old Letter" was played.

"It is a trick," said Cordyl; but Hallam, with his dark eyes fixed on the actor's face, did not seem to hear. His cheeks were unnaturally pale, and drops of cold perspiration stood on his forehead.

"Leon Kay shall suffer for this," growled the manager again; and Hallam, with his white concentrated face, turned to him with sudden excitement.

"Be silent, man, unless you want a *fiasco*. Leave me alone, and I can pull you through. Distract my attention, and see what happens."

The manager glanced at the stage again, in obedience to the journalist's directing finger.

The actor was sitting quite motionless with a vacant look on his face. Cordyl was conscious now that he had stopped speaking in the middle of a speech at the instant that the mesmerist had turned his eyes from the stage.

"For pity's sake go on," he said, conquered; and as Hallam turned back, the play went on again, the astonished manager not speaking another word during the whole performance.

The piece that Kay was giving, a piece Cordyl had never heard before, seemed to him to take hours in delivering. In reality, the monologue was quite a short one, and occupied less than half-an-hour; but the anxious manager, expecting every moment that something might disturb the mesmerist's attention, and cause the piece to break down ingloriously, the minutes passed like hours.

Even in his agony of suspense, the manager could not help noticing Leon Kay's acting. It was the wonderful part of the whole affair. He was completely transformed, and played with a depth and passion that astonished those who knew his ordinary acting in comic character, clever as that was. He had always been able to make the audience laugh. To-night, in the strange little monologue, he was making half the audience cry. When all too soon for everybody but Cordyl, the curtain came down, there was a perfect hurricane of applause, and the actor was called again and again.

Next day there was an enthusiastic notice in one of the chief morning papers, whose critic had been lured there, in time for the monologue, by a note from the leading lady. He could not say enough of the play or the acting. "Without any notice on the programme, and without even changing the scenery of 'The Old Letter,'" he wrote, "there was produced last night, at the Arundel Theatre, a short play as remarkable for its quite abnormal cleverness and beauty, as for the modesty of its anonymous author, who allowed it to appear without even a title." The criticism went on enthusiastically to describe the beauties of the monologue, and then gave a quarter of a column to Leon Kay's acting.

In the afternoon Hallam received a visit at his rooms from Cordyl and the actor who held the stakes. The latter handed over the money, and Cordyl asked if it was possible to get a copy of the monologue which Kay had delivered under the journalist's influence.

"It was a splendid thing," said the manager. "Where on earth did you get it from? I suppose you must have known it yourself word for word?"

"Yes," said Hallam quietly. "It was a little thing I offered you six months ago, which you said would not do at all."

"Well, I hope you will offer me it again," said Cordyl. "The public will expect it now. I only hope Kay will act as well when he is not under your influence."

"Oh, I expect he will," said the mesmerist with a smile; but it was not till a twelvemonth after, when his plays were being asked for everywhere, and Kay had married the leading lady and joined the Lyceum company, that Hallam handed him back his £10, and explained how anxious he and his "chum," Leon Kay, had been to get a hearing, the one for his plays, the other for his serious acting.

"But that pause, when you took your eyes away," stammered Cordyl.

"Oh! the pause was in the play," laughed Hallam.

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THE DRUMMER BOY

HE was a little drummer boy who had been attached to a regiment of skirmishers. His name was Kadour, and he was one of the handful of Turks that had followed Vinoy's army into Paris. He had been in every action of the campaign from Wissembourg to Champigny. He used to flit across the battlefields like a bird of passage, with his iron clappers and *derbouka* (Arabian drum), so lively and restless that he seemed to actually dodge the bullets.

But as winter came on this little Turk, bronzed and reddened by the fire of grape shot, was unable to endure the long night watches. The immobility of the snow proved too much for him, and one morning he was picked up on the banks of the Marne with swollen and frozen feet. He was a long time in the hospital, and it was there that I first saw him.

Sad and patient as a sick dog, the Turk looked about him with a languid eye. Whenever anyone spoke to him he smiled and showed his teeth. That was all he could do, for our language was unknown to him, and he scarcely spoke the *sabir*, that Algerian *patois* composed of Provençal, Italian and Arabian words picked up here and there like shells along the shores of the Latin seas.

Kadour's only amusement was his *derbouka*. From time to time when his memory became very restless it was brought to his bed, and he would be allowed to play upon it, but very softly, on account of the other invalids. Sometimes he would beat the charge, and the gleam of his white teeth changed to a ferocious laugh, or his eyes softened at some Mussulman serenade, his nostrils quivered, and through the nauseous atmosphere of the hospital, amid the phials and bandages, he pictured to himself the orange-laden groves of Blidah and the little Moresks coming from the bath, veiled in white and perfumed with vervaine.

Thus two months passed away. A great many things had happened in Paris during those two months of which Kadour knew absolutely nothing. He had heard beneath his window the tramping of the exhausted and unarmed troops marching into the city, and after that the rolling of cannons from morning till night, and then the tocsin and the cannonade. All of these led him to believe that the war was still going on, and that he would fight again as soon as he might be able.

At last he set out, with his drum on his back, in quest of his company. He did not search long, for some passing troops took him to the Place. After a long interrogatory, from which they were able to learn nothing more than *bono bezef, macache bono*, the general of the day settled the matter by giving him ten francs and a horse, and attached him to his staff.

There was a little of everything in those staffs of the Commune, red coachmen's frocks, Polish mantles, Hungarian coats, sailors' pea jackets, gold, velvet and spangles. With his yellow embroidered blue vest, his turban and *derbouka* the Turk was one of the brightest figures of that wild masquerade.

Happy at finding himself in such good company, intoxicated by the sunlight, the cannonade and the confusion of arms and uniforms, persuaded moreover that the war against Prussia was still being carried on, only with more *abandon*, this innocent little deserter mingled naively in the great Parisian bacchanal and became the celebrity of the day.

Wherever he went he was applauded from the windows. The Commune was so proud at possessing him that it paraded and sported him like a cockade. He would be sent twenty times a day from the Place to the Minister of War, and thence to the Hotel de Ville. For it had been said so often that the marines of the Commune were sham marines and the artillery men sham also. But he was a real Turk; to be convinced of that one had only to remark the monkey-like mobility of countenance and savage agility of body revealed in his fantastic flights about the city.

Kadour felt that something was wanting to complete his happiness. He longed to fight and smell powder. Unfortunately the staffs under the Commune, as under the Empire, were not exposed to fire. When not engaged on parade or in bearing despatches the little Turk passed his time in the Place Vendome, or in the courts of the War Ministry, or in disordered camps encumbered with half-empty brandy casks and broken barrels of pork, amid feasting in the open air wherein one still recalled the famine of the siege.

Too good a Mussulman to take part in these orgies, Kadour soberly and tranquilly held himself aloof, performing his ablutions in a corner and preparing his *kouss kouss* with a handful of semoulia. Then, after a little air on the *derbouka*, he rolled himself up in his cloak and went to sleep on a doorstep amid the flames of the bivouac.

One morning in May Kadour was awakened by a terrible fusillade. The Ministry was in commotion; everyone was frightened.

Mechanically he followed the lead of the others, leaped into his saddle and joined the staff. The streets were crowded with disordered battalions and echoed with shrill trumpet peals. Pavements were torn up and thrown into barricades. Evidently something extraordinary was about to happen. Near the quay the firing was more distinct and the tumult greater.

On the Pont de la Concorde Kadour became separated from the staff. A little further on his horse was taken from him by a very important fellow wearing eight shoulder straps, under the pretence of bearing an important message to the Hotel de Ville.

Furiously the Turk began to run towards the battle, and as he ran he loaded his musket and muttered between his teeth: "*Ma cach bono Brissien*," for he still believed it to be the Prussians who were trying to enter. The bullets were already flying about the obelisque and in the foliage of the Tuileries. At the barricade of the Rue de Rivoli the avengers of Flourens called to him "He! He! Turk! Turk!" They were only a dozen, but Kadour alone was worth an army.

He stood erect on the barricade uttering shrill cries as he fought under a storm of grape shot. At one moment the dense cloud of smoke dispersed a little between two cannon shots, enabling him to see a mass of red pantaloons ranged in the Champs Elysées. Immediately everything became confused.

Suddenly the cannonade ceased. The last cannoneer fled after firing a parting shot. The Turk alone remained. Half concealed, ready for the assault, he fixed his bayonet and awaited the attack.

Amid the dull sound of the charge an officer cried: "Surrender!"

The Turk was bewildered for a moment; he then threw up his musket, and replied:

"*Bono bono Francese*," for he vaguely imagined that this was Faidherbe's or Chanzy's army of deliverance which the Parisians had awaited so long. In the twinkling of an eye the barricade was invaded and he was surrounded.

"Show me your musket!"

The weapon was still hot and smoking.

"Show your hands!"

His hands were blackened with powder, and the innocent Turk exhibited them with his naive smile. Then they pushed him against a wall and—bang!

He died not knowing why.

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A

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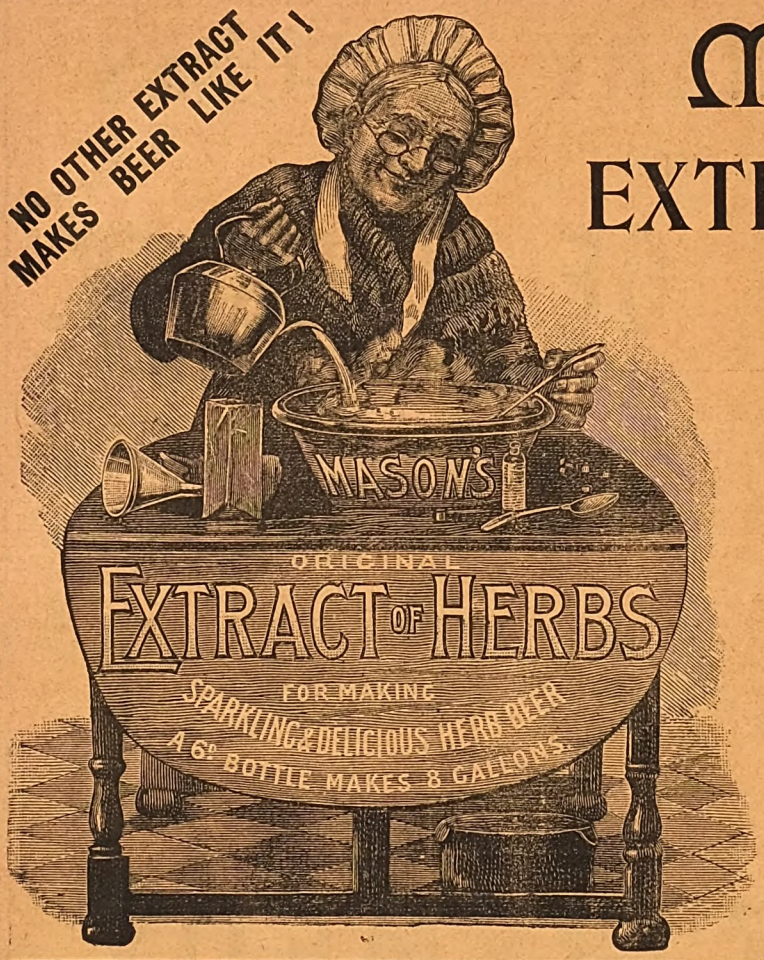

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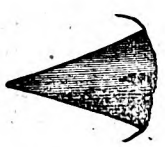

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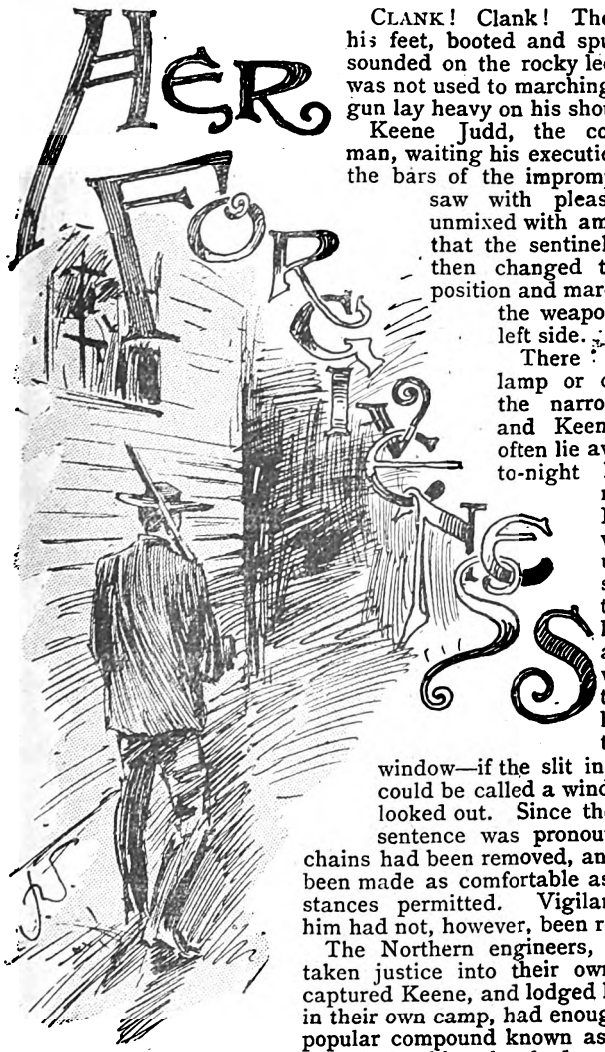
EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 333.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING MAY 18, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.



CLANK! Clank! The ring of his feet, booted and spurred, resounded on the rocky ledge. He was not used to marching, and his gun lay heavy on his shoulder.

Keene Judd, the condemned man, waiting his execution behind the bars of the impromptu gaol, saw with pleasure, not unmixed with amusement, that the sentinel now and then changed the gun's position and marched with the weapon on his left side.

There was no lamp or candle in the narrow room, and Keene didn't often lie awake, but to-night he could not sleep. His prison was the upper storey of the small log house, and there was no torch, so he crept to the window—if the slit in the wall could be called a window—and looked out. Since the day his sentence was pronounced his chains had been removed, and he had been made as comfortable as circumstances permitted. Vigilance over him had not, however, been relaxed.

The Northern engineers, who had taken justice into their own hands, captured Keene, and lodged him there in their own camp, had enough of that popular compound known as sand in their anatomy to carry through the thing they had undertaken. All day and all night an armed man walked the narrow ledge of the hillside on which the trappers had thrown the little hut as wasps build their nests on the surface of a side wall. To-night Keene watched him as he paced the length of the prison, watched the figure reverse itself and begin again the patient, persistent promenade.

Presently the guard looked up, aware by instinct that the prisoner's eyes were upon him, and as he did so met Keene's steady gaze. A look of resolution passed into his young features; he nodded, and the condemned man nodded back again.

"It air a fine night," called out Keene, "but it air not a night for sleepin'. I am a fair good sleeper, but not of moonlight nights. Ef you air sleepy now, supposin' we swap places? You come up here en have a nap en let me keep guard. You air young, you see, en need sleep more'n I do."

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John Young laughed cordially in response to Keene's guffaw, but he kept up his regular tread.

"I can't sleep in the moonlight either," he called back, "though it's mighty civil in you to offer to give me the chance. They tell me it's unlucky."

He halted in front of the window, and as he did so he thought of how Admiral Byng took his accustomed dose for the scurvy the morning of his execution. On Friday Keene was to die, and this was Wednesday night; but it wasn't worth while to try and laugh him out of his prenatal and hereditary opinions.

"It air unlucky," said Keene with emphasis. He had come forward and was leaning against the hastily constructed bars. The engineers trusted their prisoner to the vigilance of the guard rather than to the security of the hut. Its single downstairs room had a dirt floor and no window, so they lodged Keene in the upper storey and slept in their own camp under canvas about fifty yards away, under the lee of the hill.

"I guess the idea that it's unlucky," said John, "came from your not being able to see straight in the moonlight. You can't tell your dog from your bird sometimes till you've fired and heard him howl. The fact is, it does make things look out of proportion. Now, this isn't a very interesting place by daylight—just the crooked red road on the edge of the precipice and the mountains piled up all about it; but to-night it's like—well—well, I don't know what it is like."

It might have been created that night for him and Keene. The sky, far lighter than the earth, gleamed with a blue pallor; the moon, a globe of yellow, threw long splashes of light across the eastern heavens, like the light in the tail of a comet, or the rays of a magic lantern, not mingling with the surface colour, but cutting across it as a rushing river cuts through a plain.

On the hillside the trees grew in mass, heavy and dark, but spurs of white rock jutted out at intervals, making rents in the sombre green garment. Above, and on every side, the circling hills rested as billows rest on the crest of the waves, their blue was the blue of a vapour and unreal as things look in the mists of fluctuating shadows; his own, as he caught a glimpse of it, was an armed giant, at whose spectre he started back, listening with quick heart beats.

For the engineers knew that at no moment was Keene secure. Barring the wives, sweethearts and parents of the men whom the freebooter had "got even with"—to use his own expression — the Tennessee mountaineers were not grateful for the foreign interference which was to rid the Gap settlement of its tyrant.

Keene was the most popular man in the district, and at any hour, now that his execution was close at hand, a rescue might be attempted. John felt in his pocket for the whistle whose shrill call would wake his companions sleeping over there in the clump of pines. There were only eight of them, and they had come to prospect for a railway, not to execute lynch laws, but they found that Keene Judd objected to their proposed peaceful employment.

One morning they received by one of his henchmen an ill-spelt letter in Keene's laboured chirography, ordering them to quit or die; but the engineers preferred the middle course. They stayed on and warned him they should fight.

When one of their corps, a young fellow from Louisville, was found dead a few days afterwards, shot through the heart, they set out to keep their word. Their opportunity came rather unexpectedly, and not in the manner most pleasing to

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Keene was sauntering down the road.

adventurous spirits. It was on a Sunday morning, a still October day flooded with sunshine, and Keene was sauntering down the road, a bunch of red berries stuck in his soft grey hat, and dressed in his Sunday suit of blue jeans and long cowhide boots.

But the engineers could not afford to wait for the wily and popular hero to get himself in fighting trim. Keene was a difficult subject, as the photographers say, and would have to be taken on the snap, or not at all. The engineers walked up to him in a body and he threw up his hands. They were empty; so were his boot legs, his pockets, his coat-tails, and his sleeves.

The capturers walked him in their midst into their camp; heard his laconic statement that he "reckoned his time had come," and sentenced him to be hanged within ten days, without evidence, except the gaps in various households, which, it was known, were occasioned by a difference of opinion between the prisoner and the persons who now occupied places in the village graveyard.

John Young (Young John, the other engineers called him) had been hot in the pursuit of Keene, and firm in voting his death. The responsibility of executing a fellow-mortal without the jurisdiction of the law was a heavy one, but, as Virginius said to his little daughter, there was no way but this. Before a jury, Keene could prove a character as spotless as an untarnished shield fresh from the forge. John, therefore, had taken his share like the man he was, for all his sensitive mouth and his quick colour, and for three nights out of seven, for the last week, he had shouldered his rifle and walked between the hours of midnight and 5 a.m. in front of the gaol.

They were going to draw lots for a choice of executioner, but Young John had no idea, did the lot fall to him, of shirking his duty in the matter of hanging Keene Judd. His resoluteness astonished Marion, his chum at college, who had come with him to do prospecting for the new railway, of which John's father, a New York capitalist, was president, and which was to open this remote region to commerce and civilisation.

At college John was a dreamer. He edited the college journal and loved poetry. To see him pacing up and down before the cell of a condemned criminal looked odd. Marion confessedly hated his own job of guard-mounting, and wished the business over every hour of his life.

But though John was going to do his own part he was not the less sorry for Keene. He looked up at the narrow aperture where the tall, superbly-formed figure stood. The moonlight was playing on the bars that separated him from the deep, free woods. Only two more nights of moonlight in which to tempt Providence with eccentric dealings with him. The third would find him sleeping, fast and sound, no matter how brightly it shone upon his upturned face.

Young John put the whistle back into his pocket. No, it was his own shadow of which he was afraid. Afraid—he afraid? He was young enough for the hot blood to mount his cheek at the shaping of the word in his mental vocabulary.

"John!" It was Keene who called out to him as he made his four hundred and fiftieth turn at the corner. "When will the next number of the story paper git here?"

"Next Saturday," said John. He halted again beneath the window, always glad to be civil to his charge.

"That lets me out," said the condemned man despondently. "I'll never know ef that feller catched that gurl or no. I wished it could have come Thursday night. I dunno how it is, but the less time a man air got the heavier it hangs on his han's. I 'lowed es I'd pass Thursday night, which air boun' to be a long night, readin' about Lord Ernest en his vanished bride."

He sighed heavily, and John sighed in sympathy. He said nothing, however, but resumed his march.

"I love ye, John," the prisoner drawled as he passed on. "But I've got my mark on ye, en thet's a pity. Ef ye wasn't so mighty young, John, ye'd be an all-fired powerful man, but ye ain't ever goin' to git your growth. I've got my mark on ye, an' ye will always be Young John."

John laughed; his youth gave him a feeling of security, but the warning quickened his senses.

"Good night," said the prisoner, "I reckon I'll take a mouthful of sleep, es ye ain't so powerful interestin' es to keep me awake," and John renewed his march.

It was nearing midnight. The moon had climbed over the ridge and was riding high in mid-heaven. A white cloud rose from the narrow valley between the parallel lines of mountains—it looked like the veil of a bride, and the river shimmered and gleamed like a girl blushing and quivering beneath her lover's gaze. The dark hills stirred under the sweep of the wind. Down the pass the brow of Greylock shone out like a great knob of silver, a transparent drapery veiled the sky on either side of the path of the moon.

Hark! John arrested himself and stood all attention. Suddenly the twigs of an early frost-bitten bough emitted a cracking sound as if they had been put aside by out-reaching hands. In the clear mountain air, on which even the hoarse calls of the nighthawk fell like the clatter of nails upon a piece of tin, each note, distinct, though clashing down in broken fragments, he heard the approach of stealthy footsteps.

Again he felt for his whistle, though if the rescuer were alone he would risk the encounter. He drew the trigger of his gun and pointed it to the thicket whence the sound came. "Halt," he cried in his clear, high voice. The bushes parted. No rescuer, but a fair young woman stood there. John drew his breath.

She was a tall young woman, and held herself in the simple majesty of one who knows no artificial trammels. Her brown feet were bare, her supple waist, her soft round bust had known no bonds, but the straight gown that had taken the natural lines of her figure and clung to it, as the drapery of the winged goddess of victory clings to the woman beneath it. She had dark, brown eyes, and hair we call a rich auburn, that held the sun's warm rays, even in the pallid moonlight, in a reminiscent fashion. The small, imperious mouth and low brow, the aquiline nose with its delicate nostrils, the flood of warm, bashful colour that flooded her cheeks when the startled youth looked at her in amazement, all bespoke a nature too proud and too modest for her errand.

"Who am I, what do I want?"

She imitated his tone so that the young colour came to his cheek.

"Ef you don't know me, I reckon you ken fine out who I be frum——frum——Mr. Marion."

She started back into the bushes with the offended air of a tragedy queen.

John was about to dart after her, but he remembered his duty. He looked up at the window. Keene had gone back into the room.

"Keene! Keene! Asleep?" he called out, still keeping his eye on the bushes. Keene got up, after a pause, and came to the window.

"What?" he asked.

"No, nothing. I thought maybe you were asleep."

"Well, if ye did think so, I would be obleeged to ye ef ye'd

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keep on thinkin' so. I were asleep for the first time for many a night, en the las', I reckon."

It was the first surly word Keene had ever given him. John felt ashamed. Certainly he had no business disturbing the dreams of a man who had so little time to dream. Keene went back, and trusting to the fickleness of woman, John called softly:

"I say, just one minute. I'm short-sighted, you know; come out into the moonlight—oh, do, please."

The anxiety in his tone had the desired effect. The bushes parted again and the girl stood a few feet from before him.

"Oh," he said; "oh, it is you. I never dared think it was you after the dreadful way you treated me. How in the world did you get here? Did you know I was here? Did you come to see me?"

"I ain't got but one tongue betwixt my teeth," she answered coldly. "I karn't answer all them questions at onct. I live down in the valley miles an' miles from hyer. I walked all night. When ye spoke to me in the valley that day I didn't know ye frum a side of sole leather, an' that other Mister, he larffed, he did," she added with resentment. "I know'd ye was hyer guardin' of Keene Judd. You heard what Keene Judd did to we 'un, I reckon?"

She lifted her liquid eyes to his face awaiting an answer. John nodded; the mist began to clear. He knew too well the modesty and the rustic unapproachableness of the mountain maiden not to be puzzled and astonished at a midnight visit from Serena Hall, the most arrogant beauty in all Shene County. With what scorn she had walked away, not even vouchsafing him a look out of her untamed proud eyes, when he had ventured to offer her a treat of sweetmeats that day in the village; and how Marion had laughed at his discomfiture.

He had a boyish wish that old Marion could see her now, but that was quickly dissipated. He knew by his quick intuition, which was as sure as a divining rod, it was not love of him that brought the mountain Diana into the deep wood by moonlight.

He recollected the well-known killing of Talt Hall, Serena's father, a murder so daring and so open that in any other country the criminal would have been hanged within—well, within five years at least—if he had not proved an alibi, or become insane, or been pardoned. John remembered the law's delays and his back stiffened with renewed resolution.

John caught her as she fell.

"He shot him thar in the corn field," said Serena, "him, a pore ole man, mos' forty years ole, I reckon, an' he died in his sins."

"It air a pity Judd air got so much time to repent," she added passionately. "Likely he will git religion an' die happy an' go to glory, an' them he shot in their sins air in torment. It ain't fair," she ejaculated with fire in her eyes. "It ain't fair, I say. He shan't git religon. Air he got religion yet?" she asked suspiciously.

"Not that I know of," John hastened to answer, "I'm only here at night. I haven't talked to him about—about his execution."

"Yes, I know ye are only hyer at night. I couldn't er come (she blushed and her voice trembled; John felt a thrill pass over him) when the others were hyer, nor that Mister that larffed, an' I didn't mean 'em to know it, not anybody, so I came at night. I wanted to see him. I wanted him to know I was hyer an'—glad." She lingered on the word. "We on the mountains air afeard of Keene Judd, all but me. They air afeard of him hyer in goal, they'd be afeard of his haunt," she laughed scornfully. "They sont word they don't bar no grudge against him for shootin' my father—all but me. But I wan' to see him. I wan' to see him an' tell him jes' once how I scorns and hates him an' how I don't forgive him for shootin' thet ole man down in sight of his wife an' children. He shan't die happy," she called out in a shrill tone that woke the echoes. The uncanny light touched the bare limbs of a lightning-blighted tree. It looked like an animated ghost of vengeance, beckoning with its bony arms.

"Hush, hush," said John, impulsively. "You needn't feel so. It's not right to cherish hatred even for our bitterest enemies."

A soft glow of enthusiasm came over him. It would be sweet to quell that proud spirit and lead it into the higher life.

"He will suffer for his sins soon enough, but not through any revenge of ours."

Unconsciously he had classed himself with her, but the "we," as it fell from his lips, had a tender tone.

"I have not one feeling of enmity to Keene Judd," he added solemnly, "although I am here to see the right done by him as well as by us."

"I shall not res' till I see him," said the girl. "They tole

A fair young woman stood there.

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me he never slep' none lately, but stood up thar at the winder all night long. I wan' jes' one word with him. I wan' say jes' one word. 'Keene Judd,' I wan' say, 'you shan't git religion en go to glory while them you killed is burnin' in fire that is not quenched.'"

"No, no," urged John. "I can't let you tell him that"—he had stepped from the door, and his gun hung slack on his shoulder. "He is asleep, poor soul, for the first time in six nights. I can't wake him. It isn't right—it isn't human to wake him for you to curse him. His guard will be trebled to-morrow night—it's his last, you know, and he'll be nervous, likely; to-night he has only me, and he shall sleep. Besides——"

The girl began to sob. John was not used to hear a woman cry. His heart thumped painfully.

"Ye think—ye think I ought to furgive him; I ought to let him die happy? When he kilt the kindes', bes' old man, an' him in his sins. Oh, I karn't. I karn't."

The noble youth swayed like a young tree in a storm. All the nobility of Young John's nature rose in a leap.

"No!" he cried. "No, Serena, I am not fit to preach to you or to anybody. I am not good myself. But, oh! there is nothing so high, so holy, as forgiveness, nothing half so sweet. If only you will cast revenge out of your heart, right now—cast it out — and, instead of sending Keene Judd word you curse him, let me tell him when he wakes that you came here and sent him your pardon!"

She drew his head towards her.

As he uttered the last words he saw the girl stagger, steady herself, and almost reel.

"It hurts me, it hurts me!" she moaned, "hyer, hyer" (she tugged at her breast), "but—ef ye say I mus'—I will!"

She stretched out her arms, tottered, and John caught her as she fell, clasping him in a close embrace. Tremblingly his lips touched hers. He had not meant it, but the gesture—that unconscious gesture of outstretched arms—he could but obey it. The fair head lay heavy on his shoulder, the beautiful arms were folded about his body. How heavily she lay! Was she dead? He laid his head upon her bosom; he could not feel her breathe, but the heart—it beat tumultuously. He tried to raise her, but she was taller and even heavier than John. She lay like a stone.

"Serena," he whispered hoarsely. He could not call for aid, for her simple confidence in his protection and his secrecy had made her sacred; the other engineers were good fellows, but they would never understand; Marion would laugh, and her good name be despoiled.

"Serena! Wake, Serena!"

The girl had fallen where she stood, some ten feet from the ledge on which the gaol was built. She stirred, like a child asleep. Again he felt the sweep of her encircling arms.

"Ef ye say I mus' furgive him, ef ye say I mus' let him die in peace"—closer and closer she drew his head towards her, that in her maiden modesty she might whisper, though there were no listeners to overhear the dear confession—"ef ye says so, I reckon"—she drew a long breath—"I reckon I mus'."

Keene, who had by this time torn the bars of the window from their fastenings and stepped to the ground as lightly as a down feather floats in the air, had just snatched up John's gun, which had fallen when he rushed to Serena. For one instant he stood as a deer stands in the midst of the forest, all his senses quickened to catch some warning sound ere he bounds into the thicket. He made a quick motion of his hand towards Serena and was gone.

John never knew how long those tender circling arms bound him in an embrace that revealed to him his sudden dearness. A hot blush mounted his face and he tried to draw himself gently from her. Poor child! what had she not told in her overwhelming excitement and emotion!

Like a flash it came over him. His station, education, wealth, her poverty and ignorance. He saw the great gulf, but it was not too wide for his strong limbs to overlap in impetuous generosity.

"Serena!" he was held in a vice. "Serena, no; don't be afraid or ashamed, dear heart; I will protect you." He bent his lips to hers.

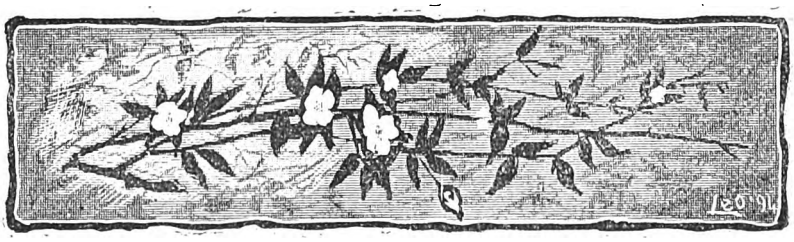
"Ye perteck me!" Serena sprang to her feet. "Me!" The moonlight streamed over her.

"Ye little miserbul weak critter." She rushed forward and pressed him down as he made a bewildered movement to rise. "Ye little mealy-mouthed preacher, ye, with your pious words en your mean actions. You perteck me? I'm Keene Judd's wife, thet's who I am. Does ye think I'd come arfter enny man but my husband? He kilt my dad because he crossed him about my merryin' him. Pick yerself up ef ye know enough. Ye gun?——"

John had got to his feet in some fashion and stood there looking from Serena to the barrel of a six-shooter held on a level with his eyes.

"Keene's got your gun, en you'd es well hunt for some uf your scatterin' brains, ye silly fool ye. Ef them partners uf yours wants to hang ennybody—they can hang ye. Ye'll have to walk down thar to wake 'm to do it, for I've got your whistle."

She brushed the long branches aside, and, like the spirit of the woods, swept out of sight into the deep forest.



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"SEVEN o'clock, sir. You haven't a minute to spare."

Such were the words that aroused me from a confused dream, in which horses, silk jackets, saddles and bridles were mixed up in indescribable medley. My awakening was sudden, but at the same time complete, for the servant's first words reminded me that I had to catch the ten minutes to eight train to Alveley, and there was consequently no time to "turn over" and indulge in that extra quarter of an hour which is so acceptable under such circumstances.

A glimpse at the weather from a hastily opened casement made me feel inclined to turn into bed again, for in the dim morning light I could see prospects of a wretched day, the air being fearfully cold, while an irritating drizzle was falling sufficient to damp the ardour of an even more enthusiastic sportsman than I.

However, I had given my word to Tom Dunkerton that I would ride for him in the Alveley Open Steeplechase, so, making the best of a bad job and a hasty toilet, I hurriedly crammed a confused heap of racing-breeches, boots, saddle-cloths and odd leads, together with a favourite five-pound saddle, into a capacious saddle-bag, bolted some breakfast, and was soon off through the rain to the station.

My time happened to be some ten minutes in advance of the station clock, the train was a quarter of an hour late, and the station-master seemed to take it as a personal affront that he should have to book a passenger at such an early hour, so when at length I took my seat in the train it is scarcely surprising that I felt on anything but good terms with myself, and entertained uncomfortable apprehensions that everything would go wrong.

Nor was the mission on which I was bound a particularly satisfactory one. Full well I knew that the result of the Alveley Open Steeplechase—of little account, as it was esteemed by the sporting world at large—meant a very great deal at least to one person. My old friend and schoolfellow, Tom Dunkerton, had been having a hard time of it for some seasons past, and, having at length outrun the patience of the Jews, was obliged to "go for the gloves," and had elected to sink or swim by the success or otherwise of his mare Lavinia in the chief event of the Alveley Meeting.

A general favourite with both sexes, Tom was one of those men of whom it is said "they are nobody's enemies but their own." Generous to a fault, of blameless character in all his dealings, and associating only with the better of the county families, Tom had found it impossible to cope successfully with the chicanery and low cunning too often encountered on the turf. Yet, though year by year he found his patrimony diminishing and his estates becoming more and more encumbered, he was unable to drag himself away from its pleasures, and still kept open house in the style which had made the hospitality of Dunkerton Hall a byeword.

"Molethorpe Junction! Change here for Alveley and all stations for the North."

My musings were thus rudely awakened, and I was quickly on the platform with my luggage. There were no signs, however, of the train which I had expected to find waiting to convey us on our journey, so I duly made inquiries on the matter.

"How long will the train be which goes to Alveley, porter?"

"Alveley, sir? It left ten minutes ago."

"What! Do you mean to say that it doesn't wait for the train from the West?"

"No, sir; though that generally gets in first. You see, it was twenty minutes late this morning, sir; and that's how you missed it."

"What time's the next, then?"

"Nothing for Alveley afore twelve o'clock now, sir."

Here was a nice mess to be in. I had so arranged matters that I should be at Alveley before that time, and thus have had a chance of walking over the course, to which I was a stranger. The next train would not land me at the station until 1.30 p.m., the time fixed for the first race, while the Open Steeplechase—in which I was to ride—was set an hour and a half later, so that I was left a very narrow margin, especially if, as had been my experience hitherto, the train failed to keep its time.

However, there was nothing to do but to grin and bear it and heap objurgations on railways in general and branch lines in particular.

Time passes somehow, even at a third-class railway station minus a refreshment room and every other resource of civilisation, and by the time I had read every word of my newspaper, and diligently studied the advertisements on the station hoardings, we were *en route* again. This time we rattled along in fine style, and I mentally shook hands with myself when the train pulled up at Alveley platform at exactly the time appointed—half-past one.

I was quickly out with my bagful of leads, etc., and, in response to a "K'rect kyard, sir, who says a kyard?" from a weather-beaten individual in a fur cap, duly purchased the necessary piece of pasteboard, which was being rapidly reduced to a pulp owing to the adverse nature of the elements.

"How far to the course?" I inquired of this worthy.

"Four miles, captin'; but you can do it in three by taking the cut across the fields."

"Cut across the fields, be hanged! Do you suppose I'm going to cut across fields with this confounded bag? I suppose I can get a cab or conveyance of some kind?"

On this head I was beginning to feel just the least bit nervous. There was hardly a soul about, and going outside the station I found that whatever Alveley might be, town or village, there was no human habitation in sight, except an unimposing-looking structure labelled Railway Tavern.

I inquired for the landlord of this establishment, but again was doomed to disappointment, for both he and the landlady—and, I shrewdly suspected, most of the inhabitants of the place—had gone to the races, taking their only available vehicle with them.

"Can't I get a trap anywhere?" I inquired, despairingly, of the maid-of-all-work left in charge.

"There was some traps, sir, and 'buses met the last train, but they're all on the course by this time. You can have the wheelbarrow to take your things up in, if you can get anybody to push it."

This was evidently my last resource, so, pressing my friend the card-seller into my service with promise of considerable largesse, we started on our long trudge. It was by this time two o'clock, and as we only had an hour in which to cover the four miles, we settled into a good pace, the gentleman in the fur cap keeping up with me by means of a gait which, for want of a better word to define it, I must describe as a shuffle.

Before we had gone a quarter of a mile, however, he had had enough of it. Seated on the handle of the barrow, and wiping the perspiration from his manly brow with his greasy cap, he expressed himself as "dead beat." If he couldn't stay this easy course, how was he to do the four miles?

There was only one way out of it. I was young and in the pink of condition, so, seizing the handles, I took his place between the shafts, and started off at a steady trot, leaving the card-seller limping slowly in the rear.

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According to the ancient saw it is a long lane that has no turning, but I really believed I had found one at last. However, just as my watch showed me it was five minutes to three, I came to a bend in the road, and saw the welcome flags and booths. Shouldering my bag, and shouting to my companion, who was just in sight, to look to the barrow and see me after the next race, I scrambled through a gap in the fence, and arrived on the course just as the numbers were being hoisted for the Open Steeplechase.

Making for the paddock gate, almost the first person I saw was Tom Dunkerton, his face white with despair.

"Thank Heavens you've come, Jack; I thought you were lost. Jump into your things; you haven't a moment to lose. Put Lavinia's number up, Mr. Ashton, will you, please?"

This to the clerk of the course, who, after considerable grumbling, gave the necessary instructions, and No. 9 was added to the others already in the frame. While hastily dressing I found that Goldseeker, an animal well known for his prowess in this description of race, was a raging hot favourite, good odds being laid on his proving successful.

Nor was this state of affairs altogether unjustified, for the big brown was a veritable "Triton among the minnows" in the hunter class. As a two-year-old he had run the subsequent winner of the St. Leger to half a length, and being purchased for eight hundred guineas, after winning a valuable stake at Derby, had—owing, it was supposed, to unsoundness—taken leave of the turf, only to reappear some three seasons later as a duly qualified "hunter."

The others, I found, were mostly local animals of no great pretensions, and if Tom Dunkerton's estimate of Lavinia's merits was not grossly exaggerated, I did not fear much danger from them.

"Now, then, if you're going to weigh out for this race, sharp's the word. Time's up already, and we can't keep the starter waiting all day."

"All right, Mr. Ashton. I'm ready. Put ten-eleven in the scales. His weight's ten-twelve; that's a pound for the bridle."

My mount was standing at the paddock gate, and I was not long getting into the saddle. I had not had time to take stock of her, though she had tried to shake hands with me in demonstrative fashion with her near hind leg as I was re-adjusting the girths.

"Odd's I'll take! I'll take 5 to 2! Eight to one, bar two."

Such were the shouts which greeted my ears as we emerged from the paddock, Tom being at the mare's head.

"You've got something to beat, Jack, but I know you'll do your best. I've got a pot on her, and it's all over with me if it boils over. You must ride your own race, but make the weight tell on the favourite in the last mile."

I answered him as cheerfully as possible, and commissioned him to invest a "tenner" for myself, "just for luck," as I put it.

I had to scurry to the post as quickly as possible, for I could see the white flag was up, and but for the fractiousness of a liver-coloured chestnut, who would not join his horses, I might have been left behind altogether.

A few words of remonstrance from the starter, and I was amongst the others, waiting until the vagaries of the chestnut had worn them out. At length he became more tractable, and with a "Now, turn round! Go!" from the gentleman with the scarlet emblem, we were on our journey.

By this time the drizzle and sleet with which the day began had turned to a storm of snow, and the surroundings were about as unsuitable for a steeplechase as can well be imagined. It would have been impossible for me to make the running had I wished to do so, for I knew absolutely nothing of the course, except that we had to go twice round. The snow made it a matter of impossibility to see from one fence to another, and altogether I began to feel that I should not be sorry when we had arrived at the journey's end.

My first sensation after starting was that I was riding a beautiful mover with plenty of power, and that we were progressing smoothly over ridge and furrow. The next moment, however, and my heart was in my mouth, for at the first fence Lavinia had taken off a shade too soon, and, blundering on landing, had very nearly sent me over her head.

The little mare, however, recovered herself in splendid fashion, and was soon going again, though we had now dropped last, some lengths behind the leaders. We lay in this position over the next two fences, but on the far side of the course a sound piece of grass gave an opportunity of getting on terms, which I quickly availed myself of.

The two leaders were Prospero and an Irish Birdcatcher horse, the pair taking their fences side by side, half a dozen lengths in front of Phantom and Country Boy, while I lay next, clear of the favourite, who was going great guns, the others having already come to grief.

We now came to a very nasty obstacle—a big ditch on the take-off side, with a guard-rail in front and a substantial gorse hedge on the other side. The mare took it with ever so much to spare, jumping in the air as if on a voyage to the clouds. A slight peck, a touch from the spur, and we were righted again and holding our own over the plough.

We were now nearing the water-jump in front of the stand, and, anxious to show to advantage before the spectators, the leaders quickened their pace. Not being used to taking such obstacles at this rate of speed, though clever hunters, both Prospero and the unnamed one came to grief, much to the delight of the rustics, who assuredly would have been greatly disappointed with the sport had there been no falls.

We were now reduced to a quartette. Goldseeker was still pounding away with long, easy stride, making light of his thirty-seven, while Mr. Cunningham, who had the mount, was sitting as much at his ease as if in an arm-chair. The big horse took most of his fences in his stride—a reprehensible habit, I have always thought—and seemed to be merely playing with his opponents.

My mount was still going smoothly enough, and, having acquired confidence, repeated none of the mistakes of the first round. By the determined way she laid hold of her bit I felt I might take a liberty; so, when on the back stretch the second time, I let her out, and quickly established a strong lead. Turning slightly in the shadow I saw Goldseeker quickly pass the other two, and come in pursuit.

We were now again at the open ditch, and I knew if the mare took as long over it as at the first attempt it would seriously prejudice her chance, as we now had less than half a mile to go. Consequently, racing at full pelt, I drove her at it, trusting to luck for her to rise. Crash went the binders, but we went through all right still in possession of a three lengths' lead of Goldseeker, with the others now out of sight.

Next came the turning point into the straight marked by a white flag. Come what might, I had determined to have the inside position here, and so sent the mare along for all she was worth. Mr. Cunningham was also alive to the situation, and, rapidly overhauling me, we jumped the last fence side by side. Perhaps he had underrated the little bay mare after all.

The big horse was now fairly doing his level best. He covered a tremendous amount of ground in his stride, but in this instance that quality proved a drawback, as, being on the outside, his rider was unable to hold him together at the turn, which was very sharp, thereby losing three or four lengths. This cost him the race, for though Mr. Cunningham rode a grand finish, and got to my girths, he could get no nearer, and the judge's verdict was, "Won by half a length."

On returning to weigh in my fingers were so benumbed with cold that I could not take the saddle from my horse, a duty which the trainer had to perform; but after Mr. Ashton had called out a cheery "All right," I was more than rewarded for any personal discomfort I had undergone by Tom Dunkerton's warm thanks and congratulations, and the information that he had taken me £100 to £10 about the mare.

Altogether I found that Master Tom had won between fifteen and sixteen thousand pounds, having backed the mare all over the country at starting price; and for the time his difficulties were at an end.

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A PRIME DUCK

It was the third day of our ocean voyage. The *City of Chester* had slipped her moorings on Wednesday, but it was not until Saturday that I was positively aware of anything except the miserable lurching of the ship and my own woe-begoneness.

During that time I had persistently endeavoured to reach the deck for fresh air, and had been as invariably forced, at short intervals, to seek the seclusion which the cabin grants, so that, when I was not actually seasick, I was practically unable to use my legs or observe anything but the swaying to and fro of my overcoat as it followed, from its hook on the wall, the motions of the vessel, or the meanderings of my bag as it tobogganned across the floor.

But on Saturday I awoke with a start, and was surprised to feel such a gnawing at the pit of my stomach that I instantly rose, and finding my strength of limb increasing in proportion to my hunger made my way to the dining-room, where a few half recuperated-looking specimens sat at breakfast.

Just as I began on my second chop, a cabin door opening into the salle-à-manger closed softly, and two people (a man and a woman) slipped into a couple of vacant seats facing me.

Glancing at them I observed that the lady was remarkably fine looking, yet she carried herself with the air of an invalid. Her hair, which was short, hung in fluffy curls of golden yellow over her forehead and covered even the tips of her ears.

The man? Pah! He disgusted me at once. Seasick and a lover; horrible combination! Evidently they were on their bridal tour, and the groom's head was too unsteady to take his seat without falling over the table.

"My dear," whispered this disgusting creature, "will you have some biscuits?" He looked across the table as he spoke, and, meeting my eye, scowled.

His wife, following the direction of her husband's glance, blushed, and dropped her fringed lids modestly upon her cheeks—not, however, with a scowl.

I took a long time over that breakfast. My appetite was simply enormous, and I was repaid by catching her name (which was Laura) and his (which was Dan).

Rising with a backward glance at my charming *vis-à-vis*, I found my way to the ship's list of passengers. On it were recorded Mr. and Mrs. Daniel La Farge, Chicago.

On reaching the deck I found the captain and a male passenger discussing a remarkable murder and robbery which had been, for some time, creating quite a sensation, and I paused near them, for the matter was one in which I was personally concerned.

It was, in fact, this same business which had caused my hasty voyage to America, for I had received orders from headquarters the day before the *City of Chester* sailed to secure my berth at once, and following certain clues hunt for the missing criminal in New York, which city it was believed he had reached by a steamer of the same line a few days earlier.

"I'll bet £5," remarked the passenger, "that Delibes is still in Liverpool, near the scene of the murder. This flying to the four quarters of the earth in search of escaped criminals is all a mistake. Take the case of Longstreet, for instance——." He paused, meeting my eye, and smiled, including me in the conversation.

"Here's a man," he remarked politely, "who probably never saw a murderer or a detective in his life, but who knows what he's about. Let's have an unbiassed opinion: Where do you think one should look for the villain who, after robbing the Liverpool Bank, got away with his plunder?"

I was about to reply, when, hearing the soft rustle of a woman's garments, I turned, and beheld my handsome *vis-à-vis* at breakfast standing with one hand on the railing of the poop deck. She lingered as if interested, yet fearful of intruding. Daniel was not with her.

"Well," I assented, "you are right, sir, and I perfectly agree with you. The Longstreet case, which we all recall and you were about to cite, is a similar incident."

The Captain, who had been silently listening with his eye upon the fo'castle, smiled with subtle meaning.

"I'm not a betting man," said he slowly, "but I do not object to hazarding an opinion, if you like. I believe that Delibes is——," he hesitated, folded his arms and glanced down at the deck—"on the whole, I postpone my judgment as to his whereabouts."

With these words he turned on his heel and walked towards the stern of the vessel.

As the week passed and we neared the coast, I became more and more fascinated by Mrs. La Farge. There was something especially fetching in the way she eluded me, yet drew me on by a hundred witching coquetries. One evening she had gone so far as to drop her handkerchief at my feet, in passing, yet when I had picked up the delicate piece of embroidery and restored it to her—after touching it to my lips—she had thanked me coldly, and taken "Dan's" arm.

Already, against the horizon, a green strip of land was visible, and the passengers, alert and excited to catch the first glimpse of land, were all on deck.

As I stood at the mouth of the companion talking to Mr. West, the first mate, I observed the Captain descending the steps which led from the poop to the main deck to approach me.

"A word with you, Mr. Z.," said he, murmuring an apology to the mate.

"Well, sir," I enquired curiously, "what is it?"

The Captain's eyes twinkled as he flashed them upon me, exclaiming laughingly:

"You are a prime duck!"

I flushed, too angry to express my astonishment.

"It's none of my business," continued he, trenchantly, "if you choose to look down your nose and allow one of the greatest rascals living to slip through your fingers; but I would advise you to keep your weather eye open."

"What?" I exclaimed. "Whom do you mean?"

"My dear Z——," replied the Captain, "Time is money. I have none to waste. Look at me—be spry! Have we never met before——."

In the light of an awakened idea I scrutinised his face.

"Aha! I see it all! Why, you have shaved off your beard since I got you out of that row with those Italians. But this rascal? Surely you do not mean to tell me that Delibes is in the steerage——."

"Sh!" whispered the Captain, turning on his heel and whistling a tune, but glancing, at the same time, over his shoulder at someone who was leaning over the poop rail.

It was Laura La Farge.

A fresh breeze was blowing, and the yellow curls that fringed her forehead were holding high carnival. From my position below her I beheld one ringlet dance away from her temples, leaving exposed a jagged red scar.

With one bound I reached the upper deck, but I was too late, for Delibes, who realised at once that the game was up, was not a man to suffer the penalty of the law when an easier death lay within his grasp.

Seizing the clinging skirts, which impeded his motions, he darted, like a flash, towards the stern of the vessel, and, ere I could reach him, had climbed the handrail, where he hung for a moment, suspended by his hands.

Then, as I sprang forward, he loosened his hold, and dropped like a log into the foaming water below.

"A man overboard!" I yelled, while on all sides there was an echo of "A lady overboard!" Fast scurrying feet—a wild effort to rescue the suicide, and a continuous threnody from "Dan," who made a brave struggle to keep up appearances.

But Mrs. La Farge was no bungler, either in the art of drowning herself or murdering others. When we found her she (or he) had passed beyond the bars of human jurisdiction.

It only remains for me to add that "Dan" was no criminal, but merely a dummy, hired for the occasion, and that among my intimate friends (to whom this story is familiar) I still retain the sobriquet bestowed upon me by the Captain, of "A Prime Duck."

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THE TENTH OF JUNE.

By John K. Leys, *Author of "In the Toils," "My Hindoo Friend," &c., &c.*

Illustrated by Raymond Potter.

SUMMARY

Geoffrey Dundas—A young barrister.
Sir Arthur Chetwynd—A retired general and Geoffrey's friend.
Leila Chetwynd—His daughter.
Captain Bingham—An army officer, and cousin of Sir Arthur.
Lord Lavington—A friend of the General.
Amavati, the Rajah of Nagore—A Hindoo prince who visits Sir Arthur, and develops an unrequited love of Leila.
Chunder Sen—The Rajah's secretary.
Kuttapani—The Rajah's cook.

During the Indian Mutiny Sir Arthur, together with Geoffrey's father (since dead), took part in the looting of a Hindoo temple on the tenth of June, and on this day every year afterwards one of the Englishmen concerned, or some member of their families, is assassinated. On the last day of May, 1884, Amavati, the Rajah of Nagore, visits Sir Arthur, and Geoffrey tells him of the danger. Sir Arthur on learning from his lawyer that his cousin, Captain Bingham, to whom he had intended to marry Leila, is almost penniless, though representing himself to be rich, wills him but a small annuity. Chunder Sen makes it possible for Bingham to surreptitiously examine the will, and promises to help him out of the difficulty. On the tenth of June, Geoffrey goes to Wales, and is followed by Kuttapani, who attacks him in a lonely spot and leaves him for dead. Geoffrey, however, recovers, and tracks him to a house in Westbourne Park, named Lancaster Villa, which transpires to be the headquarters of the Hindoo. Geoffrey asks the General for Leila's hand, but is refused, and goes abroad. On his return he meets the Rajah outside Lancaster Villa.

CHAPTER XVII.

Friend or Enemy?

The Rajah stood motionless as a statue.

"You are surprised to see me," said Geoffrey, with a grim smile.

The Rajah was evidently disconcerted. Yet his inborn dignity did not desert him. His embarrassment showed itself only in his perfect silence and the rigidity of his face.

"No doubt you believed that I was dead?"

Amavati's face changed.

"Dead? No. Why should I suppose that you were dead? Have you been ill? You do not look in bad health."

"You had not heard that I was dead—murdered?"

"I? No! What has happened? I only returned three days ago from Paris, and have heard no news."

"If you will walk a little way with me I will tell you what happened to me," said Geoffrey, who did not care to remain any longer so close to the Hindoo's house.

After a moment's hesitation, Amavati signified his assent; and without so much as a glance at Lancaster Villa he joined Geoffrey, and the two men walked down the road together.

"First, let me ask," said Geoffrey, "how is that servant of yours, Kuttapani? Is he still with you?"

"Kuttapani?"

The Rajah had stood still, and was looking at the Englishman with wondering eyes.

"Yes. Don't you remember his name? He was with you at Seacombe Towers, in the capacity of cook, I believe."

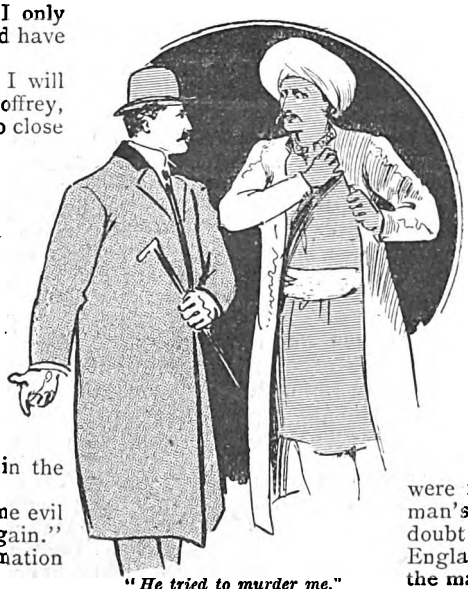
"Kuttapani was lost in London. Some evil happened to him. We never saw him again."

"Indeed! Doubtless you gave information to the police?"

"No. It would have been useless. If he was dead, it could have done no good. If he left us of his own accord, it was to return to India. Let him go."

"He may have returned to India. I hope he has. But you say you lost him in London?"

"When we arrived in London he could not be found."



"He tried to murder me."

"Did you not know that he stayed behind at Bristol?"

"That was most likely, as the train only stopped once on the way, unless he did come to London and hide himself there. But why do you ask so many questions about him? How does he concern you?"

It was not Kuttapani but the Rajah that was the real subject of Geoffrey's questions. He greatly desired to know whether the Rajah was privy to that attempt on his life or not—whether, in a word, he was to look upon him as a friend or a foe. And hitherto he had not been able to gather from Amavati's manner anything that had enabled him to come to a decision on the point.

True, the Indian seemed to be speechless with surprise at the first sight of him; but that might possibly be mere natural astonishment at meeting him in a totally unexpected place. He had also seemed amazed at being questioned about his missing servant; but that was perhaps natural enough. After that first exclamation of surprise, he had answered every query in a very natural, straightforward kind of way.

"My interest in your servant is easily explained," said Geoffrey. "The day after you and I parted at Bristol he tried to murder me."

As he spoke these words the Englishman looked straight into the Hindoo's face. But he could learn nothing there. The start of surprise, the look, half of incredulity, half of horror, were perfectly natural. "This man is innocent," said Geoffrey to himself, "or he is the greatest actor living."

"He—tried—to murder you?"

"And very nearly succeeded. It was, you remember, the Tenth of June. You had recommended me to keep myself secluded on that day, doubtless with good reason. I determined to follow your advice. I went to a secluded mountainous district in Wales.

"On the afternoon of the Tenth of June, your servant, who had secretly followed me, fell upon me from behind, and very nearly succeeded in killing me. I fell into a pool, and managed to make him believe that I was drowned. I followed him to London; but, unfortunately, lost sight of him when we reached town. Since then I have been in America. I wished to conceal from my enemies the fact that I was alive."

"You did wisely," said the Rajah.

"It seems to me you take this matter very coolly!" cried Geoffrey. "This wretched man was your servant. Where did you engage him? What were his antecedents? Who recommended him to you?"

"My secretary might perhaps be able to answer these questions," said Amavati coldly. "I cannot. And I do not see how I can avenge the outrage. If we were in Nagore, and Kuttapani—is that the man's name?—if he were taken, I might no doubt have him executed. But we are in England. I have no power here; and, besides, the man has escaped."

Geoffrey made no reply. Apparently the Rajah was unconscious of Geoffrey's suspicions; and the young Englishman shrank from charging him with complicity in Kuttapani's crime. Yet he could not forbear saying something.

"You are going to Seacombe Towers next month, I believe?"

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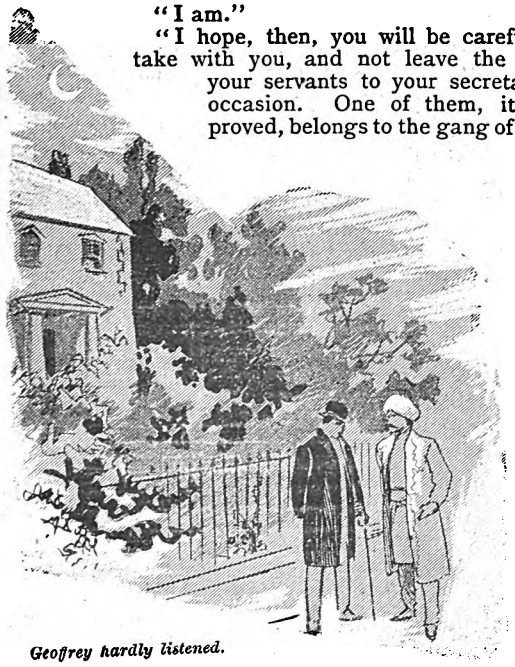
"I am."

"I hope, then, you will be careful who you take with you, and not leave the selection of your servants to your secretary on this occasion. One of them, it has been proved, belongs to the gang of murderers; and I know that the General has special reason to fear them. I cannot help telling you that I regard it as an unfortunate coincidence that you are to be under the General's roof on the fatal day."



Geoffrey hardly listened.

During this speech the Rajah had drawn himself up to his full height, and he was now regarding his companion with a cold, proud gaze, in which there was more of contempt than anger.

"Perhaps you think I would procure the assassination of my host?"

"I have not said so. Nor do I think so. But I distrust your servants—and with reason."

"Sir, the warning was not needed; but it shall not be neglected."

"Can you not choose some other date for your visit?"

For answer the Hindoo darted a strange look at Geoffrey.

"Would it surprise you to know," said he, "that one whom I believe to be the General's enemy has presumed to make the same suggestion to me?"

"The General's enemy? Who is he?"

"I cannot tell you."

"If you were a true friend of the General's you would tell me, and you would tell him too!" burst out Geoffrey. "You know that danger threatens him; yet you will not denounce his would-be murderer, nor even give him warning!"

"You are mistaken," said the Rajah, with the same air of cold, proud indifference. "Sir Arthur knows that his life is in danger every Tenth of June. He has long known it. His enemies—your enemies—would not be turned from their purpose if I were to denounce one, against whom I have no direct evidence. And he can do no more for his own protection than he has already done. I can do no more for his safety than I have done already—or, rather, it is not in my power to do anything."

Geoffrey hardly listened to these protestations. His mind was busy with conjectures as to the meaning of what he had just heard. Supposing Amavati to be speaking the truth, why should the conspirators wish the Rajah to be *absent* from Seacombe Towers on the coming Tenth of June? Did not the very expression of such a desire on their part betoken danger to the General or to Leila, or to both of them on that day?

The two men had turned, and were now walking, almost unconsciously, in the direction of Lancaster Villa. Amavati, as well as Geoffrey, was silent.

"I wish to ask you one question," said the Rajah, at length. "You need not answer unless you choose. Is the young lady, the daughter of Sir Arthur, promised to you in marriage?"

Geoffrey gave a short, bitter laugh.

"No," he said.

"Is she promised to that Captain, her cousin, or to any other man?"

"So far as I know, she is not."

"If she were, I might make some excuse to Sir Arthur, and give up my visit. But since it is otherwise, I hope to persuade her father to give her to me. Therefore I will go to his house as we had arranged."

"Could you not alter the date?"

"No, I have other visits to pay; and I leave the country finally in August."

"Why should you think of denying yourself the pleasure of this visit?" Geoffrey was tempted to ask.

"Because you were unjust enough to suspect me," said the Hindoo coldly; "and it is possible that the General may suspect me also. But since my purpose may yet be accomplished, I will not allow myself to be turned aside by your suspicions—of which you ought to be ashamed." This was said in the cold, even tone which the Rajah had used throughout.

"Ashamed!" cried Geoffrey. "If it were not that I can hardly believe that a man of your rank and character could lend himself to such a plot, my suspicions would be something like certainties. Not only does your servant, who could have no personal malice against me, try to murder me, but I find you, alone, and on foot, haunting the very neighbourhood in which the murderer was last heard of. And what is more, I find you in the act of entering the house which was, and I believe still is, inhabited *by the man who tried to poison me two years ago.*"

Geoffrey had purposely kept this parting shot for the last; and he looked keenly into the Hindoo's face that he might see the effect of it. Amavati's habitual gravity was not disturbed; his face was rigid as that of a statue; yet there was a something, a marked avoidance of the Englishman's eye, an evident effort at self-control, which told its own tale. And, above all, he did not trust himself to utter a word. Geoffrey was determined to taunt him into speaking.

"I think you will admit that these things would be enough to justify suspicions in the minds of most men," he said.

"I know you suspect me," said the Hindoo calmly. "It does not greatly concern me. You may think what you choose."

"I have little doubt," said Geoffrey, stung by the cool indifference of the man, "I have little doubt that Sir Arthur Chetwynd will see the thing from the same point of view as I do, when I mention the full circumstances to him."

"That I would stain my soul with treachery like this."

The Rajah's calmness vanished as if by magic. He turned half round, and grasped his companion by the arm.

"No!" he said, in a low, earnest whisper, "do not do that. Do not tell Sir Arthur that you have seen me here. He, too, would interpret my actions wrongly. You would fill his mind with the most unjust, the basest suspicions.

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You cannot really believe that I, a prince of royal blood, would stain my soul with treachery like this?—treachery against my host, against the father of the lady who may be my bride!"

"No; I cannot believe it," said Geoffrey; and yet—if your highness would explain——"

"I cannot explain further than this—that I may have occasion to use these men as my tools. I will not permit them to attack Sir Arthur."

"You wish to make them your tools; they may succeed in making use of you," thought Geoffrey to himself, but he did not utter the thought aloud.

"You will not tell Sir Arthur where you saw me to-night?" demanded the Rajah.

Geoffrey hesitated a moment. Then he reflected that he might put the General effectually on his guard without revealing the precise fact which had seemed to him so suspicious; and he answered, "No, I will not."

"I see you trust me, and I thank you," said the Rajah in his old proud manner.

By this time they were not far from the Hindoo's head-quarters.

"Are you going to that house—the house of the assassins?" said Geoffrey significantly.

"Yes, I am," was the answer.

"Then I must trust you not to betray *my* secret. As I told you, my enemies believe me to be dead. In that belief lies my safety; for it is war to the knife between these men and me. If you reveal to them the fact that I am alive, you seal my death-warrant—at least, you make it certain that they will make a third attempt on my life; and I could hardly hope to escape a third time. May I rely on you not to mention my name to them?"

In his turn the Rajah seemed to hesitate.

"I will say nothing," he said at last; and without another word he was gone.

CHAPTER XVIII.

GEOFFREY PLAYS THE SPY TO GOOD PURPOSE.

IT was with very mixed feelings that Geoffrey walked slowly back to his rooms, after parting with the Rajah. He had not been able to come to any decision on the question whether Amavati was to be trusted or not. In spite of appearances he was inclined to trust to the prince's honour, and under ordinary circumstances he would have done so without hesitation; but the matter was not one in which he ought to run any risk.

Sometimes he felt tempted to regret that he had not gone into the empty greenhouse, on the chance of overhearing what passed between the Rajah and the Hindoos who inhabited Lancaster Villa; but at the time he had shrunk from doing so. Considering what had passed between Amavati and himself, it had seemed like an act of treachery. Later he consoled himself with the thought that he had lost nothing through his honourable scruple.

Without another word he was gone.

Even if the Hindoos had held their conversation in the room at the back of the house, it was certain that they would talk in Hindustani, of which language Geoffrey only understood a few words. He wished now that he had gone to India, instead of to America, and learned Hindustani; but it was too late to repair that error.

"Where is Lancaster Villa?"

For some days Geoffrey did nothing beyond writing to Sir Arthur Chetwynd, advising him to be doubly on his guard, since he had reason to know that the Rajah's conduct was not free from suspicion.

Bitterly did he regret that the foolish promise he made to the Hindoo prevented his speaking more plainly; but he did not by any means feel sure that if he had told the General all he knew it would have made any difference. The old Anglo-Indian would have required not suspicion merely, but the strongest proof of intended treachery, before he would have consented to shut his door in the face of an invited guest.

That which chiefly perplexed Geoffrey was the absence of any indication as to what his enemies' plans were, or what steps he could take to secure the General's safety. He held one or two consultations with his friend Linton; but these conferences led to no result. The Hindoos were working, if at all, underground. Nothing, apparently, could be done till they chose to emerge into the light of day.

One evening, not long after his encounter with the Rajah, Geoffrey, following a vague impulse, walked out in the direction of Lancaster Villa. The evening was gloomy, and it was nearly dark.

As he passed along one of the more frequented thoroughfares, a voice fell on his ear that he thought he recognised. He turned his head sharply round. A stout man, who had evidently just alighted from a hansom, was squabbling with the cabman over the fare. Geoffrey drew a few steps nearer. He had not been mistaken. It was Captain Byngham.

The dispute was suddenly ended by the Captain turning on his heel and walking down a side street, while the cabman, grumbling and cursing, put his horse in motion, and slowly disappeared.

Geoffrey hardly knew whether he ought to speak to Sir Arthur's cousin. He had a strong, natural antipathy for the man; yet it seemed unneighbourly to let him pass without accosting him, since they had been on quasi-intimate terms at Seacombe Towers. "Besides," thought Geoffrey, "he may be able to give me some news of the General."

He hurried after the Captain, and had nearly overtaken him, when he saw Byngham suddenly pause. He had met an errand-boy, and stopped him, with the question—

"Where's Lancaster Villa?"

A kind of nervous horror stole over Geoffrey Dundas, as these common-place words fell on his ears. Was he dreaming? What could this Yorkshire squire want with those crafty Hindoos? What kind of net could they be spreading for the General's feet, that caused them to summon first one and then another of the old veteran's friends to their aid?

At first it did not occur to Geoffrey to suspect any sinister motive on Byngham's part. It was not until the Captain had moved on, and Geoffrey found himself unconsciously following him, that the question forced itself into his mind. Can the Hindoos have been using Byngham as a spy upon the General's movements? Is he coming here to report to them?

Even then he did not think of Byngham as being consciously a traitor. He imagined that the Hindoos had found some way of hoodwinking the Captain; he did not suppose

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for a moment that the Captain knew of the existence of a plot against his kinsman.

It seemed, therefore, to Geoffrey that it would be a good thing to question Byngham, and put him on his guard; and he was in the act of mending his pace to overtake him, when it struck him that it might be as well to delay speaking to the Captain until he returned from visiting the Hindoos. It might be of the greatest importance to learn what questions the conspirators had been asking, and what information they had obtained.

"Possibly," thought Geoffrey, "this may lead to my discovering the manner as well as the time of their attack. Fortune has favoured me for once."

He therefore allowed Byngham to enter the gate leading to Lancaster Villa without making any effort to detain him; and he began slowly to pace up and down the road, so that he might not miss him when he returned.

As he sauntered to and fro in the empty roadway, fresh thoughts, unpleasant thoughts, came into his mind. He remembered the expression which the General's face had worn when he said in answer to a question of his own, "Captain Byngham is not the sort of man I would choose for my son-in-law." There must surely have been a disagreement of some kind between the two men.

"Supposing," said Geoffrey to himself, "that Byngham proposed to Leila and was rejected, or suppose the General forbade the match, that might stir up bad blood between them. I rather think the Captain is a vindictive kind of fellow . . . . It is *very* odd that *he* should be consorting with the General's enemies."

Following this came a fresh wave of suspicion. He felt that he could not trust the Captain to give him a true account of what was passing in that silent house. He might very well refuse to answer any questions on the subject. "And then," Geoffrey asked himself, "what should I do? What must I think?"

As the minutes passed, and Byngham did not return, Geoffrey became more and more uneasy, till at last he could stand it no longer. An inward voice seemed to be calling on him to act, instead of waiting there in the faint hope of being able to induce Captain Byngham to be frank with him.

"Why should I not try to overhear their conversation?" something whispered, as it were, in his ear.

At first he repelled the suggestion, as an honourable man would be sure to do. But it recurred to him again and again.

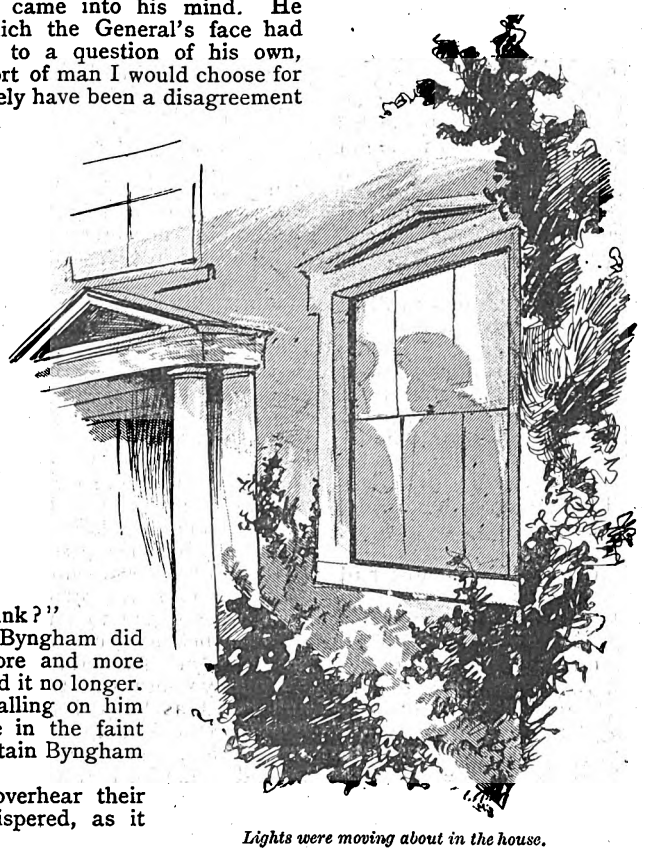
"Why," urged this persistent monitor—"Why should I allow a scruple, natural and proper enough under ordinary circumstances, to hinder my trying to save the General's life? If this Byngham has not gone over to the side of Sir Arthur's enemies, why should he be visiting them? The Rajah might have twenty good reasons for wishing to call upon his fellow-countrymen. I can conceive of no such reason in Byngham's case. And now I remember, he seemed to be on anything but friendly terms with the Hindoos who were at Seacombe Towers. He must be up to some rascality, and the sooner I find out what it is the better."

This last thought decided him. He walked rapidly to the gate leading to Chester Villa, the house which adjoined Lancaster Villa. It did not strike him as curious that the gate was unlocked. He was proceeding up the garden path, when he suddenly stopped short in consternation.

Lights were moving about in the house which he had supposed to be empty. He cautiously drew a few steps nearer. Some of the windows were fitted with curtains and blinds. There was no doubt about it. The house was inhabited. The house-agent, who had promised that he should have the first refusal of Chester Villa, had let it without informing him.

What was to be done? Go back to the road, and wait there for Byngham, or push his way on to the conservatory, at the risk of being locked up as a housebreaker? Geoffrey hardly took a second to decide. Keeping as much as possible in the shadow of the laurels, he made his way round to the back of the house.

Here all was quiet. Oddly enough, there was no light in the kitchen windows. Geoffrey moved slowly forward to the door of the conservatory, and felt for the broken pane. It was there. He opened the door and went in. The dim reflection from the glass roof, showed him that the shelves were all but empty. It seemed as if no one had been there since his last visit, nearly twelve months before.



Lights were moving about in the house.

Hardly had he began to move along the narrow passage, when the sound of voices on the other side of the wooden partition became audible. Rapidly, yet without the least noise, Geoffrey moved to the spot, from which he had once before gazed into the interior of the Hindoos' dwelling.

He mounted to the required height, and found that when he bent his head forward till it rested on the partition, he could hear distinctly the words spoken. He could distinguish the voices easily. One was that of Byngham. His heart gave a great throb when he recognised the other voice. It was that of Chunder Sen!

"You see, you can hardly fail to win the lady's heart," said the Hindoo, in his soft silky tones. "Common gratitude would make her willing to marry you. You become her protector. You rescue her from a position of the greatest danger, at the risk, apparently, of your life."

"That's all very well," broke in the gruff voice of the Englishman, "and I don't deny that it sounds all right as far as it goes. But you forget that what is wanted is her father's consent. Without that I don't want to marry the girl—at least, it would hardly be worth my while, as she would lose all the money."

"My good sir, *I* forget nothing. You have overlooked the most important result of all. You and the lady are thrown together under circumstances of—of what shall I say?—of great delicacy, in a foreign country, with no one of your friends near. There is nothing to prevent you keeping her there as long as you wish. You may practically compel her to marry you; and of course, for the sake of the lady's reputation, and to prevent a scandal, the trustees, as you call them, will gladly give their consent."

"The trustees! Why do you say the trustees? As long as Sir Arthur lives, it is for him to give or withhold his consent."

"True. Well; let us say the General. The same motives would apply to him—gratitude for saving his daughter, and the wish to prevent anything like a breath of scandal approaching her name."

"The General is not so easy a person to deal with."

"I think you may rely on it that he will give you no trouble."

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Geoffrey's blood ran cold as he heard these words. Did Bungham attach the same sinister meaning to them? Apparently not, for his next words were spoken in the same cool, unconcerned tone as before.

"I shall need some men to help me."

"It is not at all necessary. You have nothing to do but hire a house——"

"What's that?" cried Bungham, sharply.

That was a curious, rasping sound on the other side of the partition.

Geoffrey, in his anxiety to catch every word that was uttered, had bent forward till his head and hands rested on the lower edge of the aperture in the partition.

The narrow shelf on which he stood, was at some little distance from the wall, and in his eagerness to hear all that was said, he had forgotten that his footing was rather precarious. He had, in fact, slightly over-balanced himself; his hands had slipped, and made a scraping noise on the wooden surface. His heart leaped, so to speak, into his mouth, and he remained perfectly still.

"There's a hole up there!" he heard Bungham exclaim.

"My dear sir," replied Chunder Sen, "you may make your mind perfectly easy. The house next door is empty—or rather, it is in the occupation of our friends, some of whom fancied that we were liable to be overlooked by anyone who might take it. They, however, cannot understand a word of English, so that even if one of them happened to be in the adjoining conservatory, which is most unlikely——"

"But the noise! I distinctly heard a sound, as of a something rubbing against the wall, just over our heads. You must have heard it."

"Yes, I heard it. It must have been a mouse or a rat."

"All the same, I mean to have a peep through that hole in the wall."

Geoffrey had not moved, hoping that the conspirators would go on with their conversation. But now he gave himself up for lost. He heard the Captain spring from his seat, and begin dragging a light table, or some other article of furniture, towards the partition.

What was to be done?

To get out of the greenhouse in time was impossible. There was no time to think, much less to act.

Suddenly he heard a crash.

The table to which Bungham had trusted his weight had overturned.

"What's that?"

In another instant Geoffrey had softly descended to the floor, and was moving swiftly but silently to the door.

Gently he turned the handle, and crossed the threshold. But he had hardly taken three steps from the conservatory than he went back, closed the door, and passing his hand through the broken pane, turned the key in the lock. Then he retreated to a thick clump of bushes that grew close by, and waited.

In less than half a minute, a soft step was heard on the gravel; and Geoffrey, peering out from his hiding-place, saw the portly form of the Rajah's secretary come round the corner of the house. Chunder Sen went up to the conservatory, and tried the door. Then, apparently, he discovered the broken pane, for Geoffrey heard him open the door, and go inside. In a minute or two he re-appeared, locked the door behind him, and returned by the way he had come.

Saw the portly form of the Rajah's secretary.

He waited just long enough to give the Hindoo time to make his way back to Lancaster Villa, and once more stole cautiously into the conservatory.

But now no voices fell upon his listening ears. All was dark and silent as the grave. He waited some time; but not a sound was to be heard. In his desperation, Geoffrey tried to get into the adjoining house, Chester Villa, by the French window opening into the conservatory; but it was securely fastened.

There was no more that he could do. He left the conservatory, once more locking the door behind him, and went round to the front of the house.

In one window a faint light burned; the others were dark. A thick privet hedge separated the front gardens of the two houses; and it suddenly occurred to Geoffrey that if there happened to be a similar hedge on the other side of the front garden belonging to Lancaster Villa, he might possibly, by standing behind it, catch a word or two of what might pass between Bungham and the Secretary when they parted.

Geoffrey went round to the other side of Lancaster Villa, and found, as he had expected, that a hedge separated the front garden from the ground belonging to the house on the further side. That house was occupied; but Geoffrey was beyond caring for a trifle of that kind. Only, he hoped that the people who lived in it did not keep a dog. Fortunately they did not; and Geoffrey was able to take up his station within two yards of the street door of Lancaster Villa.

For fully a quarter of an hour Geoffrey waited there, in perfect silence. He heard ten o'clock strike from a neighbouring church-tower; and shortly afterwards the rattle of a door-chain was heard, and the door of Lancaster Villa was softly opened.

Listening intently, Geoffrey could just make out the low tones of the Secretary's voice, as he whispered—

"Remember what I told you."

"Oh, I'll remember. The Tenth of June. That's it, isn't it?"

"Hush!"

And, to Geoffrey's intense disappointment, the Hindoo drew the Englishman back, inside the door, as if to give him some parting instructions. It was impossible to hear another word.

A few seconds later the door was opened again; the Captain said "Good-night," descended the steps, and strode down the garden path and out into the roadway, banging the gate behind him. Little did he imagine, as he walked rapidly along towards the heart of London, that Geoffrey Dundas was quietly following him, not fifty yards in the rear.

(To be continued.)

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CARRIE'S BLUNDER

"I LOVE her, mother," cried Guion Esterhall.

He was not, in a general way, much of a talker. Consequently, when he spoke, his words had the weight of sense and rarity. But Mrs. Esterhall, the fine old lady who sat erect before the fire, was too much excited to consider all this.

"The wife of my son, Guion," said she, "should be a lady, born and bred—not one of those girls who have to fight the world until all gentleness, grace, and unselfishness are ground out of them. No, I can never give my consent!"

The young man smiled slightly.

"Mother," said he, "the diamond itself hardly possesses its true financial value until the facets are ground with much friction."

"Humph!" said Mrs. Esterhall. "No one is talking of diamonds."

"I may bring her to see you, mother?"

Mrs. Esterhall shook her head.

"I have no desire to receive her," said she. "But, Guy, here are the tickets for the Lyceum to-night. Carrie Chippendale has promised to accompany me—of course, you will be on hand at half-past seven to be our escort?"

"If you wish it, mother."

The old lady smiled to herself when Guion was gone.

"A little management," she thought, "a little judicious firmness, and Guy will get over this boyish fancy of his. The idea of a shop-girl for my daughter-in-law—for Mrs. Guion Esterhall! I think the lad must have taken leave of his senses."

And in her secret heart she rejoiced with an exceeding great rejoicing when Miss Chippendale arrived that evening, got up in the most elaborate style.

"If we are to have a private box," said Miss Chippendale, buttoning the seventeenth button of her glove, "one may as well go in full dress, don't you know."

"My dear, you are looking lovely," said Mrs. Esterhall approvingly.

Miss Chippendale was a sort of human camellia—fair, graceful, and serene—with big, expressionless blue eyes, cherry-red lips, flax-gold hair, drawn in fluffy crimps over her forehead, and an unchanging Society smile perpetually about her lips.

She had been highly educated, and she was destined by her parents to make a brilliant match. The Chippendales belonged to the upper ten—that is to say, they had never done any work, and had always spent a great deal of money. And Mrs. Esterhall had decided that Carrie Chippendale was the very wife for her son.

If only she could convert Guion to the same opinion.

Guion Esterhall was exceedingly courteous to Miss Chippendale that evening, but not a whit more so than he was to his own mother. The old lady was somewhat disappointed.

"But never mind," she said to herself, "one must have patience."

She went shopping the next day, to match a shade of Berlin wool, to buy some lace flounces, and to decide on new *portières* for her drawing-room down at Esterhall Manor. At two o'clock she experienced, not hunger, but a ladylike sensation that "tired nature" needed some sort of "sweet restoration."

"I will go into Maricotta's," she thought.

Maricotta's was full, as it generally was at that time of the day; but presently the old lady succeeded in obtaining a seat in a curtained angle, where the waiter took her order for a chicken-salad and a cup of tea. Just then she heard a clear, low voice on the other side of the curtain, as a party settled themselves at a reserved table—Miss Chippendale's soft, well-modulated tones.

"Oh, yes, Irving was very fine," said Carrie. "Oysters, please—stew for one and fritters for two and three cups of Vienna chocolate, nicely frothed, waiter. But all the same I nearly died of *ennui*. The old lady is the most dreadful bore you ever knew, and Guy is a regular prig. Handsome, you know, and very talented, of course; but one doesn't want to be on full dress parade as to one's brains the whole time. He isn't half as nice as Freddie Fortune—only poor dear Fred hasn't a penny to bless himself with, and papa looks thunder-clouds at me whenever he calls. But once I'm married, it——"

A chorus of well-bred giggling interrupted Carrie's words. Mrs. Esterhall rose hurriedly from her seat, grasped her gloves and eye-glasses, and made all haste out of the restaurant. When the waiter came with the chicken-salad and the tea, he found his customer gone. The unconscious Miss Chippendale and her friends enjoyed their Vienna chocolate and oysters very much indeed.

Mrs. Esterhall decided to return to the manor at once. Carrie Chippendale's graceful treachery had affected her more than she had deemed possible; and leaving a hastily written note to explain to Guion that she had altered her plans, she took the late express, which reached Clevedon Junction at nine, there connecting with a branch train for Esterhall Station. She was travelling alone, as her maid remained to pack up the last things, and follow her the next day.

There had been a heavy snowfall, the night had settled down dark and tempestuous, and the train was behind time. At last it came to a full stop. Mrs. Esterhall started from a doze, and looked anxiously around her.

"Ten o'clock!" someone said, consulting a watch. "Why, guard," as the man's head appeared at the window, "we are due at Clevedon at five minutes before nine!"

"Yes, I know, sir," spoke the official, "but the line is all blocked, and the T— Express is overdue at this point. We're waiting here for the signal to move on."

"And what's to keep us from waiting all night?" petulantly inquired the old gentleman.

"Nothing sir— unless the express comes along."

Mrs. Esterhall began to be a little frightened.

"Guard," she said, "is there any danger of a collision?"

"No, ma'am—not as long as we are on this siding."

Slowly the minutes dragged themselves by, gradually lengthening into hours. One or two of the more adventurous spirits among the passengers got out, peered into the darkness—flecked only by the driving snow—and then got in again with the customary uncomplimentary comments on the railway management. Mrs. Esterhall was nervous, and unaccustomed to travel alone. She began to cry softly behind her veil.

"Ah!" she thought, "if ever I live to get safe home again, I'll stay there. I'll never tempt Providence again on these night journeyings."

On the opposite side of the compartment two young girls were seated—the one pale-faced and rather plain, as Mrs. Esterhall had already noticed, the other a brilliant young brunette, with soft hazel eyes, peachy cheeks, and wavy dark-brown hair brushed carelessly back from a low, broad forehead. Presently the latter bent forward towards Mrs. Esterhall, and asked in a soft, sympathetic voice:

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"Are you ill, madam?"

"N—no!" stammered the old lady, quite forgetful of her Society dignity. "Only I am so faint and weary. I expected to dine at home long before this hour; and I took almost nothing to eat before I started."

"I have some nice chicken sandwiches in my bag," suggested the pretty girl. "My aunt insisted on my taking them, although I dined heartily before leaving home; and I have a little spirit lamp with every convenience for making a cup of good, strong tea as well. If you will allow me to prepare it for you——"

Mrs. Esterhall was a genuine tea-maniac. A new brightness came into her eyes at this suggestion.

"You are very kind," said she. "But you will want it yourself?"

"No," smiled the girl. "I don't care for tea. But my kind old aunt would put the things in. Now I am glad she did so."

In five minutes Mrs. Esterhall had eaten and drunk, and felt infinitely better. How it happened she did not question herself, but she presently found herself reclining comfortably with her head on a pillow improvised out of the folded blanket shawl that belonged to the young girl; and, mingled with her drowsy reflections, came the soft, low murmurs of the sweet-eyed brunette, who had changed her seat and that of her companion to the one directly opposite Mrs. Esterhall, and was talking almost in a whisper.

"No, I am not going back; and I do not intend to communicate my address to anyone."

"Not even to him?"

"No, not even to him."

"But he loves you, dear."

"Yes; and that is the very reason I am determined to create no dissension between him and his friends. Perhaps he will forget me."

"He will never do that."

"But at least I shall feel that I have done my duty," said the hazel-eyed girl firmly.

"I shall love him to the end of his days, but I shall not have ruined his future."

"And all this," cried the companion, "out of deference to the whims of an old woman whom you have never seen!"

"Out of deference to his mother, Alice," gently corrected the first speaker.

"What a quixotic notion," dreamily mused Mrs. Esterhall. "But she has an excellent idea of duty, this dark-eyed little girl?"

"That is you, Effie, all over!" said the friend. "You always are effacing yourself in favour of someone else. Here you are giving all your tea and sandwiches to a person you have never heard of, and giving up the man you love and who loves you, because——"

"Because it is my duty," said Effie. "Please, Alice, don't let us discuss the matter any longer. It is because I love Guy that I am willing to sacrifice everything for his sake."

"Guy! Bless my soul! Guy!" thought Mrs. Esterhall, sitting suddenly up. "But, of course, there are other Guys than mine in the world."

Just then there was a tremble of the frozen ground under them; a roar and rush of lighted carriages passed them.

"The express at last!" shouted the choleric old gentleman, bobbing up in his seat like an india-rubber ball.

On moved the train at last, creaking and groaning like some monster serpent in pain. Mrs. Esterhall roused herself, and leaned towards the hazel-eyed girl.

"My dear," she said between the throbs of the engine, "is it Guy Esterhall that you are speaking of?"

The girl started and coloured. She could not repress a cry of surprise.

"Yes? I thought so. Come over here and sit by me. I am his mother, and I want to talk to you."

It was two o'clock when they reached Esterhall station, but the closed carriage was waiting for them, with hot foot-warmers and about half a ton of fur cloaks and wrappings. And Effie Dallas stepped into the luxurious conveyance with Mrs. Esterhall, for the old lady had insisted on taking Effie home with her to the manor.

"She is such a contrast in every way to that selfish, cold-hearted Chippendale girl," said Mrs. Esterhall—"I'll telegraph to Guion at once. Really it does seem as if there was a special Providence in our train being kept so long waiting for the express to pass."

As if there is not a "special Providence" in everything that happens in this world of ours!

A Mysterious Clerk

AN advertisement of the following tenor appeared in one of the daily journals of a provincial town some years since:—

"ACCOUNTANT.—The services of an accomplished and competent person are desired by the advertiser to take charge of the books and correspondence of a flourishing business. Liberal salary and permanent position is offered to one with proper credentials. Address,——"

A hundred candidates presented themselves at the establishment of Mr. Corlis, and among the competitors there came a modestly attired person, who, more than the others, seemed, at first sight, acceptable to the proprietor.

The address of this applicant seemed quiet and pleasant. His whole appearance that of an earnest, well-disposed man, who was desirous to get along in the world.

He brought with him, and presented to Mr. Corlis, a few brief letters of recommendation from persons residing in London, and exhibited a draft for a limited sum upon a responsible banking house in the town. His story was simple and straightforward, and his manners were altogether prepossessing. He wrote a fair business hand; his credentials proved satisfactory to the not over-cautious Mr. Corlis, and he was engaged.

Ernest Maywood—for thus the applicant signed his name—proved a model clerk. He must have been some thirty years of age when he entered the employ of Mr. Corlis. He might have been five years younger, perhaps. He reaped the experience of forty, at least, for he was cunning in accounts, and his knowledge of the ramifications of debt and credit was extraordinary.

His varied qualifications were quickly brought into requisition, and his employer very soon came to esteem him for his accuracy in mercantile matters, as well as for the every-day goodness of character that marked his continually upright and honest course of conduct.

Mr. Corlis had a daughter, his only child, in whom were centred all his hopes. The father thought he saw in the character of his new clerk business qualities most desirable, and he believed him to be a man of integrity and worth; and at the end of a twelvemonth he secretly determined upon bringing about an intimacy between Ernest and his daughter, with a view to making him his partner in trade at the fitting moment, and subsequently, if possible, to uniting his daughter with him in marriage.

Maywood had once or twice been the guest of his employer at dinner, where he had been introduced to the fair and agreeable Miss Corlis, and an evening or two had been passed by him at her father's house; but nothing occurred to offer the

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parent a hope that his *employé* had been affected in any wise by his daughter's charms.

Thus the months passed quietly by, Maywood continued on in the same plodding, indefatigable, untiring round of duty, always at his post, ever devoted to his master's interests, and more than satisfying the expectations of the thriving Mr. Corlis, who was fortunate indeed in the selection he had made in his now confidential clerk.

"Ernest," said his employer to him one morning, "I voluntarily increased your salary, a twelvemonth since, because you merited it, though you did not mention the subject yourself. Two years ago to-day you commenced service with me. The balance-sheet exhibits a handsome profit upon the last year's business, to which result you have largely contributed, directly and indirectly. I now propose to offer you an interest in the business, and from this date, if you agree to it, you shall become a partner."

The offer was a liberal one. The income derivable from such a share of the profits would have quintupled Maywood's earnings. On the part of his employer, it was the opening wedge for his future plan of marrying his daughter well, and to his mind. His decision—a declination—instantly, but frankly and kindly given, astounded the generous Mr. Corlis.

Maywood said he was content as he was! His salary was ample, and was a full equivalent for his humble services. He did not desire it increased. He had no use for more money than his place now yielded him. He had no wish to incur additional responsibilities. He was happy, and if Mr. Corlis was satisfied, so was he. And there the matter dropped.

Maywood continued in the performance of his duties, and Mr. Corlis quietly awaited another opportunity to carry out his long-cherished plan in reference to his daughter's prospects; while Miss Corlis lost no fitting occasion to second her parent's views and wishes.

"Time flies with silent wings." A twelvemonth passes away quickly. Another year elapsed without any peculiar change in the relations of the parties about whom we have written.

One day a frightful collision took place at the station close to Mr. Corlis's place of business. He and Maywood were among the first on the scene, and were actively employed in their offices of kindness to the unfortunates, when the figure of a plainly dressed man was brought out writhing in his last agonies.

Mr. Corlis approached him as he came forward in the hands of the men who were removing him, and Maywood followed closely upon the steps of his employer. The fatally injured and dying man opened his eyes as the clerk came up, gazed fearfully at him, and shrieking the broken syllable "May—" expired.

Maywood started back, horror-struck! For an instant he was paralysed! That face and voice—that last glance! The clerk was bewildered, and motionless as a statue—and the body was taken away.

Maywood, in the confusion, fled. Subsequent search for him proved futile. He disappeared altogether, and all efforts to find him, or to learn of his whereabouts or his fate, were alike in vain. After weeks of unavailing inquiry, the belief of his employer settled into no very satisfactory channel (though he feared that Maywood had either met with an accident amid the terrible confusion, or that he must have committed suicide), and his place was filled in the counting-house, while the business of the establishment went on as before.

What disposal the book-keeper had made of his surplus earnings, from time to time, if he had any, or whether he had saved any portion of his pay, was unknown to his late employer. Inquiries were instituted, and all the means at hand likely to afford any light upon the singular and sudden disappearance were availed of—but to no purpose. Maywood was gone!

Six years, with their round of joys and sorrows, pains and pleasures, changes and fortunes, had passed away, after the accident related, when one evening there halted before the door of Mr. Corlis a carriage, from which alighted a lady and gentleman, who inquired if the merchant were at home. They were shown into the drawing-room, and the cards of "Mr. and Mrs. Ervine" were sent up. The name was not familiar, either to Mr. Corlis or his daughter.

"Ervine?" said the father, "Ervine? I do not recognise the name."

Mr. Corlis soon after entered the apartment, followed by his daughter, and the strangers rose to pay their respects.

"Mr. Ervine," said the merchant, "I am happy to meet you; but, really, I do not recollect."

"No," said the stranger, "I never had the pleasure of meeting you before. This is my wife, however," he added, presenting the modestly attired lady who accompanied him. "She says you will probably recollect her."

The lady advanced, offered her hand to Mr. Corlis and his daughter, and said: "Surely, Mr. Corlis, you have not forgotten me?"

"Maywood!" exclaimed father and daughter together.

"You are right," said the lady calmly.

"But how is this?" asked the merchant. "When did this change occur? A woman!"

"Sit down, my dear sir," said the lady calmly, "and I will at once unravel what must have seemed a most mysterious proceeding, in your estimation; but which, under the circumstances, could not be otherwise.

"Nearly twenty years ago I married a man of whom I knew too little, and who proved himself utterly unworthy of the confidence and love of her whom he grossly deceived, before and after our union. His habits were dissolute; he soon became a confirmed inebriate; our prospectively happy home shortly became a scene of continuously riotous dissipation; his little property, with my own, was squandered, and, before five years had passed, we were homeless, penniless, friendless.

"When I could no longer bear up under the cruel treatment to which I was subjected, I made a final appeal to him. In his drunken wrath he forced me violently away from him, and, in despair, I fled from the scene of my early miseries. I adopted my maiden name of Maywood, procured the letters of credence, which you have seen; and, having acquired a knowledge of books and accounts in earlier years, assumed the habiliments of the ruder sex, believing that I could thus better earn a sustenance.

"I came here, entered your service, saved a few pounds, and you remember the terrible occurrence which immediately preceded my disappearance?"

"The accident at the station?"

"Yes; we were hurrying about among the wounded, as you recollect, when the figure of one of the dying sufferers approached us."

"Yes, yes; I remember."

"That man was my husband."

There were tears in the eyes of the little coterie who listened to this singular tale of woe.

"I recognised him, and he half pronounced the name of Mary, my baptismal name, as I hurried about amid the frantic crowd on that fearful occasion. Stunned and bewildered by the trying position in which I thus suddenly found myself placed, and fearful of the results of exposure, I knew not what to do, or scarcely what I did.

"He did not survive the accident, however; and, two hours afterwards, in homely female attire, I claimed his unfortunate remains. None recognised me in my plain apparel, and surely none could suspect that the veiled and humble woman who followed the corpse to its last resting-place was in fact the book-keeper of the well-known Mr. Corlis.

"I left town forthwith. Through your kindness and liberality I had been able to lay by a considerable sum of money, and I departed for the West, and, once more among total strangers, I continued the resumption of the habiliments and habits of my sex. With the means at my command, I continued to live quietly and respectably, until some two years ago I met this gentleman, who offered me his hand. I am now Mrs. Ervine, and this is my husband, sir."

As may well be imagined, a happy reunion succeeded this *dénouement* of the long-time mystery which had shrouded the sudden disappearance of Mr. Corlis's book-keeper. And the reader may be assured that Mr. and Mrs. Ervine were not only very welcome in the rich merchant's family, but that the newly wedded pair became the future fast friends of "Maywood's" former employer and his extended social circle.

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I, THOMAS HOOPER, was a rolling stone; but still I had gathered some moss in my ramblings. The following incident in my career is as fresh in my memory as when it happened some sixteen years ago.

At the age of eighteen, having an intense longing to see something of the world, I had taken French leave of my master, to whom I was apprenticed, and with my savings had gone to Australia.

With this short preamble I will jump over fifteen years of my life in Australia, where I roamed about over the country, at times doing very well indeed. Towards the end of 1870 I found myself in Melbourne, with a little over £500 in hard cash—the fortune I had accumulated.

That longing to see the old country again, which had often attacked me during those long years, came over me once more with irresistible force, and I determined to go home; so I took passage on board a steamer.

We had not been many days out before I chummed on to a true-bred squatter, who was on a visit to England. He was a tall, lantern-jawed man, with a full black beard and pale eyes, ever on the look-out, as it were, for the main chance, but, as I subsequently found out, as honest and straightforward a man as ever lived.

About the fifth day out a nasty spirit of inactivity stole over me—a doing-nothing kind of feeling. It seemed a shame to be spending the time so idly, and with no chance of making money, so I strolled up to the colonial and asked him if he would play; a truly nice way to get out of my difficulty.

"Yes, I'm game," was the reply. "Poker, euchre. What's your weakness?"

I shook my head and said, "What say you to cribbage?"

"Well, 'tis a quietish game, but I'm your man to what tune you like."

Feeling proud of my money, and thinking to frighten him, I said boldly, "To the tune of £500."

Not a muscle moved in his face, as he coolly went to his berth and returned with a bundle of notes.

This was decidedly unexpected, but I would not withdraw, and we both solemnly sat down at the table.

I had always been considered a good cribbage player, and I knew the game thoroughly. Of course, I wished to play the five-card game, but the Australian said he much preferred the six-card, "because there was more scoring."

To save time we decided to toss for choice, and I lost.

I began coolly and played carefully, but the luck the squatter experienced in his cribs was something marvellous, and upset all my calculations. Gradually, under the influence of tobacco-smoke, wine, and spirits, combined with my ill-luck, I played recklessly, and I rose from the table a loser of no less than the enormous sum of £150.

With head splitting, eyes burning, and hands clammy with perspiration, I rushed on deck into the fresh air. When I retired to my berth sleep would not visit me. Tossing and tumbling in my berth I formed many plans to retrieve the loss of my hard-earned money.

I had often noticed in my ups and downs through life, when apparently in the most hopeless straits, something or other was sure to turn up and make a fairy-like change in my fortune. So I did not give way entirely to despair.

Next morning I had a cold bath, took plenty of exercise, and, in fact, did everything to steady and brace my nerves for a struggle with my successful antagonist.

Well, ultimately we sat down, and I think I somewhat astonished Mr. Squatter by saying, "Sir, I have lost a deal of money, and I want to get it back. I will play you for £100, the best two out of three games."

Slowly removing his cigar from his mouth, he cried, "Done."

How my heart palpitated, though I was cool outwardly. My spirits rose when I won the first game of the rubber pretty smartly, but the second fell to the Australian after a close game. In the third my ill-luck returned, and I suffered defeat. With trembling hands I handed over the money.

"Now, friend," said the squatter, "I like your pluck. It's agin my principles, but for once I'll go you double or quits, £500 or nothing."

This completely staggered me. As a card-player I knew it was a good offer. But, then, if I lost, could I live to face misery and perhaps starvation in the old country.

I went on deck and tried to think calmly and seriously over my position. At last, with a face as pale as death and clenched hands, I resolved to do or die. I went below again, and said I would play—aye, play perchance for life itself. One game only. £500 or death.

We tossed for deal; the Australian won, and the game proceeded. His luck seemed never to desert him. Hope was fast leaving me. The cards laughed at me; the picture cards smiled in derision, until my brain seemed as if it would give way. I was even deliberating in my mind whether to jump overboard or to end existence with a pistol-shot.

The game was drawing to a close. It was the Australian's crib.

Although the holes in the board were dancing to and fro, I found he only wanted six for game, and I the apparently impossible number of thirty.

Mechanically picking up my cards, I found my hand to consist of the fives of hearts, clubs, and spades, the knaves of diamonds and spades, and the two of hearts.

My heart gave a great jump, for I knew the biggest hand at cribbage could be made of such cards. I saw my cool friend opposite smiling with satisfaction.

Instinctively I threw away the knave of spades and the two of hearts.

With a hand that trembled as it never trembled before, I cut—great heavens!—the very card, the five of diamonds. How I shivered and shook with excitement. I still wanted to make one hole, and my opponent would in every probability play out with such cards as mine against him.

My heart was beating like a sledge-hammer. I could stand the fearful tension no longer. I shouted for a glass of brandy, which was swallowed at a gulp. This invigorated me, and I tried to calm myself until my very chest seemed bursting.

I played my knave.

"A pair—two," was the response. Four holes now. I played one of my fives.

"And six is thirty-one."

Only two more holes and I was a lost man. I had only my two remaining fives, and the odds seemed great that my opponent had a tenth card of some kind left.

I shall never forget the moment when I put the card down, and in a voice I could not recognise as mine, said, "Five."

The Australian only had a three left. Saved! I threw down my remaining five, and scored the necessary one for last card.

How hysterically I showed my hand, how the tears ran down my cheeks; what my feelings were, or what I did, I cannot tell. I know that five was the last card I ever played.

In my little sitting-room at home there is a frame hanging up containing those very five cards; above is inscribed:—

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 334.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING MAY 25, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

"IT can't be as bad as that, Sophie. Must your father have 20,000 francs by the first of January?"

"Yes, Henri, dear, or else"—her lip quivered a little—"or else the mortgage will be foreclosed, and father will lose all his land, and we shall be homeless."

"Not if I can help it," said Henri, stoutly.

Sophie looked proudly at him, and then at the wall of the studio. What an artist Henri was!

She came to him, and laying her hand gently on his shoulder, gazed sadly into his eyes, and said:

"I know, Henri, I know. But then you are poor now."

"I will rise—get a picture into the Salon—make money——"

"Yes, dear; but if papa loses all his property; and, besides——" and her grey eyes grew moist, and she looked wistfully away.

"And, besides?" repeated Henri, with anxious inquiry.

"And, besides, papa has been hinting at the marriage proposals of Jean Bertrand, an old playmate of mine, who offers to pay off all the mortgage on the day of his betrothal to me."

"To you, Sophie! You don't mean that you—that your father——"

Sophie looked sadly at a neat little pair of feet.

"Henri, you know I love you, and that I have promised faithfully to be your wife; but think of poor papa, and think of all I owe him. Oughtn't I to be ready to make any sacrifice to save him from ruin?"

Then they both looked sadly away in silence. Suddenly Henri squeezed Sophie's hand so hard that she started violently.

"Wait, Sophie," he exclaimed, "I've got a plan. We—you and I—can earn that twenty thousand."

"Yes, yes; how?"

"Why, you be my model, and I'll paint you."

"Oh, will you? But—but you couldn't sell a picture of *me* for twenty thousand francs."

In answer Henri drew her before a little square mirror, hung between the two windows, and made her look at her own reflection.

"See there, Sophie. Just look at your eyes; are they not the deepest grey, with golden lights in them? and are not your lips as red as this carmine? and just see that little pointed chin, how I could paint that; and those pink cheeks—fresh as a baby's!"

Sophie began to blush at Henri's enthusiasm, and turning from the glass, looked into his dark face, which was lit up with the glow of an almost poetic inspiration.

"And, you know," he went on, "something tells me that I shall paint you better than I have ever painted anything before—that you will be my inspiration. You must wear a loosely fitting lilac—very soft lilac—robe, and you will have your hair down, hanging down over your left shoulder, which will peep through your curls like a white dove in a golden cage. And you must hold a spray of lilacs in your hand, and be reclining under a lilac bush, and I'll call you the Lilac Witch.

"Didn't you ever hear of the legend of the Witch? She was a very beautiful fairy, and man came to catch a smile from her red lips, and the man she smiled on was made bold to do high deeds; but if his heart was drawn away to another woman, in a moment she spoiled all he had done, and made a beggarly wretch of him. Besides, you know, the lilac will go so well with your complexion and hair and eyes."

And so it was planned. The sittings were daily. Sophie was a very patient model, and Henri was full of inspiration, and worked with a certainty of success. He made studies of her face in all possible moods and expressions, till, by culling what was most entrancing in each, he began to create an ideal.

He threw the whole vigour of his poetic soul into his work, striving to get that longing, inspiring look in the large, grey eyes which, mingled with an expression, half of pity, half of triumph, in the rest of the face, was to make up the ideal of the Lilac Witch. He found the look of longing and inspiration in Sophie's eyes but the pity and triumph—that divine mixture of pride in victory and sorrow for the conquered—were wanting. By his own talent, Henri created them, inspired by his love and the prize set before him.

One day in December he was working away with his brush while Sophie reclined on the model's platform. He could see how tired she was. His own face showed that, but for the indomitable fire in his black eyes, he would have given out long ago. But the day of foreclosing the mortgage drew on apace. Still to-day was a happy day—Henri had a surprise for Sophie, and as he occasionally searched his palette for colours, the corners of his mouth twitched with his suppressed secret.

Sophie was just saying how Jean Bertrand kept repeating his offer to her father, and how, as the days went by and the first of January approached, her father seemed more and more inclined to accept. Henri smiled sweetly.

"Very good for M. Bertrand," he said; "but I have something to tell you. Something splendid—superb," and he kissed his hand with a theatrical gesture.

"Oh! what is it?" exclaimed Sophie, jumping up and spoiling the folds of her carefully arranged drapery.

Henri forgave her that for the sake of the news. Then he told her that the agent of a rich Englishman was looking all

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over Paris for paintings of beautiful women; how he had seen the Lilac Witch, now nearly finished, and how he had, with a millionaire's extravagance, offered the fabulous sum of 30,000 francs. That ended the sitting for that day, for Sophie insisted on taking Henri at once to her father, telling him the news, and making him break off all further negotiations with Jean Bertrand.

And so it was arranged. Henri was to pay off the mortgage as soon as the picture was transferred, keeping the surplus of 10,000 francs to start life with Sophie, while her father dismissed Jean Bertrand, with the precautionary hint that, in case the Englishman should fail them, he would immediately accept Bertrand's offer.

It was the evening before the great day when the picture was to be formally sold, the 30,000 francs handed over, and Henri and Sophie married. Henri was in the studio, standing before the picture. In one hand he held a lighted cigarette, in the other an acutely-pointed paint-brush. He was scrutinising the face of his beloved Lilac Witch with a look of intense exultation. Every now and then he would make an infinitesimal stroke with the brush, after which he would take a long pull at the cigarette, letting the smoke slowly exude from his mouth and nose in a manner that bespoke keen satisfaction.

He was putting on what he called the last touches before he said good-night to the picture, and went to call on Sophie. He looked at his watch. It was already past nine, and he had promised to be there at eight. Still there were only a few more tiny touches needed, and then he would go.

He lit cigarette after cigarette, he walked up and down the room, changed the lamps, and surveyed the painting from twenty points of view. Finally, he seemed satisfied, threw down the brush, drew a sofa up in front of the easel, and lay there watching the Witch's face with a lover's rapture. His chest heaved, his eyes grew bright, the muscles round his mouth softened into an expression of supreme delight.

Suddenly he started and looked at his watch. It was twelve o'clock and he had forgotten, and Sophie had probably gone to bed, wondering why he never came. He blamed himself for being so thoughtless.

This changed the current of his thoughts, reminding him that to-morrow he married Sophie, and they would always live together; a bright smile lit up his face, but it was a commonplace smile compared to his look of a few seconds ago. Yes, to-morrow Sophie would be his, and they would come and pay him 30,000 francs and take away the Lilac Witch. Take away the Lilac Witch? Why, of course; he had only painted it for the sake of marrying Sophie.

Henri looked away from the picture with a dull ache at his heart. Somehow, life with Sophie, when the Lilac Witch was gone, did not seem so sweet as it used to in the old days when they had the first sitting. Then the picture only meant to him the portrait of his dear Sophie. Now, when he was gazing into that fair, arch face on the canvas, so triumphant, and yet so pitying and tender, he never thought of its being Sophie's face at all. He seemed to see there something that was all his own and had come out of his own soul. How could he bear to part with it? But he was winning Sophie by giving it up. A horrible doubt came to him. What if after all he should love the picture better than the model? He shook his head resolutely, and went to bed. All that night in his dreams that awful doubt tormented him.

On the morrow Sophie appeared before the hour of the business transactions, so as to tidy up the studio. She found Henri there before the picture as usual. He had wheeled the easel up near the window, and was devouring the painting with his eyes. He never so much as turned his head to greet her.

He saw there, on a bank of moss, half sitting, half reclining, a beautiful woman, the image of his sweetheart, yet wearing an intangible something about the eyes and mouth, something that Henri, with feelings of misgiving, felt that Sophie had not. The wavy, light brown hair, hanging in ringlets over the bare shoulder, and the vermilion tint of the pure cheek, were simply a clever copy of Sophie's charms

But in the grey eyes was a look that seemed to tell of a great, unsatisfied longing, for love—or, perhaps, victory—while the delicate, slightly curving lips had a tender, pitying expression that was strangely contradicted by the pointed chin, which boded forth a scornful joy of triumph—perhaps the very triumph which the eyes were longing for, and whose victim the mouth pitied. The very compositeness of the face, full of contradiction, was the origin of its charm.

Henri looked long at the face, and then turned and glanced half timidly, half hopefully, at Sophie. She thought she caught his meaning, and smiled back at him.

"Is it like?" she laughed.

Henri's face lost the look of hope. He turned eagerly back to the picture, looked at it a minute, then turned away with a sigh. Sophie came to him, and, looking over his shoulder at the lovely reflection of herself, asked him why he sighed. He answered:

"Ah, Sophie, you cannot understand, you cannot know the feeling of adoration which an artist has for something into which he has poured his whole soul. This is my masterpiece. I shall never do anything as good again, no, never! All the strength, all the purity, all the poetry of my inmost soul are embodied in that one painting, and now—now, I must part with it; must say good-bye for ever to what has been meat and drink to me for months past. You cannot know what it has come to mean to me: how I have worshipped it as I created it. It is more than a portrait. It is an ideal in which I have lived for months. Oh, where, where shall I find anything to take its place?"

And Henri, kneeling before the picture, spread out his hands in supplication. Sophie knelt beside him, and gently passing one arm over his shoulder, whispered softly to him, as if they already knelt before the altar:

"Henri, Henri, here I am! Have you not me? Did you not paint that picture to marry me? And now it's done, are we not to be married, and you are to have me always?"

She paused. Henri gazed long and steadily, with a blank, searching look, into her sweet pale face. Then he turned towards the Lilac Witch, shuddered, and sorrowfully shook his head. He noticed that in a spot near the edge of the canvas the varnish had worn a little rough. He got up from his knees, and, pushing aside a curtain, went into a side room to get a pot of varnish.

Sophie remained motionless, kneeling before the picture, her bosom heaving, her eyes flashing, her hands clutching convulsively at her dress. She repeated his last words: "'Where shall I find anything to take its place?'"

Jealousy, cruel as the grave, jealousy of her own self, jealousy of the image of her own person reflected in the artist's imagination, was taking hold of her. Oh, how she hated the picture that had stolen her only possession; had cheated her of Henri's love! She rose and looked savagely at the lovely Lilac Witch. Then, glancing wildly round the room for a weapon, she spied on a little table Henri's mixing-knife. It was of steel and quite sharp. She ran to it, seized it, and then coming up so close that her hot breath made the canvas moist, she hissed:

"There, you thief, you!"—and with a few strokes of the knife, she cut and slashed the lovely face and tore out the grey eyes, and hacked the poor head and bosom into shreds. Then, throwing back her head, she stood upright, panting and trembling before her disfigured rival.

At that second it seemed as if the scornful, pitying, triumphant look of the Lilac Witch had passed to her own face.

Just then came a rustle at the curtain and a rattle at the door. Henri slipped in quietly from the inner room, and Sophie's father came bustling in from the hall. The two men came forward and greeted one another cordially; then they turned towards Sophie and the picture.

With a sharp cry Henri bounded forward, and pressing his forehead against the mutilated painting, cried like a child.

Sophie looked wildly about, and staggered towards her father. He roughly led her to a chair. Then, pulling his hat over his ears, he said hoarsely, half aloud:

"I must go and find Jean Bertrand."

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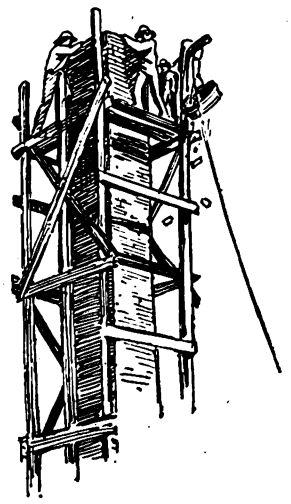
On the Chimney



"LAST summer," said Dannie McLean, the mason, to his friends at the "Dog's Tail," "I took a contract to build a chimney for the tanning company at Millville. It was to be eighty-two feet high, and they wanted the job hurried through.

"The foundation and lower part were plain sailing; but as we got higher I had trouble with my help. The local men became frightened, and left one after another, till at last I had to send back home here for Charley French.

"You see, at that height, hod-carrying was out of the question, so we had a block and tackle rigged, and lifted all our stuff by horse-power. The upper block was fastened to one of the upright posts of the staging; the lower one to a post sunk in the ground.

"It was not a very safe arrangement, as we could not make the staging very secure. But we got a quiet, steady horse, and a cautious chap for driver, and didn't feel as though there was much danger.

"There were six uprights in the staging. Of course, each of them was not all one stick. They had to be spliced about every twenty feet. This made three joints in each upright, and they were far from being firm.

"Down nearer the ground, where the brickwork had hardened, and the staging was well fastened to the chimney, it was all right; but the upper part of it was decidedly unsteady. The posts creaked and vibrated more or less every time a bucketful of brick or mortar came up.

"We had made a bet of a bottle of whiskey with the manager of the company that we would finish the work by Saturday evening. At dinner-time that day it was so certain we were going to win easily that Charley suggested to the manager that he had better pay half the bet in advance, in the shape of a flask of whiskey. He agreed; and we took the flask up with us to finish off on.

"We had drunk most of it, and had only one more course of bricks to lay, when the son of the manager made his way up beside us. He was a wide-awake, independent-looking youngster, fourteen or fifteen years of age, but he had no right to be there. He would have been sent down in a hurry if the whiskey hadn't made us a little too easy-going.

"As it was, we both had sense enough to order him to leave at once. Instead of obeying, he put his hands into his pockets, eyed us knowingly for a moment, and remarked:

"'Aren't you two a little high, for eighty feet above ground?'

"We laughed, and let him stay. He moved about the staging, not in the least disturbed by the elevation. Finally, when he got tired of looking about, he picked up a hatchet which had been in use for driving nails, and began chipping at one of the posts.

"In the meantime the last brick was laid. We finished the whiskey, and gave three cheers, while the boy stood watching us with anything but respectful eyes. Charley French was leaning against the chimney with the empty flask in his hand, looking somewhat tipsy.

"'See here, Dannie,' said he, solemnly, 'there's the old horse down yonder, and we've forgotten all about him. He's seen us right through this job, and he hasn't been offered so much as a smell of the whiskey.'

"'Hello, old chap! Here's the flask for you, anyway,' he suddenly shouted, as he gave it a toss.

"It went flashing and circling through the air, and fell with a crash on a big stone just behind the horse, whose driver was with a crowd of loafers some twenty or thirty yards away.

"The horse gave a frightened leap, and galloped off at a speed that I hadn't thought was in him. The rope whizzed over the pulleys, and the half-filled bucket shot up towards us like a rocket.

"It came against the upper block with a crash that threatened the overthrow of the whole staging. Posts swayed and bent at their joints; boards, loose bricks, and tools slipped from their places and went rattling down below.

"We clutched at the top of the chimney as the steadiest object within reach. But the newly-laid brick moved under our hands, and gave little promise of holding us up.

"The horse was checked for a moment when the bucket came against the upper block; but he bent wildly to his traces, and the fastening of the lower block gave way. He had now a direct purchase on the upper corner of the staging.

"The only thing which saved it from being torn away at the first tug was the horse being unable to bring his full strength to bear. The rope ascended at an angle which lifted the traces above his back, and shifted the strain from his shoulders to his neck. He was half choked and thrown to the ground.

"The staging groaned and reeled as he struggled to get on his feet again. His driver stood stupidly looking up at us without moving a step. The whole thing happened in so few seconds, that it is not much wonder the man's presence of mind left him. The horse scrambled to his knees, then to his feet, and pulled frantically. The strain at the top of the chimney became frightful. It seemed as though not only the staging, but the whole upper part of the chimney would be pulled away and fall at the next plunge.

"Neither Charley nor I had spoken a word. We just held on, and gasped and wondered how it would feel when everything gave way. And we forgot all about the manager's son until he spoke up behind us:

"'It's about time to cut the rope, isn't it?'

"Before we could turn our heads there was a sharp click of the block. The clean-cut end of the rope shot downward.

"The boy stood with the hatchet in his hand, watching the horse. Of course, the moment the rope was cut the straining animal pitched forward.

"'It'd be a good thing for you two men if you were just as frightened of rum bottles as old Dobbin down there seems to be,' remarked the boy calmly, as the horse disappeared round a corner, while the rope trailed behind him like a long snake.

"Charley and I were both sober enough by that time, and we wanted to shake hands with the manager's son, but he refused.

"'No use making a fuss,' he said. 'I happened to have your hatchet in my hand, and I cut the rope. That's all. Another pull from Dobbin would have brought the whole thing down, and that'd have been about as rough on me as you.'

"So you see, I came near not curling any this winter, concluded Dannie, but as it is, I'll just quit the 'conveeviaulity' o' the game."

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THE WEARER OF THE VICTORIA CROSS

THE soldiers are coming into the city.

The clank of swords and sounds of horses' hoofs, and then the band commences to play as it leads the sunburnt warriors through the old town of Chesterbury—the horses tossing their heads to the sound of the music.

At the head of his regiment rides Major Clement Homfreys, V.C.—familiarly known to his body of horse as "Old Clem"—his tall, martial figure, set off by the elaborate uniform of the "Devil's Own," being a prominent attraction.

Many a little heart fluttered, and many a sly, winning glance was cast, as he rode forward, the admired of all, he—the hero of the Egyptian Campaign and the wearer of the coveted Victoria Cross.

But the iron-grey warrior saw nothing of the bewitching smiles and sly glances, but, like an automaton, rode on through the narrow streets into the barrack-square, with its blocks of greystone buildings which constituted the new quarters of this regiment.

In a few days the excitement had abated and society imagined that dull times had passed now the acknowledged smart and fashionable regiment were ensconced within the walls of their town.

Neither were they to be disappointed, for before long polo, ennis, military dances, and all kindred sports dear to youth, were in full swing.

But the Major did not join in the gaiety, but spent his time in antiquarian research among the cloisters and historical landmarks with which the old cathedral city abounds.

"Society" at first resented this slight from their idol, but, finding argument of no avail, very reluctantly slipped the prosy Major for the acknowledged smart set of officers attached to the regiment.

So things went on, month after month, and Homfreys was left in peace to lead the sleepy existence he had mapped out for himself. But one day a fresh era opened in his mundane life.

It was while strolling through the Cathedral grounds in research that he came across a young lady painting at her easel.

Without thinking what he was doing, he wandered up behind the artist, and looking over her shoulder stood, for some minute or two, admiring the half-finished water-colour.

Then, suddenly seeing the lady about to move, and realising the apparent show of bad taste on his part, he lifted his hat, and mumbled out some indistinct words of apology and regret.

"There is no need of an apology," she said, turning to him. "I take it as a great compliment that you should care to look at my poor efforts."

"Scarcely that," he replied. "I was attracted by the cleverness of your work, and that must be my excuse for intrusion."

"Ah! Major Homfreys, like all officers, you are not above flattery," she answered, with a sweet smile and the least suspicion of colour mounting to her cheek—and then she turned to pack up her easel and sketching pad. The Major seized the opportunity and begged to be allowed to help her. Receiving assent, he went down on his knees to arrange the portable apparatus.

For a few minutes there was an awkward silence—both experiencing shyness in each other's company.

"Now, come, tell me how you knew I was a soldier," he said at last, and without looking up.

"What modesty!" she replied. "As if all Chesterbury does not know Major Homfreys, the wearer of the Victoria Cross. Has not the description of how the hero rode out under heavy fire and saved the life of a wounded soldier been published in all our local journals?" this with an admiring little laugh.

Shall it be admitted that he, the hero of many a fight, and one of England's most gallant warriors, blushed at the words of praise issuing from the lips of a little country maiden? But indeed it was a fact, and his shyness and awkwardness increased.

He tarried over the packing of the easel until his equanimity was re-established, and then sprang to his feet with a bright look in his eye unusual to him.

"And now let us come to a mutual understanding," he said. "You seem to know everything about me, won't you tell me the name of the artist who delights to hide her artistic abilities in this little place?"

"You know my father, surely, Major?" she replied. "He is the mayor of the borough—my name is Edith Chester"—this in the meekest of voices. "Papa, as you must have heard, has a strong prejudice to soldiers; but, believe me, there is a reason for it. My brother ran away from home, years ago, and enlisted in a regiment that was sent out on foreign service. The shock unsettled papa for a long, long time, and now we are forbidden even so much as to mention my poor brother Fred's name."

"Is that possible?" said the soldier kindly. "Accept my sincere regrets, Miss Chester, for intruding myself upon you."

"I think you make a mistake," she said hesitatingly. "The prejudice to soldiers rests with papa alone. I—er—you must please excuse me now, I am long behind my time, and they will be waiting tea for me." And with a red face, and not noticing the extended hand of the Major, she picked up her easel and case and ran off through the grounds.

For the rest of the day the Major walked about with a pleasant smile, which was duly noticed by his officers, and many theories were advanced as to its probable cause by the smart throng in the large billiard-room attached to the barracks.

But the Major knew nothing of this, and, indeed, such remarks had no chance of coming to his ears.

On the following afternoon his steps took him again to the Cathedral grounds, and, with pleasure, he saw his little friend seated at her easel deeply interested in her work.

She turned at the sound of his footsteps, and came forward with an outstretched hand and a sweet smile to greet him.

He took her hand within his grasp and looked tenderly down into the grey eyes upturned to his, while both hearts beat quickly.

Then he turned to the picture with a few complimentary criticisms on the girl's work.

"It seems so strange," she said, in answer, "that you soldiers should have time to care for this sort of thing."

"Perhaps I'm an odd sort of soldier," he replied, looking down upon her.

"I think you are a very nice sort of soldier!" she answered—and then, noticing a smile lurking under the heavy moustache, added—"of course, I mean to come and admire my poor little picture."

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So they both stood, somewhat abashed, yet happy in each other's company, not noticing the approach of a grey-headed gentleman, who came striding towards them, with evident anger written on his face.

They turned simultaneously at the sound of footsteps, and then the girl shrunk back with the startled cry of "Father!"

The situation was a delicate one for the Major, but, in the presence of his own sex, he found words and endeavoured to explain his intrusion on Miss Chester.

"I have nothing to say to you, Major Homfreys," the Mayor answered curtly. "It came to my knowledge that my daughter had been seen in your company, and I thought it my duty to come and escort her home."

"How can you act so rudely, papa?" the girl cried. "This gentleman was merely looking at my drawing, and——"

"Enough," said the Mayor. "The introduction to Major Homfreys was not my seeking; besides, you can finish your work at some other time. For the present, I want you at home."

With tears in her eyes the girl packed her easel and accompanied her father from the grounds, leaving the soldier standing there, gnawing his moustache.

"And to think that she will suffer for my sake," he thought, as he walked moodily back to the barracks.

"Old Clem" is down again on his luck, was the verdict of the select few—assembled that evening in the billiard-room.

. . . . .

Three weeks had gone by and Major Homfreys had not once caught sight of his divinity. He realised now what it meant to be parted from her. He, the callous disciplinarian, who for years had resisted the attractions of the opposite sex, was now pining for the presence of a little country girl—and day by day the furrows seemed to be deepening in his forehead.

One evening, on returning to his rooms, he found a letter written in a strange hand awaiting him.

With a nervousness not to be accounted for, he tore open the envelope, and read:

"Langlebury, Chesterbury.

"DEAR MAJOR HOMFREYS,

"I have such good news for you—my brother has returned home and made peace with my father, to the great happiness of us all.

Edith Chester.

"But there is a certain amount of secrecy between them that I can't quite understand; but my father wishes me to make an informal request that you will honour us with a visit this evening.

"May I, on my own behalf, tell you how pleased I shall be to see you?

"Yours very sincerely,

"EDITH CHESTER."

The Major read the letter again and again, scarcely believing his own eyes—what did it all mean?

Ten minutes later he knocked at the door of the Mayor's residence and was shown into the reception-room, where he was met by Mr. Chester himself.

"Major Homfreys," said the Mayor, grasping his hand, "I have to make a sincere apology for my rudeness to you in the Cathedral grounds some days back. Let me commence by formally greeting you and introducing my daughter Edith and my eldest son, Fred."

As he spoke a sturdy young fellow came forward and saluted the officer:

"Major Homfreys," the young man said, "you don't know me by the name of Chester, but you will remember me in Egypt under the name of Private Easton, and I shall never forget you, Sir, for *you* saved my life at the risk of your own."

The Major stood dumfounded at the working out of events. Then he found his tongue:

"Mr. Chester," he said gravely, "when I had the fortune to save your life, I did only what hundreds of others would have done under such desperate circumstances, and in return you gained for me the Victoria Cross; so you see I have been well repaid for any risk I ran," and he shook the young man's hand heartily, while the Mayor and his daughter stood smiling at the unexpected meeting.

It was a happy little party that sat down to late dinner that evening, and many stories of military heroism were told by the young sergeant that brought a colour to the Major's face and admiring glances from Miss Edith, seated at the officer's side.

. . . . . .

From a fashionable paper some six months later:

"ON the 26th inst., at Chesterbury Cathedral, Major Clement Homfreys, V.C., of the Royal Fordshire Regiment, to Edith, daughter of Frederick Henry Chester, Esq., of Langlebury, Chesterbury."

THE BLACK PEARL

A NIGHT IN ACAPULCO.

THE harbour of Acapulco is an ideal one for shelter, and, after the steamer is once at anchor, it is a source of mystery to the passengers who have not been on deck how she ever entered the quiet little bay. The high, blue mountains in the background, the tall palms and tropical green down to the water's edge; along the shore the tiled and thatched houses—among the oldest on the coast; and, on the rising ground to the right, the ancient fort and military prison. All these make a sight that fills a lover of the picturesque with enthusiasm. The waters about the steamer are thick with the boats and dugouts of the bumboat-women and dirty native boys peddling fruit, shells, pearls, and a world of indescribables, all keeping up a constant din of jabbering jargon, that, with the hundreds of half-naked natives passing from the ships to the lighters discharging cargo, makes an exciting scene, in sharp contrast to the peaceful outlook on the shore beyond.

From the ship the city seems but a collection of small adobes, scattered here and there along the hillside, with an occasional long, white building in view. But no sooner has the traveller passed the gates of the custom-house than a little city of twelve thousand inhabitants lies before him under the shelter of the hill, with thriving stores thronged with dark-

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eyed señoritas and men in white linen or bespangled velvet, many of the latter with the flaming *serape* hanging over the shoulder.

Edmund Warren represented the English house. He had taken the place of the traveller who for years had made the annual visit to the Mexican seaport. He had never seen Acapulco before, nor had Henry Sanford, who accompanied him on this trip. They had only just landed and become settled in the miserable excuse for a hotel in time to enjoy a delicious *comida*, when they felt an impulse to join the throngs which filled the clean-paved streets as evening came and night soon followed the footsteps of the sultry day.

Passing down the street leading by the stores, the market, and the plaza, just behind the custom-house, a small place under sheltering palms opened to view, where, night after night, the lower classes assembled to watch the fandango. The crowd of dark-skinned men and women, all dressed in the garb of the locality, stood out in the dim light of the long torches planted here and there among the throng, like ghosts of departed señoritas and caballeros. All were watching the couples dancing the monotonous clog-quadrille on the low platform to the music of drum, tambourine, and guitar.

The Englishmen had mingled with the throng about the dancers, watching alternately the platform and the groups of girls about. Soon soft eyes had discovered the strangers, and coquettish glances went out from beneath long lashes. Warren was never happy unless in love, and in love with every pretty face that came across his path. His heart beat faster as he caught the glances shot at himself and Henry, and he nearly pinched the latter's arm off as a smile came from a dark-eyed beauty on the edge of the throng.

"Gad, Henry! Such eyes! Did you ever see their like?" he exclaimed. "I must see where she lives. Are you with me?" And he rubbed his hands in anticipation of an adventure. Henry was quite as ready for a lark as his companion.

Ten o'clock. The dancing was over, and the crowd scattered through the dark streets.

"You had better look out for that tall Mexican with your beauty, Ned. He may stick a knife into us," cautioned Henry.

"Nonsense! Come on," was the other's rejoinder.

They did not notice the native police—not uniformed, but armed—following some distance behind as the Englishmen dogged the footsteps of the first conquest of the amorous Warren; nor did they know their custom of "running in" the foreigner on any pretext whatever for the revenue of the paltry fine. Muriella Narvaez knew full well that her new admirers were close behind, and so did her tall lover. He bade her good-night as Warren and Sanford passed, and went back towards the plaza. If the Englishmen could have heard his consultation with Old China, the bumboat woman and character of Acapulco, they might even now be back in their native city.

The young men retraced their steps, and found the olive-skinned beauty still in the door. They saluted. The bow was returned.

"*Adelante*, señors," a pretty voice said, and they accepted, with alacrity, the invitation to enter. Candles burned dimly in a corner filled with bottles—*mescal*, *aguardiente*, and *tequila*. Several other girls, quite as pretty as the captor of Warren's transitory affections, were seated about, some on stools and some on the low couch in the corner; two had guitars.

"Here's luck, Henry," whispered Warren, and they were soon quite at home in the little white adobe, though to Henry there seemed something uncanny about the place. To the Englishmen, used to the luxurious fittings of a metropolitan home, the bare walls and dirty floors, covered with palm *patates*, were a new experience.

While laughter and song came from the little house, and the Englishmen were whispering love-nothings in the ears of newly found *amoureux*, in another house, not far from the water, more serious words were passing between Old China and the tall lover of Muriella. The old dealer in green cocoa-nuts and occult mysteries was listening with ill-concealed pleasure to the man who was begging a favour at her hands. No love-scrape about the shores of that pretty bay ever escaped her notice, and nothing pleased the stout old bum-boat woman so much as to be sought out by the amorous of the upper classes to listen to such information from her lips as is sought from the "second-sight" mediums of our own country.

"So you want to *buy* the Black Pearl? To *buy* it! You fool!" shrieked Old China, when the Mexican had finished his story. "What do you know about it?"

"I know what was said when the *commandante* was found dead, and that the police were afraid to search for it. Five hundred pesos for its use to-night—that is all I ask."

"The police are fools, and you are a fool! I know nothing about the Black Pearl."

"Come, China. A thousand pesos for its use and the knowledge how to use it."

"A thousand pesos," muttered the old woman. "Have you the money with you?"

"Aye, that I have; and I want its use for only this one night."

China waddled into an adjoining room, whence, after much delay, she brought forth a package, carefully wrapped and sealed. "You must not undo this Señor," she said, "or you will suffer, if you see the Pearl."

. . . . . .

The laughter and song in the adobe *casita* stopped at a knock on the outer door, and Ned Warren's pretty Acapulcan answered the summons. A neat parcel was handed her by the messenger, which she eagerly unfolded. "With the compliments of ——" it said, but she knew the handwriting.

"How funny, at this hour," she thought; but her snapping black eyes danced with glee as she undid the parcel and found it to contain an immense black pearl, set in beaten yellow metal of quaint workmanship. At her exclamation of delight the others grouped about, and their object of admiring glances was laid upon the table for inspection.

An instinctive shudder passed through Sanford as Muriella laid it under the candle light. It seemed to emit a peculiar light, and a queer, prickling sensation went through his veins as he viewed the jewel—the largest of its kind he had ever seen. As he looked a feeling of exhilaration came over him, such as he had not felt during the evening.

"That last drink of *tequila* was too much," he thought, but the others, too, were beginning to evince signs of liveliness even greater than all the hilarity of the night had brought forth. A faint blue haze seemed to cover every object in the room. The figures of the girls at intervals looked far away and then near by, while a feeling of utter recklessness pervaded his whole being. All the phantasms of the opium-eater could not be more weird than those which came into Sanford's brain as his gaze was riveted on the jewel lying among the candles grouped around it on the table. In their dim light it seemed to grow and grow, emitting a demoniacal glow that, but for the spirit of recklessness which possessed him, would have filled his soul with dread.

"The fandango!" cried one of the girls, with a wild burst of laughter. "Let us dance once more, for I feel as though my feet were on fire," and when the guitar sounded the notes of the dance, the dancers seemed to enter into it with fiendish delight and boisterous enthusiasm. Back and forth they crossed, their feet pattering and stamping to the twanging of the guitar. Faster and faster their movements became, as the music seemed to fill ever fibre with its wild action.

. . . . . .

Five bodies were found dead in the adobe *casita* next morning, but with no marks of violence or other signs to show the cause of death.

The gossips of that quaint Mexican seaport tell a weird tale of a black pearl taken from the gulf, that acts upon beholders as does the loco-weed upon all who taste that evil plant; and they tell, too, of a mad dance of death years ago, when two foreigners and three beauties of the place fell exhausted about the jewel, whose demoniacal fire kept them treading the fandango till all energy was gone and life went from them.

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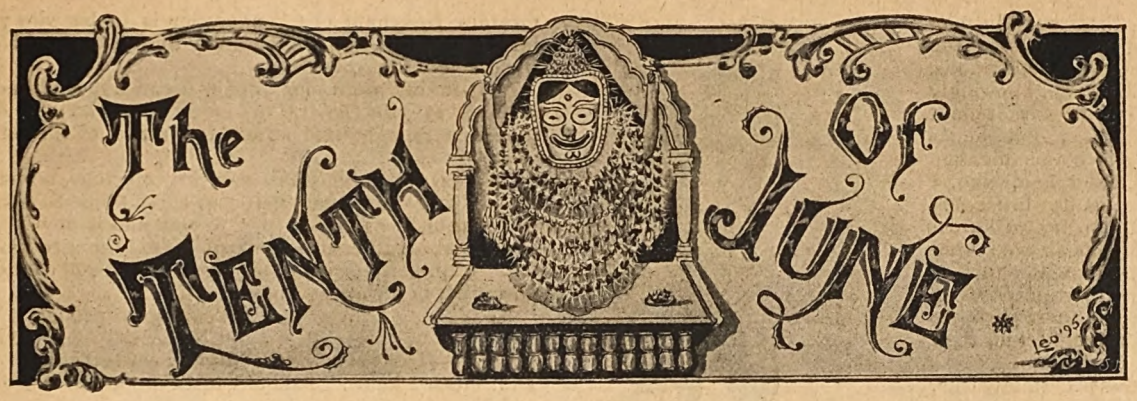

By John K. Leys, *Author of "In the Toils," "My Hindoo Friend," &c., &c.—Illustrated by* Raymond Potter.

SUMMARY.

Geoffrey Dundas—A young barrister.
Sir Arthur Chetwynd—A retired general and friend of Geoffrey.
Leila Chetwynd—His daughter.
Captain Byngham—An army officer, and cousin to Sir Arthur.
Lord Lavington—A friend of the General.
Amavati, the Rajah of Nagore—A Hindoo prince who visits Sir Arthur, and develops an unrequited love for Leila.
Chunder Sen—The Rajah's secretary.
Kuttapani—The Rajah's cook.

During the Indian Mutiny Sir Arthur, together with Geoffrey's father (since dead), took part in the looting of a Hindoo temple on the tenth of June, and on this day every year afterwards one of the Englishmen concerned, or some member of their families, is assassinated. On the last day of May, 1884, Amavati, the Rajah of Nagore, visits Sir Arthur, and Geoffrey tells him of the danger. Sir Arthur on learning from his lawyer that his cousin, Captain Byngham, to whom he had intended to marry Leila, is almost penniless, though representing himself to be rich, wills him but a small annuity. Chunder Sen makes it possible for Byngham to surreptitiously examine the will, and promises to help him out of the difficulty. On the tenth of June Geoffrey goes to Wales, and is followed by Kuttapani, who attacks him in a lonely spot and leaves him for dead. Geoffrey, however, recovers, and tracks him to a house in Westbourne Park, named Lancaster Villa, which transpires to be the headquarters of the Hindoo. Geoffrey asks the General for Leila's hand, but is refused, and goes abroad. On his return he meets the Rajah outside Lancaster Villa, and subsequently discovers that Captain Byngham is in league with the Hindoos.

CHAPTER XIX.

FOREWARNED.

Sir Arthur Chetwynd was sitting on a garden-seat, under the shade of a fine old beech tree on his lawn; at his side was a large bundle of letters and newspapers, some opened, others unopened. Sir Arthur had been from home, and this heap of correspondence had accumulated during his absence. He had only arrived late on the preceding evening, and had postponed the task of opening his letters till after breakfast.

Among these letters was one addressed in a handwriting that was evidently disguised. To his surprise, the General found that the letter inside was written by Geoffrey Dundas.

After reading the first few lines, Sir Arthur's face changed. He became very pale; and the lines in his cheeks deepened. He read a little further, and gave a start.

"Is anything the matter, papa?"

Leila had stolen up to him unobserved.

"No, child, no; but I am busy. I don't wan't to be disturbed. Here, take these"—thrusting some unopened illustrated papers into her hand. "Just go off somewhere, will you? and look at the pictures. I want to be alone just at present."

He spoke in a peremptory, harsh tone, though he was not conscious of the fact; and the tears sprang to the girl's eyes.

"He treats me like a child," she said to herself. "I can see that something has happened to cause him pain or anxiety, and he expects me to go away and look at pictures, as if I were a baby."

But Leila knew her father too well to utter a word of remonstrance. She took the newspapers, and went slowly back into the house.

"Let me see what this foolish boy says," said the General to himself, beginning to read the former part of the letter again before finishing it. "I wonder if it is all sober earnest, or if the poor fellow's nerves have been shaken by those attempts to murder him. He seems to have written under some strong excitement." He pulled down his straw hat over his eyes, laid down his cigar, and fixed his eyes on the sheet of paper before him.

"I have just discovered," wrote Geoffrey, "that those rascally Hindoos intend to make a serious attack on you; and I believe it will occur on the old date—the tenth of June. I cannot now enter into particulars of the method by which I came into possession of this knowledge; but I do beseech you not to disregard the warning. Not only you, but your daughter, are in great danger; and I have positive certainty—not merely suspicion, but certainty—that your cousin Captain Byngham is in some way connected with the plot."

Here the General stopped, and shook his head.

"That I can't believe," he said aloud. "Byngham may be a spendthrift, for anything I know; but he never would be—good Heavens!—a murderer! Geoffrey must be either mad, or insanely jealous, to hint at such a thing."

Yet the next words in the letter made him feel that he had done Geoffrey an injustice.

"I do not believe—it would take a great deal to make me

"Is anything the matter, papa?"

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believe—that your kinsman has anything to do with the main object of the Hindoos, or that he would knowingly be a party to any attempt on your life; but he is certainly in communication with Chunder Sen, who, I have no doubt, instigated Kuttapani to try to murder me. He has allowed himself to become the tool of these men for purposes of his own, and these purposes have your daughter for their object.

Began to pace up and down the lawn.

"All this is certainly true, for I overheard part of a conversation between them, and their words could bear no other meaning. I could learn nothing of the details of the plot, except that it is intended to be carried out on board ship, and that Captain Byngham is to play the part of rescuer to Miss Chetwynd, and so win your gratitude and hers. This, at least, is the arrangement. Whether he will be allowed to carry out such a scheme, or whether his Hindoo allies will play him false, throw him over, and——"

The sentence had been left unfinished. The General drew his breath hard, and read on.

"You will think that I am mad. I am not mad, but I confess I am almost beside myself to think that we are comparatively so helpless against these malignant enemies, with their secret methods and their undying hate. It encourages me to think that a little more knowledge of their plans would enable us to defeat them, this time at all events, without trouble, and that without that knowledge we must run tremendous risks.

"The question is, what can we do? I think you should come up to town and see me, when we could perhaps hit upon some way of eluding the danger that threatens you. At any rate, I beg you to allow me to become your guest for the ninth and tenth of next month. Knowing that danger threatens your daughter as well as yourself, I cannot remain away from you."

The General bit his lip, and turned to the date of the letter. It was more than a week old; and a look of perplexity came into the Anglo-Indian's handsome face.

"I can't have that. I really can't have that," he said to himself. "Luckily I wasn't at home when this arrived, and now that the yachting trip is settled, of course the thing is impossible. And yet, if there really *is* any danger threatened, Geoffrey would be the very fellow to have at one's back. But there can't be—there can't be. On board Lavington's yacht there can be no danger. Geoffrey himself said so last year. He will be relieved to hear that we are to spend next week at sea. I must write and tell him at once."

The General went back to his letter:

"As to your own movements, if I may venture to give you advice, I would say, whatever you may have intended doing, *change your plans at the last moment*, taking good care that not a living soul, not even Miss Chetwynd, knows that you purpose changing them. That is your only safe course. If you have given out that you are to be at home on the tenth, go somewhere on the ninth, you and Miss Chetwynd—to London for example. But if you have thought of spending the tenth of June at sea, change your mind at the last moment, and stay quietly at home, allowing no stranger to approach the premises.

"One word more. I know that your friend the Rajah is in communication with your enemies. Innocent communication it may be. I don't know. You will know best whether it will be prudent to have him as a guest under your roof on the coming tenth of June. But as to two men there can be no doubt. I do hope that you will permit no scruples about hospitality to stand in the way of your safety; and if either Captain Byngham or Chunder Sen is to be with you on the fatal tenth, it is quite imperative that you should get rid of them before that day."

"Upon my word our young friend is very free with his advice," said the General to himself with a smile. Apparently the same thought had struck the writer of the letter, for he went on to say:

"I fear you will think me very officious, perhaps impertinent; but I can't help that. If I had failed to put the thing in the strongest possible light to you, and if anything were to happen through your neglect of obvious precautions—forgive me. I am perhaps offending again. But you cannot imagine how great is my anxiety!

"Your most devoted

"G. L. D.

"P.S.—The conspirators' plans involve *the use of a boat*. That much I know. I should therefore think it safer for you and Miss Chetwynd to keep on shore, and not even go down to the beach, until some days after the tenth."

Here the letter abruptly ended.

The General rose, and began to pace up and down the lawn, with his hands, in one of which he still held Geoffrey's letter, folded behind his back.

"Poor fellow, he is terribly anxious," he said to himself; "and I daresay he has discovered some evidence that those blackguards have got hold of Byngham. What for, I wonder? Probably as a spy. But in any case we are safe—absolutely safe. On board the old yacht it might have been different; but in the new yacht, a fine steamer, five hundred tons burden, with a strong crew of English sailors, most of whom are personally known to Lavington—Danger? Pooh! The thing is impossible.

"Yet, Chunder Sen! I confess I should feel easier if he were to be left behind."

Half mechanically the General went back to the garden seat, where he had left the little heap of unopened letters; and opened one of them. As soon as he had read the first few lines, his face cleared wonderfully.

The letter was from Chunder Sen, writing in his capacity of secretary to the Rajah. He wrote, he said, by his master's permission, and at his master's request, to say that neither his religion nor his health—he was extremely liable to sea-sickness in its worst form—permitted him to make one of the party on board the *Aphrodite*. With the Rajah's and the illustrious General's permission, he and the other members of the Rajah's suite would return to London on the ninth of June—the day fixed for the *Aphrodite* to leave Plymouth. And as the Rajah would require an attendant he would feel obliged if the General would allow one of his own servants to accompany him as his valet; or, if not, he could, perhaps, recommend an English servant who would not object to a sea trip to serve for the occasion.

Such was the purport of the Hindoo's letter.

The General gave a little exultant laugh as he tossed the letter down again among the others on the garden-seat. There was just to his mind one element of real danger in the situation—the Hindoos whom the Rajah might chance to bring with him in his suite; and this danger had been removed by the Rajah's own act! Of the Rajah himself Sir Arthur had never been suspicious.

To suppose that *he* would descend to be an assassin was absurd. And he now proposed to leave all his attendants behind, except one, and that one an Englishman, to be selected by the General himself.

Nothing could have been better. This decided the question of giving up the intended yacht expedition, which Sir Arthur had never, in his own mind, intended to abandon. No asylum could now be safer than Lord Lavington's yacht. Chunder Sen and his fellow countrymen might possibly reach him in London, or even at Seacombe Towers, but not on the open sea.

With a pleased smile on his face, very different from its former expression of stern anxiety, Sir Arthur proceeded to open the rest of his letters. Among them was a second one from Geoffrey Dundas, written a[bout] a week after the other.

"I was so surprised and a[nxious]" wrote Geoffrey, "at not hearing from you, that I s[hall] [go] down to Seacombe Towers,

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to make inquiries. He reported that you were from home, and I concluded that you had left directions that your letters were not to be forwarded. But I have no doubt you will get my former letter before sailing.

"I can only repeat my earnest hope, that you will change your plans with the utmost secrecy before the tenth of June. Make some excuse to Lord Lavington, if you are engaged to take another cruise with him, and join the yacht, if you will, later on—anything rather than aid your deadly enemies by carrying out arrangements which must be known to them, and on which they must have calculated.

"I would come to you to urge you by word of mouth to take my advice, but I cannot leave this place at present; and, after all, I could hardly say more to you than I have said in my former letter. I trust you will not stir out of doors on the tenth of this month. May I beg you to give my kind remembrances to Miss Chetwynd?

"Yours very faithfully,

"GEOFFREY L. DUNDAS."

"Poor lad!" said the General, half aloud, in a compassionate tone, as he folded up the letter, "he has got those rascally Hindoos on the brain. And no wonder, I must say, after the experience he has had of them! 'Can't leave this place,' he says. Where is he, then?"

He unfolded the letter again and glanced at the top of the first page.

"Oh! Asnières; some town in France, I suppose. What craze can have taken him there? I will write to him at once, and tell him not to be under any anxiety on our account. With Lavington we shall be as safe as if we were in the Tower of London. I wonder if Lavington means to take this opportunity——"

The General's thoughts did not shape themselves in words after this point; but he could not help wondering why Lord Lavington had not already asked Leila to be his wife. The fact was that Lavington was a slow, cautious man; and he had decided, twelve months before, that it would be as well to see a little more of Miss Chetwynd, charming as she certainly was, before taking the irrevocable step.

He had a remarkably high opinion of the greatness of the house of which he was the head, and a tolerably good opinion of himself. Lady Churchwood had a young friend of her own, whom she had destined, in her own mind, to be her sister-in-law; and her brother's attitude to Leila on the night of the dance in London had opened her eyes, and made her

Let fall some slighting remark.

"Where is Mr. Dundas now

regret that she had so readily yielded to him when he had asked her to send invitations to the General and his daughter.

So, with a woman's skill, she had taken the opportunity a few days later to throw cold water on the Viscount's passion, by letting fall some slighting remarks about Miss Chetwynd's appearance. She did not speak ill-naturedly—she had more sense than that; but she let her brother understand that she looked on the General's daughter as a countrified miss, quite unfit to fill a place in the "smart" world.

These remarks sank into the Viscount's mind. He did not say anything; but he was annoyed with his sister. He had thought Leila Chetwynd delightful, perfectly charming, in fact; yet Gladys did not seem to consider her quite up to the mark in some way. It would not do for him, he acknowledged to himself with a sigh, to marry a woman who was not in all respects worthy to wear a coronet.

He turned the matter over in his mind a good deal, and finally came to the conclusion that Miss Chetwynd was good enough for anybody. What did it matter if her childlike delight in amusements and scenes which were everyday, common-place affairs in the world of fashion were such as to amuse women of the world like Gladys? She would soon throw off that unsophisticated style.

He resolved to ask the General and Leila to join their yachting party for a trip to the Mediterranean in the spring. He would then be able to renew his acquaintance with the young lady; and if she seemed as desirable as she had appeared to him during the last cruise, he would take the plunge before the yacht returned to England.

The trip to the Mediterranean had to be delayed, however, because the new yacht, the *Aphrodite*, was not quite ready for sea; and it was nearly the end of April before Lord Lavington, meeting the General one day in Plymouth, pressed him so earnestly to accept his invitation for the first cruise in the *Aphrodite* that Sir Arthur felt compelled to say "Yes."

After a little hesitation—for the General was a little hurt to think that the Viscount had not spoken to Leila during the preceding summer—he asked Lord Lavington to spend a few days at Seacombe Towers. The invitation could not be accepted, as Lavington had made engagements up to the time of the yacht sailing; but his sincerity in declaring that he would gladly have accepted the offer if his time had been at his own disposal was manifest; and the two men parted very good friends.

Leila was looking forward to the trip with even more than her usual enthusiasm. She was sure that Italy and Greece must be beautiful beyond words; she thought of the cruise all day long, and dreamt of it at night.

"Have you got through your letters by this time, papa?" she called out from the terrace.

For reply, the General beckoned to her; and Leila soon joined him on the lawn, bringing some "work" with her.

"I have just heard from Geoffrey—Mr. Dundas, I mean. He desires to be kindly remembered to you."

The General did not fail to notice the start and quick look of glad surprise that came into his daughter's eyes as he spoke.

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Preferred the company of a little orphan niece.

"Confound the fellow!" he said to himself. "He may have done more mischief than I know of."

"Please send him my kind regards when you write," said Leila demurely.

The General grunted, but said nothing.

"Where is Mr. Dundas now? Is he still in Canada or the States?"

The girl tried to speak in a common-place voice; but she could not control her blushes, and she felt that she was betraying herself.

"He is in France," said her father coldly.

"In France! What is he doing there?"

"I don't know. He didn't think fit to tell me."

"Papa!" cried the girl, alarmed at her father's tone, "is anything the matter—I mean anything wrong—between you and Geoffrey—I mean, Mr. Dundas?"

"Since when, Leila, have you taken to calling young men by their Christian names? But there, my dear," he added, seeing that the girl looked terribly confused, and almost as if she were going to cry, "never mind. I've no doubt your doing so was a mere accident—good thing no one but I overheard you. You must really be more careful. Geoffrey—er—I mean, Dundas seems all right."

"Don't you like him, papa, as well as you used to do?"

"Like him! Of course. Why shouldn't I like him?"

"Why doesn't he come down here?"

"How can I tell? I don't suppose he has been in England since his return."

Leila would have liked to hint that an invitation might be sent to him; but she did not dare to say more.

"I expect the Rajah on Friday," said the General abruptly.

"Oh, that reminds me! Papa, I meant to ask you as a favour to let me invite Jane and Emily Stoddart to stay with me while he is here."

"Hum, my dear! They were here the last time the Rajah was here. Won't it look just a little odd?"

"Odd, papa? No! How? Why?"

"Why do you want them?"

"To keep me in countenance. You see, with the Hindoo for our only guest, if I am alone in the house——"

"It might be awkward for you—I see—I see. Very well, my dear, have them by all means. And their father, too, if he'll come. A British officer is surely good enough company for an Indian prince, whatever the difference in their purses may be."

"Thank you, papa. I will ask him; and I am sure he will be pleased with the invitation, whether he accepts it or not. Is it quite settled, about our trip?"

"Quite settled, my love. Why do you ask?"

"I was afraid something might interfere to prevent our going. It seems almost too good to be true that we are to go on such a delightful cruise!"

"No, my dear," said the General, lighting his long-neglected cigar, and settling himself down behind the *Times*; "nothing has happened to prevent our going, and nothing is likely to happen. God willing, we sail on the ninth—and lucky it is the ninth," he added, under his breath. "If it had happened to be the tenth that had been fixed for our departure, that foolish boy, Geoffrey, would have been ready to swear we would never come back; and I, myself—well, under the circumstances, I confess I should *not* have cared to sail on the tenth of June."

CHAPTER XX.

TRAPPED.

ON the day after this conversation, Jane and Emily Stoddart arrived at Seacombe Towers. The Lieutenant excused himself. He was too old, he said, to care for society. He preferred the company of a little orphan niece who shared his house, his pipe, and his newspaper, to that of all the Hindoos in creation.

A day or two later the Rajah made his appearance, bringing with him Chunder Sen and two Hindoo servants.

The house party was not so gay as that of the year before had been; but the Rajah seemed to be enjoying himself in a quiet way.

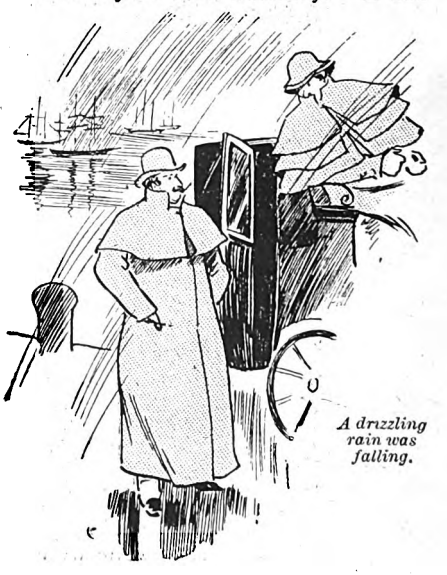
He played at chess a good deal, sometimes with the General, sometimes with one of the Stoddart girls, both of whom were very fair players. He made several attempts to teach Leila the royal game; but she always declared, after a quarter of an hour's close attention, that she was too stupid to learn; and the Hindoo relinquished the effort with a sigh, and a bow which made the simple English girl feel almost as if she were being ridiculed.

But the ninth of June, the day of departure, was fast approaching; and soon everybody who was to be of the yachting party was busy with preparations—all but the Rajah. He never seemed to concern himself about anything. His arrangements were all made days beforehand; his wishes were carried out with the certainty and smoothness of clock-work.

He never was in a hurry, never showed more than a languid interest in any subject of conversation. There was an aloofness about him that would have distinguished him from the rest of mankind—Anglo-Saxon mankind, at all events—even if his skin had been as white as an Englishman's.

One of the General's footmen, a young fellow named Brown, volunteered to sail with the party as personal attendant to the Rajah; and for two or three days he had to submit to be instructed by the Rajah's valet in his new duties.

The ninth of June fell that year on a Saturday. It had been arranged that the *Aphrodite* should leave the Thames, where she was taking in stores, in time to reach Plymouth on Saturday forenoon, and the final start was to be made on Sunday, or early on Monday morning. Lord Lavington and his friends were to embark at Gravesend, while the General and his party were to leave Seacombe Towers on Saturday morning, and join the yacht at Plymouth on the afternoon of the same day.



A drizzling rain was falling.

On Thursday of

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that week Chunder Sen and the Hindoo who acted as the Rajah's personal attendant left for London. A difficulty had arisen as to providing a cook for the Rajah; but this was fortunately overcome.

One of the General's old army friends who lived near London had a Hindoo servant who had been with him for many years, and had proved himself to be thoroughly trustworthy; and the General asked his friend to let this man accompany the Rajah in the capacity of cook, if he could be spared a few weeks.

The Hindoo was willing to go, and the old Anglo-Indian was delighted to oblige his friend; so it was agreed that the man should join the *Aphrodite* at once, in London. The Rajah's own cook was to leave his master at Plymouth and proceed to join his fellow-countrymen in town.

On Friday forenoon, while Leila was kneeling beside a trunk in her little boudoir, her father burst into the room, his face a fiery red, and an open telegram in his hand.

"Here's a pretty thing to ask!" he cried out. "Confound the man's impudence, I say. I shan't go! I shan't change my arrangements for any peer in the country."

"What is it, papa? I don't understand," said Leila, rising to her feet.

"Just listen——" and the General read the telegram aloud:

"'Yacht *Aphrodite*, Plymouth, Friday morning. Compelled to sail at latest daybreak, Saturday morning. Can you possibly join us here to-night? So sorry to put you to inconvenience, but cannot possibly be helped. Our sailing on Saturday a necessity. Will explain when we meet. Please wire reply. Will wait arrival of last train. — LAVINGTON.'

"There! What do you think of that? Do you call that civil? To invite us weeks ago to take this confounded cruise, and then change the time of joining at the last moment. I shan't go!"

"Oh, papa!"

Leila's hands hung down by her sides. She looked the picture of despair.

"Why couldn't he have let us know sooner?"

"I suppose they have just arrived in the yacht from London."

"Then why couldn't he have telegraphed before leaving town? Eh?"

"I don't know, papa, I'm sure."

"It is treating me with something like—with a want of that consideration which is due to a guest," said Sir Arthur, in his grandest manner. "I will not go."

"But the Rajah, papa?"

"The Rajah is a gentleman. He will see the matter as I do. But I am sorry, I am *humiliated*, to think that one of our aristocracy should put this affront on him."

"Papa, don't you take this matter a little too seriously? After all, Lord Lavington ——"

"Seriously! Too seriously! Upon my word!"

"I beg your pardon, papa; I do indeed!"

"That's right, my girl."

"Of course, I shall be *awfully* disappointed."

"I am sorry; but I see no help for it."

There was a silence, during which Sir Arthur stood with his hands in his pockets, looking out of the window. Then an inspiration came to Leila. She waited for a minute or two, and then said in a tone which was certainly unusual with her:

"There's some sort of entertainment on board to-night."

"It is abominable conduct in Lord Lavington! It is unpardonable. I suppose you will cut him next time you meet."

"I'm not sure, my dear," answered her father, after a pause, "that that would be the proper course to take. It seems hardly important enough for that. I don't think I would be justified in cutting him."

"He ought to have told you the reason of his changing his plans"

"Perhaps it was too long to be explained in a telegram."

"Well, it doesn't matter. *I* shall never speak to him again."

The General walked up and down the room, thoughtfully pulling his moustache. Now that he saw the thing a little closer, in the light of Leila's remarks, his anger was beginning to cool down.

There *might* be some really urgent reason for setting off a day sooner than had been intended. Lavington might wish to avoid having to ask some bore to accompany them. At any rate, it was civil in him to bring the yacht round to Plymouth for them, when they were in such a hurry to be off.

And it would be a pity to upset all the arrangements—Leila's whole future might depend on her going. And Lavington was really a good sort of fellow. "He *must* have had some strong reason for putting us all to such great inconvenience," said the General.

Leila, standing by, watched her father's face.

"It really doesn't matter, papa; and there isn't time now to pack up in time to catch the evening train."

This was touching the old campaigner on his tenderest point.

"Not time!" he growled out. "Why, I could pack for a voyage to India let alone a trip to the Mediterranean, in something under half an hour. But with *you* it may be a different matter."

"Oh, don't let me stand in the way," said Leila in an indifferent tone. "As it happens, most of my things are packed already, and I can easily be ready in time."

"Come now, Leila," said the General, smiling; "don't pretend that you don't care whether we go or stay. You would be disappointed if we didn't go, wouldn't you? You said so a little while ago."

"To tell the truth, papa, I would be more disappointed than I have ever been before, all my life!"

"Then, my darling, we will go."

He rang the bell, met the servant who answered it on the stairs, and issued half a dozen orders in as many seconds.

At half-past six that evening the General and his party left the Towers.

* * * *

It was dusk when they reached Plymouth; and a drizzling rain was falling. By the time Sir Arthur had seen his luggage loaded upon two cabs, and put his daughter and the Rajah into a third, it was almost dark.

When they got down to the sea front, they found that the wind had risen. It was coming in from the sea with a moaning sound, and sending the salt water up on the rocks in great smooth billows.

"Boat, sir?" cried half a dozen men at once, surrounding the cab in which the General was seated.

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"I want to go on board the *Aphrodite*," said the General, putting out his head.

"All right, sir. This way, sir."

"But do you know her? Have you seen her?"

"Can't say as I do, sir; but we'll find her if she's in the harbour. What sort of a vessel might she be, sir?"

"She's a steam yacht, of a hundred and fifty or two hundred tons, I fancy. She only came round from the Thames to-day."

There was a momentary silence among the group of watermen.

"Oh, *I* know," said one of them at last. "She'll be that new-looking black yacht that came in yesterday."

"Not yesterday," said the General. Then he remembered that it was only an inference of his own that the yacht had only arrived that day.

"That's her, sir, showing the white light at the side. Take you over in a jiffy."

At this moment a burly figure pressed through the crowd. "Be you for the *Aphrodite*, sir?" he asked, touching his cap.

"Yes. And you?"

"I was sent ashore for your party. Been lying here about three hours," said the man in a surly tone.

The General looked at him. He wore a sort of undress uniform, such as is worn by the petty officers on board well-appointed yachts.

"Where is your boat?" he asked sharply.

"Just down here, sir. But I have only two men in her, and they can't leave her with this wind blowing on shore," and he glanced at the pile of luggage as he spoke.

"That needn't trouble you," said the General drily. "Bear a hand, one or two of you, and carry the luggage down," he said to the men standing near.

They sprang forward at once; and a few minutes later Leila found herself seated in a boat that seemed dreadfully small and low in the water, being pulled slowly out seaward.

The General said something by way of encouragement to one of the men rowing, but the sailor did not answer him.

"They're Lascars," said the English seaman who had first accosted them.

"Oh, that will be so interesting!" whispered Leila to her father. "There were no Lascars on board the *Pallas*, were there?"

"No, my dear; there were not. And I rather wonder at Lord Lavington—however, I suppose it is usual nowadays to fill up with foreign sailors."

As he spoke, the portholes of the yacht which they were slowly approaching became lit up.

The caged lion.

"There's some sort of entertainment on board to-night," explained the boatswain. "Lord Lavington gave orders that if you didn't come before it began you was to be took straight to your cabins in the first place. He said you'd most likely take some supper after your journey."

"Very true," cried the General. "I, for one, shall be glad of something. And of course we must have it in our own cabins, as the saloon will be occupied."

All this time the Rajah sat without uttering a word, his eyes fixed on the yacht.

As they drew near the boatswain hailed, and an indistinct sound floated over the dark water in reply. The rain was coming down faster now, and Leila wondered whether she would be able to get to her cabin before she was wet through. Of course by this time it was quite dark, and nothing could be made out on board the *Aphrodite*. It was evident, however, that they had been heard, for a lantern was hung over the side, and a short step ladder was run down.

In a very few minutes they stood on the vessel's deck.

"This way, sir; I'll show you to your berths," said the boatswain.

The thought passed through the General's mind that Lavington might have left the saloon for a few minutes to welcome him and his daughter; but he was anxious to be under cover, and hardly gave the matter a second thought.

He found that the cabin allotted to him opened from a small open space just outside the saloon door, at the foot of the cabin stair. There was a corresponding cabin on the other, the port side of the ship; and to this Leila was conducted.

The General's cabin was of fair size and comfortably furnished. On a small tray in the lower of the two berths—there were two berths, though only one was to be occupied—was a tray with cold ham and chicken, and other eatables, as well as a decanter of sherry. The soldier eyed it wistfully, and then, deciding that he might as well eat first and dress afterwards, he drew a camp-stool up to the side of the berth, and attacked the provisions.

Before his meal was ended he felt the throb, throb of the engines, and knew that the vessel was moving through the water.

"Hallo!" he said to himself, "Lavington has lost no time. I remember he said they must sail at daybreak at latest. I suppose he thinks we may as well escape from this climate—and quite right too."

Having finished supper the General went to his cabin door to call the steward.

The door was locked.

"I say! What the dickens!"

Even then no suspicion of treachery crossed Sir Arthur's mind. He simply supposed that some bolt had been accidentally pushed home, or that something was the matter with the lock.

He knocked on the door, and called aloud.

No answer.

He knocked again, and before an answer could have come it seemed as if a lightning flash had darted through his brain, withering up all ideas, all feelings but one—they were trapped, they were prisoners!

"My God!" cried the old man, clutching his heart.

In that one moment he seemed to taste the bitterness of many deaths.

Could he be mistaken?

He sprang to the door, and rained blows upon it, then paused to listen. No sound but one only—Leila's voice answered him indistinctly.

"Oh, Father in Heaven! My innocent child!" cried the unhappy man, sinking on his knees. "Let not my past sins be visited on her head!"

For a few seconds he remained so, his face covered with his hands.

Then he sprang to his feet. It was well for Chunder Sen and his friends that none of them were at that moment within reach of the caged lion.

Lifting his foot he drove it with all his force upon the lower panel. It split—and revealed the fact that two narrow, but thick, pieces of wood had been fastened lengthwise on the outside of the door. The cabin had been converted into a cell.

He put his face down to the split panel and called out:

"Leila! Leila, my darling, do you hear me?"

"Yes, papa, I can hear you. But I can't get out. Somebody has locked the door, or else the lock is out of order Was it you who made that dreadful noise?"

"Yes, it was I, my child. I, too, want to get out."

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"Have both our doors got fastened? Why doesn't somebody come and open them?"

"Because, my love—Leila, you are a brave girl, I know. Remember you are a soldier's daughter."

"Yes, papa."

"Can you bear some very bad news?"

"I will try."

"You won't faint? You must not faint, for no help can come to you if you do."

"No, papa, I won't faint. But what does this all mean? I can't understand it."

"My dear, I'm afraid I've made a dreadful mistake. I don't think we are on board Lord Lavington's yacht at all!"

"Oh, how funny! And they have shut us up, taking us for bad characters, I suppose. But why don't the people of the yacht come and let us explain who we are?"

The General could not speak.

"Why don't they come, papa, or send someone?"

"My child, I fear that the yacht does not belong to—to honest people."

"You don't mean *pirates*, papa?"

"Something of that sort. What they mean to do with us, I don't know."

"Do you mean we shall have to pay ransom for our lives?"

"Perhaps. But, Leila, my dear, since I have got you into this horrible mess, try to put a bold front on it. We are quite helpless, I fear, at present. We must put our trust in God that no harm will befall us. Is there a lock on your door?"

"There is a bolt."

"Bolt the door, then, so that it cannot be opened during the night. And—you have blankets, and sheets, and so on?"

"Yes, the berth is ready."

"Take off some of your things then, and lie down. Try to sleep, and perhaps sleep will come. Promise me that you will."

"Yes, I will try. But isn't it all very, *very* strange?"

"Yes, my darling. But I can tell you no more."

"Good night, then, papa. Isn't the yacht moving."

"Yes, I know she is."

"Where are we bound for, then?"

"Ah, my darling, I wish I could tell you!"

"Well, good night, papa. You must try to sleep, too!"

"Brave girl!" cried the General to himself. "Not a cry, not a tear, though she must know, she must guess, that we are in terrible danger."

It may be imagined that the General did not close his eyes that night. "Oh, fool! fool! fool!" he moaned to himself. Now that it was too late, it seemed madness to have neglected Geoffrey's warning, to put implicit faith in a telegram that any one might send, to trust that villainous seaman with his Lascar comrades.

"I might have known the instant I stepped on board," he said to himself. "But by that time it was too late. And the Rajah? What has become of him? Is he a prisoner, too? No; for we should have heard him shouting. Besides, they would never dare to imprison him. Then he must be one of the gang—a traitor, a double-dyed traitor! And I would have trusted that man with my life!"

(To be continued.)

Her Answer

THE fishing fleet had set out early in the morning. The atmosphere was very clear, and the boats could still be seen in the distance, strung out in a long line across the horizon, between the Criel beach and the Points de Cayeux.

A few sailors' wives, children, and old men, still loitered on the jetty, all in excellent humour, for with such weather there should certainly be a fine haul of fish. The sea was admirably blue, but, lashed by the wind, it broke into little waves, which rushed, white-capped, towards the shore.

"Do you see it yet, mamma!" asked a little fellow who had stayed away from school that morning in order to see his father start with the fleet.

His mother had a telescope—a luxury that her neighbours envied her. In such clear weather as this if they could not distinguish the men they could at least make out the numbers on the sails.

He would have remained a long time watching his father's sloop as it grew smaller and smaller in the distance, but his mother led him away. They must go back to the house to their work.

They loitered by the side of the harbour, which had lost its animation now that its fleet of fishing craft was gone.

Madame Fournier stopped mechanically in the centre of the quay to look at a fine English three-master, the *Harding*, which came every week with a cargo of coal. A sailor, leaning over the rail of the ship, saw her, and waved his cap gaily to her. She turned away and hurried up the Rue de la Falaise to her home.

Two hours later the loungers of the Rue de la Falaise were greatly surprised to see Master Fournier, the owner of the fishing sloop T 672 hastening angrily homeward.

He had not entered the house before the neighbours had run to learn the reason of his sudden return.

Why had he come back?

It was that way that they had of leaving port with all sails set, whatever the weather, which was known all up and down the coast as "Treport sailing."

Her backstay had been broken, and Fournier had had to come back to port for repairs. These were already under way, and, once he had seen his men at work, he had come up to see his wife a moment.

"Your wife—she has gone out, but she will be back directly."

He was pouring himself out a glass of thin wine from the pitcher he had drawn that morning before leaving, when he noticed the inkstand open on the table, and the pen beside it, still wet with ink.

It was his son's pen and inkstand, but as the little fellow never wrote during the day he concluded that his wife must must have been writing. Almost at the same moment he noticed a letter in the blue vase on the mantelpiece, and, without thinking, he opened it and read:

"MADAME FOURNIER,—I love you more than I can tell. I implore you to set a time when we can meet. You are free—your husband is gone.

"HARRY EVANS."

"Oh, heavens!" cried Fournier, "Harry Evans!"

He knew him well, this handsome English sailor of the *Harding*, who had already ruined more than one home in Treport—a tall fellow, as tall as Fournier himself, fair, with the complexion of a girl and tender blue eyes.

He sprang up to rush to the quay and strangle the English-

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man when he heard his wife returning. Evidently she had answered that insulting letter, and she would tell him what answer she had given. He trusted his wife.

"I hurried back," she said, as she came in, "I heard of the accident as I was doing my marketing."

As she laid the purchase she had made on the table he had time to thrust the letter back into the vase. He would wait for her to speak.

Madame Fournier continued to busy herself with her household duties. He watched her and he found her still young, browned like himself, almost as tall, gracefully poised on her pointed sabots, and with a waist still slender.

From time to time she looked at him with a smile: she was not surprised to see him looking sombre after the accident. She did not say anything about it, for she had given him her advice on the subject long ago, and it was the sole matter on which they disagreed.

"Wife, have you nothing new to tell me?"

"Nothing, my dear husband."

His face contracted as with a sudden pain. His wife, thinking it due to chagrin at the accident, kissed him tenderly.

He pressed her to him with unaccustomed force. Never, even in the fiercest tempest, had he suffered as he suffered now. Suspicion entering his simple, loyal heart, ravaged it terribly.

"Well, good-bye. I am going to the harbour. We shall go out with the next tide if the backstay is repaired. Good-bye!"

She accompanied him to the end of the street, and bade him farewell so frankly, that he asked himself if it were possible that such a woman could lie.

He was about to go to the *Harding*, when one of his crew saw him and came after him. Compelled to return to his vessel he had time to reflect. A sudden fit of rage—a fight—would prove nothing, and he would never know the truth.

So he calmly watched the work of reparation, which was going on apace. At twelve o'clock his wife brought him his breakfast; at five his son came to kiss him good-bye; and that evening he set sail again, after having seen the *Harding* leave Treport for England.

The following Saturday, after a terrible tempest, the fishing fleet returned to Treport laden with a fine catch of fish. Master Fournier looked quickly to see if the English three-master was at the quay, but she was not there.

Disembarking, he learnt that the *Harding* had gone down in sight of Spithead, and that all on board had been lost.

Harry Evans, then, was dead. His wife alone knew the truth; he would not dare to question her; he would never know the truth—he would doubt her always!

From that time every one in Treport remarked that Master Fournier had grown taciturn. They asked his wife the reason, but she replied evasively that she did not know.

His crew found him rougher than before and more avaricious. He often returned to Treport on Sunday morning and left again the same evening without a night's rest.

One week he came back on Tuesday and the news spread that the *St. Laurent* had brought back the corpse of a drowned man. According to the custom of that part of the coast Master Fournier had given orders to return to port, losing his catch of fish in order to bury the dead.

Accompanied by two of his crew he made his deposition before the commissioner, and the latter had him sign the declaration that "the body of a drowned man had been recovered by the *St. Laurent* at a point fifteen miles south-south-west of Spithead, measuring five feet ten inches in height, dressed in a blue shirt, trousers of grey cloth and neckerchief of red cotton; no papers, no marks to establish identity; supposed, from the place of drowning, in default of other evidence, to be one of the crew of the *Harding*."

Early the next morning a funeral procession traversed the little village and bore to the church the remains of the unknown sailor found by the *St. Laurent*. Behind the coffin walked the crew of the *St. Laurent*, their master at their head, and behind the men came the wives or mothers of the sailors.

The religious ceremony was brief, but respectfully followed, and the unknown dead was conducted to the cemetery by the great family of sailors of Treport, who honour themselves in thus honouring the remains of others.

"Get yourselves ready," announced Master Fournier to his men; "we go to sea directly."

Fournier led his wife to a little knoll a few paces away from the cemetery. He wished to speak with her without witnesses.

"Wife," he said, "do you know for whom you have come to pray?"

She trembled and pressed her husband's hand. She had never seen him so solemn. "The man we have just buried was Harry Evans—wait!"

Madame Fournier turned pale. Her husband tendered her a paper, stained as if with water.

"Wife, I have doubted you. My punishment is to accuse myself of it. I read the letter he dared to write you, and I have been very miserable. The other night when this drowned man was found, I searched him. I could not show to others, not even to the commissioner, the only paper he had on him, in a little bag of oiled silk. The water had dimmed it a little, but I have read it nevertheless."

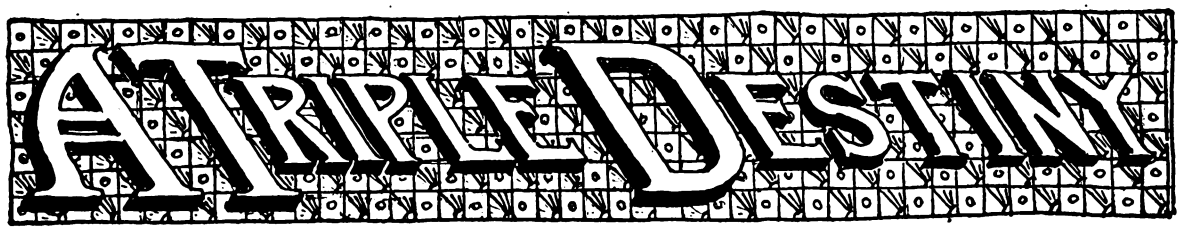
It was the answer written to the handsome English sailor by Madame Fournier.

"Sir; I love my husband; that is the sole answer I can make to your letter. I shall say nothing to my husband, for he would kill you. Never come here again."

"Wife, do you forgive me?"

"Oh, my poor husband, how you have suffered."

From that day Master Fournier grew young and gay again; but nothing can keep him from going out with all sails set.



I.

ALTHOUGH she was barely fifteen, the daughter of the King of Mataquin took pleasure in dwelling on the delights that must follow a maiden who was loved by a really charming prince. One morning, whilst the ladies of her bed-chamber were occupied before the great mirror in dressing her hair, which was very long and very beautiful, the Princess took it into her head to declare that she would be very glad to be married.

No doubt such an avowal was hardly the correct thing. It is not fitting that a damsel should so openly lay bare her secret thoughts on this subject. If such frankness ever ceases to be considered reprehensible, the day will not be far distant when we shall be deafened by the voices of the countless multitudes of girls, young and old, pretty and ugly, rushing through the streets and crying, "A husband, a husband!"

However, the Fairy Hulda, who was godmother to the Princess, was not angry with her for the desire that she so unceremoniously disclosed. She was an amiable fairy, full

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of indulgence, although she was not wholly devoid of a certain coldblooded jesting humour.

The doors of the bed-chamber of the Princess suddenly flew open as if by magic, and the fairy entered, gloriously clad and with a very good-humoured expression. Six little negroes, who must have been African gnomes, bore three coffers after her. These coffers were the most beautiful that ever appeared in the world. The first was made of chased silver, the second of refined gold, the third was all glittering with jewels.

"Good-day to you, god-daughter."

"Good-day, god-mother."

"So it is true that, like the impatient rosebuds that are anxious to unfold their leaves, you are in a hurry to find a husband?"

"It is true, god-mother, that I should have no great aversion to marriage if I was offered a husband such as my fancy has painted. To say all in one word, he must be like the young prince whom I see now and then—in my dreams."

"What is he like, this prince that you dream of, god-daughter?"

"Oh! more charming than any prince that mortal eyes can see!"

"That is of not much value as a description; is there nothing more?"

"In the first place, he is clothed with all the magnificence and good taste that are possible."

"Kings' sons richly clad are not rare in the neighbouring countries."

"In his exquisite face are placed lips that are fresh and rosy as a rose that is wet with early dew."

"There is no lack of princes with good mouths."

"In his blue eyes I saw so infinitely deep a sweetness, that one who looks at them imagines that he sees all the depths of heaven through two translucent sapphires."

"Hum! hum!" said the fairy. "Eyes with all that in them are not very common. Perhaps it will give you some trouble to find their fellows. Happily, as I am kind, and do not desire to expose you to the possibility of repenting of whatever choice you make, you will be allowed to marry three times. It is surely very hard if in three chances you do not meet with a husband who entirely suits you."

"What! three times, godmother?" cried the Princess, with a furious blush.

"Not all at once, of course. You must take care to put reasonable intervals between your successive weddings Besides, although you are allowed to marry three times, the fates will not force you to do so. Nothing forbids you to stop at the first, if you are happy in it. But at the worst you can have three chances. So I have brought you these three coffers. In the first, which is made of chased silver, there is a robe of white satin and point lace, which you shall wear for your first nuptials. In the second, which is of refined gold, I have caused to be put a dress embroidered with the sun and stars, which you shall wear to enrapture your second husband. And the dress for the third wedding, the most beautiful of all, is enclosed in the third coffer, that which is all glittering with jewels."

II.

Not long thereafter the nephew of the Emperor of Golconda came to the Court of the King of Mataquin to ask for the hand of the King's daughter in marriage, for the fame of her beauty had gone out through all the nations of the earth. Never had it fallen to anyone's lot to see a prince so gorgeously apparelled as this. Over satins that seemed to be made of luminous snow, and muslins light and rosy as the clouds of the dawn, he wore broidery of pearls and rubies, beryls and carbuncles that shone like blossoms of fire. The Princess was dazzled by them, and made no difficulty about marrying the nephew of the Emperor of Golconda.

She opened the coffer of chased silver, and drew from it the robe of white satin and point lace, in which she attired herself with delight for the wedding ceremony.

But it was not long before she discovered that fine feathers do not make fine birds. When her husband appeared of a morning in his dressing-gown he had nothing in common with the young prince of whom she had dreamed. Where were the tender eyes, deep and sweet as the infinite skies?

Little by little she became very despondent, often spending a whole day in her private apartments, and weeping out of sight. Thus she had all imaginable trouble to show signs of a decent grief the day that her attendants brought her the news that the nephew of the Emperor of Golconda, who was a mighty hunter, had been devoured by lions amongst the hills.

III.

When she had worn her weeds for more than six months, something began to whisper in her heart that nothing forced her to remain a widow. She felt her heart stirred by a thrill of tenderness at the sight of a cavalier who had just arrived at the Court, and who had overcome the most valiant knights of her father in the great tournament. Not only was this new-comer magnificently attired, but in his beaming face were found lips that were fresh and rosy as a rose that is wet with morning dew. The Princess could hardly restrain her joy when she learnt that this cavalier had formed the fixed design of marrying her. At once she gave her consent to this new engagement.

From the coffer of refined gold she drew the robe that was embroidered with the sun and stars, in which she clad herself with bliss on the morning of the wedding day.

But she was not long in perceiving, in spite of the rapture of kisses, that it is not enough for a prince to have beautiful attire and a mouth like a fresh-blown rose in order to assure the happiness of a damsel so exacting as herself.

Even this husband was not the Prince who had shown himself in her enchanted vision. Not his were the soft blue eyes like translucent sapphires. She grew to loathe the days and pass the nights in weeping, more unhappy than tongue can tell. The truth is, that it was a great effort for her not to smile through her tears when the news came that the cavalier—who was a knight-errant ever on the scent of adventures—had been slain by a wicked magician in an enchanted forest.

IV.

A year passed, and still the Princess had not thought of other nuptials. The two first experiences had been two painful for her to have heart to venture upon a third. She told herself that she would never find the husband of her dreams, and gave herself up to melancholy musings. But one evening, while she walked in an avenue of the royal park, she saw a youth approaching her in the dusk who seemed more beautiful than any mortal.

Was he really a human being, or rather some angel come down from Paradise? He seemed to be clad in robes of starry light. His mouth was like a fresh rose, but such a rose for beauty as never maiden found in any earthly garden. When he came beside her, there was in his blue eyes so infinitely deep a sweetness that she seemed to gaze at all the depths of heaven through two translucent sapphires.

This time, at last, she had found the mate whom she longed for. He stood beside her, like in all points to the delightful apparition of her dream. When he said, in a voice softer than the murmuring of the breeze upon the water, "Will you marry me, beautiful Princess?" she felt as if overcome by such languor that she seemed to be dying of too much happiness.

When the day of the nuptial ceremony arrived she opened the last coffer, which was all glittering with precious stones, in order to take from it the robe of the third wedding, which was to be the most beautiful of all.

But in the coffer there lay one strange garment. It was a linen shroud.

Then the Princess began to mourn, for she understood that the moment of her death was at hand. Taken with a sudden illness, she gave up the ghost before the fall of night. Her attendants wrapped her in the linen shroud, and laid her reverently in the coffer that glittered with precious stones. For to no one here below is it given to grasp the full fruition of an ideal. It is not upon this earth that princesses marry princes who have at once magnificent apparel, lips fresh as flowers, and eyes in which are seen the infinite blue depths of heaven.

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IN TERROR OF DEATH.

"You know," said Manuel, "what a sorrowful day for Tarragona was the 28th of June, 1811. But you cannot imagine the horrors attending the city. You did not see 5,000 Spaniards perish in ten hours; you did not see houses and churches in flames; you did not see unarmed old men and helpless women slaughtered in cold blood; you did not see pillage and drunkenness mingling with murder; you did not see, in short, one of the greatest exploits of the conqueror of the world, the hero of our age, the demi-god Napoleon!

"I saw it all. I saw the sick rise from their bed of suffering, dragging after them their sheets, like shrouds, to perish at the hands of foreign soldiers on the threshold over which the day before had passed the Viaticum! I saw lying in the street the body of a woman they had slaughtered, and at her side her infant, still nursing at its dead mother's breast. I saw the husband, with hands tied together, witnessing the murder of his wife; children weeping with terror at the horrors that surrounded them; despair and innocence taking refuge in suicide; impiety insulting the dead.

"Dangerously wounded and unable to take further part in the conflict, I fled for refuge to Clara's house.

"Full of anguish and terror, she stood at the window fearing for my life and risking her own to see me in case I should chance to pass through the street.

"I entered and fastened the door, but my pursuers had already caught sight of Clara—and she was so beautiful.

"They saluted her with a roar of savage joy and a burst of brutal laughter. A moment more and the door would yield to the axe and the flames. We were lost!

"Clara's mother, carrying in her arms her year-old babe, led us to the cistern or reservoir of the house, which was very deep and which was now dry, as no rain had fallen for several months, and there we concealed ourselves. This cistern, the floor of which might measure eight yards square, and which was entered by a steep underground flight of steps, narrowed, towards the top, like the mouth of a well, and opened into the centre of the courtyard, where a breast-work was built round it, above which two buckets were suspended from hooks attached to an iron bar for drawing water.

"The child I have spoken of, whose name was Miguel, was Clara's brother, that is to say, the youngest child of the unhappy woman whom the French had just made a widow.

"In the cistern we four might find safety. Seen from the yard, the cistern seemed a simple well. The French would think we had made our escape by the roof.

"They soon declared that such was the case, uttering horrible imprecations while they rested themselves in the shady yard, in the centre of which was the cistern.

"Yes, we were saved! Clara bound up my bleeding hand, her mother nursed Miguel, and I, although I was shivering from the chill which had followed the fever caused by my wound, smiled with happiness.

"At this moment we noticed that the soldiers, wishing, doubtless, to slake their thirst, were trying to draw water from the cistern in which we were concealed.

"Picture to yourself our anguish at that instant!

"We drew aside to make way for the bucket, which descended until it touched the floor.

"We scarcely dared to breathe.

"The bucket was drawn up again.

"'The well is dry,' cried the soldiers.

"'There must be water upstairs,' exclaimed one.

"'They are going away!' we all said to ourselves.

"'What if they should be concealed in this well,' cried a voice in Catalan.

"It was a renegade—a Spaniard—who had betrayed us.

"'What nonsense!' responded the Frenchman. 'They could not have got down there so suddenly.'

"'That is true,' responded the renegade.

"They did not know that the cistern could be entered by an underground passage, whose door or trap, carefully concealed in the floor of a dark cellar somewhat distant from the house, it would be impossible to discover. We had, however, committed the imprudence of locking the iron grating which cut off the communication between the cistern and the passage, and we could not open it without making a great deal of noise.

"Imagine, then, the cruel fluctuations between hope and fear, with which we had listened to the dialogue carried on by those wretches on the very brink of the well. From the corners in which we were crouching we could see the shadows of their heads, moving within the circle of light on the floor of the cistern. Every second seemed to us a century.

"At this moment the babe Miguel began to cry.

"But at his first whimper his mother silenced the sounds that threatened to betray our hiding-place, pressing the infant's tender face to her bosom.

"'Did you hear that?' cried some one in the yard above.

"'I heard nothing,' responded another.

"'Let us listen,' said the renegade.

"Three horrible minutes passed.

"Miguel struggled to get his voice, and the more closely his mother pressed his face into her bosom, the more violent were his struggles.

"But not the slightest sound was audible.

"'It must have been an echo,' exclaimed the soldiers.

"And they all took their departure, and we could hear the noise of their steps and the clanking of their sabres slowly dying away in the direction of the gate.

"The danger was passed.

"But, alas! our deliverance had come too late.

"Baby Miguel neither cried nor struggled now.

"He was dead!"

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A

POSITIVE REMEDY

FOR

CORPULENCE

"Any remedy that can be suggested as a cure or alleviation for stoutness will be heartily welcomed. We have recently received a well-written book, the author of which seems to know what he is talking about. It is entitled, 'Corpulency and the Cure' (256 pages), and is a cheap issue (only 4d.), published by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. Our space will not do justice to this book; send for it yourself. It appears that Mr. Russell has submitted all kinds of proofs to the English Press. The editor of the *Tablet*, the Catholic organ, writes: "Mr. Russell does not give us the slightest loophole for a doubt as to the value of his cure, for in the most straightforward and matter-of-fact manner he submitted some hundreds of original and unsolicited testimonial letters for our perusal, and offered us plenty more if required. To assist him to make this remedy known, we think we cannot do better than publish quotations from some of the letters submitted. The first one, a marchioness, writes from Madrid—'My son, Count ——, has reduced his weight in twenty-two days 16 kilos=*i.e.*, 34 lbs.' Another writes—'So far (six weeks from the commencement of following your system) I have lost fully two stone in weight.' The next (a lady) writes—'I am just half the size.' A fourth—'I find it is successful in my case. I have lost 8 lbs. in weight since I commenced (two weeks).' Another writes—'A reduction of 18 lbs. in a month is a great success.' A lady from Bournemouth writes—'I feel much better, have less difficulty in breathing, and can walk about.' Again, a lady says—'It reduced me considerably, not only in the body, but all over.' The author is very positive. He says—'Step on a weighing machine on Monday morning and again on Tuesday, and I guarantee that you have lost 2 lbs. in weight without the slightest harm, and vast improvement in health through ridding the system of unhealthy accumulations.'"—*Cork Herald.*

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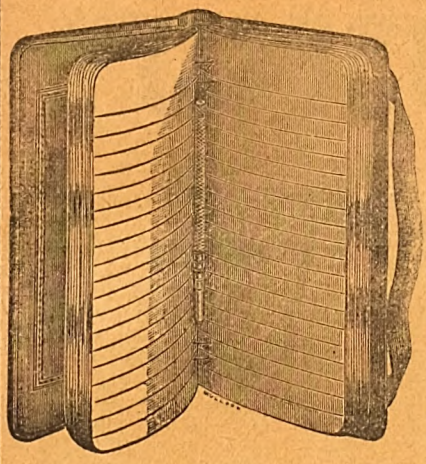

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EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 335. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 1, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

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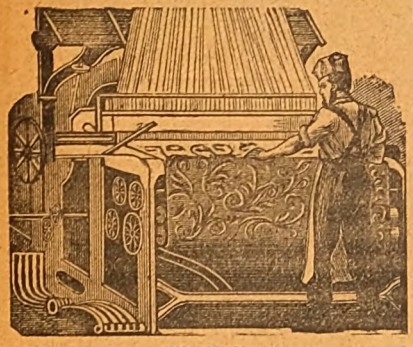

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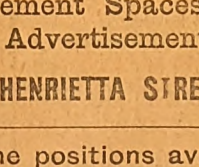

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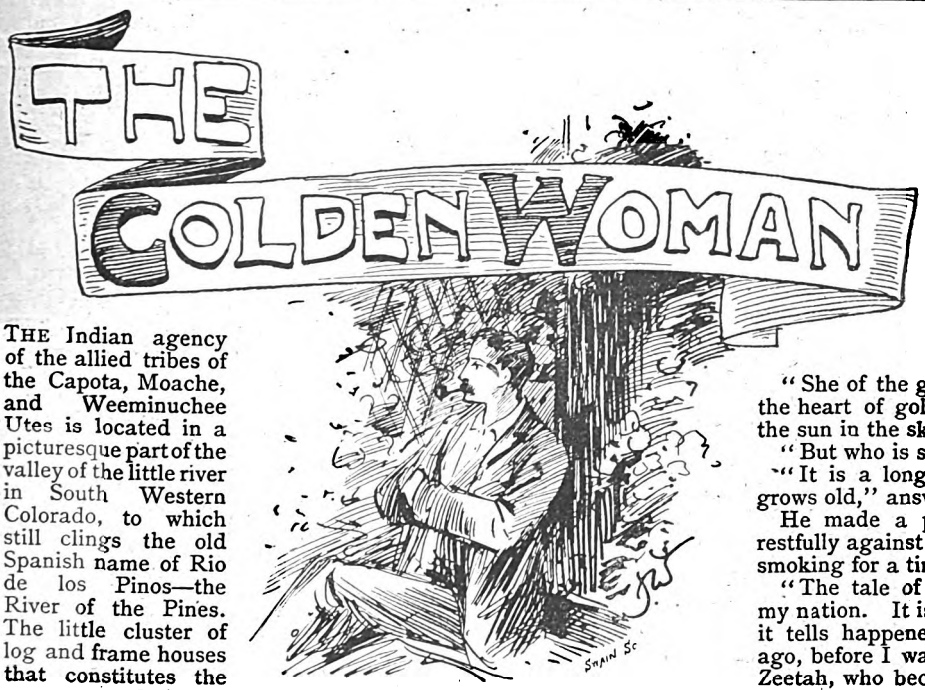
EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 335.] FOR THE WEEK ENDING JUNE 1, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.



THE Indian agency of the allied tribes of the Capota, Moache, and Weeminuchee Utes is located in a picturesque part of the valley of the little river in South Western Colorado, to which still clings the old Spanish name of Rio de los Pinos—the River of the Pines. The little cluster of log and frame houses that constitutes the agency stands in the narrowest part of the valley, and high mesa walls rise from the river on either side. Far away in the distance on either side, their crests showing high above the mesa lines, can be seen the La Plata Mountains and the mountains that hem in grim old Cumbres Pass.

For a month the old log agency building was my home. During the day I lived among the Indians, listening to their strange tales of magic, of battles and hunts of the golden long ago, before the day of reservations and Indian agents, and at night—the month was March—we clustered about the big open wood fire in the doctor's quarters, and talked of the hundred thousand things that isolated men with time to spare can find to talk of.

One midnight found me sitting in the agency porch smoking and wondering at the beauty of the brilliant moonlight that filled the valley. About two hundred yards from the building was a cluster of *can-nees* or tents, one of them brilliantly lighted by means of a bright wood fire, and sharp at midnight there went up from this tent a chorus of as weird unearthly wails as I believe a white man has ever listened to. I knew it to be some of the "medicine making" of the Indians, and I thought lazily of going to the place to ascertain if any of the Indians, who were my friends, were there, and if I might witness the ceremony.

I sat so for half an hour, listening to the wail that came from the medicine tent, and, just because I had nothing better to do, I was going to turn in, when, without a sound, old Lo-To-Kah stood before me. He was dressed in full native costume; an eagle feather was in his hair, and he was wrapped in a rich Navajo blanket. He was not known to be on the reservation, and I had not expected to see him.

"Lo-To-Kah," I said in surprise, "where do you come from? Why are you here?"

"I am here, O friend, for two things. One is to see you, for Jose Amarille met me in the Blue Mountains and told me. And the other thing I am here for is to be present at the chant of the Golden Woman. Do you not hear the chant the medicine men are making?"

"I hear the chant," I answered, "but what is it all about? And who is the Golden Woman?"

The old man did not seem to hear me, and he gazed away down the valley as though he saw something. As though speaking to himself he said:

"She of the golden hair. The Golden Woman with the heart of gold! Ah! she was more beautiful than the sun in the sky on a May morning!"

"But who is she, or was she?" I asked.

"It is a long story, O friend of mine, and the night grows old," answered Lo-To-Kah.

He made a pillow of his blanket, and I leant restfully against the log wall of the building. After smoking for a time in silence he said:

"The tale of the Golden Woman is an old tale of my nation. It is a true tale, and the things of which it tells happened in the old time of the long, long ago, before I was fully a man, before I had ever seen Zeetah, who became my wife. Eighteen summers had come into my life, and that was all, and I was but a boy when the Golden Woman was brought captive to one of the encampments of my people. She was tied to a horse, riding astride like a man, and she was so weary that she swooned from faintness and fatigue as soon as she was lifted from the saddle.

"I have but to close my eyes, and in memory I can see that beautiful woman again. I can see her fair face, her eyes as blue as the arch of the sky, and her long silken hair that was of the glorious colour of molten gold. There was a time, too—just a fleeting bit of time scarcely long enough to be remembered—when I gazed upon her and was almost sorry my skin was red instead of white; for I thought if I had been white, and had been of the blood of her race, I might have won her love. Such thoughts were foolish thoughts, *amigo*, just stray, half-formed thoughts that wandered unasked into the empty head of a boy. And, too, that was before Zeetah had ever been seen by me."

The old man ceased speaking. He leant his head against the wall of the old agency building, a dreamy look came into his eyes, and he gazed down the valley. His cigar went out; I lit a match and offered it to him, but he did not see it.

A belated Indian swain, returning to his tent from some amorous expedition, passed us and spoke, but Lo-To-Kah did not stir. His mind was wandering back to that old time, almost three-quarters of a century gone, when he had been a youth and had known her who was called the Golden Woman. It seemed strange to me that Lo-To-Kah, the savage nobleman who had been a very knight in his loyal devotion to the one woman who had been his wife, should lose himself in a flood of memories of a woman whom I began to believe, he had loved in secret. He had had but one wife; and if a lurking love slept in his heart through all the long years that lay

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between his youth and his old age, it was a secret that he would not confess, and would not even give a hint of unless in some unguarded moment. After a time he roused himself and said:

"Pardon me, my friend; I was dreaming without being asleep. We old men, when we live past the time that is allotted for action, live over the years again in memory, and I was living over again a time that was old before you were born. I will now go on with my tale.

"When I was a boy, and esteemed by some of the vain-glorious warriors as being too young for battle, a party of our warriors set out on a raid against a roving band of Kiowas that were journeying beyond Tierra Amarillo. I desired to go with the band, and could have gone, except that Mirdo, who was sub-chief and had command of the expedition, said that I should not. This Mirdo had longed to possess my mother when she was a girl, and because she would not wed him, he hated her and my father and myself. Mirdo who was on his horse, stood up in his stirrups, pointed his goad at me and said:

"'I go forth to lead men, and not children, to battle. Yon Lo-To-Kah is called a Ute, because he was born to a Ute woman, but he acts like no Ute. He is now old enough to be a man, to have lovers, to cheat slow old men out of the kisses of their young wives, and to play in the games of kan-yute where men win horses and blankets. He is not a man in love or games, and he will not be a man in war. He cannot go with any band I lead.'

"I stood in silence, my arms crossed upon my heart, and listened to the talk of Mirdo. And as he talked I promised to myself that a time would be when I would hold the throat of Mirdo in my grasp and make him eat his words and beg for his life like a craven. But I spoke no word in answer, for an Indian, as you know, can bide his time when he promises himself to be revenged upon his enemies. And Mirdo and his band rode away, their feathers streaming in the morning sunlight, and I was left in the camp with the women, the children, and the old men.

"It was evening when our warriors returned,—an evening two weeks after they had gone forth, an hour before the going down of the sun, when from far over that mesa that lies towards the cruel heights of Cumbres, we heard a cry of 'ho-la-ho-ho!' The cry was a cry of victory. Soon the men came in sight, riding one ahead of another. Both men and horses showed the signs of long travel and hard riding.

"Mirdo rode at the head, two fresh Kiowa scalps flying from the shoulder of his hunting shirt; and by his side, strapped to her horse and riding astride like a man, was the fairest and most beautiful woman who ever trod the earth of the valley of the River of the Pines.

"I liked not Mirdo and I expected to hear him insult me, but I stood among the tents to greet the warriors. Mirdo rode up with a flourish, dismounted, and called some old women to come and unbind the woman. And when she was unbound she swooned but she soon recovered, for she was a woman who was brave.

"'Who is the woman with the golden hair?' asked an old man.

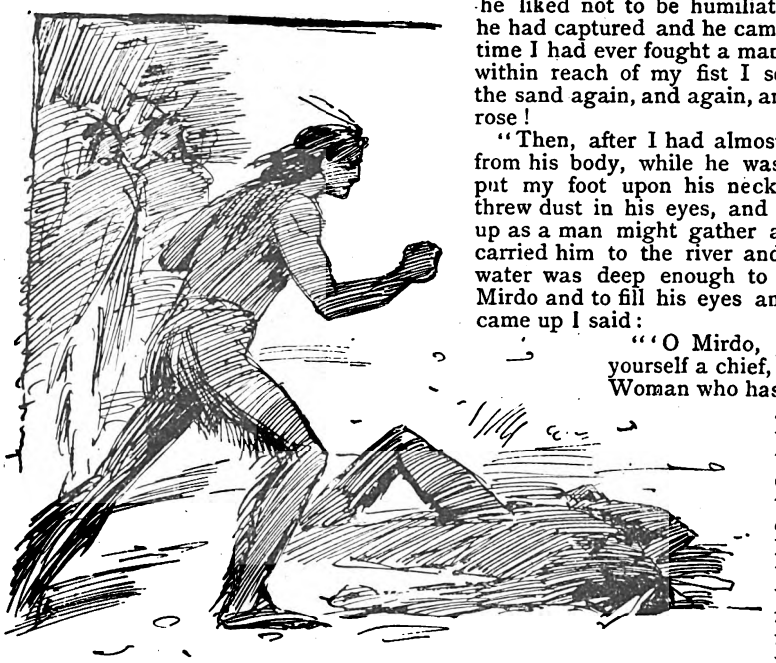
"'She is my captive,' replied Mirdo; 'the Kiowas took her from Navajos, and I took her from the Kiowas. She is mine to keep my tent; she is mine to work for me. I am Mirdo, and I am a man without fear, and a man who deserves the most beautiful woman in the land.'

"So boasted Mirdo; and as he boasted he looked upon the woman with his greedy gaze, and as he looked she cowered and shrank back. And I spoke to the woman, asking her name and from whence she came. The woman could not understand the Ute speech, but she seemed to feel that I was her friend, and she came close to me and held out her hands to me in appeal.

"I could speak the Navajo tongue also, and Mirdo could not; and I spoke to the woman in that speech, and she answered and asked me to protect her. I gave answer that I would protect her with my life. And then Mirdo took me roughly by the shoulder, saying:

"'Speak not to my woman, you squaw. What! Do you think to play with her and prattle to her? Get you to your mother's tent.'"

"Mirdo stood leering into my face, and as soon as he finished, I shot my clenched fist into his face and felled him as the blow of a stone axe would fell a sheep. He rose to his feet and drew his knife. The men caught him and took it away, and said that Utes must fight not like enemies but with their naked hands. Mirdo was a coward at heart; but he liked not to be humiliated before the woman he had captured and he came on. It was the first time I had ever fought a man. When Mirdo came within reach of my fist I sent him sprawling in the sand again, and again, and again, as fast as he rose!



"I sent him sprawling in the sand.

"Then, after I had almost knocked the breath from his body, while he was lying in the dirt, I put my foot upon his neck, I spat upon him, I threw dust in his eyes, and then I gathered him up as a man might gather a log of wood, and I carried him to the river and threw him in. The water was deep enough to wet the garments of Mirdo and to fill his eyes and mouth. When he came up I said:

"'O Mirdo, you coyote, who call yourself a chief, look upon the Golden Woman who has four times been made a captive! First this woman was taken by the Navajos, and because they took her they had the right to do with her as they liked. Then she was taken by the Kiowas, who had the same right for the same reason. Then she was taken by you, and the rights of the other thieves became your rights. But now she is taken by me, mine is the right to do with her as I choose, and it will fare ill with any man who dares to so much as lay his finger upon her.'

"Mirdo stood glaring at me, his bleeding lips hanging, and a look of murder in his eyes. I had not intended to strike him again, but the sight of his big brute face was a temptation that was too strong: and just as he was ready to snarl some reply to the speech I had made, I struck him, breaking his nose.

"Then Mirdo slunk away. He vowed that he would leave the tribe and lay in wait for me in the forest. But an old medicine man, the one who was teacher of Mape-ah-sas, whom you know, said to Mirdo that he was a coward, and that if he ever sought to do me wrong except in a fair fight or open battle, he would cause the evil spirit to haunt him all the days of his life. You know, *amigo*, that no Ute would incur the danger of a medicine man's curse; and I knew that I was safe.

"Then the old man said the woman was mine, and that I had fairly won her. I took her to my mother's tent, but with no thought of making her my slave or my wife as Mirdo would have done. I told her that she was safe from all danger, and

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then I sat down on the ground before the tent and thought. I tried to think of Mirdo and the battle I had fought with him; but I could not think of him, because I was thinking of the Golden Woman who had come into my life so strangely. And there I sat all the night keeping guard over the tent and wondering what the days of the future would bring forth.

"From that time on, life was different to me. Before then I had been a lonely, silent boy, wandering in the forests or sitting aside, while the men and boys played games. But it was not long before the Golden Woman became my friend and then my companion; and we talked to each other and wandered together in the forests, and rode ponies from one encampment of my people to another. Not at first, of course; for the woman was timid and half afraid.

"She was afraid of my people, and also afraid of me, for she knew I could make her my slave or my wife if I cared to do so. But she besought me not to take her to wife, and I placed my hand in hers and told her I would guard her, and that her life should be lived as she desired. It was after that—after she had thanked me, and kissed my hand—that she became my companion.

"A few times the woman was affronted. One burly man of my tribe, when drunk upon Mexican mescal, attempted to embrace her. I was sitting in front of our tent at the time, fitting heads to arrows; but her first cry took me to her side, and when I had been there but a little time, the brute lay upon the ground in a stupor that came very near being death. I was mad with anger, and after I had felled the man to the ground and knocked him senseless, I sprang upon his body and trampled his face in the dirt.

"Then I took the Golden Woman in my arms as a mother might take a babe, and bore her to my tent. When we were inside the tent, she placed one of her soft arms about my neck, she drew my face down to hers and kissed me, crying as she did so. Her kiss thrilled me through and through, and I was in danger of forgetting my promise. And I told her if she desired me to keep the promises I had given, she must kiss me no more. It seemed for a moment as though she, too, were tired of the promise, for she held my hand in hers, and looked wistfully into my eyes.

"After the fear of my people left her, it came about that she would go among them. At first she went only to the women and children, but it was not long until she went among all, even the chiefs and medicine men.

"When a child was born in some cold tent on a hillside, the Golden Woman was there. When a woman or child was sick, there was the Woman; and when a plague came upon our people, when the men died in their tracks as they stood in the camp ground, and little children were daily found dead in the arms of their dead mothers, then it was that the people of the Ute nation learnt to love the glorious being whom we named the Golden Woman.

"She comforted the sorrowing, cared for the sick, and prepared the dead for burial. She seemed sleepless and tireless, and every hour of the day and night while the plague lasted, she would be seen flitting from one tent to another, making tasteful things for the sick ones to eat, bathing the hot brows of those who were in the throes of death. And our people believed she was a medicine woman sent from a bright land that lies in the sun.

"Then some men came from the other Ute tribes, and they took home to their people the tale of this Golden Woman whose heart was said to be of pure gold. And thus it came to be that this woman was looked upon by us almost as a goddess, and that feasts and chanting are yet given in her honour.

"There are not many secrets among Indians who live in one encampment, and the people knew that the Woman was not my wife. I had another tent made, joining the one my mother had before, and I lived in the outer one.

"In time I taught her the Ute speech, and in time she told me something of her life. She was born in a great city in the East, and had gone to the West to be a missionary among the Indians. She first lived with a band of peaceful Navajos, and learnt their speech. Then she went to El Paso del Norte for rest.

"I took the Golden Woman in my arms."

"Between El Paso del Norte and Ciudad Fé, she had been captured by a roving band of Navajos, but before they had reached their camp they were beaten in battle with Kiowas and the Kiowas had taken her. The Kiowas started for their own country and were surrounded by the Utes under Mirdo. In this way she had been stolen by one tribe after another, and so swiftly that no harm had befallen her.

"More than this the woman did not tell me, thinking, because I was an Indian, I would not understand. But I learnt in time that she had journeyed to the wild lands of the West because of an almost hopeless hope that she might find her lover, who had come to the West and had never been heard of again.

"But as time went on, the Golden Woman grew silent as she went about her work of healing the sick. I fancied that she tired of dwelling in my tent, and when I asked her she said it would please her if she might dwell alone. It is not well for a woman to dwell alone, especially if the woman be young and beautiful, and I would not give my consent; but an old Navajo woman, who had been taken captive, and who had grown too old for work, also desired to live apart from the others.

"And the two women, the fair young one and the wrinkled old one, had a hut built in a sheltered part of the valley of the Rio Florida, and there they took up their abode. They tilled some land, and the hunters brought them much game, and they did not want for anything. The other people did not at first note the change that was taking place in the Golden Woman; but I, who knew her as well as though she were my mother, or daughter, knew that she was going mad.

"After this, the years sped on, and I lived my life as it came to me. I met Zeetah and took her to be my wife. I became a chief among my people, and much honour came to me. My mother died, my brother was killed by the Apaches, and many adventures of many kinds befell me. Often I journeyed to the ends of the lands that were known to my people, and often the time was long between my visits to these valleys.

"One time I took my band of people and went into the West, and for almost two years we did not see the Valley of the Pines. After a time we began, very slowly, to make our way homeward again, but going only by short marches, hunting and fishing by the way.

"While we were encamped in a valley in the Blue Mountains a man came to our camp, being on his way from this valley to visit one of our tribes in the place that is now Utah. And when he visited us he told me that the Golden Woman was sick in her hut, and that the old Navajo woman was also sick and had lost her mind. Then I told Zeetah what I intended doing, and I saddled my fleetest horse and set out for this place, hoping to see the woman again before she died, or perchance to save her life.

"When I came to the place I dismounted and went within. Upon a shelf-like bed built into the wall lay the old Navajo woman dead. And seated on the floor, in the middle of the room, her wealth of golden hair falling all about her, sat the Golden Woman, moaning and rocking herself to and fro. I

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stood in the door and gazed upon her, and it was long before she heeded me. In time, though, she saw me, and smiled a sad, sad smile that almost broke my heart. And she said:

"'So you have returned to me, Lo-To-Kah. Did you find Hugh?'

"I had never heard of any man named Hugh, and I knew not what answer to make. I stood in silence, trying to think, and the woman got up from her seat on the floor. She came and stood by my side, and took my hand in hers.

"'Lo-To-Kah, I have been crazed. For how long I do not know, but I know that when last a glimmer of reason and memory was left to me, the Navajo woman was living and was well; and now, you see, she lies dead. It must be that I am very ill, and it may be that I, too, will soon lie dead in this little hut. Now, when I am dead, I desire that you go forth and journey among the white-faced people until you find a man named Hugh; and when you find him, tell him that Helen died with his name on her lips, and that the love of him was the only love that ever was in her heart.'

"She sank down on the floor again, and before I could think of an answer to make, I heard a shout from outside, and, upon looking, I saw a small party of Navajo warriors riding forward. I did not fear the Navajos, for our tribes were then at peace. And when they came nearer I saw that a white man was with them.

"I was glad of this, for I knew not how to set about the task of finding this Hugh, and thought perhaps the white man could tell me. I told the Golden Woman to look; but at first she paid no heed, and she would pay no heed until the party of riders had drawn up their horses and stopped before the door. Then the woman rose to her feet, she brushed her long hair out of her eyes, and with me she went out.

"As she stepped outside the door, I saw the white man leap from his horse with a great shout. The woman saw him the same instant, and stopped dead as though she had been stricken with a palsy. The two white-faced people stood in mute, wondering silence for an instant, then the man called out the name 'Helen'; he sprang forward and clasped the woman in his arms, and all the time he wept as a mother might weep who had found her long-lost child.

"I thought at first the man might be her father, for he seemed older than she; but he was not her father, he was her lover. The woman nestled in his arms, and then for the first time for long years I saw the light of perfect reason shining in her eyes; for the first time since I knew her I saw her with a happy look.

"And then he saw me, and at once he stood as straight and firm as though he were made of stone.

"'Is this woman your wife?' he asked in a fierce tone.

"'Is she your wife?' I asked in turn.

"The man flushed hot and red; for a moment he did not speak, and then he hung his head and said:

"Stood in mute, wondering silence."

"'No, God forgive me, she is not. You have as much right to her as I.'

"'Why, Hugh, what is all this talk of right?' asked the woman, looking curiously into his face.

"The face of the man hung lower and lower; his cheeks grew first red and then white, and he said:

"'It means, dear one, that I gave you up as dead, and married another woman.'

"And then the Golden Woman lay on the ground at his feet, in a faint that seemed like death. And the man took her face in his hands, and kissed her lips, and wept over her as one weeps over the dead. It was a sad thing to see, friend; sadder than I at that time could understand. For then I knew only the ways of the Indians, and it seemed to me that if the woman loved the man, and the man loved her better than the other woman, who was his wife, that he could cast off his wife and take the Golden Woman in her stead.

"In time the woman recovered, and it seemed to me that the shifting light of lunacy was again beginning to come into her eyes. And I, knowing no better, stood by their sides as they talked, and I learnt that the man who was named Hugh had been the lover of the woman, Helen, and was to have taken her for his wife. He was an officer of the white-skinned soldiers, and had gone into the West, and the report had gone back to his home that he was dead.

"Then it was that the first touch of lunacy fell upon the woman; but she did not believe him dead. And saying she was going as a missionary among the Indians, she went to the East to seek him. She was captured, as I have told you. And the man who had not been killed, in time returned to his home in the East, and found that the woman had gone; and he believed her dead, and he had married another woman.

"He told the blue-eyed Helen that the woman who was his wife was cold, and proud, and haughty, and that he did not love her and she did not love him.

"'But she is your wife,' said Helen.

"'Yes, God pity me, she is my wife,' answered the man, his eyes upon the ground.

"What more they said I do not know, for I went with the men to help bury the old Navajo woman; and while we were thus at work the white man and woman talked, and the Navajos talked to me. They told me that the white man was a man who had first come to their country to fight them, but that he had become their friend, and that, more than a year before, he had come among them to live, telling them only that he was not happy in his own home. And I knew that he had left his wife, and would never call her wife again, whether Helen married him or not.

"When we had buried the old woman and returned to the tent, the man and the woman were still talking, both speaking in the Navajo tongue, which had come, from long usage, to be the same to them as the tongue of their own people. And I, knowing the thing that was troubling them, asked if a runner might not be sent to the white man's home to learn if his wife still lived, in order that he might take the Golden Woman to wife. The man said that could not be done. Then he mused a while and said to me:

"'Do you know the trails that lead to Santa Fé?'

"'I do,' I replied.

"The man took a paper book from his pocket, tore out a leaf, wrote upon it, and asked me how much gold I would require of him to carry that to Santa Fé. I replied that I would not do it for gold, but would do it for the Golden Woman. And he told me the paper was for a man who lived in Santa Fé, and was to ask him to write to the East and learn if the woman who was his wife still lived.

"I was told to give it to the man, and then, in six weeks' time, the man said he would send to Santa Fé again and get a letter that would let him know what he sought to know. And I took the leaf of paper and said I would go, and that I would also tarry in Santa Fé, if he desired, until the answer came out of the East.

"As the time drew near for the courier to return, both the man and the woman became troubled, and often they would anxiously gaze away over the mesas

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"There sat a man and woman."

as though hoping, yet fearing, for the return of the runner, and for the news he would bring. I sent a runner to my camp to tell Zeetah why I should be away; and although I greatly respected the two white people, I thought they were fools.

"For if they had been wise, they would have lived and loved and forgotten the East, and paid no heed to the going and coming of runners. And when the time for the return of the runner came, I, too, began to grow restless, and I would go down the valley, many miles below where the *rancho* of Sevaro now is, to try to meet him. And it chanced that I met the runner fully two hours' ride away from the camp.

"'Ho, Navajo, what news?' I asked as soon as the man came near.

"'The wife of the white man lives,' replied the Navajo.

"The reply so angered me that I almost struck the man, for I knew how it would grieve the Golden Woman and the man she loved. You know, friend, that only Indians with evil hearts will lie. But at that time I resolved to lie, or to induce the Navajo to lie, which was as bad. And I said to the Navajo, whom I knew well:

"'Do you know the cayuse pony that is in my herd? The one with the glossy hair, that can run like a deer and leap like an antelope?'

"'I know that pony,' said the man. 'If it were mine, many are the blankets I would win with it in races.'

"'It is yours,' I replied, 'if you will forget this foolish message that was told to you by the white man in Santa Fé, and will tell the white man and woman that the wife in the East is dead.'

"'But the writing that I carry will tell the truth,' said the Navajo, his eyes shining at the thought of my cayuse.

"'Tear up the writing, and say you lost it,' said I. A strange thing was that I did not feel like a mean man, even when I advised such things.

"And the Navajo tore up the writing, and then galloped to the camp with his lying message. And when I returned I saw two happier people than I had ever seen before."

Lo-To-Kah pulled a gold hunting-case watch from some fold or pocket in his garments, looked at it leisurely, and asked me for a match.

"But the Golden Woman?" I asked. "What became of her?"

"She is dead," answered the old man, lapsing into the stolidity of his race.

"But what befell her before she died? Come, tell me the remainder of her story."

"The man and the woman talked long about returning to their own land, and to their own people," said Lo-To-Kah; "but the wilderness, forests, and the wild life, have many charms for those who have had sore hearts, and they like not to return to the clanging cities and the unwise ways of their kind. And Hugh, the white soldier, and Helen, the Golden Woman, agreed with each other that they would abide in the wild lands of the West.

"They went away that night, telling me not to say that I knew aught of their going; and I did not learn more of them for many years. My people believed that Helen had been an enchanted woman, and that she had vanished in the air and gone to her home in the sun. I said nothing to change their belief; and they began the chant of the Golden Woman, and the custom has lasted through all the years since then.

"After that time I knew no more of the Golden Woman for ten long years. Then I was riding alone, going to a great medicine ceremony on the river Gila, to which all men must go alone. And while I was riding across the desert I came to a fertile little valley, hidden away among cliffs, from which I saw smoke arising. I thought it must be the encampment of some wandering Indians, and I approached it with caution.

"And when I rode nearer to the place, I saw in the valley a house built of stone, and it was surrounded by fields of corn, and melons, and trees. And I rode to the house, and upon a porch that was covered with the boughs of trees there sat a man and a woman. The man was Hugh, the woman was Helen, the Golden Woman.

"They were glad to see me, and I was treated like a chief returning from a long absence. But I was grieved to note that the woman was again partially insane. She knew me, she knew her husband as well as ever; but she had forgotten many things that took place in the East.

"And the man told me that they had built that *rancho* and lived there alone, but that once a year they went to Santa Fé, or some other Mexican town for supplies. And he said he was happier, living alone with his wife in the wilderness, than he would have been if he had been a king and had not had her with him. And I believe I understood, in a dim way, how this might be a true thing that he said."

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IN ONE HANDSOME VOLUME, 8vo, 376 PAGES, UNIFORM WITH THE ANGEL OF THE REVOLUTION, and OLGA ROMANOFF.

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THE BOON OF SILENCE

AND so Peter Martin reluctantly came to the conclusion that he would have to consult a physician. He had never been to a physician in his long life, and to have to go now was bitter to him. It was a luxury. He felt he couldn't afford it. A man who keeps a four pounds a week family on two pounds a week paid monthly has a hard time of it in this world.

For thirty years the roar of the City had been in his ears, and he had no holidays. So it was just his luck to stumble into the office of the most expensive doctor in the metropolis. If the servant had seen him he would not have got into the presence of the great doctor, but Martin, knowing nothing of how a man whose time is worth two guineas a minute is hedged in, and happening to come when the last patient was undergoing examination, walked straight in from the street, and by good luck, to the infinite astonishment of doctor and patient, walked into the consulting room.

"There is something wrong with me," said he, fumbling with his hat. "I don't know just what it is, so I thought I should see a doctor. Which of you is it?"

The patient waved his hand towards the great specialist, and Martin turned his pathetic, appealing glance in his direction.

"See what's wrong with him," said the patient in a whisper, who was evidently impressed with the humour of the situation.

He thought it funny that so evidently poor a man should consult a physician whose fees ran into hundreds.

The doctor asked many questions and examined his new patient carefully. Then he stood away and looked at him for a moment.

"There is nothing radically wrong with you. What you need is absolute quiet. Medicine will not do you any good. Get out of the roar of the City for a couple of weeks, or a month, if possible. Go into the country, to some farmhouse. That's all you need."

Peter Martin sat down with a sigh of exhaustion.

"I cannot get away," he said, "I would lose my place, and besides, I can't afford it. I get only two pounds a week."

"Ah, I am sorry for you," said the doctor. "We have no prescription for poverty."

The wealthy patient put his hand in his pocket and drew out some money.

"Here," he said, "that will help you to a little holiday."

Peter shook his head. He was too nervous and shaky to draw himself up indignantly, as perhaps he should have done.

"I have never taken any money that I did not earn," he said, "and I am too old to begin. How much is your fee?" he asked, looking at the specialist.

"I usually get one and sixpence," answered the great man, "that is, of course, when I don't give any medicine."

"Of course," said Peter, simply, drawing out his lean purse and paying over the coin. "Good morning, gentlemen." And with that Martin tremulously departed.

"You did that nicely," said the patient rising. "I must follow him and try to smooth over my blunder."

"Are you going to experiment with him?"

"Perhaps."

Martin, as he walked slowly down the street, felt a touch on his shoulder. He turned, and saw the man who had been with the doctor.

"If you come with me I think I can help you. Will you step into my carriage?"

Somewhat reluctantly Peter did so. He did not like the man, but there was something in his dark glance that compelled obedience. When the carriage stopped Martin was taken into a house that was luxuriously furnished.

"Sit down," said the stranger. "Now let me understand thoroughly about your occupation."

Martin told him all about it, and the stranger listened patiently.

"If I understand you, then, your hearing is of no use to you in your business—that is, it depends on your sight only. If you were deaf you could still hold your place. Am I right?"

"Quite right," answered Peter.

"Well, then, I want to try an experiment on you. I think it will help you; in any case, it will do you no harm. Do you consent?"

"If it will help me."

"I think it will. Now fix your eyes and attention on this."

The machine referred to was a small box with a thin, upright rod on which were two horizontal arms each with a small, round, shining mirror at the end. The dark man touched a spring and the mirrors rapidly revolved. Peter looked at the whirling mirrors intently for a moment, then leant slightly forward with his eyes widely opened.

The stranger, watching him keenly for a few moments, at last stopped the machine. Peter's eyes remained gazing fixedly at nothing.

"You are asleep," said the man, quietly, passing his hand over Peter's face.

The eyelids closed and Peter answered not.

"When you awake you will be stone deaf—you will hear absolutely nothing. You will have to be very careful of the street crossings, and wherever there is any danger. Now wake up."

A shiver ran over Martin's body and he looked round wildly for a moment.

"What have you been doing to me?" he inquired.

"Can you hear me speak?" said the man loudly.

"What have you done to me?" repeated Peter. "Everything seems unnaturally quiet."

The dark man drew a writing pad towards him, and wrote on it handing the result to Peter. He read the words:—

"You are stone deaf. Try the effect for two weeks and then come back and see me. If at any time before you wish your hearing restored, come to this address. Try the effect for two weeks if you can stand it."

Here followed the man's name and address. Peter folded the paper in a dazed sort of way and put it in his pocket. He went out into the street. The traffic was as busy as ever, but an awful silence was over the City. There was something unearthly in the appearance of bustle and the absence of all sound. He was in a city of phantoms, and it frightened him at first, but finally there seemed to come over him a sweet peace, because noise did not exist.

When he went home that night his good wife received him just as she had done these many years.

"Now, you good-for-nothing, what's kept you? Here am I toiling and moiling, and getting something to eat for an old fool that doesn't know enough to come home for it before it's cold. What are you looking at me like that for? What's the matter with you? Have you been drinking again?"

Now Peter neither drank nor smoked, which no one knew better than Mrs. Sally Martin. He couldn't afford either; but

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as he always winced when she accused him of it she accordingly flung it at him.

"Sally," he said, quietly. "I'm deaf. I suppose you are speaking to me, but I cannot hear a word. You'll have to write it down."

"Write it down!" exclaimed the good woman, aghast.

She had some idea that he was shamming; but as she watched him she saw that he was serious. She broke out occasionally in wrath, but quickly subsided and murmured, "Oh, Lor'!"

And Peter Martin spent the first evening of peace at his own fireside for twenty years.

In two weeks Peter Martin called on the dark man in the fine house. He was looking very much better in health than he had done when he left that place a fortnight before. The far-away look of the deaf was already beginning to appear in his eyes. A sweet serenity sat upon his countenance.

"I am pleased to see you look so——"

Then the man remembered and drew his writing pad towards him and wrote:

'If you will sit down in the chair I will take away your deafness."

Peter read it with a smile.

"I merely came to thank you," he said. "I will not sit down."

A Tender Conscience

HE went among his friends by the name of the "Vatican Torso." Gordon Durmot rather liked him. In spite of the ponderousness of his sobriquet, and the magnificent solidity of build which had earned it, he had found the young man less heavy than he had supposed. The classic suggestiveness of his head and face did not prevent him from being an apparently simple young Roman of the nineteenth century, with a fine, lambent, open eye, and something ingenuous and almost appealing in all his mien.

It has been said that Gordon Durmot was inclined rather to like him. But this was before the moment when, like a flash of lightning, it came home to him that the Marchese Severini was his rival. Then all this changed. After all, Florence was only a girl, and girls were easily flattered by the devotion of youthful noblemen with profiles like Greek gods.

Gordon Durmot wished that he had never followed her at all; wished he had never come abroad. He hung upon the outskirts of excursionists as they scattered among the ruins, and looked over the Campagna and extolled the view. For Gordon there were only two objects in creation just then—Florence's light, slim figure, in its perfect costume, and the Marchese Severini's stalwart form by her side.

He was not usually so impressionable, but it seemed to Gordon at that moment that life could hold no further joys. He resolved to leave Rome on the morrow—perhaps to return home altogether.

After coming to this decision he seemed to gain some composure.

He no longer followed those two figures with his eyes. He turned, in a spirit of bitter defiance, to a pale, fair-haired girl who had sat by his side at luncheon, and, though he scarcely remembered her name, devoted himself vigorously to her for the remainder of the afternoon.

Meanwhile this was what had been transpiring between Florence and the magnificent young Roman.

"Mees—ah, you seema so cold. It is deefeecult—I don't know how you say—to speak to you."

"I do not know why it should be difficult to speak to me, Marchese," nervously.

"It is deefeecult for one who—who lofes you, mademoiselle."

That which she had dreaded had come at last, and Florence shrank back.

"Oh, please, please—don't!" she hastily murmured, with an averting gesture.

"You will not listen to me? You see I was right." The handsome young Roman's face betokened deep despair. He turned very white and his eyes had a hunted look. Florence's heart bled within her.

"It is very hard for me to speak to you so," she cried in trembling accents, "but I cannot do otherwise. I am sorry you have fixed any thought on me—you—I can only hope you will soon forget me!" she concluded, clasping her hands in her earnestness.

Severini shook his head mournfully.

"We are not like zat. We have stronger passions—stronger emotions. We are not like ze Eenglish."

Suddenly he raised his downcast eyes and looked at her.

"You will not care for me, you will not have any of my lofe—because of your compatriot who came a little while ago—because of the gut Monsieur—M. Durmot?" and before she could reply he had exclaimed, "Ah, yes, I know."

"I—you are mistaken. Mr. Durmot is only a friend," stammered poor Florence.

But Severini was not to be deceived.

As they went back to the others he spoke but once, and that was to say—

"He will never lofe you as I would. It is impossible. Ze Englishmen are fery cold. I know—yes, I know that he must lofe you, but it will not be like me."

That evening the married lady under whose chaperonage Florence found herself, observed, with all possible discretion, that she thought the Marchese Severini was becoming very attentive.

"He—he proposed to me to-day," said Florence, who felt horribly miserable and conscience-stricken, and longed to confide in somebody.

"And you refused him?"

A nod for a reply.

"Well, he has a fine name, you know, and he is very, very handsome. And you might have had enough for two—for, of course, he is quite, quite poor. Still, I suppose you know your own affairs, dear. Has—has Mr. Durmot anything to do with your decision? There! that is very prying of me. Quite inexcusable. Forget that I ever asked you."

But the good lady had had as much answer as she needed in the violent blush on her protegée's cheek. She resolved to keep her eyes wider open when Durmot next came.

But several days went by, and Durmot—who had been so assiduous that it really looked as though he had come abroad simply to be with Florence—did not appear. Someone said he was about to leave Rome. Florence began to grow pale and thin. She was wasting away. Her chaperone, who was a thoroughly kindhearted person, finally resolved to broach the subject plainly, and there resulted an admission on Florence's part that she believed Durmot did care—a little—for her—perhaps, but that he had probably resolved never to come near her again

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because he might think she had determined to marry Severini's good looks and title.

"That must be put before him in the right light then," said the lady.

"Oh, for goodness sake! I should die of mortification if anything were said!" cried Florence.

"Now, my dear, that is folly. It is my firm belief that many a woman has made herself, and a good man, too, miserable for life just because of some such false pride, false delicacy. Let me manage this thing. I shall shield you if you insist on it. But since you have actually refused that magnificent specimen of humanity, the 'Torso,' Mr. Durmot may as well know it."

Florence was too wretched, possibly, to make further objections. In any case, she said nothing at the time, and her friend took the silence for moral acquiescence. In the course of the same afternoon she so arranged matters as to have had an interview with Gordon Durmot, which put a sudden end to the misery that gentleman had been enduring ever since the famous day of the picnic outside the walls, and she furthermore found it necessary to attend an archæological lecture that same evening, leaving Florence considerately at home in the hotel. Nor was she surprised when, upon her return, the girl threw herself into her arms with a glowing face and whispered tremulously that Mr. Durmot had been there.

Gordon Durmot told the chaperone all that she wished to know. The beautiful diamond engagement ring which came the next day apprised her of nothing new.

. . . . . .

They were to be married immediately upon their return to England in the autumn.

A month before the wedding they found themselves in Paris.

And here Florence received a letter which made her turn very white. She was alone when it came to her, and she said nothing of it for several days. During those days she passed many hours by herself, seemingly almost shunning the society of Durmot.

"Do you know what ails Florence?" the latter said anxiously to Florence's chaperone.

"No," replied the latter with some impatience. "Girls are very queer anyway, and Florence especially so. She is supersensitive. One can never tell how things are going to affect her. She may have something on her mind. I think she has."

The knowledge of what that "something" was came upon Durmot like a clap of thunder out of a clear sky. He was sent for one day, and, arriving, found Florence sitting with downcast eyes alone.

"My darling," exclaimed the young man, "tell me what troubles you. I know there is something."

Florence drew away from his arm with a little shrinking shudder.

"Please don't!" she murmured.

"Come now, Florence," he cried vigorously in a moment, "this thing must stop! I will know what has come between us—what has estranged us."

"Nothing—oh, nothing can ever estrange me from you, Gordon," said the girl, quivering. "But——"

"But? Well! I am waiting!"

"Oh, Gordon," she suddenly wailed, "don't be so harsh with me! If you only knew how I have suffered, how anxiously I have striven to do right, you would not be so unkind. Oh, I think you ought to help me instead of making it all so hard."

"If you will explain what all this is about, perhaps——"

"I will explain," she interrupted, rising. "Severini—you remember Severini?" she stopped herself to ask, in a pitiful, pathetic attempt to gain time.

"I should think so," remarked Durmot with sarcasm.

"Yes. Well, he—he is dying!"

"Dying?"

"And it is I who have killed him."

"You killed him!" shouted Durmot. "Look here, my girl, are you in your right senses? Come to yourself, Florence!" The lover was thoroughly alarmed.

Florence slowly shook her head. All her agitation had subsided and she was very calm.

"No, I am not mad, though you think I am. I see my duty very clearly. I don't expect you to see it in the same light. But—but—I have come to the conclusion that it would be very wicked of me to marry you. It would be—it would be like marrying over a grave."

Durmot stood in stony silence.

"I could never be happy; my conscience would never rest. If you will think of it you will see that it would be impossible."

And her faltering phrases broke against his obdurate silence as against a wall. She raised her eyes at last appealingly to his. But there was no help in them.

"I don't know," Durmot said finally, "what to think of you. Either your conscience is morbidly diseased or you are the cruellest creature God ever made."

"Oh, don't—don't say that," the girl wailed. And then she saw that he had turned towards the door. "You—you are not going from me so—without a word?" she faltered.

"What would you have me say?" was Gordon's savage reply. And then Florence was left alone.

Those were dreadful weeks that followed for her, but she was upborne by the consciousness of having done a duty that must have been sacred, because it was so very, very hard to perform. Gordon had already gone home without sending any sign of relenting or toward forgiveness. And thus it seemed to Florence that the sacrifice was fully consummated. To all that her elderly friend could say she only replied—

"I could not be happy over the wrecked life of another. They tell me that that poor man is dying for love of me. It seems to me impossible, incredible, and yet they assure me that it is so."

"Yes, it is rather incredible," said the elder lady drily. "Men have died, and worms have eaten them, but not usually for love."

"Yes," Florence humbly assented. "I am not worthy of it in any way. But it is so. And I—I cannot be happy knowing it."

"The logical process by which you reach that conclusion is not apparent to anyone but yourself."

At last the day came that preceded the one fixed upon for their departure from Paris. Florence was nursing her wretched thoughts in her own room when her chaperone precipitately entered it.

"Well?" she remarked, and she stopped, looking at Florence.

"What is it?" said the latter, listlessly.

"Prepare yourself for a surprise."

Florence looked as though nothing could ever cause her surprise again in this world.

"The Marchese Severini is in the hotel. I have just seen him."

Florence's face changed.

"He is not alone," pursued the elder lady. "In short, my dear, who do you suppose he has with him? His wife."

Florence rose.

"His wife?"

She trembled like an aspen.

The elder lady burst into irrepressible laughter.

"Actually! His wife; an English girl she is, too, with lots of money. I found out the whole affair before coming to you. It seems that the 'Torso,' poor fellow, was really very low about you, Florence. He was desperately smitten. But this other charming English girl appeared on the scene and she sympathised with him at first, and so, by degrees, a love affair sprang up. The engagement was announced and the marriage followed almost immediately. Well, what do you say to that?"

But Florence was almost past saying anything.

"Oh," she sobbed, "do you think Gordon would ever—will ever forgive me?"

The elder lady considered a moment severely.

"Well, when we get home I suppose I might go and try to make matters right with him. It will be the second time, observe. Positively, I don't know that I would ever have done such things for anyone but you."

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THE TENTH OF JUNE.

By John K. Leys, *Author of "In the Toils," "My Hindoo Friend," &c., &c.*

Illustrated by Raymond Potter.

SUMMARY.

Geoffrey Dundas—A young barrister.
Sir Arthur Chetwynd—A retired general and Geoffrey's friend.
Leila Chetwynd—His daughter.
Captain Bygham—An army officer, and cousin to Sir Arthur.
Lord Lavington—A friend of the General.
Amavati, the Rajah of Nagore—A Hindoo prince who visits Sir Arthur, and develops an unrequited love for Leila.
Chunder Sen—The Rajah's secretary.
Kuttapani—The Rajah's cook.

During the Indian Mutiny Sir Arthur, together with Geoffrey's father (since dead), took part in the looting of a Hindoo temple on the tenth of June, and on this day every year afterwards one of the Englishmen concerned, or some member of their families, is assassinated. On the last day of May, 1884, Amavati, the Rajah of Nagore, visits Sir Arthur, and Geoffrey tells him of the danger. Sir Arthur on learning from his lawyer that his cousin, Captain Bygham, to whom he had intended to marry Leila, is almost penniless, though representing himself to be rich, wills him but a small annuity. Chunder Sen makes it possible for Bygham to surreptitiously examine the will, and promises to help him out of the difficulty. On the tenth of June, Geoffrey goes to Wales, and is followed by Kuttapani, who attacks him in a lonely spot, and leaves him for dead. Geoffrey, however, recovers, and tracks him to a house in Westbourne Park, named Lancaster Villa, which transpires to be the headquarters of the Hindoo. Geoffrey asks the General for Leila's hand, but is refused, and goes abroad. On his return he meets the Rajah outside Lancaster Villa, and subsequently discovers that Captain Bygham is in league with the Hindoo. The General and Leila (believing that they are visiting Lord Lavington's yacht) are taken to a vessel chartered by the Hindoos, and are so caught in a trap.

CHAPTER XXI.

"I Cannot Let My Father Die."

General Chetwynd lay in his berth, sleepless, watching the round port-hole, as minute by minute the light increased. He was in that state of mind when a man is prepared for the worst. He was not unready to die. But Leila! He had to force himself not to think of her possible fate, lest he might go mad. He saw no hope, no possibility of rescue.

The one chance lay in his being able to make a sort of bargain with his murderers, giving his life that she might be spared. But what sort of bargain could he make? he asked himself, with the bitterness of despair.

His life was already forfeited to these savage fanatics, on account of that sacrilege in which he had taken part some thirty years before. Time had had no effect in lessening their thirst for vengeance. They would, he well knew, put him to death without mercy, as readily as if they had caught him but yesterday, red-handed, amid the smoking ruins of their temple. His fate was already decided. How, then, could he make a bargain on behalf of Leila? He had nothing to offer in exchange for her liberty and her life.

Gradually the light from the port-hole grew stronger, till the various objects in the cabin stood out clearly in the summer dawn.

A noise—faint at first, but now more decided—a noise as of a rat gnawing at the upper panel of the door. A tool, in the hands of an inexperienced workman, was slowly cutting away at the thin panel.

The General understood. His gaolers wanted to communicate with him, and they were afraid to enter the cabin. He had no weapon; but he thought with a grim smile that they were wise. Yet this did not deceive him. He knew that his murderers had only to thrust the muzzle of a loaded rifle or revolver through the hole in the door, and he would be completely at their mercy.

"Sahib!"

The General paid no heed.

"Sahib!"

Perfect silence.

"Let the Lord Sahib speak with his servant. It may be well for him—and well for the lady, his daughter."

"What is it?" said the General. He did not stir from the berth. His tone was as cold as if he had been speaking to a servant who had committed some fault.

"I wish to converse with the Sahib."

"Who are you?"

"I was known as the Secretary of the Rajah of Nagore, Chunder Sen."

"Ah! I understand."

"But I am now the head priest of the Brahmins who had the care of the Temple at Churruckpore."

"I guessed as much! I have sheltered a couple of murderers—that's all."

"Not so, Sahib! The Rajah did not know until he came on board last night who his secretary really was. He had no part in your capture. He did not know that any such measure was intended."

"Indeed!" said Sir Arthur ironically. "Perhaps you have made him a prisoner, too?"

"He is not at present under personal restraint," said Chunder Sen gravely. "We respect his rank too much to treat him with discourtesy. But he is not the master of this vessel; and he does not share our counsels."

"I may believe that or not; but it matters nothing to me. What is it you want to say to me? Say it, and be gone!"

"You are aware, Sahib," said the soft, silky voice of the Hindoo, "that your life is justly forfeited. The penalty of violating a shrine of Vishnu is death."

"Did you take the trouble of drilling a hole in the door to tell me that?"

"But Vishnu has already been avenged in part," went on the Hindoo, as if the other had not spoken. "There have been many victims. We are ready to spare you, and land you on the coast of France uninjured, if you agree to one condition."

"Ay? And what may that be?"

The General raised himself on his elbow, his heart beating high with expectation. He was known to be a wealthy man. Visions of liberty for himself and Leila through the payment of a ransom were already crowding into his mind.

"The condition is a very easy one," answered the Hindoo. "It involves neither loss nor degradation. It is merely this—that you give your written consent to the marriage of your daughter to your kinsman Captain Bygham, with a suitable dowry."

A cry burst from the General's lips—a cry, not of wrath, or agony, but of horror. In a moment he had sprung out of the berth, and stood behind the barred door, his arms crossed on his breast, his teeth clenched, his eyes flashing fire.

A cry burst from the General's lips.

"Bygham! It is impossible! He cannot be an accomplice of those wretches. I cannot believe it. A man of my own blood! No! Reginald Bygham cannot have descended so low. He cannot be mixed up with this abominable outrage. It cannot be!—And yet, why should those Hindoos make common cause with him if he is not their friend? Why should they make it a condition that *he* should marry Leila,

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if he is not one of them? He marry Leila!"—All this passed through his mind in an instant.

"I would rather see my daughter lying in her coffin than give her hand to that man," he said aloud. At that moment Captain Byngham seemed more hateful to the high-minded soldier than even Chunder Sen.

"You will think the matter over, Sahib; and if the young lady is willing——"

"I shall *not* think the matter over, you scoundrel! It is wasting your time to talk to me. We are in your power; and of course you know what that means. What security have I that if I signed such a paper as you tell me you want, my life would be spared? None! He who could play the part of a traitor once would play it again. Yet I would give a good deal to know one thing."

"And what is that, Sahib?"

"Only this—Why do you ask this thing from me? What interest is it of yours who my daughter marries? What is Captain Byngham to you?"

A low laugh was at first the only answer. Then Chunder Sen deigned to speak.

"The noble Captain is our friend," he said with a sneer. "From him we knew of the arrangement you made to sail with Lord Lavington, and we laid our plans accordingly. There was an agreement made between him and us long ago that he should inform us of all your movements."

"I have spoken my last word."

The answer to this was a groan.

"And this was to be his reward!" said the General, as if to himself.

"The Miss Sahib is to be his reward."

"Never!"

"You cannot prevent it. Captain Byngham is to come on board to-night and take her away."

"The miscreant! But it will be in vain. She will not marry him. He will never touch my money."

"The Miss Sahib will gladly marry him."

"Don't you see that she will look upon this ally of yours as a monster—that she would rather die than touch him?"

"She will not look upon him as a monster," replied the Hindoo, insensibly lowering his voice. "She will be told that he heard of your predicament through the English servant, Brown, whom we sent ashore before we left Plymouth, saying that the Rajah found a servant had been brought from London for him, and that he was not wanted.

"Brown knows nothing of the real state of the case; but the Captain will pretend that his suspicions were aroused by what Brown told him, that he followed the yacht, found her and boarded her, and discovered that you had run your heads into a snare. He will then give her to understand that he had to surrender his fortune in order to ransom her; and he will grieve with her that we refused to allow you to be ransomed also."

"Miss Chetwynd is not a fool; she will see through that shallow pretence," said Sir Arthur contemptuously. "Besides, my trustees will see through it. They would never consent to the marriage."

"They will be forced to consent to it. Captain Byngham will take the young lady to his own house, and detain her there for some days on the pretence that he is trying to get a man-of-war to follow this vessel and save you. By that tim will be too late to save you. The steamer we mean to abandon. But after a time your daughter will come to understand that she must marry Captain Byngham. If it should be necessary he can easily make representations to your trustees, which will make them glad to consent to the match."

The General was silent. He was amazed at the cunning and audacity of his enemies, and for the moment overwhelmed by the awful revelation that had just been made to him. He felt that he was totally unable to do anything to save his daughter from the fate that had been prepared for her; and indeed he saw that it might be better for her to marry her cousin, bad as he was, than remain in the hands of the Hindoos.

One thing only he resolved upon. Leila must pass his cabin door as she left the vessel. It would be impossible to prevent his calling out a few words that must reach her ears. He would not blacken Byngham's character to her as yet, on the bare word of a treacherous Hindoo. But if he heard the Captain's voice on board, if he heard the girl leave her cabin, he would take care to let her know the real character and motives of the man who was pretending to rescue her.

Once more Chunder Sen's voice was heard in the stillness.

"Does the Sahib, then, consent to this marriage? It would be much better for him to do so, and save his life."

But the General was convinced that he could place no dependence on the truth of what the Hindoo might tell him; It was possible that all he had heard was a mere lie designed to draw the written consent from him. And besides, if he did sign the paper, it was quite likely that the faithless Hindoos, having got all they wanted, would shoot him without mercy He made no reply.

Again the Hindoo pressed his argument—in any case the Miss Sahib's fate was sealed; but the Sahib might yet save his life by giving his consent to her marriage. The General could not understand his persistence. He could not know that one of the most powerful of the priests of Vishnu, who had not come to England, a subject of the Rajah, was bitterly opposed to his sovereign's contemplated marriage with a Christian, and had sent word to his fellow priests that they must at all costs hinder this alliance.

It was because Chunder Sen doubted the ability of Captain Byngham to force the girl into marrying him, that he was so anxious to get the written consent of the General, which might be of the greatest service, both with regard to Leila and with regard to her trustees.

The General, not knowing the primary motive of the Hindoos, wondered at the fidelity to their ally; but he was not the man to save his life by becoming a party to a vile plot against his own daughter.

"Go away!" he cried out impatiently.

"It is enough," came back the answer. "I have spoken my last word to you. You shall die before the morrow is one hour old."

The Hindoo's voice ceased and it seemed as if he must be gone, but no sound told of his coming or his going. To the General it was almost as if an evil spirit, a formless intangible creature with a voice, but no other part or attribute of man, had been tempting him.

"They may spare themselves the trouble of talking to me again," said the General to himself, as he strode back and forward over the narrow floor of his cabin. "I don't believe they would keep their promises; at least I have no security that they would. That way there is no hope. God help us! God help us!"

Some hours later the fastenings of the door of Leila's cabin were quietly undone, and she saw the handle of the door turn half way round; but as she had bolted the door it did not open.

"It is I, Miss Chetwynd," said a voice she knew well.

"You! I own I am surprised to think that the Rajah of Nagore should become an accomplice of common murderers!" cried Leila in a voice of scorn.

"You do me injustice. Indeed you do. I only beg you to open the door, and give me a hearing."

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Lightly touched it with his lips.

"Do not trust him, Leila!" called out a clear, strong voice. It was the General's. He had overheard what passed.

"You may trust me; indeed you may," said Amavati.

Something in his voice carried conviction to the girl's mind.

"I am not afraid, papa!" she called out in a tone clear and strong as her father's had been. And with that she drew the bolt.

The Rajah entered, and stood respectfully at the further end of the tiny cabin.

"Will the daughter of the great soldier hear me?"

There was the same calm pride in the Rajah's manner now as there had been when he had stood before this girl an honoured guest under her father's roof.

"It seems hardly necessary, but speak if you will."

There was a world of scorn in the girl's tone, in the half raised glance of her eye; a world of contempt in the upright carriage and the turn of her slender neck.

"I assure you on the honour of a prince of the House of Sastri that I was wholly ignorant of this outrage. I knew something was plotted against your father; but I thought he was safe for this year. Like him I thought I was coming on board Lord Lavington's yacht. Like him I was deceived. The truth appeared to me when it was too late."

"You knew something, yet you did not warn us!" exclaimed the girl.

"He needed no warning; he knew of the danger that threatened him. But I did not imagine that the avenger would strike this year."

"What avenger do you mean?" asked the girl, turning a shade paler as she spoke. "What was the danger that threatened him?"

In a few rapid words Amavati told Leila the story of the burnt temple and the vendetta of the priests.

"As for me," concluded the Rajah, "though I knew such a conspiracy existed, I had no share in it."

"I believe you, Rajah!" cried the generous-hearted girl, holding out her hand to him.

He took it, bent down, and lightly touched it with his lips. Leila did not snatch her hand away, but neither did she allow it to remain in the Rajah's grasp an instant after this act of homage had been paid.

"I have not yet said that which I came here to say," said the Rajah with his eyes on the floor.

"What is there to say?" asked Leila softly. "We are in the power of these men. If they choose to kill us, as it seems likely they will, then we must die."

Amavati Sastri lifted his eyes and met those of the girl.

"Pardon me. They would neither wish, nor dare, to lay a finger on the wife or the father-in-law of the Rajah of Nagore."

Leila started. Her hands convulsively clasped each other in front of her dress; and she stared at the Rajah as if she hardly understood his meaning. His attitude was that of a man conscious of his power; but before Leila's clear frank gaze his eyes fell.

"What did you say?" came in hardly audible tones from her lips.

"I only tell you the truth. The way to save your father, and the only way, so far as I can see, is for him to become my near relative. I do not think that you personally are in any danger. At least these men gave me a promise that you should not be harmed. But your father is in danger, in great danger. If you promised to become my wife I could protect him."

Suddenly the girl's face changed. Distrust spoke in it, then contempt.

"So *this* is the price you ask for your treachery!" she exclaimed.

"You do me wrong," said the Hindoo; and though his voice was calm, it was plain that he was deeply moved. "I have told you that although I knew your father had enemies of our race I was not one of them, and had no knowledge of this plot against his life. Besides, you forget, I was at the time your father's guest."

This was said as if such a crime against the laws of hospitality was simply unimaginable. Once more the sincerity of the Rajah's voice and look banished Leila's mistrust.

"Forgive me," she said, "if I wrong you. I am ashamed to think that I should have doubted you again—but indeed it is all so strange, so horrible, that I don't know what to think, or what to believe."

"It is natural that you should suspect me, seeing that——." He was going to say, "seeing that the chief conspirator is Chunder Sen," but he stopped himself. If Leila knew that fact, he thought her suspicions might return.

"No; I suspect you no longer!" cried Leila. "I have insulted you shamefully by thinking you could have taken part in so base a plot. Once more I say I trust you. But, my father! Oh, Rajah, think! There must be some way of saving him! His whole fortune——."

The Rajah shook his head.

"It is not wealth they seek, but revenge," he said.

"Yes, I know; I know." Unconsciously she was picking at the bosom of her dress with her fingers, as she might have done had she been suffering an extremity of pain. "I know," she repeated; "but they are men. They have hearts in their breasts. I will kneel to them. I will offer my life for his."

"You could not expect me to help you to such a sacrifice; but it is not necessary. You have only to consent to be my wife. I love you, Leila; I have loved you since first I saw you. I will be true to you. I will become a Christian for your sake. I will make you happy."

The girl put her hands over her eyes, as if to shut out the pictures his words brought before her mind.

"I would like to be alone."

She stood there, without speaking; and the Rajah said no more.

"Give me time—time to think of it. But why should I ask for time? If there is no other way——"

"Believe me, there is none."

"Then I must consent. Yes; I cannot let my father die. I should be his murderer! Yes; I consent!"

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They called out to each other.

She drew herself up, and gave the Hindoo her hand, as a pledge of her good faith; but as his soft palm touched it a strong shudder passed through her frame, and she made as though she would withdraw it.

A gleam had lighted up the Rajah's dark eyes. But now it suddenly died out. He made no effort to detain her hand beyond an instant. A sigh rose to his lips.

"Tell my father that he shall not die," she said, "but do not tell him the way in which he is to be saved—at least, not yet. Make them set him at liberty at once, if you can. And now, please, I would like to be alone."

CHAPTER XXII.

A Chivalrous Knight.

The slow hours dragged themselves along. Leila never could remember afterwards what her thoughts had been during that time of terror. She was hardly capable of coherent thinking. She dared not think of herself as the Ranee of Nagore, lest she should be tempted to repent of the sacrifice she had voluntary offered.

Still the steamer ploughed its way slowly through the green water. From the porthole Leila could see nothing but a waste of waves. Once, when the sea seemed calmer, she opened the porthole and looked out. The sun was shining on the water—a million waves were tumbling this way and that, as if they were the children of the sea at play. Far, far away the sun's rays fell on the topsails of a passing ship. All was lightness, brightness, freedom. The narrow cabin prison seemed more hateful than before, from the sight of the wide, unfettered sea. The girl sank down on the couch beneath the window, and for the first time since her imprisonment began, the tears fell like rain from her eyes.

As the afternoon wore on the sky became again overcast. Black clouds rose up from the horizon, bringing rain. It suddenly became cold. And the wind rose, whistling drearily in the sailless rigging.

There was no change for the captives. From time to time they called out to each other, to assure themselves that so far the other was safe; and it was a comfort to the girl to hear her father's strong, manly voice, singing out cheery words to encourage her.

"Keep up your heart, my dear!" he would cry out. "We'll find a way out of this mess yet."

Or again—

"I don't believe they will dare to touch me when it comes to the point; and I don't think they will hurt you in any case."

Or—

"I do believe they only want a heavy ransom. What else could they want? When they think we are hungry and dispirited they will begin talking about a cheque. We shall be landed in France to-morrow, you'll see!"

But it was only the sound of the old General's voice that was sweet to Leila's ears. His words had no meaning for her. She knew they were meaningless, merely invented to prevent her from giving way to despair. "Aye," she said to herself, "it may be we shall be at liberty to-morrow, able to walk about and breathe the air. But I shall be a slave, a life-long slave!"

Suddenly a thought came to her.

"I can try!" she cried out; and springing to the cabin-door she knocked on it as hard as she could with her tiny fist.

A step sounded in the passage outside.

"I want to see the Rajah!" she called out. "Go and tell the Rajah I must see him."

In a very short time the door opened, and Amavati stood before her.

"I have sent for you, Rajah," began the girl, "to beg you to think—to consider—— Would you not rather——?"

The words would not come. She was trembling from head to foot with excitement; and though she was eager to speak, it seemed as though she were in a nightmare, and could not utter the words.

She sat down and tried to calm herself.

"Amavati," she said at length, "I believe you are a good and honourable man. Will you not make an effort to save my father and me, without demanding this sacrifice from me? Which would you rather have, my lifelong gratitude and respect, or—my hatred?"

"Your hatred? No. Why should you hate me?"

"I am certain I should hate you if I were—if we were married. If I became your bride, you would find that you had purchased a slave, not married a wife. I tell you frankly, I could never love you, though I have liked and in some ways admired you. Why should you wish to forfeit my respect, in the vain effort to gain my love? It can never, never be yours. I may leave my father and my country, according to my promise, and go to live with you in India. But I should be longing for death all the time. I should soon die. You would not have the poor prisoner long."

The Rajah stood with his eyes cast down, dumb as a statue.

"Think! In our country we have stories—I daresay you have them in Hindostan—about brave knights who risked their lives to save maidens from peril. Did you ever hear that one of them made it a condition, before striking a blow, that she should marry him? It would have been reckoned a shame. And you are not without nobility of spirit, Rajah. You have some magnanimity. It is unworthy of you to drive a bargain with a girl for her father's life."

She paused, and waited for the Hindoo to speak. It was some time before he opened his lips; and when he did so his voice was low and indistinct.

"What would you have me do?" he asked without lifting his eyes from the ground.

"Do? Try to save our lives! you have influence with these men. You are a prince of their nation. They dare not touch you; and you can threaten them. Tell them that if they kill my father, you will denounce them, and they will suffer death themselves. Tell them that you are our friend, and that you will count an injury done to us as if——. Oh! you know what to say, what to do. Pretend, if you like, that I am to be your bride. But do not force me to marry you. No! Oh, no! Do not do that. Do not force me!"

"I have failed."

A heavy sigh, long suppressed, burst from the Rajah's breast.

"Leila," he said, "you have conquered me. Henceforth I will not seek to marry you, since I see you regard a union with me with abhorrence. I will be content—it

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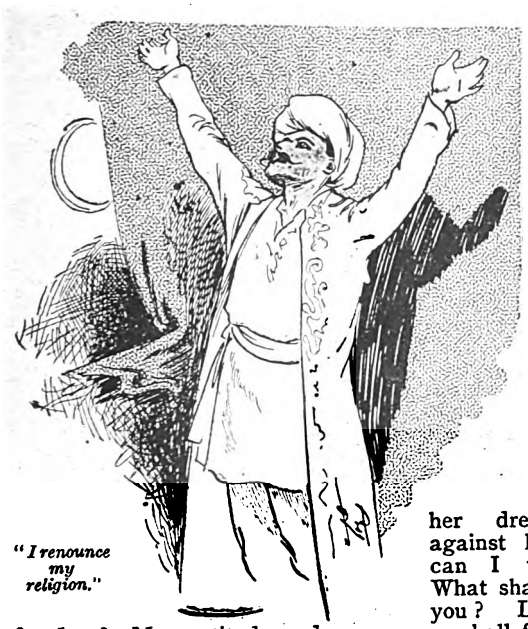

"I renounce my religion."

is I who say it—I will be content with your goodwill. I will do my best to save you and your father; but I ask no reward."

"Oh, how can I thank you!" cried Leila; and she sprang up, her eyes filling with tears, and came close to the Rajah, so close that her dress brushed against his. "How can I thank you? What shall I not owe you? Life, honour, freedom? My gratitude and my prayers shall follow you as long as I live, wherever you go! I shall be always thinking of you—always thinking that if it had not been for you—— And always with the thought of you will come a grateful wish, and a prayer for God to bless you!"

"I will go now; but do not be sure that I can help you. What I can do, I will do. You may be sure of that. But these men are not my subjects, and they are priests. They care nothing for money, in comparison with revenge, and they care not hing for death. I very much fear—but I will try."

"Yes; and you will let me know as soon as possible whether you can save us?"

"Yes; I will send you a message," said the Rajah; and he slowly left the cabin.

The light grew mellow; it was the afternoon. The radiance that broke for a few minutes from a watery sun was pale and dim; it was drawing towards evening—and no word, no message from the Rajah. No sound was heard but the throb of the propeller—and occasionally the General's voice, as he called out to know how his daughter fared.

Leila had not dared to tell him that the Rajah was making efforts in their favour. Of course, all they said to each other was overheard; and she feared that it might embarrass the Rajah if she openly proclaimed that he was going to save them if he could. Besides, her father would naturally suspect the Rajah, as she herself had done. He would not believe in his good faith, and would most likely receive the news with a burst of mocking laughter.

The evening was now fading into twilight, and still the Rajah did not come. Leila had long since become anxious for the success of his mission. Minute by minute the suspense became more intolerable.

The weather was now completely changed. The wind had risen hour by hour; and the steamer was rolling a good deal. Her speed had been slackened. It seemed to Leila that she was hardly making any way through the water. The rain, too, had begun to fall, in small close drops, that made no sound on the planking overhead.

It must have been eight o'clock in the evening when Leila was startled by a slight rustling sound at her cabin door. She glanced round, and saw that something white had been pushed under the door. In a moment she had pounced upon it, and carried it to the porthole.

By the fading light she could just make out the words, scratched in pencil:

"*I have failed.*"

The girl gave a low cry of horror and dismay, and sank down on the red velvet couch, pale as a sheet.

But the next moment she was shaking the cabin door, and knocking loudly to attract attention. As soon as she heard a step outside, she called out that she wanted to see the Rajah.

"What do you want with him?"

It was her father's voice, from the opposite cabin.

"I want to thank him, father—and to ask him to do something for me. He is our friend, and has been trying to use his influence with these people to save our lives; but he says he can't."

"You astonish me, Leila. I thought he was the head and front of the conspiracy."

"No, papa; I am sure he is not."

She was interrupted by the entrance of the Rajah himself.

Even in the dim light that came in through the porthole, she could make out that he was in a state of great agitation.

"You sent for me?" he began.

"Yes, I want to thank you—I thank you just as warmly, just as sincerely, as if you had been completely successful. You have done what you could. No one can do more. I suppose these men *have* no hearts?"

"They have not!" burst out the Rajah. "They are demons, not men. From this moment I renounce my religion. I will become a Christian. I will not have such men for my priests. They have broken faith with me—or mean to break it."

"Did you tell them you would accuse them of murder?"

"I did. I used every argument I could think of."

"Rajah"—the girl's voice sank so low that it barely reached her own ears—"Rajah, if it is necessary; if my father would be safe as your relation——"

"No, Leila," said Amavati, in a voice of deep sadness. "If I tell you the truth I shall confess that I was wrong. My marriage with you would be extremely unpopular with my subjects, and with all Hindoos, for reasons connected with the dynasty. I believe they would kill you rather than allow you to become my wife."

"Then we are lost!"

The Rajah was silent.

"You said the priests had broken faith with you; how was that?"

"They promised me, weeks ago, that you should not be harmed. And now I find that there is a fresh plot on foot. I cannot learn the details, nor even the precise nature of it; but I believe you are its object. I believe you are to leave the vessel soon."

"Oh, Rajah, save me!"

Her cry rang through the cabin. Her father called out to know what was the matter. She had to answer him, and reassure him; and that helped to steady her nerves.

"Promise me one thing, Rajah," she said, clinging to the Hindoo's arm as he was about to leave the cabin—"promise me that if there is no other way—rather than allow me to fall alive into the hands of these men, or any of their associates, you will kill me yourself—promise me!"

No shudder passed through the girl's body now, as she seized the Hindoo's hand in her own. She knew him to be her friend, and she had none but him to look to.

He gazed steadily into her eyes, and answered:

"I promise you. And I promise you this—you shall not die unavenged."

"What do you mean?"

But the Rajah had already left her.

He had not told her all.

He had spared her the awful news that the priests of Vishnu had decided that ere the first hour of the new day, the Tenth of June, had gone by, Sir Arthur Chetwynd would cease to live.

(To be continued.)

To prevent unnecessary labour, and consequent disappointment, to any readers of this paper, who in the past have forwarded original stories for insertion, we would take this opportunity of saying that our arrangements for the provision of matter for "Short Stories" are complete for some time to come.

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The Soul of the Cat

YES, John Ling was a lonely one. He had friends in plenty, and relatives, too, for that matter, but Ling had his own views on matrimony, and he didn't believe anybody could be happy without a wife. It was strange why he had so suddenly taken on that belief, for hadn't he lived fifteen years away from his own Flowery Land! Of course he had.

He came first to Lamb Flats and went to work on the diggings, but he couldn't stand it, for he used to feel the strange white devils at night punching him in the back. So he gave his claim to a relative and travelled down country to Sydney.

He was idle for a while, and then started in to sell soap to the laundrymen, until finally he got enough cash to rent a store. He put out his red sign, with the fluttering red streamers on it to keep the evil ones way, and he became store-keeper. Every night for years he had crawled into his little bunk, curtained off at the back of the store, and after comforting himself with the opium he loved so well he had fallen asleep, to dream of pretty Chinese girls, tottering on pink clouds across the water and stretching their arms out to him.

He often thought of China and the home life there, and he used to count the money in his trunk and wonder when he would have enough to go back and buy a koonfoo's rank and wear a cap with the red button of the third degree. Then he thought he would buy with some of his money the prettiest girl in the province, and she would have feet so small that she couldn't walk at all unless she had a strong servant holding each hand.

He often gambled in the hope that he would win, and he burnt prayer sticks before his kat god that he might have luck, but he might just as well have saved the sticks, for luck never came. So persistently did he lose that more than once he was tempted to let one of the burning prayer sticks fall over against the god and burn it, but he was afraid lest the deceit should be discovered and the god seek a just revenge.

One day there came into his store a white girl who lived in a house in the same street. She had hair like the gold he used to dig out of Lamb Flats.

"I say, John," she said, "me mother's run out o' sope, an' she's up to her neck in washin'. Gimme a bar!"

Ling was smitten with a great love. He remembered having seen this girl go past his store many times, but he never had such a chance as this to speak to her.

"You mommee want sope?" he asked. "She washee?"

"Yes; I want er bar, an' I want it quick."

"Alle lite," said Ling, and he clattered behind the narrow counter and pulled out from a shelf two bars of soap.

"You takkee two," he said. "No worry, you takkee; you sabe?" and he pushed the soap and the five pennies she had laid down away from him. Then he went on: "I likkee you; you heap nice! Lat you name?"

"So I get the sope for nuttin', do I, John?" said the girl. "Well, me name's Maggie Brown, if yer wanter know."

Ling looked at her with admiring eyes. Then he pointed to the soap and pennies, and said simply:

"You takkee. I heap lakkee you; sabe? You clum 'glain?"

"Yes, I sabe, John," said the girl, "an' I'll come again."

So she went out and Ling went to the door and looked after her until she had disappeared round the corner. Then he went back behind the narrow counter and sat down on a stool. He rested his elbows on a pile of paper, sunk his chin in his hands and thought very hard. His thinking amounted to something, for he went to the little room curtained off at the back of the store, and out of the big camphor wood chest he pulled some carefully folded clothes. He was a new man when he came out into the store again, and a couple of his countrymen, who had dropped in to have a friendly chat and a smoke, began to chaff him.

His old cloth blouse, with the shiny place on the back where his well-oiled cue had hung, lay in a heap on the floor with his old pow tail and coarse trousers; instead, he wore clothes of brocaded dark blue silk and his sandals were like those of a koonfoo. A cold wind was blowing up the street. It made him shiver, but he stood his ground and watched for the coming of Maggie Brown.

Every day for a week he watched, until on the eighth day he saw her running by with a shawl over her head and a jug in her hand. "Hi-lo," he cried, "hi-lo, Maggie Brown! you com' nichue?"

"Hello, John; how's things? I'll see yer when I get th' old man's beer," and she dashed on, while Ling went in and waited.

After awhile she came in with a rush.

"You lakkee China candy?" began Ling before she could say anything. "Heap good!" and he pushed a queer little box of keung towards her. "I lakkee you," he continued, while he picked at the gilt buttons on his blouse. "I bling you nice close, heap nice, you sabe? Makkee you nice close, you dless heap nice, sabe? You mally me, you have heap money."

"Marry you, John? Me old woman would pull the pigtail out of your head if she heard you talking like that."

"You mally me bimeby," said Ling, as though he felt sure he would win.

"So long, John," she said, as she went out munching the sweets. That was the first of the queer courtship. It struck Maggie seriously, as though she thought she might do worse.

"I don't know but what I'm marry the old chap," she said to herself. "I'll get all the clothes an' money I want."

There was a cat which used to sleep under Ling's counter. She grew fat on the scraps of chow suet and chue yunk which fell from the table, and altogether lived a life of peace. But the day Ling proposed to Maggie Brown the cat's manner changed. Instead of sleeping under the counter all the day she took to walking on the counter, mewing uneasily in a wailing voice which filled the room with a distressful sound.

Then she would pause in her walk, and sitting on her haunches glare at Ling with starting eyes. Once or twice he drove her away, but she came back and glared until her eyes turned from green to purple. Once he struck her with his bamboo t'ung, and she retreated to a high shelf and watched him.

"The evil one possesses her," said Ling, and he burnt more prayer sticks before his kashat Joss, but the wailing of the cat never ceased. She crept under Ling's bed that night and scratched at the matting on the floor; she paraded the little room, and her big shining eyes seemed to light up the dark place. From that night the cat was never at rest, and Ling became so stricken with a silent terror that he would go out into the street rather than cross her path.

He forgot about the cat a couple of days later, when Maggie Brown came in. She was better dressed than usual.

"Hello, John," she began, "I had a row with the old woman, and I've clim out. I'm dead tired of gettin' jumped on. Now, if you wanter marry me on ther square, I'm with you."

"You mally me," asked Ling, while a smile crept over his face. "Allee lite, I mally you."

"But I'll tell you, John," the girl went on, "you've got to cut that pigtail off and wear proper clothes. You got to be pretty near a white man. You got to be as white as clothes kin make you, an' you got to treat me white, too, or I'll shake you!"

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Ling didn't want to lose his cue and he fought against what he considered a sacrilege, but he found Maggie relentless.

"I curl him up so," he said, as he twisted it about his head; "'n I puttee on hlat, so," and he pulled an old slouch hat down over his head, "'n noblody slee him, ha?"

No, even that wouldn't do, and Maggie went away saying: "I'm going up to a lady friend's o' mine ter stay ternite, John, an' I'll see you to-morrer, an' if ther pigtail don't go I don't git married, see?"

Ling didn't quite see, but he thought a lot. He thought Maggie was the prettiest girl he had ever seen. There was nothing ch'an about her. She had fine blue eyes, a trim figure and a shock of golden hair that attracted the Chinaman. The old cat jumped on the counter and howled and stared at him, and he went out to get away from those green eyes. He went to the Joss house and burned a lot of prayer sticks and paper. He made up his mind quickly after that, almost ran down the dark, creaking steps and across the way to where the barber lived.

"Take off this thing!" he said, when he sat down on the stool in front of the little razors and scissors.

"What!" said the barber, "are you crazy, or have the foreign devils got you too?"

"Cut it off, I tell you! Are you not here to do such work as this?"

"No, that is wrong. I knew your mother. What would she say if I did it? Her curses would come to me as well as to you, unworthy son."

Ling ran out while his courage lasted. He went to a Kwang-tung man who lived near Pell street and had no cue.

"Cut this thing off!" he said; he did not need to beg this time.

"Ha, ha!" laughed the Kwang-tung man, "you are going to be one of us; good!" and he picked up a big pair of shears. Snip! and Ling's cue was gone, cut close to his head. Out Ling ran, leaving his cue behind him. He went into his store and sat down to think, when up jumped the cat. Her eyes were yellow this time, and she howled mournfully.

"Get away, you evil thing!" and he pushed her off with a stick. He did not sleep that night; he dreamed strange things and saw strange sights; he thought of his home in far-off China, and his mother and the little Chinese maidens whom he had known before he came to the new country. He smoked and saw faces in the clouds. In the morning his eyes were heavy, and red with the opium. He lay in his bunk and smoked the opium until he heard a voice. It sounded as if it came from a great distance. It said:

"Hullo, where's John? In the back room? All right!"

The curtains were pulled back and Maggie Brown came in.

"How's yer pigtail?"

"I cut him off. He glone," said Ling half stupidly.

"That's good. I knew you'd come round. Git up if yer a-goin ter git married."

Ling had a vague idea that he was very happy. The opium had brought a peaceful feeling, but he was rather stupid. Maggie sat on the edge of the bunk and the cat walked across the room with stately tread, glaring at her. She paused at her feet, and at one bound was on her lap. "Hullo, pussy!" she said, putting her face down and stroking the fur. Like a flash a paw shot out; five hooked, sharp claws were unsheathed and dragged across the girl's cheek. She gave a frightened scream, and when Ling looked he saw the red lines down her face, from which blood was oozing. And the cat walked slowly across the floor with the same stately tread.

"I've got a nice-looking face now!" said Maggie, "and I think I'll have that cat killed."

"Less," said Ling, "kill him," and he rose dreamily and tried to drive the cat out, but she wouldn't go. He gave it up, and cursed the spirit which possessed the cat. "Some enemy of mine has died," he thought, "and his soul has gone into the cat." Maggie washed the blood from her face and put on three long strips of plaster, and then they went to the little mission house where they were married.

They went back to the store then. There was a letter on the counter near the scales. It had come from China and was for Yee John Ling. The cat sat near it and would not move. Ling pushed her away with a stick, but she came back. He was afraid to put his hand out for the letter, so he pulled it towards him with his pipe. It was from his native town.

"Your good mother is dead," it ran; "the scourge devil carried her away. It was her will that you return and marry the girl she has betrothed to you."

The letter fell from Ling's hands; he looked up and saw the cat still staring at him.

"My mother's soul is there, to curse me," he whispered to himself, backing towards the door.

"It is she! She has come across the big water because I did not return," and he kept stepping backwards.

"The curse has come upon me!" And he felt for his cue. Then he looked at Maggie and saw the marks of the claws. With a shriek he opened the door and rushed out!

"John's gone crazy!" said Maggie to the attendant. "It's the opium, I guess. It knocks 'em all when they get the habit."

Ling never came back, so Maggie patched a truce with her mother and went back to the tenement. Nobody but the minister knows she is Mrs. Yee John Ling, and the new sign which swings over the door of the little store tells everyone who looks up at it that Sun Quong sells Chinese groceries there. Sun Quong was the attendant.

Pearson's Fresh Air Fund.

PEARSON'S FRESH AIR FUND is in the fourth year of its existence, and each year the field of its influence extends farther and farther. For the first two years the little children of the London slums were the only ones who benefited by it, but last year its usefulness was increased, and 25,000 street arabs from some of our largest provincial towns were by its agency able to enjoy a day in the country. This was in addition to the 49,074 London children, making 74,074 in all.

This year arrangements are being made to give at least 80,000 children in London and the large provincial towns a day in the country, and not only a day in the country, but plenty to eat and drink during that time—no small consideration to these city waifs, to whom an unlimited supply of beef-pie, bread and butter, jam, cake, and milk, is, indeed, an unknown experience. The money required to do this is £3,240, which we have every confidence will be subscribed by the readers of PEARSON'S WEEKLY, STHORT SORIES, HOME NOTES, and our other papers.

In making arrangements for these outings, Mr. C. Arthur Pearson guarantees that half the amount needed for each town shall be given, whether or not it is sent by the readers of our several papers. I have no doubt, however, that the money will come in, as it has done in former years, for, I think, of all charities that which benefits little children especially touches people's hearts. I feel sure that it will appeal to the readers of SHORT STORIES, who know how much their own little friends delight in the country.

If children in happy circumstances and surrounded by every pleasure do this, what must such an outing be to the small gutter child, with no idea beyond the squalid court or alley in which he lives?

But to return to the disposal of the money which we hope will be entrusted to us. This year, all towns with a population of 200,000 more have been included in the list of the Fresh Air Fund. Our readers are so widespread that I am sure they will be glad to know which towns these are. The following is the list:—London, 40,000; Birmingham, 5,000; Liverpool, 5,000; Manchester, 5,000; Glasgow, 5,000; Belfast, 4,000; Leeds, 3,000; Sheffield, 3,000; Edinburgh, 2,000; Hull, 2,000; Bradford, 2,000; Nottingham, 2,000; Bristol, 2,000.

I give this list hoping that readers will interest themselves in the especial branches nearest to them, and will go and see the real delight experienced by the children.

Now, with reference to the expenditure, it cost but ninepence to give each child a day in the country, with plenty of food and drink. You will understand, therefore, that every farthing of the money sent is given to the children, the whole of the heavy working expenses being paid by PEARSON'S and the Ragged School Union.

Every little helps, even if it bebut nine pence for one child. To those who are blessed with means I would say that £8 2s. gives a day's enjoyment to a complete party of 200 children with a proportionate number of teachers to take care of them.

Subscriptions addressed to PEARSON'S WEEKLY Buildings, Henrietta Street, W.C., will be gratefully acknowledged in the columns of PEARSON'S WEEKLY.

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RAISING THE DEAD.

TOWARDS the middle of the fourteenth century there suddenly appeared in Florence a personage calling himself Dr. Attrapeccini. Whence he came no one knew. His name indicated an Italian origin; but, from his accent in speaking, one would have supposed him to be a German, while his long beard, grave expression, and majestic bearing seemed suggestive of the Orient. Certain manuscripts, indeed, declare him to have been a native of Gascony; but the authenticity of the manuscripts has not been proved.

Whatever might be his nationality, however, the doctor had no sooner arrived in Florence than he caused to be announced, with a grand flourish of trumpets, cornets and drum, that on Tuesday, the 1st of May, at precisely six o'clock in the morning, he would repair to the city's cemetery, and there restore to life five persons of his own choosing.

At last the excitement grew so intense that the podestat or chief magistrate of Florence resolved to send for Dr. Attrapeccini and demand an explanation. A man who was able to restore five dead persons to life could have no difficulty in guessing what was passing in the mind of a podestat, and, accordingly, the magistrate was just about to strike his gong to summon an usher, when the doctor himself was announced.

"You come just in time, doctor," said the magistrate; "I was about to send for you."

"I knew it, my lord, and wished to anticipate your orders," was the reply, uttered in a calm tone that filled the podestat with amazement.

He recovered himself, however, and was going to interrogate the new-comer when the latter exclaimed:

"I understand, my lord, that some of your people here have doubts of my science, and even of my honesty—in fact, that I am suspected of coming to Florence for the purpose of making dupes."

"Something of that kind has been intimated," replied the magistrate.

"They say, moreover," continued Dr. Attrapeccini, "that I intend to decamp in a day or two, before the 1st of May."

"That also has been said," assented the podestat.

"You can understand," said the stranger slowly, "that I owe it to myself to put an end to these reports. I have come to request of you that a guard of ten, twenty, thirty or more men be stationed round my house so as to make it impossible for me to leave Florence before releasing from their tombs five persons, as I have promised. You cannot say that my request is an unreasonable one, since you had determined before seeing me to have me watched."

"Your request is granted," he said. "I shall have your house guarded night and day by twenty men, until the time comes for you to fulfil your promise, or until you change your mind, and acknowledge you were not in earnest. It would, perhaps, be wiser for you to leave the city at once; believe me, it is not safe to put a whole town in commotion. I know the Florentines, and I believe them to be capable of falling upon you in fury, perhaps of hanging you, when they find they have been mocked at and tricked. The least serious mishap that could befall you would be a sojourn of several months in prison while you waited for the public indignation to subside."

"I should deserve even more severe treatment if I failed to carry out my programme," said the doctor.

The doctor's interview with the magistrate was soon known all over Florence, and the news of it served to increase the popular interest and confidence in the stranger.

A week before the first of May, a man about forty years old, and dressed completely in black, entered the doctor's study. He was the Senator Arozzo, celebrated for the violent grief he had displayed on the death of his wife six months before.

"Signor Attrapeccini," said he, briskly, "I do not wish to waste words. Although what you promise is generally considered impossible, I admit that it may be possible, and I have come here to beg you to leave my wife at rest in the cemetery."

"What!" exclaimed the man of science, with a laugh, and the widower repeated his own words earnestly.

"I beg of you," he cried; "I am about to marry again—the banns will be published next month. You would not like to put a man in such a predicament, would you?"

As he spoke he placed a purse full of gold on the table.

"Set your mind at rest," said the doctor, "and continue the preparation for your wedding."

The next day he received a visit from Philippini, the most famous physician of Florence, and, indeed, of all Tuscany; out of every hundred Florentines at least eighty were at one time or another in his care.

"Learned and honoured brother," said he to Attrapeccini, "I trust that you will not do me the injury of bringing back to the light of day any of the unfortunate people who have chanced to pass away while in my hands."

"Certainly not," replied the other. "Just give me the names of the persons you mean."

"That would be a very difficult matter," said Philippini. "Would it not be more simple for you to exclude from your ceremony all my former patients?" and with these words he laid on the table a heap of gold coins.

"It shall certainly be as you wish, my dear brother," said the foreign physician.

The door had hardly closed upon Philippini when it was opened again to admit two brothers named Gavazza. The Duke Pierre Gavazza and his brother, the Marquess Paul, had risen, partly by their own merits, and partly by good luck, to the first rank in the Italian nobility; but their journey had been long and difficult, as their father had been a miller. It was the miller whom they did not wish to see restored to life.

Dr. Attrapeccini was shocked, and exclaimed angrily that he could not believe it possible that two persons could be so unnatural as to oppose the resuscitation of their own father. It was nothing less than parricide, and he would not connive at such baseness! He had not any intention of reviving the miller, but now he would take good care to do so; and, unless he changed his mind, the old Gavazza would be the first person resuscitated in the cemetery.

The dismay of the duke and the marquess may be imagined. They offered money, but though they had brought a large sum with them it was not sufficient to allay the scruples of Attrapeccini, and each of the brothers was obliged to sign a note.

The eve of the first of May arrived, and the guards round his house were doubled, and received the strictest orders, for the chief magistrate knew that the people would blame him if the invoker of the dead were allowed to escape. It was estimated that 50,000 persons were assembled in the cemetery or its vicinity on the first of May, at six in the morning, and as the doctor did not appear at the first stroke of the hour as he had promised, 50,000 voices cried out, "Attrapeccini! Attrapeccini!" At the same time the chief magistrate presented himself at the stranger's house, and found the interior of it just as empty as the exterior was well guarded.

The restorer of the dead had departed by way of the cellar, where there was an opening into the next house, and the chronicle reports that he took with him a sum equivalent to his 50,000 florins, which had been paid to him on consideration of not performing a miracle and of leaving the dead in their graves.

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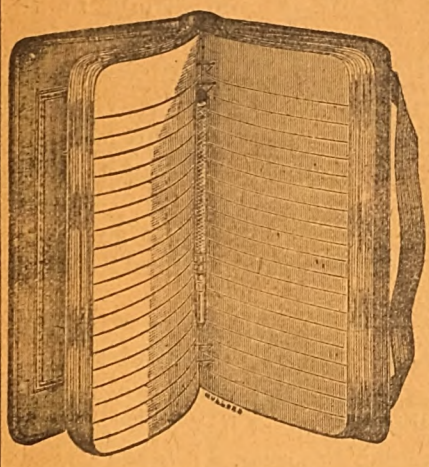

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OUR SOLID ENGLISH HOUSES.

NEARLY all the houses in England are of brick or stone. All the better for England, too, say I. We don't have so many fires. At the time of the great fire, when London was burned from London Bridge away over to Smithfield, it was a wooden town. It won't happen again—nor anything like it. The reason is too plain to need pointing out.

Now, why can't we learn to protect ourselves against diseases—which are fires in the body—in the same common-sense fashion? Then we might walk among fevers and epidemics like the three Hebrew children in the fiery furnace. "Not possible," say you. Yes, it is; only we won't take the trouble.

I introduce you to a lady who says that in May, 1894, she took such a terrible cold that she went near to dying of it. My point is, that what a wooden house is to a spark of fire, her body was to the influence we commonly call a "cold," but which should be called a "heat." Let us read what she says:—

"In the spring of 1888 I fell into a low, weak state. I was always tired, heavy, and sleepy, and much troubled with mazy bouts. I had no appetite, and great pain and tightness at the chest after meals. I often belched up a sour fluid; indeed, all my food seemed to turn into acid. Cold, clammy sweats used to break out over me, leaving me quite exhausted. Finally I got so weak I could barely walk about, and often, when outdoors, would swoon and fall down in the street.

"I consulted different physicians and took many medicines, but in spite of it all I was no better. This, in general terms, was my condition for six years. In May, 1894, I took a violent cold which pulled me down. My face swelled and my throat almost closed up. At times I was driven nearly mad with an excruciating pain in my head. There was an awful taste in my mouth, particularly in the morning. It was sickening, and made it impossible for me to even *taste* food, much less to enjoy it.

"From this time on I grew so much worse that I am not able to picture my sufferings in words. For months together I took no solid food at all; I lived on milk, sago, and other liquids. By now I was so weak I had to be lifted in and out of bed, and so wasted that little was left of me besides skin and bones. I was so nervous and excitable that a mere knocking at the door would make me tremble all over and set my heart beating like a drum. Usually I lay all day long on the couch, too weak to stir. When I attempted to walk alone I fell down.

"Both my husband and my friends gave up all hopes of my recovery. The doctor said I might get better, but he did not think I would. Thus, hopeless and helpless, I sank lower and lower.

"In November, 1894, a gentleman told my husband about Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup, and how it had benefited him when he was ill with an ailment like mine. That it would do me any good (so far gone was I) appeared to be too much to expect; but we got a bottle from Mr. West Lang's drug stores, Teviot Dale, and after I had taken it a short time I began to improve. My appetite revived, and I could eat without vomiting or feeling any of my former pain and distress. As I got stronger, the bad symptoms that had made me miserable so long, passed away, and I gained flesh and began to take an interest in life once more. I need only add that I continued with Seigel's Syrup until I was a new woman. I can now do my work easily and eat anything. This remedy saved my life, and I am willing all the world should know it. (Signed) (Mrs.) Sarah Ann Gould, No. 1, Froggart's Yard, Brady Street, Portwood, Stockport, February 15th, 1895."

This lady's bitter experience will appeal to the hearts of all who read it. But the point to bear in mind is this: When she took the bad cold in May, 1894, *she had already been suffering six years with chronic inflammatory dyspepsia*, which had thrown her whole system out of order, filled her blood with poisons from the diseased stomach, and rendered her an easy victim to any chill or exposure. The cold was only an *incident* of her trouble; it was like the fire which catches and consumes inflammable material. Keep your *digestion* right and your blood pure with Mother Seigel's Syrup, and you won't take cold. Please consider this fact carefully and act on it. Fasten your doors and windows and you keep out thieves.

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 336.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING JUNE 8, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

WORDS THAT PAINT AND PICTURES THAT SPEAK

CHAPTER I.

"ADORATION is ignorance," she was saying, as the great rocking-chair swayed lazily backwards and forwards in front of the fire, to the imminent peril of a fragile wicker table on which the tea-things were spread.

Her companion moved a little silver vase filled with hot-house flowers and deposited his cup on the mantel-piece before he turned and faced her.

"What are you talking of?" he said. "Men or things?"

The girl leant forward clasping her hands round her knees, and laughed.

"The beautiful in art appeals only to the artist," she answered in her deliberate way. "Of course, I was speaking of men. Our sincerest admiration is reserved for those about whom we know little or nothing. That is what I mean."

"'Familiarity breeds contempt,'" he quoted. "It is not exactly an original thought."

"Perhaps not. But, you see, I was looking at it from the other point of view."

"*Apropos* of what? If I had not seen such a great deal of you since we came down here I might flatter myself——"

"Please don't," she interrupted, with a little deprecating gesture. "The great beauty of being cousins is that we need not pay each other compliments."

They were standing together on the hearth now. The man in his pink coat and muddy boots and spurs, the tall, graceful girl at his side in the pretty mauve tea-gown for which her shopping habit had been changed.

"You entirely misunderstand the benefits of the relationship," he said, with a tinge of disappointment in his voice. "But, if it is not me, who or what is it, may I ask, that has put you into this philosophic mood?"

"It's no good telling you," she answered, staring down into the grate. "You would only laugh. Men of the world never can understand anything but the common-place."

"Look here, most beautiful woman, if you talk like that, I'm going."

She allowed him to reach the door without a word, and then she looked up and called him back.

"My dear boy, how dense you are," she said. "Can't you see how I am longing to unburden myself, and to get a little sympathy?"

He came back—not very graciously—and seated himself on the music-stool with an air of mock resignation.

"To tell you the truth," the girl said, leaning her elbow on the piano and looking down on him, "I have fallen in love—genuinely and desperately in love—with a man whom I have never seen."

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"Impossible!"

"But nevertheless a fact."

"And you think that if you knew him the illusion would be dispelled?"

"Yes. Adoration, as I said just now, is ignorance."

The man turned round and began strumming a few notes on the piano.

"If I were a journalist," he said, "I would write an article on the littleness of greatness, or the superiority of names over people."

"I am not in love with a name."

"Then what in the world are you in love with?"

"With the wonderful personality of which every line of the man's work seems to speak."

"So he is an author then?"

"Yes."

"And you imagine you can tell what sort of a man he is from the way he writes. It's absolute nonsense, my dear girl. A style may be characteristic, but an author never says what he really thinks in a book."

"Perfectly true, O Solomon! I do not suppose for a moment I know the real man. I am in love with the ideal.

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Led the way across the prettily furnished room.

Not with the author of 'A Broken Altar,' but with my conception of him."

"With the hero of the book, in other words—like most other women of course, you confound the author with characters he creates."

The girl laughed.

"With what the hero would have been if he had been allowed to live, perhaps. He is a machine instead of flesh and blood. He says things and does things because the author puts words in his mouth and pulls wires. In real life such a man would have been perfect."

The girl had resumed her seat and was rocking herself backwards and forwards again and smiling. Her companion watched her with amused contempt in his look and reverence in his heart. She was an enigma to him; his efforts to understand were always futile.

"It must be a great assistance in your work," he remarked, thoughtfully referring to her gift of reading between the lines and catching the reflection of words.

"Illustrating stories would be quite impossible without the knack of meeting the author half way. The best novelists leave the reader to write half their book, and the artist has to help them. Come and see my studio."

He followed her as she rose and led the way across the prettily furnished room into the hall, where their appearance was greeted by a low growl of pleasure from a magnificent boar hound, which rose leisurely from the broad circle of light in front of the fire, and came over the polished boards to meet them.

At the same moment the girl was conscious of a quick furtive glance from her companion.

"Do you recognise him?" she asked, and the white hand laid affectionately on the broad smooth head trembled a little in spite of herself.

"'Peter the Great!' How long have you had him?"

It was asked carelessly, with an evident effort to make the question appear nothing more than a polite endeavour to be interested, but there was an unmistakable note of jealousy in the man's voice.

"Only a month. Lord Worthington gave him to me at Christmas. Wasn't it kind of him?"

To this the man vouchsafed no response, but he muttered something under his breath, and the girl knew that he was taking someone else's name in vain, and laughed.

Passing through a swing door at the further end of the hall they entered a narrow corridor, when the young artist was the first to break the silence by looking back over her shoulder and saying:

"Don't forget the promise you made this morning, Duncan, never to breathe a word of what I am doing to anyone. If the mater knew I was illustrating stories for the magazines, instead of copying family portraits or painting lifeless landscapes, I believe she would send me off to a convent."

And with this word of admonition she turned the key of her studio and ushered her visitor into a lofty room, one side of which was taken up almost entirely by an enormous window, which, however, was now partially covered by the half drawn curtain. In this magnificent abode of Art no furniture was allowed to find admission except the oldest and rarest oak, and the high panelling on the walls was of the same material, and exquisitely carved by Lady Evelyn's own hand—a fact which she duly announced to her cousin. The broad settees were heaped with luxurious cushions, and an immense Persian carpet occupied the centre of the polished floor.

At the further end of the room stood several easels covered with heavy cloths; but contenting herself with merely pointing these out, the girl led the way to a writing-table near the fire, on which a heap of proofs and pen-and-ink sketches were scattered.

"Here are the opening chapters of 'A Broken Altar,'" she said, turning the galleys over in her hand. "It is not nearly finished yet, but it is already being published in the *Illustrated London News* as a serial story, which makes my work a great deal harder."

"And the gifted author's name is——?"

"Guy Provost."

"I have never heard of him before."

"Nor have I. This is his first novel, I believe."

"Lucky man."

"Why?" with a little, conscious laugh.

Her companion did not answer. He had picked up an advance copy of the paper from a low stool by the fender and stood with his back to Lady Evelyn, turning over the pages.

"It is a love story," he said presently.

"Yes—so far."

"And you have drawn yourself as the heroine."

"No," half indignantly, "I don't flatter myself that I am quite so good-looking as that."

"But it is you," he persisted.

"It is what I would like to be if I could make myself."

"Blessed are they who do not fish. Come here, Evelyn."

The request surprised her, but she crossed over to his side obediently.

"Now look in the glass."

Standing on tip-toe on the fender Lady Evelyn saw her own image in the mirror side by side with a full-page illustration of a remarkably pretty girl, who was stooping down and unfastening the muzzle of a wretched, starving dog who had found a delicious bone that it could just lick with its tongue and nothing more.

"There is a certain resemblance," she confessed, looking from the one to the other and thinking that, after all, she must be more beautiful than she had ever supposed. "But I give you my word of honour, Duncan, I did not mean it. You don't think the mater will guess?"

"She must notice the likeness," the man said, not very consolingly.

"But she won't know who drew the picture!"

"Considering that it is signed with a *nom de guerre*, perhaps not."

Lady Evelyn drew a sigh of relief. Her companion turned over a fresh page. The next moment a sudden exclamation broke from his lips.

Controlling his emotions with no little difficulty, he turned round and faced his cousin.

"Who was your model for the hero of this story?" he asked, holding out the paper and placing his finger sternly on the figure of a young man who was depicted in the act of stepping from a hansom cab on to the pavement in front of a West-end club.

His manner startled the girl.

"No one," she said. "What do you mean? Why are you looking at me like that?"

She took the paper, glanced at the offending illustration, and suddenly turned crimson as it flashed across her that the figure she had drawn was a fac-simile of no one else in the world but "Peter the Great's" late master.

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For a moment she did not know whether to laugh or to cry at her situation. It was certainly embarrassing and undignified, and her cousin's reproachful stare made her feel unaccountably guilty.

"So Lord Worthington is your idea of Mr. Guy Provost, personified in his hero; no wonder you have fallen so deeply in love with him!"

"Lord Worthington is nothing of the sort," replied Lady Evelyn indignantly. "I never thought of him once when I drew that picture. Do you think a man like that could write such a clever book as 'A Broken Altar'? The likeness is the merest accident; I promise you it is, Duncan . . . If you don't leave off laughing I shall never speak to you again. . . . Duncan, I hate you!"

Her companion took no notice of this outburst.

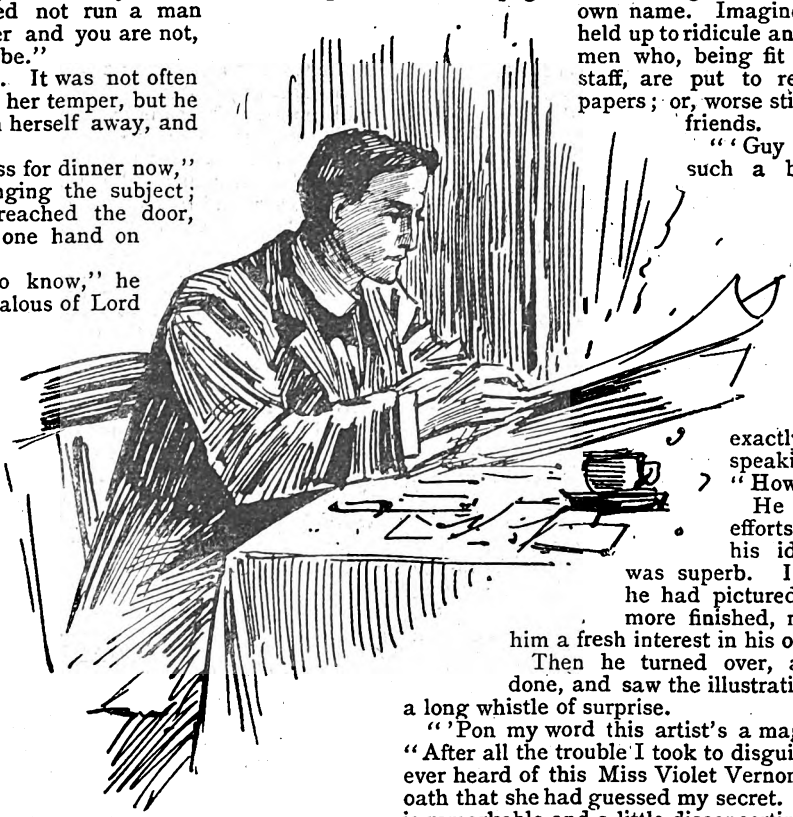
"You are profaning your old friends," he said, "and will be sorry for it when you find that Mr. Provost, whoever he may be, is only an ordinary mortal after all."

"He is no such ordinary mortal as you or Lord Worthington, at all events. You need not run a man down because he is clever and you are not, however jealous you may be."

Duncan Stuart laughed. It was not often that my Lady Evelyn lost her temper, but he knew that she had given herself away, and understood.

"I must go up and dress for dinner now," he said, suddenly changing the subject; "*Au revoir.*" As he reached the door, however, he turned with one hand on the handle.

"If it interests you to know," he said, "I am far more jealous of Lord Worthington than of your precious author. We reserve our sincerest admiration for those whom we know least, as you have been kind enough to explain to me this afternoon. But when, in our anxiety to pay homage to the unknown, we take to ourselves the image of some familiar friend as the nearest approach to the ideal—it is, my dear cousin, a very serious symptom." And thereupon he closed the door.



A copy of the "Illustrated London News."

CHAPTER II.

BREAKFAST was always served at a little table drawn near the window when Lord Worthington was alone at the castle. Several vases of rare exotics ornamented the centre of the cloth, and the warm glow of the beech logs blazing cheerfully in the wide, old-fashioned hearth flashed on the silver coffee-pot and service. A pile of letters and newspapers lay by the side of the solitary place which had been set, and the smoking dish covers betokened that everything was ready with the exception of his lordship himself.

At five minutes past nine a tall, leisurely-looking individual opened the door and strolled towards the table. The expression of the handsome, clean-shaven face did not betray any particular talent or genius. It was that of a young man, well under thirty, with smoothly brushed black hair, blue eyes, regular features, and the most charming manners in the world. With all his good looks, however, Lord Worthington was not conceited. Perhaps it may have been that he belonged to that limited and probably mythical class of men and women who are sufficiently conscious of their own attractions and superiority to be more or less indifferent to them.

Lord Worthington did not profess to have any ambitions in life beyond those of the ordinary country gentleman. He frankly confessed an abhorrence of politics, and avowed a preference for friends of a sporting type. No one, as a matter of fact, expected anything more from him. The last thing, however, which most men are is what they appear to be.

On this particular morning Lord Worthington evinced something very much like excitement as he caught sight of the contents of the letter-bag lying beside his plate. He looks through them quickly, and everything is thrown aside except a long yellow envelope marked IMMEDIATE and a copy of the *Illustrated London News*, which he unrolls and opens out with the nearest approach to haste that he ever permits himself.

"I wonder what on earth people would think if they knew I was writing a Socialist novel—*with a moral!*" he thought as he smoothed the paper out with his hand and began turning over the pages. "Thank goodness I did not write under my own name. Imagine the ignominy of being held up to ridicule and criticised by the young men who, being fit for nothing else on the staff, are put to reviewing books for their papers; or, worse still, being chaffed by one's friends.

"'Guy Provost!' That's not such a bad *nom-de-plume* after all," he reflected, as he propped the paper against the loaf and ran his eye quickly down the double column of type.

At this moment he noticed for the first time the illustration on the opposite page and gave a little start of pleasure.

"That's it! that's it exactly!" he exclaimed, speaking unconsciously aloud. "How magnificently drawn!"

He had rather dreaded the efforts of someone else to put his ideas into form, but this was superb. It was the scene just as he had pictured it all to himself, only more finished, more complete. It gave him a fresh interest in his own work.

Then he turned over, as the other man had done, and saw the illustration of the hero and drew a long whistle of surprise.

"'Pon my word this artist's a magician!" he ejaculated. "After all the trouble I took to disguise myself, too. If I had ever heard of this Miss Violet Vernon before I would take my oath that she had guessed my secret. As it is, the coincidence is remarkable and a little disconcerting."

He read through the first instalment of his story, and went on with the proofs; and when he had finished he wiped his forehead, and said something about the room reminding him of a Turkish bath.

He had never seen his own thoughts in print before, and he felt half ashamed of them now that they faced him in black and white. On the whole, however, he was contented,—far more, indeed, than he had expected to be—with his own handiwork. The story, so far as it went, was certainly clever, and decidedly well written. In fact he was rather surprised at his own success.

Criticising the novel from the most impartial standpoint, he felt that there was a certain artificiality about his characters. The attempt to metamorphose himself, under a careful disguise, into a hero, had not been altogether unsuccessful, but he could not help noticing that the heroine was a little unnatural, and the emotions of both rather too mechanical to enlist the sympathies of the reader in the human interests of the story.

"The socialism is admirable," his lordship thought to

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himself as he crossed over to the fireplace and lighted a cigarette, "but the love story has a suspiciously fictitious air about it. The truth of the matter is, I suppose, that I am writing about a subject of which I know very little."

And, indeed, Lord Worthington, society man that he was, had never been engaged in a serious love affair or felt his heart beating for a woman.

"I have taken too much care of myself, confound it," he meditated, as he stared from his place of vantage on the hearth at the wintry landscape outside. "One must have experience before one writes, and my education has been neglected. I suppose there would really be plenty of time now before I attempt to finish my story. Only——"

He broke off abruptly, startled at his own thoughts.

After all, he was not quite sure whether a man would be justified in carrying on a flirtation with a girl merely to become conversant with the mysterious way of lovers. There could be no doubt, however, that this was the only step to take if he wished to make his story true to life. It would be easy enough to write about the real thing while undergoing all the sensations and to describe the inevitable little scenes while living in an atmosphere of such soft influences.

He was still setting forth the pros and cons of this ethical problem, and giving them all a most conscientious scrutiny, when his eye happened to fall on the copy of the *Illustrated London News* which still lay open on the table.

"I know that face reminds me of someone," he exclaimed, taking up the paper and giving a closer inspection than he had yet bestowed on the portrait of the girl illustrating his own story.

He stared at it stupidly for a moment, and then a light broke across his face.

"Lady Evelyn, of course! What a curious likeness. Why in the world did I not think of her as my heroine? Why——"

For the second time he left a sentence unfinished, and with the air of a man who has made a sudden determination and does not mean to allow the grass to grow under his feet, he swung round on his heels and rang the bell.

"Tell Stevens," he said, as the footman appeared, "to saddle the grey at once, and say I shall want one of the chestnuts as a second horse."

Then he looked at his watch.

"There is plenty of time if I am quick," he mused, moving towards the door. "The hounds meet at the kennels to-day and Lady Evelyn is sure to be there. Knowing the young lady's reputation I need not feel any qualms about playing the *rôle* of lover to her, and then—heigh ho! for a place on a pedestal among the great writers of the day."

CHAPTER III.

Two months had passed. The story was progressing in a way which the author had never dreamed of when he first took up his pen to write. "A Broken Altar" was undoubtedly the novel of the year. Everyone was asking who Guy Provost was, and nobody knew. The editor was reticent on the subject, and in spite of the ceaseless efforts of the busy interviewer the secret never leaked out. And meanwhile the circulation of the paper went up by leaps and bounds. Such a boom had never been known before at the offices of the "News."

One cold clear evening early in March, Lord Worthington, with a gun under his arm and a solitary spaniel at his heels, was walking down a narrow woodland track which led from the park gates to the keeper's cottage. His whole attitude was one of despair or of deepest depression, and it was not difficult to see that his mind was occupied with thoughts of the most disagreeable and lugubrious nature. The stooping shoulders, the down-cast eyes, the heavy listless tread, all spoke of grave mental disquietude or abject misery pitiful to watch.

A young crescent moon shone down through the leafless branches of the trees. Under foot the ground was moist and sodden, and there was a certain freshness in the air which spoke of recent showers. A stile on the further side of the thick underwood was faintly visible in the deepening twilight, and turning aside from the beaten path he had been following Lord Worthington made his way towards it, and, leaning wearily against the wooden rail, he buried his face in his hands and remained apparently wrapped in meditation. Every now and then a stifled sob broke from him, and his whole frame shook.

At last, however, he seemed in some measure to regain his composure.

"What a fool I am to break down like this!" he exclaimed. "I have no one but myself to thank for all my misery. If a man must needs play with fire, he has no right to cry at a burn."

He laughed at the platitude, but it brought him no consolation or comfort. The terrible wound in his heart was too recent to be forgotten. Sitting there in the falling darkness he went over and over again the story of his misfortune, of the search after the knowledge of love—begun in jest and ending with the real and awful suffering of a broken heart.

How this passion had sprung into life he hardly understood. It had come upon him unexpectedly. Only a few days ago he was on his quest for a new experience, and Lady Evelyn was nothing more to him than a pleasant companion—an interesting psychological study. And now it had come to this! He had been sent about his business.

He thought of his newly acquired fame in the world of letters and laughed for the second time. He thought of the thousands and thousands of human beings who sympathised with his story and thought of himself—alone and friendless in the world.

. . . . . .

Late that night Lord Worthington retired to his library to write. He felt unusually disinclined for the task, but the editor was clamouring for the next instalment of his story and there was no alternative. For a long time he paced up and down the room, to and fro, to and fro, trying to collect his thoughts. Things were going very smoothly indeed with the hero of "A Broken Altar." It was as well, perhaps, that this should happen in a romance of fiction, as it so seldom did in real life. And then a new thought came to his lordship. As he had been made to suffer, others should suffer, too. The idea pleased him. He seized his pen and sat down and began to write.

He would put his character to torture just as he had been tortured that day.

And presently, as he wrote, there came to him something like relief.

CHAPTER IV.

Now it is probable that on this particular evening no one in the world was half so unhappy as the Lady Evelyn herself. From the most unfortunate and long-repented moment when Duncan Stuart had been initiated into the secret of her studio she had lived in a constant state of alarm. Unintentional as the double likeness had been, it could not be denied or overlooked, and it was quite impossible to meet Lord Worthington without wondering whether he was reading Guy Provost's story in the *Illustrated London News*.

The thought was sufficiently embarrassing to make her look and feel uncomfortable. No one is more conscious of guilt than the innocent.

There was some satisfaction in the reflection that he could never know who the artist was if Duncan Stuart could be trusted, but she had not the most implicit faith in that young gentleman, who had taken to chaffing her unmercifully on the subject.

In her fury she made up her mind to avoid the innocent cause of her misery as much as possible until the hateful story was finished. This, however, was easier said than done. The more she tried to escape him the more determined he appeared to see her. The meetings which had once been of rare occurrence had now become almost daily.

The evil-minded Duncan observed this and made the most of his opportunity. He pointed out that from the very day on which the first instalment of Guy Provost's story had appeared Lord Worthington's attention had become more

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marked. Only one thing could be deduced from that. His lordship was evidently under the impression that some mutual friend was endeavouring by this somewhat novel means to bring about a not altogether undesirable match, and was by no means loth to take the hint.

Lady Evelyn was furious.

To make matters worse, the likeness in the illustrations could not be altered. As she had begun it was necessary that she should go on to the bitter end. She had almost come to hating the unknown author of "A Broken Altar." As if she had not enough to bear already, his characters were continually meeting and talking, and behaving in a way which reminded her of sundry little incidents in her unwished-for intercourse with Lord Worthington.

And then the climax had come. Lord Worthington had taken her by surprise, and offered her his undying devotion. She refused him, of course. Under the circumstances there was nothing else to be done—and then she was sorry.

Deep down in her heart she knew that she had fallen in love with this man. When she came to think the matter over in the solitude of her bedroom, she could find nothing but the fear of what Duncan Stuart would say that had influenced her decision. A sort of numbness came over her. All that night, and for many a weary day afterwards, she suffered with horrible acuteness. All the joy and pleasure in life seemed to be gone. And there was no one to whom she could go for consolation—except Guy Provost. In the misery of the last few weeks she had almost forgotten him, and now she began to look forward to the day when the next batch of proofs would arrive in order to comfort herself by reading of the happiness which might have been hers. The hero had already made up his mind to propose. The heroine, who reminded her more than ever of herself, would, of course, accept. Considering how they loved one another this was the inevitable sequel, and in their happiness perhaps she would be able to forget for a time her own joylessness and misery.

And then the proofs came.

She read them through eagerly, almost breathlessly.

Things had come to a climax, and the hero had been sent about his business.

How sorry she was for him! A little lump rose in her throat as she read, and tears of ready sympathy stole down her cheeks. Poor fellow! How he suffered. She had never read anything so wonderful or so beautiful as this description of a broken heart before! It carried the reader away with its passion, and pathos, and eloquence! She felt her indignation rising against the heroine. The girl must be heartless and cruel and brutal to cause so much suffering!

She read the proofs over and over again until she seemed to know each word by heart. How it brought back another scene to her mind!

When she sat down at last and took up her brush her hands trembled so that she could not paint. It seemed almost sacrilege to depict such a sacred subject—besides, how could she ever do justice to the powerful, graphic words that described the exquisite emotions of the scene far better than any picture could do. Her heart failed her.

And presently, as she sat there, crying a little, a new idea came to her. Not a single word, not a line of reference had been made by the author to the feelings of his heroine. He had ignored that side of the question altogether. The girl for some secret reason had refused to marry the man whom she loved so dearly and sent him away broken-hearted. What must her sensations have been! Lady Evelyn's heart beat faster. A moment before she had been half angry with the girl. Now she was full of sympathy. A flame of inspiration touched her soul, the beautiful sorrowful face lit up with animation.

Words—the saddest, most touching words she had ever read had painted the sorrow of the man; and now she would draw a picture that would speak of the agony of the woman.

It was a theme worthy of her brush—the outpouring of a laden soul.

It was a marvellous work of art.

. . . . . .

The few weeks that have passed from the time that Lord Worthington relieved his pent-up feelings by describing the acute suffering of his disappointed love affair had not served to lessen the pain. He was as keenly sensitive as ever to the cost of Lady Evelyn's refusal. He was still indignant with himself for the ridiculous part he had played in bringing things to such a pass. At the same time he looked forward, with curiously mixed feelings, to seeing his experience—bought so dearly—in print. He was anxious, too, to see how the unknown artist, who had displayed such sympathy with his feelings before, would illustrate that scene.

The actual discovery was to be a revelation and a shock.

Here was no picture of a man soul-tormented and consumed with self-reproach.

Instead a drawing of a woman—alone—standing with arms outstretched towards the half-closed door—and on her face a look of anguish, of awful, silent suffering that thrilled and fascinated a beholder.

It was a marvellous work of art—a powerful picture, portraying the tearful longing of the heart, the dreariness of the loveless future, and the sacrifice.

Lord Worthington was deeply moved. It was an undoubted liberty on the part of the artist, but, for all that, not one that he felt at all inclined to resent. The revelation that came to him left little room for any thought of the kind—only it filled his breast with hope.

. . . .

Three months later, when Lord Worthington decided to bring out his story in book form, he naturally thought him of Miss Violet Vernon, the artist. The editor, however, on being consulted, did not think that she intended to undertake any further work; but he promised to write and lay the matter before her. Now, truth to tell, the Lady Evelyn had made up her mind never to illustrate another story. When she received the editor's letter, however, it occurred to her that by exercising a little diplomatic tact she might, without committing herself, arrange for a personal interview with Mr. Guy Provost. She was particularly anxious to meet this mysterious man who had made such a mark in the world, and to her surprise and delight it was duly arranged in the course of a few days that they were to be introduced at the offices of the *Illustrated London News* to discuss any further collaboration. It was not difficult to find an excuse for running up to town, but when the eventful morning came and she found herself settled down comfortably in an empty first-class carriage, who should get in at the last moment but Lord Worthington—the last person in the world she wanted to meet or see just then.

It was an embarrassing situation for both of them.

Lady Evelyn was the first to speak.

"Is it friendship?" she asked.

"Of course. How can you ask? I am afraid you must have considered my behaviour most extraordinary last time we

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met. I was carried away under the influence of the moment. I had no right to speak as I did."

"Shall we talk of something else?"

"I beg your pardon——" and then, with a sudden inspiration: "Have you been reading that story in the *Illustrated London News*?"

For the life of her Lady Evelyn could not keep back the colour that rushed to her cheeks.

"I have," she said, growing more and more uncomfortable under his scrutiny, and as the awful thought flashed across her that Duncan Stuart might have said something about the illustrations.

"And you liked it?"

"I think," she replied, "that it is the most wonderful story I have ever read."

In spite of himself Lord Worthington started a little at this candid confession. It was difficult to realise that everyone did not know so well as he did who the author was.

"I am glad you liked it," he said, "for the author is a man I know."

"Guy Provost?"

"Did you draw that picture?"

"Yes. Why shouldn't he be?"

"I did not think that you went in for such intellectual friends," she answered truthfully. Then, with a little malicious laugh, "I have fallen in love with him, you know."

. . . .

When Lady Evelyn arrived at her destination she was conducted at once to the waiting-room, where she was told that Mr. Guy Provost was expecting her.

A tall, well-built man was standing with his back to the door as she entered.

He turned round as the editor spoke.

"Mr. Provost, allow me to introduce you to Miss Violet Vernon."

The speaker vanished, and they were left alone.

"Lady Evelyn!"

"Lord Worthington!"

"Did you—did you draw that picture?"

Lady Evelyn's answer was drowned in the clatter the office-boy made darting away from the door. Those two names were worth half a sovereign to him at the office of the *Star*.

THROUGH VANITY

I WAS by far the happiest man in the universe when I burst into the room of my friend, Jack Townsend, the morning after my betrothal to Leila.

"Congratulate me, old boy," I said hilariously, "for in less than a month I am going to marry the prettiest girl that ever ensnared the heart of man."

I was so elated that the expression of my friend's face only dazed me for a moment. He seemed to be labouring under some mental anguish, and it was some time before he recovered himself sufficiently to reach out his hand and grasp mine in anything like a congratulatory manner.

"Of course, I wish you joy, old fellow," he said finally, "but some way the thought of matrimony for you brings a premonition of evil that frightens me a little. You know I was married once," he added, almostly abruptly, and then his pale face flushed to a brilliant red as he added fiercely, "and I would rather see you dead this moment than know you must go through the horror of my short experience."

I said nothing, but I was deeply concerned at the passionate reminiscences I had awakened. After a moment's silence my friend seemed to recover his composure.

"Sit down Phil," he said, more gently; and as I dropped into a chair, beside the fire he drew another towards me and laid his hand upon my knee.

"Let me tell you the story of my wedded life, old fellow. It will be a relief to me to speak of it, and it may perhaps be the means of putting you on your guard against woman's greatest of all weaknesses, her foolish vanity.

"When I married Vera, ten years ago, I was moderately wealthy. I knew that with judicious handling my income would keep us in comfort, if not in luxury. I explained this to my wife before we were married, and considered her apparent indifference on the subject as another proof of her unselfish love for me. She was but little more than a child and beautiful as an angel, and at first her delight at a new jewel or a flower seemed to me the very personification of childish innocence.

"It was months before I began to realise the full extent of my darling's vanity, and then, with a shudder, I saw how much her love of dress had cost me. Gradually I had squandered everything I possessed, but even in the face of bankruptcy itself I did not regret my folly until the change in Vera's nature began to show itself.

"The first wish of hers that I was obliged to thwart from lack of funds brought forth a shower of tears that nearly drove me to distraction. The second refusal deluged me in a perfect storm of reproaches and bitter words, and the last time I was forced to deny her some costly gem she turned upon me with a brazen face and vowed that she would have her wish even if some other man's funds were drawn upon to purchase it.

"I was horrified at this avowal, made, as I was obliged to admit, with the practised *sang froid* of an old adventuress, but when she appeared before me a few days later with the costly pin flashing in the braids of her golden hair, there was nothing left for me but to protect my honour before it was destroyed entirely.

"I gave her half of what was left, and then absented myself from home to spare myself the pain of parting. A week later I entered the house only to find that she had ruined me completely, for, not satisfied with wrecking my life, she had marred and destroyed my home until the place was hardly recognisable.

"I never attempted to secure a divorce. The whole affair was too bitterly painful, and the next thing that I heard of Vera was that she was living in Paris."

When my friend stopped speaking, I seized his hand and

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pressed it warmly. "Such an experience as that is enough to lose a man his soul," I said, with feeling. My friend bowed his head and gazed abstractedly into the fire, and at last I rose to go. "I thank you for telling me that story, Jack," I said slowly, "for while I find it impossible to anticipate anything so dreadful in my coming union, still, Leila is young and beautiful, and, as you say, vanity in woman is a dangerous sin, and one which every loving husband should try at once to conquer or eradicate."

An hour later I left my friend alone with his sorrow, and, only a short month after, Leila and I were wed and began our honeymoon by travelling about the Continent.

To describe my wife's beauty would have been, to me, almost impossible. To even dream of picturing her dainty, girlish manners, would seem the acme of absurdity. She was absolutely perfect in face and nature, and the joy with which she received and wore my simple offerings convinced me that, as yet, her soul was free from the taint of pride and vanity.

She should be jealously guarded against this greatest sin of woman, and in protecting her against temptation I would be protecting myself against an agony of spirit such as I had clearly seen portrayed during the last memorable call upon my friend Jack Townsend.

One day at Paris we were passing a jeweller's window, and for the first time in our married life Leila asked me for a tiny diamond. Naturally, I had no wish to refuse so trifling a thing, and although Jack's warning flashed opportunely through my mind on each occasion, I soon found myself eagerly buying every trinket that my imperious but always loving little wife saw fit to covet or admire.

One day I determined to bring this to an end. I had been looking over my finances, and found, not that I was in any great danger of bankruptcy, but that in order to complete our trip as economically as I had planned I must refrain from purchasing more of those useless things that gave my wife but a moment's pleasure. As if to test my late resolve, Leila entered at that moment and flung her arms tenderly round my neck.

"Oh, Philippe," she whispered, with a coaxing pout, "I have just seen the loveliest diamond bracelet, which M. Le Madeau says would look so charmingly upon my arm! Do buy it for me, Philippe, dear; you will make your little wife so happy."

"How many diamonds have you now, sweetheart?" I said laughingly, for I dreaded to hurt her feelings after all.

"More than the Countess G——, and almost as many as the Duchess of W——," she responded quickly and with flashing eyes.

I was completely astonished by her unexpected answer.

"Then you must have jewels that I have not seen," I responded, "for the Countess's are valued at £10,000, and the Duchess of W—— has the finest collection in all Paris!"

Leila blushed scarlet and bit her lips angrily, as if to punish them for telling tales. "I—I had some given me long ago," said she timidly. "I never told you of them because I did not know how you would feel about it. They were given me by an old admirer when I was quite a child," she added, with an attempt at candidness.

"And now you wish for this bracelet," I said coldly, for I was beginning to feel sick at heart, and the horror of my friend's fatal experience seemed duplicating itself in mine.

"Yes, please, Philippe," my wife said brightly. "I must have the bracelet, for it is the only one of its kind in Paris."

I put her from me with an angry gesture almost before she had finished her emphatic words. "You will have to do without the bracelet, Leila," I said decidedly, "for I cannot afford to buy it for you!"

Almost in fury she looked into my face. "Is it possible that I have married a pauper?" she hissed between her sharp, white teeth.

I seized my hat and left the room, and the next day, without consulting my wife in any particular, I returned with her to London. There was nothing further said between us regarding the bracelet or her insulting words, but before leaving Paris I wired Jack Townsend to meet me at Victoria, and as we slowly moved into the station, the first face that I recognised among the crowd was the friendly one of my boyhood chum, as he wrung my hand in an honest welcome home.

Just then I was astonished to see him turn suddenly pale, and with one furious glance at my wife, spring hastily into a waiting cab and drive away without a word.

In a moment the whole horrible truth was revealed to me with merciless plainness. I glanced at my wife—mine or Jack's, I knew not which—and read a confirmation of the truth in the bold indifference that seemed suddenly to be stamped upon her face.

Without a word I placed her in a cab; then, wordless still, we drove to the Métropole; and, after seeing her safely in the room, I turned without a backward glance, and went frantically to seek Jack Townsend. I found him pacing his floor like an angry lion. "Jack, old fellow!" I cried, with tears in my eyes, as I burst into the room, "Jack, I never dreamed who that woman was! Forgive me, for I have wronged you in very innocence, and, oh, Jack, old fellow, be as merciful as you can, for I, too, am suffering torments, and that alone should keep our hearts together."

There were tears also in my old chum's eyes as he turned impulsively and took me by the hand. "Sit down, Phil," he said, with an attempt at calmness, "and together we will talk over what it is best to do, for in this terrible revelation I can see that our friendship must be anger-proof or ignored for ever."

. . . . . .

Five minutes after her husband left her side Leila walked deliberately across the room and looked at herself in the massive mirror.

"Your two husbands are comparing notes," she said, with a mischievous smile at her own face in the glass, "and there is nothing left for you to do but improve the present moment to escape them."

Then she glanced hastily about the apartment and scribbled something upon a card.

"Send these trunks to this address," she said to a porter who answered her summons. Then, when he had gone, she walked back once more and raised her shapely arm before the mirror.

There was the flash and glitter of diamonds upon her wrist, and the sight restored her girlish pleasure. "I have the bracelet in spite of you, Philippe," she said gleefully. Then she made a mocking bow before the glass, and, walking backwards, caught the last reflection.

"Thank goodness, the Count has followed me!" she whispered as she left the room, "for he of all my so-called friends seems to delight in decking and admiring me in all the costliest jewels."

Four days later two gentlemen passing by a large hotel were called to attend a distressing scene. Murder had been committed in a private room; and the old Frenchman, who muttered and mumbled some unintelligible gibberish as he danced about, still flourishing the bloody weapon, was promptly taken to a place of safety, away from the presence of the dead.

Jack Townsend was the first to bend above the lovely form with a glance of pity and remorse, but it was Phil who touched the silent lips, and turning, with great tears upon his cheeks, cried: "Jack, forgive her, even as I, for after all her sin was caused by woman's weakness—vanity."

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By John K. Leys, *Author of "In the Toils," "My Hindoo Friend," &c., &c.—Illustrated by* Raymond Potter.

CHAPTER XXIII.

On a New Trail.

Geoffrey Dundas did not lose sight of Captain Byngham, on the night of that gentleman's visit to the Hindoos' quarters at Lancaster House, till he had seen him safely landed at his hotel. Why he followed him, he would have found it hard to explain. Sometimes he entertained a half-formed idea, that on reaching the Captain's lodgings or hotel, he would send up his name, insist on seeing him, and then tell him that he was aware of his visit to Lancaster House, and demand an explanation. But soon he perceived the absolute futility of such a proceeding.

If the Captain were scoundrel enough to join in a conspiracy with the Hindoos, he would be capable of telling any number of lies, and of making any number of promises, without the slightest intention of keeping any one of them. To accuse the man to his face, and quarrel with him, could do no possible good. The only result would be to put Byngham and his fellow-conspirators thoroughly on their guard.

It was not till the hansom in which Geoffrey was following Byngham's cab had accomplished half of its journey to the Strand, that it occurred to Dundas that it might pay better to keep a watch on the Captain, though he was only an instrument in the hands of wilier men, than to look after the Hindoos themselves.

To follow them about would be impossible, since there were so many of them; and it was not likely that anything further could be learned at Lancaster House, since the adjoining house was now in the hands of the enemy. Besides, the scraps of conversation which he had overheard had made it plain to Geoffrey that Captain Byngham was to play a leading part in the plot which was on foot. Byngham, then, would be sure to be on the spot at the critical moment. If his attack could be parried, the plot must fail.

Geoffrey Dundas did not lose sight of Captain Byngham.

So argued Geoffrey, and in pursuance of his new resolution he stopped his cab when he saw the one which contained Captain Byngham pass through the gates leading to the Charing Cross Railway Station.

"Is he going somewhere by train?" thought Geoffrey to himself. "It will be awkward for me to start on a journey at his heels, without so much as a clean collar, and with only thirty shillings in my purse!"

It was a false alarm, however. Byngham's cab made for the hotel entrance, and there the Captain alighted. After waiting a few minutes Dundas followed him into the building, and having ascertained that Captain Byngham was staying there, he engaged a bedroom. He then went to the Temple, packed a portmanteau, and took it with him to the hotel so that he might be ready to start off anywhere at a moment's notice.

Arrived at the hotel, Geoffrey's first care was to ascertain Captain Byngham's number. It was 59. Geoffrey then sent for the head-porter, gave him half-a-sovereign, and promised to make it a whole one if he would let him know when No. 59 gave indications that he was about to leave.

As no one could quit the place without this man's knowledge, Geoffrey felt tolerably easy in his mind. He wrote to General Chetwynd that night; and next day he ventured to stay away from the hotel long enough to do a little shopping. He bought, among other things, a revolver and a supply of cartridges, for he thought it more than likely that they would be of use before the business in hand was ended. He also called on his friend Linton, and told him what he had discovered, and what he was doing.

"Let me come with you, Dundas!" cried Linton impulsively. "I am no genius, but two heads, they say, are better than one."

"You're awfully good, old man," returned Geoffrey, "but I won't take you out of town until I find out something more definite. For my present *rôle* of detective—which I hate, and for which I am about as well fitted as an elephant on stilts—I think it would hardly do to have a companion."

"Perhaps you are right," said Linton. "At any rate, you will not hesitate to summon me if I can be of any use—even if it should be only in the way of providing someone you can talk to. I might be of use in that way, if in no other."

Geoffrey thanked him warmly, and promised that he would write to him the moment he was in need of help.

Two days after this, the head-porter told Geoffrey that the gentleman in No. 59, was leaving next morning. To follow Captain Byngham's cab was, with the head-porter's assistance, an easy matter. The cabman received the necessary instructions, and carried them out faithfully. In a few minutes Geoffrey found himself at Victoria.

The Continental train was about to start, and Geoffrey took a ticket for Paris. It was with some hesitancy that he did this, for he thought it most likely, that Captain Byngham was merely going to the French capital for a few days' change and amusement.

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There were very few people on the platform.

However, it turned out that this guess was wrong. To Geoffrey's surprise, Captain Byngham did not go on to Paris after arriving at Calais, but waited at the station some little time, and then got on board a local train. With some difficulty, Dundas followed him, unobserved indeed, but without a proper ticket, for he could not ascertain where the Captain meant to alight. He had therefore got one for a station a few miles down the line, so as to be able to enter the train.

His object now was to find out when Captain Byngham left the train, and this was for Geoffrey, who was entirely unused to such work, an unpleasant and a difficult task. He succeeded, however, beyond his hopes.

It soon became evident that the railway skirted part of the Normandy coast; and at Asnières, a little watering-place some three hours from Calais, the Captain alighted.

There were very few people on the platform, so few that Geoffrey felt certain that the Captain would see and recognise him the moment he stepped out of the carriage; and even if, by any chance, he should fail to do so, the little fracas that would be sure to arise when it was discovered that Geoffrey had been travelling without a proper ticket, would certainly lead to his being noticed.

Now it was to Geoffrey's mind essential that the Captain should be quite unsuspicious of the fact that he was being watched. So, after a moment's consideration, Geoffrey decided to keep his seat. He went on to the next station, then got out, paid his excess fare without demur, and then took the next train back to Asnières, where he arrived about two hours and a half after Byngham had been left there.

Geoffrey made sure that he would find the man he was shadowing at one of the hotels. It turned out that there was but one hotel—a huge, brand-new structure, still smelling of bricks and mortar, called L'Hôtel de l'Europe.

But at this hostelry Captain Byngham could not be found. There had been an Englishman there for lunch, the head waiter informed Geoffrey; but he had not brought any luggage, nor had he engaged a bedroom. Geoffrey concluded that Byngham must have friends in the place with whom he meant to stay. At any rate, the place was so small that it seemed certain that no one could hide in it.

Geoffrey felt certain that if the Captain stayed in the town he would meet him sooner or later. The worst of it was that there was nearly as much chance of Byngham being the first to see him as there was of his being the first to see Captain Byngham. That, however, could not be helped.

As it seemed tolerably certain that the Captain meant to stay some days in the town, and the hotel proved to be somewhat expensive, Geoffrey hunted about for rooms, and found what he wanted in a small villa, nearly the last of a long row of detached houses which fringed the shore to the eastward. The villa belonged to a widow named Fresual.

She had two sons and two daughters. The elder son, Jacques, was a petty officer in the French navy, just then at nome on leave—a fine, frank, manly fellow. The younger, Ernest, made a living by hiring out pleasure boats. The two girls helped their mother in the house-work.

The morning after Geoffrey took up his abode with Madame Fresual, as he was standing at the window of his sitting-room after breakfast, he saw, to his surprise, the very man he was so anxious to find, walking along the sands, between him and the sea.

As he carried a pair of towels in his hands it was evident that the Captain had been for his morning dip. But where could he be going? There was but one house further on in that direction. Perhaps he was merely taking a constitutional after his swim? No; he went straight up to the little gate in the railing that fenced in the garden of the next house from the sands, opened it, and walked up the garden path as if he were at home.

"Ah!" said Geoffrey to himself, "I am lucky. The Captain has taken rooms as I have done. I shall be able to keep an eye on him comfortably."

He put a few questions, however, to his landlady, and found that he was not quite right in his conjecture. M. Prébost, who leased the last house of the row, did not let rooms. He let the house furnished for the summer months, and lived in it himself during the winter. But Madame Fresual had not heard that M. Prébost had found a tenant. She could easily find out, though; for it happened that she knew the widow Coquelin, M. Prébost's housekeeper, very well.

Madame Fresual was as good as her word. She was soon able to report to Geoffrey that the Villa Carnot (as M. Prébost had named his dwelling) had been let for a month, to a compatriot of Monsieur's. There was no doubt about the fact, since the widow Coquelin, her informant, acted as housekeeper and cook to the new tenant. She did not sleep in the house, but went in the morning, and returned to her own cottage later in the day. Generally, the Englishman dined at a café; so the widow had decidedly an easy time of it.

He went straight up to the little gate.

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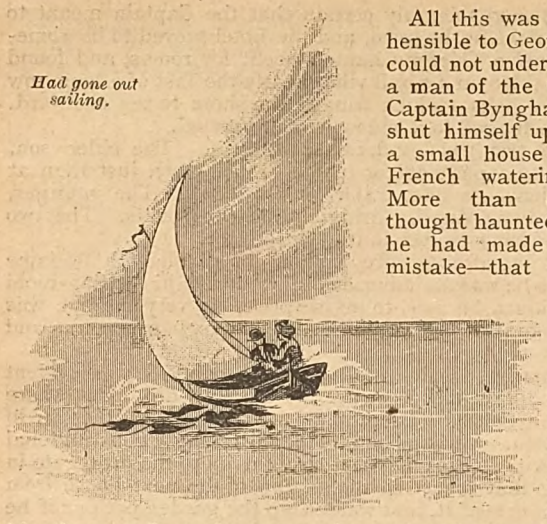

Had gone out sailing.

All this was incomprehensible to Geoffrey. He could not understand why a man of the world like Captain Byngham, should shut himself up alone in a small house in a dull French watering-place. More than once the thought haunted him that he had made a grand mistake—that the Captain had merely come here to economise, or to recruit his health; and that he, himself, was wasting his time, and staying away from his friends at the very moment when he might have been of service to them.

The General's letter re-assured him on this latter point. He could not possibly have maintained a watch over Leila and her father, while they were on board Lord Lavington's yacht. And he could not deny that Sir Arthur's reasons for not altering his arrangements, seemed sound. Yet he was haunted by a vague uneasiness.

As the Tenth of June drew near, this indefinable sense of impending evil increased. The very inaction of his life tended to make Geoffrey nervous and apprehensive. During the first week of his stay at Madame Fresual's, he had gone out sailing a good deal with Jacques Fresual, to whom he had taken a strong liking, in one of his brother's boats.

It was tolerably safe to do this, as Captain Byngham had discovered a casino in the town—few seaside places in France are without one or more of these establishments—and spent the greater part of his time at the roulette table.

But now, Geoffrey did not dare to go a mile away from the town. He became morbidly afraid of letting Captain Byngham escape from his surveillance, and at the same time morbidly anxious lest he should let the Captain know that he was being watched. This, of itself, was enough to make him wretched; and he was constantly tormented by the fear that Leila might be in danger on the coming Tenth of June, without his being at hand to defend her. He became nervous, depressed, and gloomily apprehensive of the future.

At length, one day he telegraphed to Linton, begging him to come and keep him company for a few days, if he could leave town.

Next day, Jack Linton arrived at Asnières. Geoffrey met him at the station.

"I shall never forget your goodness in coming to me now," said Geoffrey, as he grasped his chum's hand. "That fellow is still here. He spends his days and half his nights at the gaming-table, and it seems useless my staying on here. I can do no good."

"You can do no harm, at all events," answered Linton; "and I quite think that after what you heard at Lancaster House, you should keep an eye on our fat friend. You have let yourself get over anxious. I'll take your place to-morrow, and see that Byngham doesn't make a bolt of it, while you take a twenty mile walk. It will do you a world of good."

CHAPTER XXIV.

Geoffrey and his Friend Play a Bold Stroke.

Linton's presence acted like a charm upon his friend. The cloud that had been hanging over Geoffrey's mind vanished. The sense of bewilderment and hopelessness, which for some days had weighed down his spirits, disappeared. He was his own man again.

It had been a dull, threatening day. The sun set in an angry sky that glowed in the west like burnished copper, while a thick band of dark purple clouds hung over the reddish-yellow light, as if they were intent on crushing it out in darkness.

"It's going to be a stormy night," said Geoffrey to his friend Jacques Fresual, as he passed him in the garden.

The sailor took a look seaward, and answered "Oui, monsieur. Soon now, in two hours or less, it will blow heavily—what you call hard."

Captain Byngham had gone home about six o'clock, and had not stirred out since; so the two friends thought they might safely smoke a cigar on the sands after dinner. It was already dusk, and would soon be quite dark. If the Captain left his house they would be sure to observe him, while they would be seen by him, perhaps, but could not possibly be recognised.

The wind spoilt the cigars which the two young men were smoking, and brought them to an untimely end; but they continued to pace the sands arm in arm, sometimes going a considerable way in the direction of the town, sometimes extending their beat a few yards beyond the Villa Carnot.

A drizzling rain began to fall, and Linton was just proposing that they should go indoors, when Geoffrey, grasping his friend's arm, said:

"I say, what's that?"

A bright light suddenly shone out from the loftiest of the windows of the Villa Carnot which looked seaward. It seemed as if a lamp had been placed in the window, and—what was more singular still—in a few moments a second lamp (or a candle strengthened by a reflector) was placed above the first, the two being in a perpendicular line.

"Looks like a signal," said Geoffrey.

"Doesn't it?"

"What can it mean?"

"It can only mean that the gallant Captain has friends out there, and that he is trying to attract their attention, or to convey some message to them."

"Or they may be sending a boat ashore; and the lamps may be placed there as a guide"

"True. I propose that we stay here and await developments."

They both gazed out to sea; but it was pitch dark, and a driving rain was falling. Even if a ship were there, near

A bright light suddenly shone out.

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enough to be visible by daylight, it was quite impossible to see it. They could only wait.

"You have not forgotten the date, I suppose?" said Geoffrey in a low voice to his friend.

"The date?"

"Yes This is the ninth. To-morrow is the Tenth of June!"

"Ah!"

Nothing stirred within the Villa Carnot. There was no sound but the soft crashing of the waves on the pebbly beach; nothing visible but the lamp-signal close by.

"I can't stand this," cried Geoffrey, after they had waited patiently for, perhaps, a quarter of an hour. "Let us get a little nearer to the house, and find out, if we can, what the Captain is about."

As they were in the act of doing so, the house door opened, and a figure appeared, clad in an ulster that reached down to the heels. It was Captain Byngham.

The two friends stood still. They were in the thick belt of darkness that lay beyond the illuminated streak. He could not see them, but he remained perfectly visible to them as he stood at the open door of the house gazing seaward. He passed slowly down the garden-path, his hands deep in the pockets of his ulster, and the collar turned up to his ears, for it was still raining, then down the beach to the water's edge. He stood there for a while without moving, and then slowly retraced his steps.

"Let me alone; I must speak to him," said Geoffrey in a whisper to his friend. He had gone up close to the garden gate, so that he would be right in Captain Byngham's path as he returned to the house. Linton, knowing that his friend's impulsive disposition sometimes led him to act imprudently, had put his hand on Geoffrey's arm to pull him back into the shadow, but Geoffrey shook off his grasp.

"I mean to be at the bottom of this!" he said between his teeth.

Byngham paid no attention to the tall man that stood beside the gate—took him, probably, for some tourist who had lost his way.

"Captain Byngham!"

The Captain gave a start of fear rather than surprise. His face, which Linton saw clearly in the light from the open door and the lamps in the window above, was as white as marble.

"I—I thought you were dead!" he stammered out at last. "You were said to have been killed among the Welsh mountains. How did you come here? Won't you—er—that is, I suppose you are staying at the hotel?"

"I am staying here for the present. And you?"

"Oh, I only came down from Paris yesterday. Staying with some friends here. I fancy I shall be gone in a day or two."

"That is not true. You came here a fortnight ago, under the instructions of those murderous Hindoos. And to-night, the eve of the Tenth of June, I find you displaying a signal in your window. What is the meaning of those lamps?"

The Captain had started violently when Geoffrey uttered the word "Hindoos;" but he recovered himself in a second.

"I ask you—what is the meaning of these lamps?" repeated Geoffrey, without raising his voice a semi-tone. "Are they meant for a signal? If so, to whom?"

"Confound you! Mind your own business!"

"It *is* my business; and I mean to mind it. Are you expecting any visitors to-night? I saw you go down to the beach."

"Curse you, you sneaking cur! Do you imagine I shall tell you one iota about my affairs? Get away, and leave me alone, or it will be the worse for you."

"That is precisely what I shall not do. I shall not leave your side this night till I know the reason of your presence in this out-of-the-way French town, and the reason of your making those signals in your window to-night. I give you warning that I shall watch for you outside your door, and follow you wherever you go this night."

Captain Byngham had never been accustomed to restrain his temper, and he had a very strong sense of his own dignity. More even than the threatened frustration of the scheme he had on hand, he resented the indignity with which he was menaced.

Without a word, without so much as a gesture of warning, he lifted his fist, drew it back, and struck Geoffrey full upon the temple. The blow was swift and sudden as a lightning flash. Geoffrey fell, and lay as motionless as if he had been struck by a thunderbolt.

But when Linton seized the Captain by the collar, crying out: "You cowardly rascal, to take a man unawares like that!" the noise and trampling of the struggle soon roused him. He sat up, then sprang to his feet, and seized one of the Captain's arms, while Linton clung fast to the other.

"Let me go, you ruffians!" shouted the Captain, struggling violently in their grasp. "I will give information to the police, and get you three months' hard labour for this night's work."

"I fancy you have more to fear from an appeal to the law than we have," said Geoffrey significantly. "What shall we do with him?" he added to Linton.

The question was not an easy one to answer; but plainly it was imperative that Byngham should be prevented from warning the people whom he was evidently expecting. Something, Geoffrey thought, might be learned from them, if they could be met and questioned before Byngham could exchange a syllable with them.

"Let us shut him up in his own cellar," said Linton at last.

"The very thing!" cried Geoffrey; and they proceeded to carry their prisoner up to the house. He offered a stout resistance, and (forgetting that he was in a foreign country) shouted "Police!" at the top of his voice. But no answer came. No one was likely to be abroad on that solitary shore on a dark, wet night. Captain Byngham was carried into his own house; and there his captors proceeded to tie his wrists and ankles with their pocket-handkerchiefs, pending a more secure set of fastenings.

As it turned out, the house had no cellar; so Geoffrey and Linton placed their captive in a chair in his sitting-room, and bound him to it with some trunk-straps, which they found upstairs.

The Captain struggled violently, but when he found that his efforts were useless, he remained perfectly still. All the time he did not utter one word.

"Now listen to me," said Geoffrey. "It is necessary that we should see the persons you are expecting to come ashore and question them. You must not interfere in any way. If you give me your word of honour not to call out to them—not to cry out at all till we come to release you—I will not gag you. I should be sorry to do that."

Here Linton touched Geoffrey, as much as to say that he did not approve of his running this risk. But Geoffrey paid no heed to him.

"What do you say?" he continued. "Will you give me your parole to keep quiet?"

"Yes."

"That will do. We will not keep you in this uncomfortable state longer than we can help. Come, Linton!"

They left him there, and went down to the beach, leaving the signal lamps burning.

(To be continued.)

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A HAIRBREADTH ESCAPE

In 1870, a month or two before the outbreak of the Franco-German war, one of the most promising cadets, or, as they are commonly styled "pupils," of the military college of St. Cyr was Gaston de Langeais. He was the last representative of an ancient family in Brittany, whose traditional obstinacy and impatience of control he had inherited to an extent which rendered him more popular with his comrades than with the presiding authorities.

Gifted by nature with an abundance of luxuriantly curling hair, of which he was inordinately vain, the prescribed necessity of having it cropped short was a perpetual grievance to him; and he looked anxiously forward to his second year at St. Cyr, and to his emancipation from the too close scrutiny to which he had hitherto been periodically subjected.

"In two months," he said exultingly to one of his intimates, "my time here will be up, and once named 'officer' I shall be free as air, and no longer ashamed to show myself to my cousin Louise. For you see," he added, lifting his cap, and displaying a thick growth of short curls carefully flattened down, "I still have some hair left."

Castles in the air, however, are apt to collapse; and Gaston's visionary projects were, to say the least, premature.

A few mornings later at the hour of parade, the corps of youngsters were unexpectedly summoned to undergo the inspection of the infantry lieutenant, Bouchard, a lynx-eyed martinet, by no means favourably disposed towards pupils destined for cavalry regiments, whom he contemptuously designated as "coxcombs."

De Langeais, as the recognised leader of the band, was particularly obnoxious to him; and his keen eye twinkled maliciously as he stopped short before the young man and examined him curiously.

"Take off your cap," he said.

Gaston obeyed with an inward shiver of apprehension.

"I thought as much," growled the lieutenant. "If that superfluous hair has not disappeared by this time to-morrow you will pass the next four days in the 'salle de police.'"

"You are in for it now," whispered his sympathising comrade when the terrible Bouchard had passed on.

"Not a bit of it," replied De Langeais, shrugging his shoulders unconcernedly.

"Why, what on earth can you do?"

"I don't exactly know; but I intend to put off the evil day as long as I possibly can."

Next morning, with the aid of a couple of brushes, well soaked in water, he succeeded in levelling the rebellious locks so as to deceive even a practised eye, and appeared on parade with his wonted jaunty air, although not a little nervous as to the result of the coming ordeal. Presently the lieutenant with an ominously slow step, and pausing, as before, exactly in front of Gaston, repeated the order of the previous day:

"Take off your cap."

For a moment Bouchard appeared puzzled by the apparently smooth surface of the "pupil's" head, but bent on ascertaining the real state of the case, he unceremoniously lifted a portion of the flattened hair with his forefinger, thereby disclosing a substratum of tiny curls. Then, turning to the adjutant who accompanied him, he briefly consigned the offender for four days to the "salle de police," and continued his round of inspection with a self-satisfied grin.

During the last day of his seclusion Gaston practically employed his leisure in decorating his knee, by a judicious mixture of blue and green paint, with a tolerably exact imitation of a bruise, which he showed to the regimental doctor, pretending that the contusion had been caused by his coming in contact with a post in the riding-school.

Whether he implicitly believed the statement or not, the good-natured medico put him on the sick list, and thus twenty-four hours were gained. His reappearance on parade, however, became at length a matter of necessity, and this time his continued disobedience entailed on him a week's further confinement, at the expiration of which he was again consigned to durance vile for an entire fortnight.

"This will never do," thought De Langeais. "The earthenware pot must in the long run be smashed by the iron one, and I shall have to give in at last. I had better try old Grison once more."

Whereupon, having previously by way of precaution added a few touches to the pictorial embellishment of his knee, he limped into the consulting room of Dr. Grison, who was fortunately too much engaged with other patients to bestow more than a very cursory glance at the bruise, and not knowing what to make of the case, gave the newcomer an order of admission to the infirmary, then under the charge of half a dozen Sisters of Charity, presided over by a lady superior.

Gaston had hardly changed his ordinary attire for the regulation loose grey coat and cotton night-cap, when Pitrot, the tonsor of the establishment, was announced, bearing an enormous pair of scissors and a laconic note which ran as follows:—

"The pupil De Langeais' hair to be cut off immediately.

"BOUCHARD."

The poor coiffeur, unwilling to lose so excellent a customer for pomade and other capillary unguents, and yet compelled to obey the imperative mandate, was in despair.

"Would it not be possible, monsieur," he suggested, "to obtain from the lady superior a certificate that the effect of the operation might be injurious to an invalid?"

Gaston could not help smiling at the idea. "I don't quite see," he said, "what a cropped head has to do with a bruise on the knee, but there can be no harm in trying."

As good luck would have it, Sister Angelique, in whose memory, perhaps, still lingered the fondly cherished recollection of some romantic episode of her youthful days, listened with interest to the handsome Breton, while he related to her his hopes and fears, and his attachment to his cousin Louise. Being naturally kind-hearted and sympathetic, she agreed without much persuasion to his rather incongruous request, so that Pere Pitrot, relieved from his disagreeable responsibility, went on his way rejoicing.

A quarter of an hour later the lieutenant burst into the infirmary in a paroxysm of fury.

"So, youngster!" he cried, "it seems you are bent on braving me! Well, we shall see. You cannot stay shamming here for ever; and, mark my words . . . when you do come out, I'll have that head of yours as smooth as a billiard ball!"

With this parting threat he bounced out of the room, and next day every one of the future cavalry officers—the prisoner alone excepted—underwent the summary operation of "cropping" at the hands of the tonsor, Pitrot.

Meanwhile, Gaston's position was by no means an enviable one. Through the grated windows of the infirmary he could see his comrades mounting their horses in the courtyard, and caracoling gaily as they passed, and on Sundays—most painful trial of all—could hear with a pang of envy the joyous shouts of his more fortunate colleagues, emancipated for a few hours from duty, and on their way to catch the first train to Paris.

The day of deliverance, however, was at hand. Early on the 14th of July—a date never to be forgotten by De Langeais—the occupants of the infirmary were suddenly startled by a tremendous uproar immediately under their windows, and, on looking out, imagined for a moment that pandemonium had broken loose.

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Such a spectacle had assuredly never been witnessed at St. Cyr. The entire quadrangle was thronged by an excited multitude, rushing to and fro in tumultuous disorder, flinging their caps high in the air, and bursting every now and then into a loud and prolonged hurrah! Was it a revolt, marvelled the sisters and their patients; or what could it possibly mean?

A few minutes sufficed to explain the mystery. A hasty step was heard outside the door, immediately followed by the entrance into the sick room of an adjutant, bearing in his hand an official document, the contents of which, recited by him in a sonorous voice, were greeted with an enthusiasm bordering on frenzy.

"War is declared with Prussia. By Imperial decree, the seniors are henceforth sub-lieutenants."

Before the sisters, deafened by the clamour, had recovered from their stupefaction, they found themselves alone in the infirmary, the invalids, one and all, having mustered strength enough to throw aside their wraps and make the best of their way downstairs.

Each of the seniors entitled to promotion having notified to the adjutant on duty the regiment to which he was desirous of being attached, the preparations for departure were speedily completed. At an early hour in the afternoon the band of exulting youngsters started for Paris, intent on making the most of the three days allowed them before joining their respective corps.

Gaston's regiment being stationed at Lilie, he had ample leisure, after partaking of a farewell repast at Brebant's with his old companions, to carry into execution his long-cherished project of paying a flying visit to his cousin Louise at Trouville; and, repairing on the third day to headquarters, reported himself to the colonel of the Forty-second Dragoons, who received him most cordially.

"You are dispensed from duty," said his chief, "until you have got your kit in order. *Ma foi*, young man, you have arrived in the very nick of time, for before the week is out we shall be on our way to the front."

On his first appearance at mess, De Langeais discovered to his astonishment that every one of his new companions, without exception, was closely cropped. "A very necessary precaution," said the president, "in war time; the less encumbrance we carry about us the better. A long beard and as little hair as possible; no comb or razor wanted, nothing but a simple 'brush up.'"

"Not to mention," chimed in an old campaigner of proverbial baldness, "that a heavy helmet plays the very deuce with one's hair."

Gaston listened with due respect to these well-meant exhortations, but without the slightest intention of being influenced by them; and, on the arrival of his division at Metz some days later, had already, more than once, declined to avail himself of the services of the regimental barber.

Nevertheless, he instinctively felt that a continued refusal to conform to the general custom must inevitably endanger his popularity, and that the only way to atone for this obnoxious singularity was to distinguish himself by some exploit which might obtain for him an honourable mention in the order of the day.

An opportunity soon came. On the 18th of August his regiment, posted near St. Privat, behind an avenue of poplars bordering the road to Saarbruck, had been exposed for several hours to a galling fire of the German artillery, and had suffered severely from an incessant storm of shells, which were beginning to set the trees on fire.

The position of the French corps became untenable, and the colonel, deciding that the enemy's guns must at any cost be silenced, ordered a small detachment of dragoons commanded by De Langeais to charge, and cut them off from the main body.

The Germans, taken by surprise and imagining they were about to be attacked by the entire regiment, ceased firing and hastily retreated, leaving one of their guns on the field, which Gaston, at the head of fifteen men, bore down upon, and, sabring the gunners, carried it triumphantly into the French lines.

"Bravo!" cried the colonel, warmly grasping the young sub-lieutenant's hand; "you have deserved the cross for this, and I will take care that you get it."

Stimulated by this first success, and eager to justify by some further act of daring the good opinion of his chief, De Langeais, neglected no opportunity of proving himself worthy of it. Dispatched on a foraging expedition and attacked by an outpost of infantry, he completely routed them and brought ten prisoners into the camp, and a few days later held his ground for half an hour, unsupported save by his own men, against an entire corps of the enemy.

His gallantry did not pass unrewarded. Not only was the Cross of the Legion of Honour conferred on him, but his name was three times mentioned for exceptional bravery in the order of the day, and his speedy promotion to the rank of lieutenant was generally regarded as a certainty.

At this juncture the unexpected capitulation of Metz was a severe blow to him, and, unwilling to accept comparative liberty on parole, he conceived a project which, although extremely hazardous, might enable him to join the Army of the Loire. His design being approved by the general commanding under Bazaine, who intrusted him with a letter to his colleague, Aurelle de Paladines, informing him that the army of Prince Frederick Charles would shortly march towards the Loire. Gaston exchanged his uniform for a blouse and a peasant's straw hat, and, carrying a basket of eggs, pursued his way in the direction of the enemy's lines.

"It is a terrible task," he thought, "but better be shot at once than rot in a German prison."

Challenged by the first man he met, and arrested on suspicion, he was taken before the colonel of the regiment, who, surrounded by his officers in council, scrutinised the prisoner attentively.

"Where do you come from?" he inquired in tolerable French.

"From Ladonchamps, on my way with these eggs to Grige," was the young man's reply.

"Are you aware that you run the risk of being treated as a spy?" pursued his interrogator.

"Necessity has no choice," retorted De Langeais, with a perfectly indifferent air.

During this brief colloquy the officers glanced curiously at the stalwart individual before them, and were almost unanimously of the colonel's openly expressed opinion that he was no peasant, but an officer in disguise, and consequently a spy. A pause boding no good to the accused ensued, and in another moment his fate would have been sealed, when a grey-haired major who had been intently gazing at De Langeais suddenly rose from his seat.

"Stay," he exclaimed, "with all submission, I think you are mistaken. This man, whoever he may be, is no officer. All those we have taken prisoners have been close cropped, and no one ever heard of a French soldier on active service with such a head of hair as that."

"True, the major is right," assented several of those present.

"It may be so," said the colonel, only half convinced, "and in that case he is entitled to the benefit of the doubt. Give him a pass and let him go and be hanged somewhere else."

"A narrow escape," muttered Gaston to himself as he left the camp. "I wonder what Bouchard would say if he knew it."

A week later our hero reached his destination, and delivered his credentials to the general in command, by whom the grade of lieutenant was immediately conferred on him. At the conclusion of the campaign he was promoted to a captaincy, and in 1871, after the final rout of the Commune, married his cousin Louise. In the following year, while on leave in Paris, he came across his old enemy, Bouchard, on the Boulevard des Italiens.

"How goes it with you?" asked the latter, as they were sipping their absinthe together.

"Admirably," replied Gaston. "Here am I, a captain at twenty-two, Chevalier of the Legion of Honour, and the husband of a charming wife; and all this—no thanks to you, by the way, Bouchard—because I saved my hair."

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MRS. WOODCOTE'S COUP.

A TELEGRAPHIC TALE.

"REALLY, Evelyn, it is too bad of Mrs. Goodfellow not being here after her promise," said Mrs. Hauton to her daughter, as they stood on the platform of the station at Victoria.

"Never mind, mamma," replied Miss Hauton, "it is but a couple of hours to Brighton, and I can take good care of myself until then."

"Well, dear, your travelling alone is contrary, I am sure, to all etiquette——"

This remark of Mrs. Hauton's was destined not to be finished. The foregoing conversation was heard with interest by a young woman of some thirty-five years, whose most noticeable feature was an alert pair of light grey eyes. With a frank smile the unknown approached the Hautons, and, speaking in well-bred, apologetic tones, said:

"Pray pardon this intrusion, but inadvertently I have overheard your conversation. If this young lady is nervous about travelling alone, it would give me great pleasure to look after her to Brighton, where I also am going."

This extraordinary offer, which would have been curtly, or at any rate, promptly declined by a woman of the world, did not strike Mrs. Hauton as being strange—on the contrary, she accepted it with alacrity and profuse thanks, and ended by introducing herself and daughter to the unknown, who in turn stated that she was a widow, Mrs. Woodcote.

Mrs. and Miss Hauton were simple, and, I fear we must acknowledge, somewhat vulgar people. They were not versed in the ways of polite society, and did not know much of the world. They had not always answered to their present high-sounding surname, being the earthly remainder of John Houghton, a big contractor of Manchester.

The late John Houghton was in many ways eccentric. He had started in life without anything but a clear head and indomitable pluck. In the early part of his career he formulated a theory on which he acted until his death. His theory was that there are but two forms of property that are imperceptibly changed by market changes and fluctuations—*gold* and *diamonds*.

The latter being less bulky, it had been his yearly custom to invest a part of his savings in the glittering gems, and on his death his wife and daughter found themselves in the possession of jewels worth somewhere near £50,000, and land and cash to the amount of about £100,000.

This was a great surprise, and almost turned the heads of the two women, who had hitherto lived an extremely comfortable, but somewhat plain life, having no idea of the amount of Mr. Houghton's possessions.

They remained in Manchester for a decent period of mourning, but, sad to relate, the poignancy of grief was forgotten in the luxury of expectation.

Many were the castles in the air they built, and the plans formulated. The first one to be carried out was a change of name, so that it was *Mrs. and Miss Hauton* that first moved to London and then went for a long trip on the Continent, accompanied by two maids and a man servant.

We shall not follow them about Europe, as their sojourn there was unsatisfactory. They made the acquaintance of lots of men, but these latter, when of the right sort, were somewhat diffident about introducing them to their women folk.

After awhile they tired of the joys of the Continent, and determined to spend a short time in London.

Returning to the station at Victoria, we find Mrs. Woodcote and Miss Hauton just stepping into the train. The guard whistles, and the train glides out of the station.

On the journey they become somewhat confidential. With a mournful air and a far-away look in her grey eyes, Mrs. Woodcote states that she is alone in the world except for one old uncle, and that she is travelling to kill time, and if possible soften her grief at the loss of her husband.

Miss Hauton was either touched by these sad confidences, or had a preference for cheery conversational topics; anyhow, she started off at a brisk rate into a cheery disquisition on the season in London, telling of her conquests, and stating that she was now paying a flying visit to Brighton for her health.

Becoming more confidential, Miss Hauton told her new acquaintance about her father's money and his strange proclivity for diamonds; she also described some of the principal articles of value, and regretted that the setting was rather old-fashioned and out of date.

Mrs. Woodcote agreed that this was a pity, and having heard that this fortune in gems was at all times left in the sole charge of a French maid named Antoinette, and an old butler named Johnson, she made a practical suggestion.

"Surely, Miss Hauton," she said, "it would be wiser to have these jewels sent to a first-class jeweller, and thus remove so great temptation from two servants. You could do so without hurting their feelings by having them reset, and at the same time having French paste duplicates made, keeping the genuine stones in some safe deposit vault, and retaining the imitations in your house for ordinary use."

Miss Hauton laughed at the idea of losing her jewellery, but Mrs. Woodcote's interest in her affairs appeared to be very kind and considerate. Thinking of the widow's lonely life, a good-natured thought came into Miss Hauton's giddy little head, the result of which was, that shortly before the train was due at Brighton she turned to Mrs. Woodcote and said: "I have not yet telegraphed to any friends to meet me at the station, as I told mamma I should. Suppose you and I go to a hotel together? You shall chaperone me and be my guest. We can share a suite of rooms and have delightful talks. Do you agree?"

A strange glitter seemed to scintillate from Mrs. Woodcote's eyes as she replied: "Your suggestion and invitation are far too kind and thoughtful for a lonely woman to lightly reject. Thank you very much. I accept with great pleasure."

Arrived in Brighton the two ladies and their luggage were speedily conveyed to the Hôtel Métropole.

Having engaged a suite of rooms, they went upstairs and had their luggage unpacked. By the time they had their belongings disposed of to their joint satisfaction, the hour was late, and they agreed that it was bedtime, so they started to make their toilets for the night.

When Miss Hauton awoke in the morning she found that it was nine o'clock and that Mrs. Woodcote was already dressed. The latter laughed off Evelyn's apologies for her slothfulness, saying that she was always a very early riser, and made it an invariable rule to be out of doors by 7.30 a.m., however late she retired.

The acquaintance thus peculiarly formed ripened rapidly and progressed by leaps and bounds to friendship, resulting, after two or three days, in all sorts of plans that had the common basis of going somewhere or doing something together. Having dispatched to Mrs. Hauton a letter full of enthusiastic praises of her new friend, Evelyn followed it up by announcing that she had invited Mrs Woodcote to come back to London and stay with her for the remainder of the season.

Mrs. Woodcote in London was not by any means a rival of Evelyn's; on the contrary, she appeared rather averse to man's society; and now, to Mrs. Hauton's surprise, Evelyn began to show a distaste for masculine society, too, and an absentmindedness that was quite new.

The middle of September came and the season waned.

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Visitors spread their wings for flight, and with them the Hautons, who went to their house in Brighton, a recent purchase that they had not yet occupied.

Mrs. Hauton was not destined to remain there long, as a telegram came from Manchester, which required her immediate presence in the North on business matters. Mrs. Woodcote could chaperone Evelyn, so, having no anxiety on that score, Mrs. Hauton took time by the forelock, and with but little luggage made an immediate start for Manchester, having her maid Antoinette to accompany her.

Mrs. Woodcote and Evelyn had plenty to occupy them whilst settling down in the new house, as all the servants, with the exception of Johnson, the butler, and Evelyn's own maid, were new and needed instructions. Mrs. Woodcote used frequently to talk of the magnificent Hauton diamonds, and finally succeeded in making Evelyn nervous about them, so that she now kept them in her bed-room. Still acting on Mrs. Woodcote's advice, Evelyn kept them all in a large dressing-bag with a strong lock, so that none of the new servants might suspect the treasure that was stored in the house.

Of course, the Hautons often found it necessary to pay short visits to London, and so it was that one day early in October Evelyn and Mrs Woodcote started off for the Metropolis. Just before they left Johnson had asked for leave of absence as his mother was dangerously ill, and had gone to Bristol, whence at the end of four days he sent a respectful notice of the death of his parent, saying that he would return about three days after the funeral. The house had been left in charge of the footman, James, a nephew of Johnson's, for whom the latter was ready to vouch in every respect.

James felt proud of his responsibility, and when a telegram came to him he opened it in the servants' hall with much pomposity, and read aloud as follows:

"A gentleman—Mr. Arthur Sartoris—will call for my dressing-bag. Give it to him, and re-direct all letters to Hotel Victoria, London, for three days.—EVELYN HAUTON."

About two hours after the arrival of the telegram, a highly respectable valet presented a card inscribed "Mr. Arthur Sartoris, Bachelors' Club," and asked for the dressing-bag, which was handed to him without demur.

Having in the meantime finished their shopping and other duties in London, Evelyn and her companion made up their minds to once more turn their faces towards Brighton, and agreed on an afternoon train of Thursday.

The journey was destined to be made alone by Miss Hauton, for Mrs. Woodcote was summoned by telegraph to Liverpool, owing to the serious illness of the only near relation she possessed.

"I *must* go, dear Evy," she said, "but you may rely on my being with you by Saturday evening at the very latest. Take care of yourself, and be a good little girl."

Miss Hauton went direct to Brighton, and chafed a good deal at her lonely condition. Saturday came, and with it the pleasurable anticipation of a speedy reunion with Mrs. Woodcote, whose absence she had objected too very much.

Four o'clock in the afternoon found Evelyn looking at the clock, and I am in a position to state that she was just then saying to herself, "Only one more hour to wait, and then——"

"A telegram for you, miss," said the obsequious James, handing the yellow-covered missive to her on a silver salver—

"Uncle Henry very ill; with you Tuesday; cheer up. Always your "WOODCOTE."

I will not again assume the privilege of my position to tell you what the gentle Evelyn said on receiving this disappointment.

Sunday was a dull day, and on Monday she welcomed the return even of the staid old Johnson. Calling him to her, she said:

"Johnson, get out my dressing bag, please. I think I shall have some of my diamonds reset, and get you to clean the others."

"Very well, miss," replied Johnson, going to Evelyn's room for the bag.

In a few minutes he returned with his face as pale as death, and said the bag was not there! James was called, and questioned.

It would take an able pen to describe the utter astonishment expressed in Evelyn's face when James produced the telegram received by him, and sent off from London with her name appended to it.

Johnson was a man of acts, not words, and he immediately dispatched a messenger to police headquarters, requesting that two or three detectives be sent up on a very important matter without delay.

As soon as possible an inspector arrived, and listened attentively to the whole narrative, as told by Miss Hauton, Johnson, and James. Being told that the jewels were worth some £50,000 his attention became even more engrossed and fixed.

When they had finished, Mr. Morris, the detective, said:

"Were you alone in London, Miss Hauton?"

"No. I went with my friend, Mrs. Woodcote, whom I expect here to-morrow. We stayed at the Victoria."

"Did Mrs. Woodcote return to Brighton with you?"

"No. She was summoned to a sick relative in Liverpool."

"What relation is Mrs. Woodcote to you?"

"None. She is a friend—the most intimate one I have."

"Is she an old friend?"

"No. I made her acquaintance only this summer. But what do you mean by these extraordinary questions about Mrs. Woodcote? I simply wish you to find my jewellery. I did not send for you to discuss my personal friends with you," rejoined Miss Hauton in a somewhat angry tone, with a flush of annoyance on her face.

"No need to be offended, miss," replied Mr. Norris. "Simply professional custom. We always like to make ourselves familiar with all the surroundings of a case before going to work. What is Mrs. Woodcote's address in Liverpool?"

Having obtained Mrs. Woodcote's address, the first move of the astute Mr. Morris was to telegraph to a brother detective at Liverpool and get him to pay the widow a call. He then called at the Bachelors' Club, where Mr. Sartoris was unknown.

It was not long before he received a cipher reply from Liverpool, which on interpretation was to the effect that the house in question was unoccupied, and that the postman had instructions to keep all letters addressed there at the post-office to be called for.

Mr. Morris addressed a dummy letter to Mrs. Woodcote, and ordered an incessant watch to be maintained at the post-office. In his own mind he had no doubt as to who the guilty party was, and had every intention of making the important capture.

The greatest drawback he had to contend with was not being able to obtain a photograph of Mrs. Woodcote, as this lady, with commendable modesty, refused to have her speaking features reproduced by the photographer's art.

Miss Hauton speedily became reduced to a state of total collapse, attendant on the worry and the notoriety the robbery brought upon her.

The climax came unexpectedly.

One morning Mr. Morris dashed up to the hotel in a hansom. Pulling Johnson in after him they disappeared as fast as the horse could gallop.

Arrived at their destination, which was a police station, they went to an inner room. Here were several high officials of the police department.

Mr. Morris said: "Mr. Johnson, several prisoners are to be paraded here, and we want you to see if you know any of the faces."

The march past commenced, and Johnson scanned each man narrowly. One erect, well-dressed young fellow resolutely turned his face to the wall. He was halted.

Directly Johnson caught sight of his face he jumped about a foot from his chair, and shouted out: "Mrs. Woodcote, by George!"

"Better known as William Howard, the smartest criminal in the kingdom," added the imperturbable Mr. Morris.

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TWO LITTLE SLIPPERS

I WAS travelling in Ireland with some friends. We were in the south-eastern part of the island and were traversing Connemara, the poorest part of that poor country. If anything can give a horrible impression of misery, it certainly is Connemara.

A profound melancholy seems to rest upon that corner of the earth. Low plains destitute of verdure extend at the right to a chain of mountains, which are bare, as though they had been ravaged by fire. These immense spaces are without a village, often without even a single dwelling.

The few which we pass at long intervals consist only of four stone walls, piled up without cement, and with a black roof. From the back of these dreary cabins issues a thin thread of blue smoke.

In front of them one sees children, from five to twelve years old, with naked feet, sun-scorched skins, and ragged clothing, They utter uncouth sounds in a language which is partly Irish partly English. They usually run after the carriage for several miles. With a supplicating hand, they extend to you some sort of rude merchandise—it may be roughly hewn shoes, it may be woollen stockings, it may be a little bunch of flowers, plucked from the mountain side. They run, shouting, hurrying, hustling each other.

"Penny, please! Penny, please!" they repeat over and over. A penny is finally cast to them.

Immediately there is a brawling, struggling, and fist-pounding. The conqueror deserts the ranks of our followers, but the others still pursue the carriage. One by one the small flock drop away. First the youngest become exhausted and stop. At last there are only three—then two—then only one, who, in his turn, rolls in the dust raised by the wheels, uttering a last "Penny, please!" with laboured and panting breath.

About eleven o'clock we arrived at Ougtherard, near Lake Correb. This lake is said to contain as many islands and also as many inhabitants as there are days in the year. Here we should breakfast.

For a long time a little girl of about twelve followed our carriage. She alone had persisted of five or six children, the rest of whom had dropped away as we passed along. Tall and slender for her age, she had a charming face of the true Irish type of beauty.

Her complexion was darkly browned, and she had large blue eyes. Her long run had put roses into her cheeks; her parted lips showed her brilliant teeth. A ragged brown linen bodice and skirt composed her costume. Her naked feet, which were remarkably small and pretty, seemed to fly through the dust. Poor little one! Our hearts ached to look at her.

Suddenly she uttered a cry, extended her arms, and fell forward. We stopped the carriage, but fortunately nothing serious had befallen her. A projecting stone had slightly cut her foot, which bled a little. We asked her who she was and from whence she came. She called herself "Betsy" and said that she lived at Ougtherard.

We told her to climb into the carriage and we would carry her to her home. She looked at us in bewilderment, as though she could not understand what we were saying. We repeated our offer. She blushed with pleasure, and gave us a look, which, although full of inquiry and wonder, was yet most grateful. She seemed to be overjoyed at riding in a carriage. It was her first experience of that kind.

Ten minutes later we were in Ougtherard, a poor village of forty houses. We gave two shillings to the child as a parting present. She looked at it as though she could not believe her eyes. It occurred to me that the wound in her foot might be inflamed by a walk in the dust. I therefore entered a shoemaker's shop, the only one the place afforded, and bought a pair of slippers for the poor child.

Betsy watched the operation in profound perplexity. When I extended the slippers towards her, saying they were for her, she was dumfounded. She dared not take them.

Finally, as I firmly insisted that the slippers were for her, and only her, she seized them and fled with a bound of joy, and without even saying "Thank you."

"Little savage!" thought I, "she does not even know how to thank anybody."

I rejoined my companions, who were already seated round the hotel dining-table, and we had soon finished our breakfast, and were about to climb into our carriage, when I felt a little hand within mine which sought to detain me.

"Come, sir," she said, "come."

"And where do you wish to lead me?"

"To our house. It is very near."

I followed her. My companions were not a little puzzled. She led me to the bottom of a narrow street. There we paused before a humble cottage. She pushed the door open and we entered. The interior consisted of a single room. It was without a floor and contained scarcely any furniture. It was dimly lighted by the feeble rays which entered through a paper-covered window, near which sat an old woman spinning. She was Betsy's grandmother.

At our entrance three little black pigs scampered under her bench grunting. In the corner stood the lowly bed of the grandmother; at its side the little cot of the child. Just above her pillow Betsy showed me a kind of rough staging leaning against the wall. Upon the middle board, covered with a very white linen cloth, beneath an image of St. Patrick, and between two bunches of white flowers, I perceived—the little slippers!

The poor child looked at her shrine of beauty with admiration, and even with religious awe, as upon a precious relic.

"But you should put the slippers on your feet, they are for you to wear," said I. I could not help laughing to see them set up as sacred objects of devotion.

She appeared astonished, almost angry. "Oh, never," she said earnestly: "they are too beautiful."

We slipped some money into the pocket of the old grandmother, and bade adieu to Betsy.

A month later we passed through the same place, on our return trip, and made a halt there as before. We did not see Betsy. I wished to see her again, if only for a minute.

I sought out and knocked at the door of the poor little cabin. No one opened it.

I lifted the rude latch and entered.

A sad spectacle presented itself to my eyes. Around the little bed of Betsy, lighted by three smoking candles, some old women were kneeling and reciting prayers in a monotonous voice. Upon my entrance the chant stopped, and one of the old women rose and came to me. It was the grandmother.

"Betsy?" murmured I. "Where is Betsy?"

In a few broken words, she explained to me that Betsy had taken a fever and had just died.

I approached the cot. The pale face of the child wore a peaceful expression. Her long black hair lay over her shoulders in heavy curls, but her beautiful bright eyes were shut. Clasped in her thin, blue-veined hands, and pressed closely to her heart, were the image of St. Patrick and the two little slippers. During all the time she had been ill, the old dame told me, she had held them in her hands. I begged the old woman to bury them with her.

A tear came to my eyes. I leant over the poor Irish child and imprinted a kiss upon her forehead.

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SUMMER HEAT AND OBESITY.

Summer with its sultry heat, is not a source of unmixed pleasure to those who suffer from excessive corpulence. Health cannot be maintained under conditions of great obesity. In general the mental energy of the highly corpulent becomes impaired, and their capacity for the conduct of business is consequently much diminished. Our readers will therefore be interested to know it is an indisputable fact that excessive corpulency can, in all cases, be cured by the system which has now for many years been successfully practised by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. Mr. Russell possesses hundreds of testimonials from persons in all classes of society, many of them holding distinguished positions in the learned professions and in Her Majesty's services, which, taken collectively, prove to a demonstration that anyone suffering from obesity who systematically applies his remedy for a few weeks consecutively can be cured. The patients under his treatment are not asked to be "fasting men"; and it is remarkable that in the case of many of Mr. Russell's subjects their appetite increases as their weight diminishes. A book (256 pages) entitled, "Corpulency and the Cure," containing most interesting and trustworthy information, *together with the recipe*, may be had by writing to Mr. Russell, enclosing 4d. stamps for postage. With such a remedial agent at their command as Mr. Russell's specific, excessively corpulent persons have only themselves to blame if their unwieldy persons are not speedily reduced to fitting proportions.—*Extract from a Leading Journal.*

TO METAMORPHOSE FAT PERSONS

"We were reading in the *Penny Illustrated Paper* how to reduce obesity, wherein it says in that very excellent publication: 'The corpulent will be glad to learn how to lose two stone in about a month with benefit to health, strength, and muscle, by a comparatively new system. It is a singular fact that the patient, returning quickly to a healthy state with increased activity of brain, digestive, and other organs, naturally requires more food than hitherto; yet, notwithstanding this, he absolutely loses in weight one to two pounds daily, as the weighing machine will prove. The Book, "Corpulency and the Cure" (256 pages), containing the "recipe," can be had gratis from Mr. F. C. Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., by sending cost of postage, fourpence.' He has discovered a simple herbal remedy, most pleasant to the taste, which entirely disposes of the necessity of starving oneself in endeavouring to be rid of all superfluous matter. An interesting point, which goes to prove that the almost magical compound is beyond doubt harmless, is that in prescribing it in a tentative way to lean persons, or rather to those who carry no superfluity of fat beyond that which is required as fuel for Nature's furnace, the medicine is absolutely inoperative, attacking only that unhealthy, disease-creating waste accumulation which is the burden of the fat creature's existence. In many cases where people take decoctions reputed to be new medical discoveries to cure some specific disease, they may recover by the action of the medicine, or Nature may have effected her own cure. In the case of corpulency, if a simple remedy undertakes to reduce a person, say, 7 lb. in a week, all that one has to do is to get weighed, and thus prove it conclusively. So it is with Mr. Russell's compound, but he asks you to prove it in twenty-four hours only."—*Coventry Standard*, January 18, 1895.

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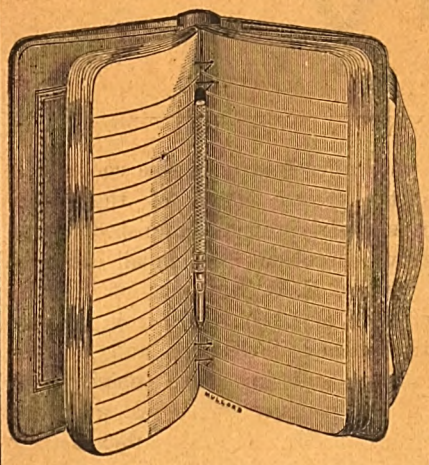

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 337. FOR WEEK ENDING JUNE 15, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

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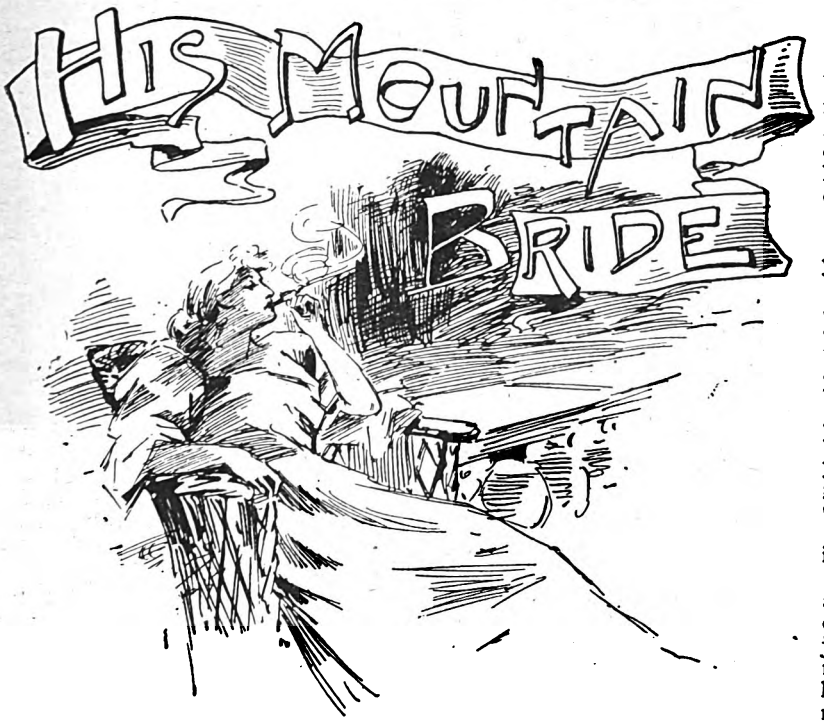
SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 337.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING JUNE 15, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.



THIS is a tale of witchcraft, for all that it took place in this enlightened century.

Herzfeldt, of Trinity, and I were great friends, but I lost sight of him completely after he left Cambridge. A handsome clever Austrian, mad on athletics, and popular in proportion. Three years ago I met him again quite by accident during a long continental ramble I indulged in after being called to the bar.

It was in Vienna. Feeling rather seedy, I had gone to consult a famous doctor, when who should walk into the waiting room after me but Herzfeldt. I never should have recognised him, he was so incredibly changed; thin, worn, feeble—an old man before his time—but he knew me instantly and seemed delighted at the meeting.

He had come into his mother's property somewhere in the Theiss district of Hungary, and he was married: that was the great event, especially as it was comparatively recent. No doubt about its having been a love match. His haggard face flushed like a boy's over it, and it seemed a romantic affair enough from his account—a chance meeting in the Carpathians, while on a sporting expedition, with a child of those wild solitudes; love at first sight—anyhow on his side—a madness of love, which never rested till he had carried her off as his bride. He dwelt a good deal on her extraordinary beauty and attractiveness, but not a word about her family—a silence which I thought ominous in one of his proud race and from which I drew my own conclusions.

"Only the necessity of seeking advice about some strange symptoms, which of late have grown frequent, brings me so far from her to-day," he concluded, smiling; "we are still on our honeymoon, though full three months married."

On my summons to the consulting room, which here interrupted us, I agreed to wait for him till he, too, should be dismissed. This was not, however, until so prolonged a delay that I began to lose patience; but the look on his face as he emerged at length froze remonstrance and even inquiry on my lips. He took my arm mechanically, and walked out of the house like a man in a dream. After we had paced half the length of the street he suddenly halted and looked at me.

"He gives me a year," he said quietly.

I stared at him. "Good gracious! what do you mean?"

"It is the heart, of course," he pursued after a while in a more natural tone. "Let us go down this way; I am bound for the chemist's, for the making up of a certain recipe which the doctor says may save my life—for the moment, be it understood—when the symptoms reappear, and which, in consequence, he says, I am never to be without. I am sorry to have victimised you with this business, Fraser, yet I am selfishly glad to think some friendly soul knows my secret. Of course," half to himself, "I cannot tell her."

"Why not," I exclaimed impulsively; "it is surely her right to know her duty——"

"You cannot conceive what nonsense you are talking," he interrupted, with a curious outburst of irritation; "you Englishmen would judge all women by your own wives and mothers——." He checked himself abruptly, as he caught sight of my amazed countenance, bade me a hurried and careless good-bye, and left me.

Wondering, and not a little chafed, I stood and watched him. Half way across the street he paused, hesitated, and finally came back.

"We are at Csendiak, my country place," he said with some constraint; "do you think you could shortly spare a few days to visit a man with one foot in the grave?"

The invitation was not pressing; but I saw in his eyes that he would like me to accept, though there was something in the background which made him doubtful. At once I jumped at the conclusion that he was jealous of his young wife, and I confess I thought it unworthy of him. Yet under the circumstances, I could not refuse, and was glad of it, for his mysterious manner had piqued my curiosity. He wrote all the necessary directions on his card.

"You will come, then," he said; "that is well. Our first visitor." But there was still the doubt and wistfulness on his face. Then we again shook hands and parted.

Well, to cut a long story short, after a week I landed at Szolnok, the station Herzfeldt had indicated, late in the afternoon. There I found a mail-phaeton, two splendid horses, and a villainous-looking Hungarian in picturesque attire, waiting to convey me across the remaining fifteen miles of that unkempt, desolate, yet rich country. The autumnal air was hot and damp, my conductor taciturn; we had gone some two-thirds of the way under these cheerful circumstances, and I had fallen into a somnolent state, when I was suddenly aroused by the sound of what seemed a mad gallop behind us.

We were traversing a wide plain absolutely denuded of habitation, wreathed with rising mists and strangely dreary under the fading sky. There was still a broad belt of orange light in the west, and as I looked back I saw, blackly defined against it, the image of a woman on horseback. She was

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She passed out alone.

urging her steed with weird little cries as of some wild bird; in a flash she was upon us, and in another flash was gone.

As she passed she looked back at me over her shoulder and I caught a glimpse of a perfectly white face, heavy yellow hair and extraordinary luminous eyes. Her look struck me—I can use no other word—like a blow.

My driver gazed after her imperturbably, as if Valkyries on the ramparts were an accustomed sight; but my curious questions he could not, or would not, understand. So with the strange image imprinted in my brain, and passing and repassing before me in the gathering gloom, I was forced to reserve my curiosity for Herzfeldt.

It was quite dark when we reached the house. My host was at the gate awaiting me and his welcome was of the warmest.

"I was grieved not to be able to meet you and drive you back myself," he said, as he brought me to my room; "but I could not risk it." The grey pallor of his face, the marked change for the worse in the whole man, even in the short time since we had met, gave melancholy weight to his words.

"Now, do not trouble to dress," he went on rapidly, with determined cheerfulness; "my wife is already expecting us in the dining-room."

He conducted me through the house—typically Hungarian; sumptuous, vast, comfortless and unhomelike—to the dining room, which was as large as a church; there, standing under the full light of the lamps, I beheld the Valkyrie of the road, and I felt a disagreeable shock at the discovery that she was Herzfeldt's wife. Why, I should have been puzzled to explain.

Herzfeldt addressed her in German, the only language in which we could all three meet.

"Hedwig, this is my old friend. Bid him welcome."

She favoured me with a hard stare and stretched out her hand, with the one word: "Wilkommen."

As we sat down and the meal began, I could not help examining her with a curiosity nearly as open as her own. She was not by any means the extraordinary beauty I had expected, yet hers was a strange personality, and one which I could not meet with indifference, which from the first affected me to the most inexplicable extremes. Strongly built, but perfectly proportioned, a skin of opaque changeless pallor on which the scarlet lips made almost too vivid a spot of colour; light grey-green eyes, which each time gave me a fresh surprise when I fell under their scintillating glance, and coils and coils of dead yellow hair wound round a curiously flattened head.

Perhaps the most striking characteristic was an air of intense but repressed vitality, of being ready to spring, behind movements of languorous softness, that reminded me indifferently or rather collectively of a cat and a snake. She spoke in a low drawl, broken now and then with loud inharmonious resonances.

That night, however, for the most part, she was silent. Herzfeldt, on the contrary talked a great deal with a forced jovialty unlike the real man and in painful contrast with his state. At dessert the conversation turned on riding.

"It is almost our whole life here," said Herzfeldt; "but just now my rheumatism obliges me to abstain or we should have had some lengthy expeditions together." He gave me a sad look of warning as he spoke. "We shall enjoy our gallops together, shall we not, Hedwig? It was horrible to have to let you go alone to-day!"

Her answer was a curious one. She first leant her elbows on the table, and looked at him with a broad, incomprehensible smile: then taking a cake in both hands tore a bit off with her teeth, and flung the remainder to the great slate coloured hound which sat beside her.

Revolted, I glanced at Herzfeldt—the soul of refinement. His eyes were bent on his plate and his face was set as if in some mental or physical struggle. Noisily pushing her chair away, my hostess rose. She looked at me when I opened the door, as if expecting me to accompany her, but Herzfeldt showed no sign of moving, and I took it for granted that we were to adopt the English custom. With an angry movement, she passed out alone, swaying her body from side to side in a way which again made me think of some unknown animal combination.

I am not going to describe my whole stay at Csendiak, but will merely touch on such scenes as form, so to speak, the stages of that episode The next, then, was on the third day of my visit. We were all three on the terrace whiling away a hot hour with pistol-shooting. Herzfeldt's wife, a cigar between her lips, lying back in a wicker chair, her shapely feet in her untanned boots, resting on a high cushion, was basking after the mid-day meal in her cat-like way, and watching us with lazy intentness.

I made a brilliant score—I happen to be rather a good hand at a carton; pistol shooting is a lost art among us, but I have had opportunity to cultivate it in Paris; but Herzfeldt shot wretchedly, and that after long aims. Once or twice he had to lower his hand, which trembled visibly. After a few attempts with a look of discouragement, he gave it up. It was pitiful to see that he felt humiliated before his wife.

"A complete break-up, my boy," he said in English, with a sad smile. On her face there was a light of amusement. Not wishing to prolong the scene, I was replacing the weapons in their box when she got up.

"Once more!" she said. "I like to see you aim so quickly and shoot so straight."

Obediently I lifted my hand and this time carelessly missed.

"All luck, you see," I urged, anxious to cover Herzfeldt's vexation; "won't you let me rest on my laurels? As for Herzfeldt, he is out of condition; when he is himself he can beat me."

But Herzfeldt here interposed, irritably bidding me talk no nonsense, and go on shooting without further mock modesty.

"Yes, one more for me," repeated my hostess musingly; "what shall it be?" Then, with her broad smile, "I know," she said, unfastening the gold brooch at her throat and in her swinging,

Fixed the pin in the bark.

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She had glided from me.

swaggering way stepped up to an old tree and fixed the pin in the bark.

Herzfeldt frowned. "My last present," he muttered. "Never mind, Fraser, bring it down—shiver it!"

I felt her eyes on me as I raised the pistol towards the tiny, glinting spot. To my own astonishment—for I had fired almost unconsciously—the ball grazed the trinket and sent it spinning upward.

Without a word Herzfeldt went to look for it, and laughing, I turned round to his wife, to meet her eyes still fixed upon me with a gaze that suddenly appalled me.

Her scarlet lips, her glass-green glance were full of an odious, satisfied significance which I could not—dared not—put into shape, even in my most secret mind, for the horror of seeming privy to it.

"Thank you," she said to me after a moment; then she took her brooch from her husband's hand and walked away. Half angrily, half sadly, he looked after her, while I in vain endeavoured to shake off the strange unreasoning dread left upon me by the sorcery of her eyes.

I was beginning dimly to understand the nature of Herzfeldt's infatuation for her, since I myself, cool headed though I be, was unable to escape her strange influence. For the rest of the day and the whole night afterwards, sleeping or waking, I was haunted by her image, though when away from the inexplicable attraction of her actual presence the spell immediately changed its character and my unwilling mind dwelt on her with no other feelings but those of horror and disgust.

Under these circumstances, finding all my reason and philosophy of no avail, I rose the next morning, with the intention of curtailing my visit as much as I could without hurting Herzfeldt's feelings. But fate itself intervened—the next day was destined to be the last I spent within those gates. A ride had been arranged for the purpose of showing me the pride of the estate, an imprudence which I feared for Herzfeldt, who daily looked more shattered. But a certain irritability he had of late displayed with me kept me from remonstrating.

At the appointed hour, however, two horses duly made their appearance, and the groom handed me a note. "I dare not go out to-day, you understand, yet would not disappoint her," he ran; "invent some excuse for me, and have your ride."

Even as I finished reading, his wife came out of the house. In a sort of abstraction and totally unheeding my explanations, she walked up to her black Bessarabian and planted a kiss in each fiery nostril. Then accepting my ministration with seeming unconsciousness, her arched foot with its glittering spur scarcely pressing my palm, she sprang into the saddle with some wild Eastern exclamation.

Immediately the animal reared and plunged, while, in fear for her, I held its head as firmly as I might—and now an ecstatic look came on her face, the lazy eyes shot brilliancy, the red lips parted. Suddenly, with a rage of impatience, she cut at me with her whip: "Let him go—let him go!" she panted.

In an instant the brute broke away, shot across the courtyard, rose like a bird to the stone wall and disappeared. Hurriedly I mounted, and in his turn, my horse, quivering with fury at being left behind, darted after his companion. I gave him his head and before long had rejoined her; she had settled down to a canter, awaiting me; as I drew near her she looked round with a silent smile, but no sooner were we abreast than, with another weird cry, she spurred on again, and away we fled at a tearing gallop.

How long the enchantment lasted I can hardly say; gradually our wild steeds slackened pace; panting, covered with foam, they at length fell into a walk.

"This is life!" said one of us—whether she or I, I never knew. I looked at her. She was breathless; the heaviness of exhaustion lay round her eyes; then I, too, felt unaccountably broken with fatigue, a chill crept over me, and in that second, as if a chasm had opened before me, I saw my danger.

"We must go back," I cried in a toneless voice; trembling like a craven, conscious of but one clear thought—the imperative necessity of my instant departure. I turned my horse's head homeward. She followed me; she spoke to me; I cannot remember what I answered, or if I answered at all. The spell was broken, the glamour had faded. In silence we reached the house. I dared not glance at her. I was afraid to help her to dismount; I sprang from my horse and rushed indoors. As luck would have it, in the hall I found a letter awaiting me, which I seized upon as a pretext, and straightway sought my host.

"I have had news which necessitates my leaving you," I said. "Can you send me to the station to-day?"

He looked at me with a sudden awful suspicion, but when our eyes met, his face cleared.

"There is a train at ten o'clock," he answered simply; "I shall order Gregor to be round after dinner." Then moved by the same impulse we clasped hands.

The early hour of the Hungarian dinner came. She was dressed with greater elaborateness than usual; at her throat the little brooch dented by my bullet; her face seemed gleamed more weirdly white, her lips more scarlet, her eyes greener. Beset as I was by conflicting emotions, her presence tortured me. I scarcely looked towards her—I dreaded to meet the strange meaning

I sought to restore the dead to life

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smile which, by the very side of my dying friend, appeared to claim my complicity in the terrible thought that prompted it.

After my meal I took an early opportunity to escape to my room and don my travelling gear. When I came down again the great hall and the adjoining apartments were deserted. Thinking the husband and wife were together I forbore to seek Herzfeldt, and fell to pacing the length of the ill-lighted dining room from end to end. Presently the valet, carrying my portmanteau, paused at the door, to tell me the carriage would soon be round. With an impatient sigh I resumed my march.

Then, in the gloom and chilling silence, an uncomfortable impression of being watched stole over me, and gradually, as if drawn to it, I met the gaze of two shining eyes fixed on me in the darkest corner. It was the woman again.

She advanced softly into the light.

"You dare to go! Coward, you are running away!" She spat the words at me in a fierce whisper. I felt that I was falling into her power again. My mind—I cannot express it otherwise—was seized with trembling. As to what followed I have myself but a vague knowledge. Her hand fell on mine. Mine must have been icy cold for her touch was burning. Her gaze encompassed my whole being, and before I could grasp at my intelligence and save my good name the lithe gorgeous form was in my arms. As in a dream I could not measure time, but the madness cannot have lasted a second. My arms had barely closed round her when with an angry movement, like a snake disturbed, she had glided from me, and at the sound of a voice the thrall fell away with a rush like that of a torrent from my brain. I came to an awful awakening.

Yet the voice was neither loud nor menacing.

"Could you not have waited?" it said quietly. "It would not have been for long."

Thrilled to the marrow, I looked and saw Herzfeldt—my friend—my host! His face was ashen; his eyes shone with phosphorescent light; he was smiling. It was horrible. Then slowly he went away.

At that moment came the sound of carriage wheels at the door, and my first impulse was to fly at once from the accursed place; but as I turned into the hall the hateful vision of Hedwig arrested me on the threshold; silently, with a significant gesture, she fingered the broken trinket at her throat and vanished.

My mind leapt to her evil meaning, but with a widely different conclusion; the thought of seeking death before Herzfeldt's pistol came almost as a relief.

Like a madman I rushed down the passage and burst into his study. From the threshold the pungent smell of the drug seized me by the throat. He was sitting alone, panting, with his nails dug in his breast. When he saw me he smiled—an awful smile of contempt—through the agony of his seizure.

"You see," he said, in broken words that ended in a hiss, "I have spared you even the trouble of shooting me."

Then, gasping convulsively, with the grey circle of death already round his open mouth, he fell forward on his face.

As with frenzy I sought to restore the dead to life, light footfalls fell upon my ear, and she, who was as truly her husband's murderess as she was the murderess of my honour, came into the room. I sprang to my feet. Once more I looked upon her, saw the flash of satisfaction behind her first glance of mere curiosity, met the infamy of those eyes as they met mine, and my head reeled. But the spell was now one of pure horror. She barred my way and would have spoken. I struck her from me and fled. I heard her cry out in strident contempt, "Fool!" And the cry pursued me as I leapt into the carriage and was whirled away into the night.

A WILY WIDOW.

FRED HAWTHORN was a man about town, in every sense of the word.

The proverbial silver spoon had been born with him, and now, at the age of twenty-five, we find him a confirmed bachelor, with more money, perhaps, than brains.

A very desirable catch, thought the dames of West Kensington with marriageable daughters, and many a siege was made for poor Fred's banking account. But our hero was cold and callous to their winning ways, and, while admitting his devotion to the fair sex, would not enter the net of the snarer; so, day by day, month by month, Hawthorn lived his life, with a modicum of the vices attendant to a man about town. The monotony of routine bored him, however. 'Twere a great pity he had not taken up a profession, if only to cut short the tedious hours of the day. Small wonder that the card tables knew him as a regular attendant; the racecourse recognised him as an energetic plunger.

Lately a series of reverses in matters monetary had not added to his good humour.

He sits and muses as to his next move; to get out of the ruck of his hum-drum life, he will clear off to a little country place for a few weeks' fishing? Yes, a good idea! No sooner thought than done, and Fred is in the depths of Bradshaw.

Eventually he desides on the little fishing village of W——— on the Welsh coast.

Next morning his portmanteaux are packed, and Hawthorn is off to Euston and catches the midday train.

It is late in the night when he arrives at the outlandish spot, and on inquiring finds the small and only hotel in the place is filled with a large fishing party.

Here's a nice dilemma!

The obliging station-master advises him to try Mrs. Keeble's lodging-house, on the Parade—"and very clean and comfortable you'll find it too, sir!" he adds. Hawthorn is too dog-tired to cared what kind of diggings form his rest for the night, and, bundling his boxes into a ramshackle old cab, drives off. Happily there are rooms to let at Mrs. Keeble's, and, although they are primitive, the station-master has not erred in describing them as "clean and comfortable." Hawthorn turns in between the sheets of the small bed and sleeps on until the next morning is far advanced, the sun high in the sky: he breakfasts in a small parlour overlooking the sea, and eats heartily and with a relish quite novel to him.

Later on he strolls out to the shore and goes for a sail, and, while skimming across the water, experiences the peace for which he has longed.

That evening, he dines in the best and largest room attached to the Keeble establishment, and again experiences satisfaction from the fact that no member of the opposite sex is staying in the house, the only other visitors being two old enthusiasts who have come down for the excellent sport to be found in the neighbouring trout stream.

For three whole days Hawthorn lives a life of Arcadian ease and simplicity. He rises early in the mornings and driving over to the abode of Mr. Trout, sits for hours, his pipe between his teeth, indulging in the pastime that Walton loved. Then home to late dinner, finishing up with a cigar and cider at the Railway Inn.

On the fourth day a shock is awaiting him, for, on his return home, he stumbles over two large boxes, clumsily placed in the hall. His eyes catch the name on the labels of the boxes, "Mrs. Marchmont," at the same moment his ear catches the *frou frou* of a lady's dress in the room beyond. Hawthorn is in a bad humour when he comes down to dinner. To add to his chargrin he finds the new comer already seated at the table with the two old fishermen. He goes through the menu

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in silence, but curiosity prompts him to take sly glances at the unconscious intruder.

She is rather pretty and attractive—that he is bound to admit—with hazel eyes, a mass of golden hair loosely coiled about her head, and a complexion that many a country lass would enjoy.

But Fred has determined to eschew the female sex, at least for the time being. He moodily finishes the meal, and, without regard to that etiquette due to the presence of a lady, walks off to the Railway Inn, where he remains till closing time, indulging in the first fit of bad humour since his arrival at W——.

During the remaining days of the week, Hawthorn sees the lady at intervals, and, although they have broken the conventional ice and spoken, has been barely civil to her.

On the Sunday night he sits reading in his bedroom until the drowsy god catches him up, and he undresses and goes to bed. He has just dozed off, when he hears a voice, close by his bedside, that brings him back to the world, wide awake.

"Dear heart," the voice is saying, "have you no consideration or kindly feeling for me? Are we always to be as strangers? Will you for ever refuse the love I long to shower upon you? One kind look, a word, or a smile would tend to ease my aching heart. My love, my love, why will you not come to me?"

Instinctively, one of Fred's arms comes out from beneath the bedclothes and waves about in the vicinity of the bed, but grasps nothing but air.

Yet he could swear "she" is in the room, for he has recognised her voice. Hastily he lights the candle and searches round, but the room is empty.

Shall it be confessed that he even goes down on his knees and peers under the bedstead! He remains as one dazed. What does it all portend? Is it possible that something not to be realised has drawn him to this woman? He will go to bed and sleep it off.

Scarcely is his head on the pillow than the voice again is heard:

"What mad regret is mine!—A love scorned. Why did you come across my path to make me love you?" and then comes the sound of a woman sobbing.

Hawthorn lies in bed trembling and perspiring, scarcely daring to breath.

Every minute he expects to hear the voice recommence, but all is silence now, and eventually he drops asleep.

The next morning, on going down to breakfast, he learns that the young widow has gone out for a drive across the Cliffs. What is the reason of the regret he feels—the suspicion of a longing to see her?

He ruminates all the day through, and actually feels glad when the dinner hour arrives. "Will she be there?" he wonders. "Will anything have happened to keep her away?"

He is not to be disappointed, for on entering the dining-room he discovered his divinity seated in her usual place, radiant as ever, and looking even more beautiful, as Fred thought.

She smiles upon him as he takes his seat, he in return inclining his head, feeling too agitated to speak.

All through the meal he dare not look at her—feeling her gaze upon him, reading the thoughts of his very heart.

Dinner finished, he springs forward to open the door as she rises to leave the room, receiving for his pains a sweet smile that causes his heart to throb at a high rate.

That night he goes to bed, very wakeful, awaiting the mysterious voice.

At last it comes.

"My love, my curly-haired handsome boy, you have made my heart so glad. You have smiled on me! But, have I found your love—for which I pine? See, my arms are extended, hungry for your fond embrace—my lips ready to be pressed to thine. Take me, oh, take me, for I cannot live without you." A pause here—and the sound of a long drawn sigh; then, "Good night, fond heart, good night," and all is silence.

Fred lies awake thinking until the dawn comes. By that time he has decided on his course of action.

Yes, yes, he loves her; of that he is sure. She is the only woman in the world that can rouse such passions within him. He will see her in the morning and offer all he has in the world in return for her true love. Yes, he will not dare to fight against fate; and with relief in his heart he turns to the wall and falls asleep.

. . . . . .

At breakfast he meets the lady, and openly smiles at her across the table, causing the long lashes of her eyes to drop, while a blush mounts quickly to the pretty face.

Fred can scarcely tolerate the presence of the two old fogeys, who prevent him from having the desired *téte-à-téte*. She has gone at last, and he waits a decent interval, with the fixed intention of following her and pouring out the flow of passion cramped up in his system. Quite casually he dons his straw hat, and goes out on to the front, looking strong and happy in his new joy.

On the shore two young men are talking and laughing loudly, but at the sight of Hawthorn their merriment ceases, and they go on with their work of fitting up the sailing-boat.

Recognising one as the son of Mrs. Keeble, Fred walks over to them and enters into conversation.

"I say, John," asks Hawthorn, "can you tell me anything about that lady?" pointing in the direction of Mrs. Marchmont, who is sauntering along the beach.

"Oh, yes, sir, she is a widow lady who comes here every year"—and here the young fellow bursts into a violent fit of laughter.

Hawthorn has the greatest difficulty in keeping his temper.

The young boatman is quick to notice this, and expresses his sincere regret, with a hope of pardon. Then, as if by a sudden impulse, he blurts out, "I think I ought to tell you about that woman. Sir, she's a wrong 'un, and that's straight. She gave me a sovereign to fix a pipe from her room to the head of your bed, and I'm sorry now I did it!"

A light comes into Fred's eyes as he stands and stares at the young man. Then he finds his tongue, and what follows seems to give relief to the young man from town, for he strolls about the place for the rest of the day with a merry twinkle in his eye.

. . . . . .

Fred goes to bed that night with the set smile on his face.

This time he allows the candles to burn.

Evidently he is awaiting the voice—no longer mysterious.

At the right time, it comes.

"Dear love, I am unhappy to-night, for you have evidently evaded me. And but yesterday you were so kind, so loving towards me. Tell me, sweetheart, what it all means?"

Fred lifts himself on his elbow, tears aside the curtain at the head of the bed, and putting his lips to the end of a trumpet end, fitted into the wall, shouts at the top of his voice:

"Am I to be pestered every night in this way? Why don't you go to bed and give off that bosh under the clothes?"

A short scream and the gasp from a woman tells him the words have reached home. He pulls the curtain into its place, nestles down in the pillows, and snores loudly.

. . . . . .

The following morning, on going down to breakfast, Hawthorn learns that the widow has flown—a summons from a relative lying dangerously ill being the cause of her abrupt departure by the early train.

NOTICE.

NEXT week will be commenced in SHORT STORIES a splendid serial story by FREDERICK LESLIE, Author of "Lawyer Bell," "An Ideal Love," &c., &c. This story will be entitled

SINDBAD'S VALLEY,

and will be profusely illustrated by Mr. A. KEMP TEBBY.

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By John K. Leys, *Author of "In the Toils," "My Hindoo Friend," &c., &c.*

Illustrated by Raymond Potter.

CHAPTER XXIV.—*continued.*

The wind seemed to be still rising, but there was no sound from the sea.

"Come with me a moment," said Linton, going back in the direction of the house.

Geoffrey followed him.

As he went up to the house, Linton purposely made a good deal of noise. Immediately a loud cry burst on their ears. "Here! Help! Murder!" It came from the dining-room.

"I told you so!" cried Linton, darting past his friend into the house. "Those shouts might be heard on the beach. In any case, if anyone comes ashore, he is sure to come up here," he added as he made his way to the sitting-room.

"There, that won't hurt you."

"So that is the way you keep your parole!" he cried out as he opened the door.

Byngham's shouts ceased at once. He turned on Linton a look full of unsubdued ferocity. But Linton whipped the Captain's handkerchief out of his pocket, and, with its half, fastened a small stick of firewood between his teeth.

"There, that won't hurt you, or prevent your breathing," said the young man. "And, as for the unpleasantness of the thing, you have yourself to thank for it."

The two friends then hurried back to the beach. They were anxious to intercept the Captain's visitors, and find out from them, if possible, where Captain Byngham had meant to go that night, and what might have been his errand.

They had not waited long before a voice hailed them out of the darkness. Geoffrey answered; and presently they saw a boat manned by four rowers emerging from the gloom. The shore was well suited for landing, as the beach shelved rather suddenly, and the sea was not high enough to give much trouble, the wind being off shore.

"They will only expect to see one person," said Geoffrey in a whisper to his friend. "You had better go back to our lodgings."

"I will wait outside," said Linton, as he disappeared in the darkness.

Geoffrey guided the boat in, and helped to pull her out of the water.

A burly fellow who looked like an English seaman stepped up to Geoffrey, and said to him:

"Are you the man going on board the *Aphrodite*?

For a moment the young barrister thought he had committed a horrible blunder. What more natural, than that a boat from the yacht should be sent ashore for Captain Byngham, if he had been asked to make one of the yachting party?

"The *Aphrodite*?" he stammered.

"Ay," answered the man, with a short laugh, "the new *Aphrodite*, I may call her."

This was unintelligible to Geoffrey; but he answered, "No."

"Where is he? I thought you were a friend of his?" said the sailor.

"Oh, Captain Byngham you mean? I know him very well. Yes. He's not come down yet."

"So I see. Well, he had better be quick. The wind is getting fresher every minute; and it will be a tough job to get back."

"Oh, he's coming back, then, is he?"

"Of course he's coming back. Him and the young lady.

"It's too rough a night to land a lady in."

"That can't be helped. She's bound to come to-night."

Geoffrey's heart beat fast. He thought he had his finger now on the very pulse of the plot. He resolved to hazard a question.

"Is her father coming ashore too?"

Dark as it was, Geoffrey felt that the sailor was throwing a suspicious glance at him. The man's tone was full of suspicion as he answered roughly:

"No; I know nought about the old man."

There was more than suspicion in his tone. It was the voice of a man who knew more than he dared to confess, even to himself.

Just then the cold wind drove a hail of raindrops in their faces.

"Are you the man going aboard the 'Aphrodite'?"

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A small knot of men approached.

"I shan't wait out here any longer!" cried Geoffrey in affected impatience.

"You? Are you goin' with 'im then?"

"I was; but I don't know. It's beastly weather."

"I had no instructions about *you*."

"Oh, please yourself. I'm not anxious to go, on such a night as this especially. But I say, you might as well be under shelter till Captain Byngham comes back. I can take you to his house where the signal is—that's his house; and the moment he comes home you will know it."

"I hardly like leaving the boat."

"Leave the men with her, then; or—the tide's on the ebb—pull her up on shore a bit. She'll be right enough."

Still the man hesitated. Geoffrey was in an agony of suspense; but he kept his voice well under control.

"Well, I'm off," he said, moving over the sand as he spoke. "I don't see the fun of getting soaked here, when I might just as well be under shelter."

Still the seaman did not move, and Geoffrey was afraid to stay longer, lest the man should begin to suspect that his object was to get him away from the boat, and seat him comfortably in the kitchen of the Villa Carnot.

Just as he reached the garden-gate, Geoffrey ran back to the boat. The four men were stolidly sitting on the gunwale, waiting. He slipped a couple of francs into the hand of the man he had already spoken to.

"Captain Byngham is sure to come to the house first," he said; "and I will tell him you are here. But in case you should see him coming along, raise a shout to let me know, will you? I'll run down in a minute; for I want to see him before he goes."

The man promised he would do what was asked of him; and as he pocketed the francs, the last shade of suspicion disappeared from his mind. The rain was falling faster than ever, and the men were audibly grumbling when Geoffrey left them for the second time.

Linton, who had watched all that went on, met his friend at the door of the villa; and they exchanged a few rapid sentences. Then Jack Linton went off, to carry out the instructions which Geoffrey had given him during their hurried talk.

He had barely disappeared in the direction of Madame Fresual's, when the sound of footsteps was heard on the gravel outside. Geoffrey darted to a window. He could make out four lumpish figures in the darkness outside, hanging about the gate, as if uncertain whether they should advance or retreat.

Geoffrey hurried out to them.

"Better come round to the kitchen door," he said to them. "You can sit down there, and I'll serve you out a glass of grog."

The men touched their caps, and followed him.

The stove was lit in the kitchen; and though it could not dry the men's soaking clothes, the glow looked cheery and comfortable. In a few seconds the sailors—a rascally-looking set, as Geoffrey remarked to himself—were seated round it, each one with a glass of spirits in his hand. The brandy was Captain Byngham's. Geoffrey placed the bottle in charge of the leader of the party; and then saying that he was going to look for Captain Byngham in the town, he went off.

Instead of going to the town, however, he went straight to the boat and seated himself on the gunwale. The rain had made quite a small pool in the bottom of the boat. Geoffrey found the baling-can, baled it out, and then sat down again on the edge of the gunwale.

Of all the experiences he ever had, Geoffrey said afterwards, that was the most trying. It was a race against time. At any moment the trick might be discovered; at any moment the sailors might take it into their heads to return to the boat. Everything depended on the degree of good luck that Linton might experience.

The suspense became absolutely unbearable; yet nothing could be done—nothing. Sometimes Geoffrey would take a few hurried steps in the direction of the town, and stand bending his head to listen; but no sound other than the lashing of the rain and the loud moaning of the wind fell on his ears; and he was forced to go back to his place by the side of the boat.

Suddenly he started.

He had heard a low, undefinable noise, that told him someone was approaching.

A small knot of men appeared.

"Linton!" cried Geoffrey in a voice that trembled with anxiety.

"Right my boy. Here are Jacques and Ernest, and another fine fellow, all ready to go anywhere and risk anything in such a cause. And here are the things you wanted."

He handed Geoffrey a heavy ulster, a brandy-flask, and a revolver as he spoke.

"God bless you! I will never forget this!" cried Geoffrey, as he gripped for a moment, the hand of each of his new allies.

The boat, seized by five pairs of hands, was quickly run down to the water's edge. A minute later Geoffrey and his friends were pulling rapidly out to sea.

CHAPTER XXV.

WHAT HAPPENED ON BOARD.

"WE'VE missed her, Jack!"

"Aye; it looks like it."

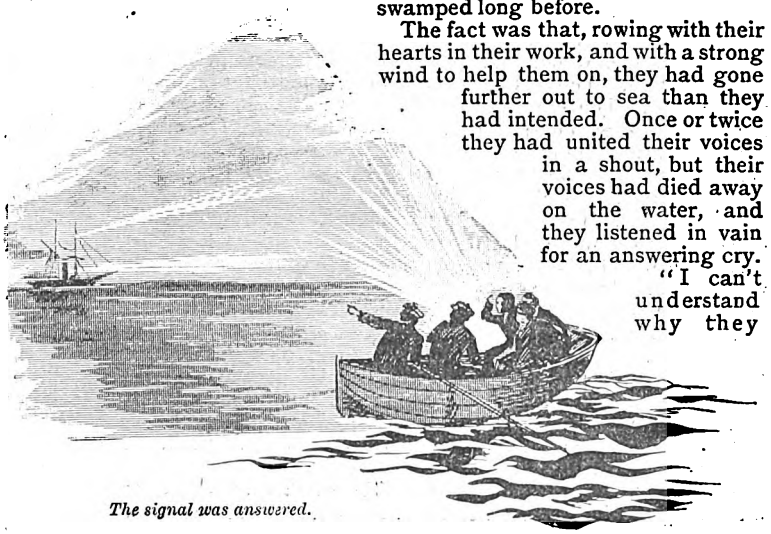
"What had we best do?"

"Turn her head round, and try the eastward."

The two friends had to shout at each other, though there was only the length of the boat between them. The tumbling waves rose higher and higher. Luckily, Fresual was at the helm; if he had not, the boat would probably have been swamped long before.

The fact was that, rowing with their hearts in their work, and with a strong wind to help them on, they had gone further out to sea than they had intended. Once or twice they had united their voices in a shout, but their voices had died away on the water, and they listened in vain for an answering cry.

"I can't understand why they



The signal was answered.

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"One word, and you are a dead man."

don't show a light," growled Geoffrey. "They must be expecting the boat back by this time."

"We ought to have brought a lantern," said Linton, "but one can't think of everything."

"Isn't there a locker of some sort under the seat, Fresual?" shouted Geoffrey. "Just see if there is anything there one can make a signal with."

The Frenchman opened the tiny receptacle, and found a blue-light.

"Hurray! That's the expected signal, no doubt!" cried Geoffrey. "Just set fire to it, Jacques; you understand these things."

In another minute or two a strong blue light was shedding its unearthly glare over the boat and the men in it, and the black sea that surrounded them. Before it had burned itself out the signal was answered. Away to the east shone out two white lights close together.

"There she is!" cried Geoffrey. "Give way, lads; we'll soon be on board of her!"

There, however, he was wrong. The most toilsome part of the work now began, for the wind no longer drove them along before it. But Frenchmen and Englishmen alike pulled hard, and soon the distance between the boat and the two lights sensibly diminished.

Geoffrey, meantime, had been forming something like a plan of action. The first point, of course, was to get on board the steamer. The next was to find out who was in charge of the yacht, and who had sent for Captain Byngham. Of course, there was a possibility that he was on a false scent. But the sailor had used the name *Aphrodite*, and what likelihood, Geoffrey asked himself, was there that any young lady would go ashore from the yacht at night under Captain Byngham's care, if all were well on board?

At all events he had now gone too far to retreat, and there was this consolation—if he had made a mistake no irreparable injury had been done, whereas if any plot against Sir Arthur or Leila was on foot he was doing his best to stop it.

One thing seemed plain amid the cloud of uncertainties. It had been clearly understood that no Hindoos except the Rajah were to sail in the *Aphrodite*. The presence of any Hindoos on board would be an almost infallible sign that foul play was being practised; and it would be war to the knife between him and them.

Nearer and nearer drew the boat. The black-hulled steamer was riding at anchor, her head to the shore. The boat drew up on her port bow, and swung round, Geoffrey, who was in the bows, catching a rope that was thrown out to him.

Thrusting his revolver into the breast pocket of his tweed jacket, Geoffrey clambered on board, Jack Linton following close at his heels.

When he reached the steamer's deck Geoffrey stood amazed. The ship seemed to have been deserted. Not a soul was to be seen. Linton's head was just appearing above the bulwarks, when Geoffrey heard a gentle footfall on the deck behind him. He turned sharp round, and met Chunder Sen face to face.

For one instant the Hindoo was speechless—dumb from terror. He had up to that moment believed that Geoffrey Dundas was lying at the bottom of a mountain tarn. For that second of time the Hindoo could not think. If he thought at all it was to struggle against the belief that a disembodied spirit stood before him. But that second of inaction was enough. Before he could recover his senses, much less raise an alarm, Geoffrey had caught him by the throat, and, by main force, dragged and pushed him down upon the deck. Another second, and the young Englishman's knee was on his chest, while a cold iron circle which the Hindoo well knew to be the mouth of a revolver barrel, was pressed against his temple.

"One word, one cry, and you are a dead man," said Geoffrey in his ear.

The Hindoo lay perfectly still.

"I say, Geoff," whispered Linton, "suppose this steamer belongs to the Hindoos, we should be in a pretty mess, shouldn't we?"

"Mind him, Jack; and shoot him like a dog if he so much as utters a sound," was all Geoffrey's answer.

"I'll risk it," said Jack philosophically; as, taking a revolver he had borrowed from Fresual, out of his pocket, he knelt down on the body of the prostrate Hindoo.

Geoffrey, amazed at the perfect silence on board, made for the cabin companion-way, and went down.

At the bottom of the stairs, suspecting a plot, he stopped short, and cocked his revolver.

"Is anybody there?" he called out.

A shout came from his left hand—and one piercing cry from his right.

Geoffrey recognised the General's voice; but for the moment,

Geoffrey fought like a madman

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he was deaf to it. He bounded in the direction of the cry he had heard; and gave a furious wrench to the handle of the cabin-door.

"Is that you? Are you there, Miss Chetwynd?" he said in a low whisper.

"Yes—oh yes, dear Mr. Dundas! We are prisoners here, papa and I. But now you are come we are saved! Oh, thank God—thank God, we are saved!"

As she uttered these last words, Geoffrey's arm was thrown round her waist, and she was swept bodily out of the cabin. The key had been left in the door to enable Captain Byngham to carry out the pretended rescue, and Geoffrey had only to turn it and throw open the door.

"Don't faint, please," he whispered to her. "Our work is not over, and we have not one moment to lose. If we alarm the crew we are lost. Where is your father?"

Leila pointed to the opposite door. She could not speak.

That door was locked, and the panels were boarded up. For a moment Geoffrey hardly knew what to do. It was impossible to leave the General behind, yet it was equally impossible to break open the door without spending so much time and making so much noise that discovery would be a certainty.

"Are you there, General?" he said, in as loud a voice as he dared to use.

"Good heavens! Dundas! I thought I heard your voice, but—How are you here? Have you got my daughter? Save her, Geoffrey, as you hope for heaven—save her! Never mind me."

"She is here with me. But the question is, how to get you out without raising an alarm."

"Have you a boat?"

"Yes, I have a boat manned by friends, but——"

"Then take Leila to it at once. I command you to do this. Don't hesitate for a moment."

"No, papa, no!" cried the girl. "I cannot go without you." She sank down on her knees as she spoke.

"Do as you are told, Leila! Geoffrey, take her away at once—Go!"

All this had been said in a few seconds; but seconds were precious. There was no time to wait longer. Geoffrey caught up Leila in his arms, and carried her up the steps. On the deck he saw Linton still kneeling on the body of the Hindoo. Fortunately, these two were concealed from the eyes of the crew by the engine-house. Geoffrey could make out three or four shadowy figures in the fore part of the vessel. If these men suspected for one instant what was going on, it would be all over. But they suspected nothing. It was exactly what they had been told to expect—an Englishman carrying the lady down to the boat.

The sea was running so high, that although the steamer partly sheltered the small boat, it was a very difficult thing to bring her near enough to get Leila on board of her. At last the boat was tossed right up to the bulwarks.

"Now jump, Leila!" cried Geoffrey in her ear.

She obeyed; and was safely caught by two pairs of strong arms, and laid down in the stern-sheets. The instant Geoffrey saw that she was safe, he sprang to Linton's side, and whispered a word in his ear.

Then he rushed down the cabin-stairs. The Hindoos and Lascars, supposing that he had gone to fetch a cloak or bag for the lady, never stirred.

Bang!—Bang!

They stared at each other for a moment, and then rushed aft; but Geoffrey and the General reached the top of the cabin-stairs before them. Geoffrey had blown in the lock of the cabin-door with two shots of his revolver.

The moment the Hindoos saw the two Englishmen they rushed up to them, and Geoffrey fired two more shots at them, wounding two men. Then he rushed forward, knocking down a third Hindoo with a blow from his left shoulder.

"Quick, Linton!" he cried. "Get into the boat, while I keep those fellows at bay!"

The Rajah . . . fell into the sea.

Linton sprang up, darted to the side, and threw himself over, hardly caring whether he alighted on the small boat or not. He was just on the heels of the General, who had made a leap for the boat the moment before. Both reached their mark, badly bruised, but not seriously hurt.

"I will kill the first man who touches me!" cried Geoffrey.

But the threat was useless. They rushed on him as one man. He pulled the trigger, but something had jammed—the revolver missed fire.

Then Geoffrey was desperate, and he fought like a madman. Seizing one man by the throat with his right hand he hurled him back on his fellows, and gained one second's time. In that second he had reached the side of the steamer, and had also turned the revolver in his hand, grasping it by the barrel. It served him for a weapon.

One Hindoo, who had raised a knife high in the air, went down as if he had been shot; another, who had caught him by the leg, received a blow on his hand which made him let go. He was almost free, when a third caught him round the neck. This man he managed to thrust away from him by main force. Then he vaulted over the side, intending to drop into the sea; but just then a wave carried the boat close up to the vessel's side, and he fell upon the heads of his friends.

"Now, lads, give way!" sang out Linton. One of the Frenchmen gave his oar a vigorous thrust against the side of the steamer, while the other two tugged hard at their oars. But it took a minute to get any way on the boat in the rough, tossing sea; and, if the Hindoos had had fire-arms, they might have shot down the rescued and the rescuers at their ease.

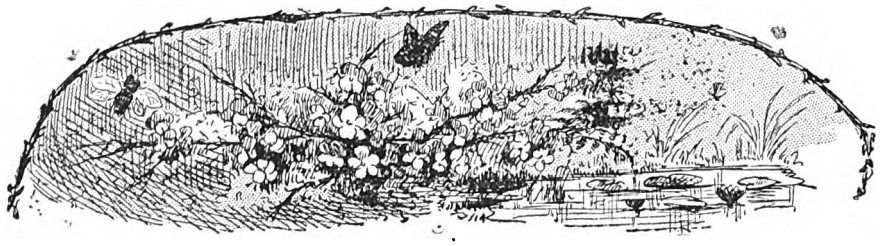
Just as they were drawing clear, a dark figure sprang on the bulwarks.

"Shoot him!" cried young Fresual.

"No, don't!" screamed Leila. "It is the Rajah!"

As he stood there, balancing himself for the spring, another dark form appeared behind him. The next moment the Rajah gave a cry, sank down, and fell into the sea.

(*To be concluded.*)



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THE KING OF DEATH.

HE had entered the marble passage leading to the boudoir of the Countess when the sound of heavy breathing and the soft patter of slippered feet on the tiles caused him to turn his handsome head.

It was Matuska, an old retainer of the Borisloffs, a wrinkled old woman, as ugly as a Hindoo idol, who carried herself with military precision despite her eighty years. She had nursed the Borisloffs for two generations; she knew of no other world beyond the boundaries of their estates.

To-night her face was flushed, her beadlike eyes gave forth a steely glitter, as she paused panting before the young man, and laid one wrinkled hand like the claw of a bird on his arm:

"Go back, illustrious *pani*," she stammered, breathlessly, "you must come here no more to see the Countess."

"And why not?" he asked, pulling idly at his black moustache, which drooped over his smiling mouth.

"Because—because," and the words seemed to stick in her throat, "last night when you were here, as I waited at the end of the passage, a shadow passed me. I am sure it was the Count—that he had been listening in the ante-room. You know the furious nature of Borisloff, even though you come to see the Countess as a simple friend. You know his mad adoration for his wife. Moreover, you know that in all Europe no one is so sure of aim as he with a pistol."

"Bah!" said the young man. "You mean well, I dare say, my dear Matuska, but I fancy you had been taking too much vodka when you saw the Count. He is far away in Moscow. Madame the Countess had a letter from him only yesterday. Go to bed. You are full of foolish fancies, old woman," and he shook her off and passed on.

Matuska leant against the wall and watched him disappear.

"There is a shadow on this house," she murmured, pressing her wrinkled hands together. "To-day the cross in the chapel fell from the altar. It is an ominous sign. But what is old Matuska to do to avert the calamity? Holy Father, if Borisloff has really returned!" and she glided down the passage in the direction the young man had taken.

In the meantime Loris had pushed aside the curtains and entered a large hall fitted up like a conservatory. The air was warm and perfumed, almost inebriating in its heavy fragrance. He did not announce himself, knowing well that he was expected. And he sat down in a fantastic chair covered with crimson plush, whose scarlet arms gave him the appearance of being clasped in the jaws of a giant crab.

The subtle fragrance of the apartment was conducive to dreams, but to judge from his face they were pleasant, as he smiled softly to himself and plucked idly at a blood-red rose that nodded its fragrant head towards him as a gust of warm air swept through the curtain.

"Loris!"

A flutter of skirts and the Countess stood before him.

He rose with a startled cry.

"How beautiful you are," he murmured, kissing her softly, almost reverently.

And beautiful she was indeed, as she sat down on a sofa covered with white fur, and motioned him to take a seat beside her.

She played with the filaments of the feather trimming of her gown as softly as a bird smoothing its plumage. As she sat there she looked like a spirit of the snow.

"Well, have you nothing to say to me?" she asked, with a little pout, turning her black eyes full upon him.

He started again.

"I was so intent on admiring you," he murmured, "that for the time I could find nothing to say. It seems cruel to be able to find only common words to speak to a goddess." Then he told her about Matuska and her suspicions.

"Poor Matuska," said the Countess with a laugh; "she is so devoted to our house that at times her fidelity oversteps the bounds. I hope, Loris, that her words have not frightened you," casting a quick glance at her companion.

"Frightened me?" looking up. "Oh, no. At the same time I should not care to meet Borisloff with a pistol in his hand if he mistook the nature of my visits."

"He must be a skilful marksman if he can send a bullet all the way from Moscow," laughed the Countess. "I heard from him again to-day. He will not return without letting me know," and her metallic laughter rang through the room, the glass walls of which gave it a bell-like sound, and roused answering echoes from the halls on either hand.

But what was that? The echoes did not die away; a harsh, growling sound was heard from the marble passage through which the young man had just entered.

The Countess heard it, too, and her face grew pale as her snowy gown. She had risen, and they stood listening, and at the same time regarding each other with dilated eyes.

There was a sound of struggling without, the clamour of angry voices, and one louder than all the rest pierced like a sharp sword the two occupants of the room.

"I will not believe it. You lie, you cat! I will convince you that you are wrong, and then you shall be knouted."

"My husband!" murmured the woman in white.

Then they heard the furious falsetto of Matuska.

"The proof is not wanting—here—here!"

The curtains were torn aside. The Count, his face flushed with evil passion, was pushed, half dragged into the room by Matuska. Behind them crowded the servants of the house, talking to each other in hushed whispers.

"Are you satisfied, Altesse?" cried the old nurse, pointing to the man and woman that stood silent in the centre of the room, stupefied by this sudden onslaught.

The Count was silent a moment. His face had resumed its calm expression; only his eyes displayed his anger.

"Take that woman," pointing to Matuska, "to the court-yard and flog her," said he to a tall mujick.

The old woman was dragged screaming away. With an imperious gesture Borisloff motioned for the others to follow.

"Now, monsieur," he said calmly, turning to Loris, "you need not attempt any explanation, for I assure you it would be useless. You may be innocent of any intent to wrong, but the publicity given this affair necessitates one thing:—that you should meet me in a duel. I have a right to kill you. Society would acquit me if I did, but I shall give you a chance for your life. I will believe you less guilty than you are."

"You are very considerate, I am sure," replied Loris, ironically, for though the sudden appearance of the Count had surprised him, he was far from being a coward.

"You may believe that this melancholy affair has turned my head," said the Count. "But I assure you that I was never saner in my life, when I propose a peculiar duel." He went over to a small table, and picked up a pack of cards. "Now, monsieur, we shall take our seats at the table, we shall play a game of *écarté*, the stakes—the life of the loser. You know I am an unerring shot, while you are but an indifferent one, so I wish that our chances should be entirely equal. If you lose, you will, as a man of honour, blow out your brains before noon to-morrow. If the game go against me, I shall do the same. Do you accept?"

"I accept," came the reply from the dry lips of the young man.

"Very good. For how many points shall we play?"

"Five."

The game was begun. The only witness was the Countess, who, attracted by a terrible curiosity, had drawn near the

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players, her eyes fixed on the gaily painted bits of cardboard on which the fate of two lives depended.

Fortune seemed to favour the Count. The game stood four to nothing. The face of Loris for the first time during the game grew grey and worn looking. He had bitten his lip, and a fleck of blood dropped down on the cards in his hand.

The Countess, whose hand rested on the table, was shaking like a wind-blown leaf. Her husband looked at her pallid face, and smiled.

"Give me the cards," he cried. "It is my deal."

The cards glided in and out through his white fingers as if animated with life. The silence was broken only by the sound of heavy breathing and the rattle of the woman's ringed hand on the board.

Even that ceased when he dealt; but as the last card slipped from his hand there was a crash.

The Countess had fallen at their feet.

He had turned the king!

A harsh laugh followed. Borisloff stooped and raised his wife from the floor. The young man made a movement to assist him, but the Count waved him off.

"No, no, she is mine now;" he murmured, "mine alone. The king decided for us. The king of death!" and he laughed again.

Loris stood hesitating in the centre of the room, surveying the limp figure of the Countess, which her husband had borne to the sofa. The dark face of the Count was now lighted by a triumphant smile as he leant towards her.

The young man, stifled by the heavy perfume of the room, with fire in his heart, felt a sudden weakness assail him.

"Before noon to-morrow," he murmured, and tottered unsteadily from the place, down the dark passage, and so into the street, like a man walking in his sleep.

The cool night air revived him, but, with the return of consciousness to the present, he was assailed with the horrors of his situation. He was not a coward, but he knew that he had been guiltless of wrong towards the Count: that a harmless flirtation, born of a woman's coquetry, had led him to sacrifice his life.

To-day he was happy-hearted, filled with the joy of living. To-morrow he would be a cold and pulseless thing, to be hurried to a suicide's grave. He was only twenty-five, and it was hard, very hard to die so young.

He half closed his eyes as he hurried along, dreading to look at the familiar houses and cafés that lined the avenue, lest the thought of all that he must leave might fill him with added anguish.

He knew that when he passed again through that highway now flashing like a double strand of diamonds with its myriad lights, it would be in a musty coach with sombre plumes followed by impatient mourners.

As he ascended heavily the stairs leading to his chambers, it seemed as if every step led him down into the abyss of death, and the pulsations of his heart were like a hammer rising and falling, beating out his life.

Wearily he entered his room, bidding his servant go to bed, asking to be awakened early on the morrow. He had no intention of evading his promise to the Count. He would kill himself before the clock sounded the hour of noon on the morrow.

The grey light of dawn found him still arranging his papers, writing letters to his friends. How surprised they would be to hear that he, the rich, *fêted*, well-beloved Loris Nudiolanski, had taken French leave of the world for good. They would talk about it a week—two weeks, perhaps—in perfumed boudoirs. Then Loris, the suicide, would be forgotten.

His last preparations made, he took out a pistol from his duelling case, cleaned it thoroughly, and put in a new cartridge. He made ready the other in case the first should fail.

"If I wait until broad daylight," he said to himself, "someone may arrive to prevent my taking my life. It is better to do it now before all the world is awake. While they are sleeping, I shall sleep, too."

He poured himself out a glass of brandy; it steadied his hand; there was even a flush of colour in his face as he raised the pistol to his head.

A report followed, filling the small room with a dense smoke. When the veil lifted, Loris was still standing. At his feet a man lay with his hand pressed hard against his breast.

"Borisloff!" cried Loris, scarcely believing that it was his old enemy that lay at his feet. "In Heaven's name what does this mean?"

"It means," gasped Borisloff, "That I got here—just—in time—to save you—to do justice. Remember—I died an honourable man. Here—take back your pistol."

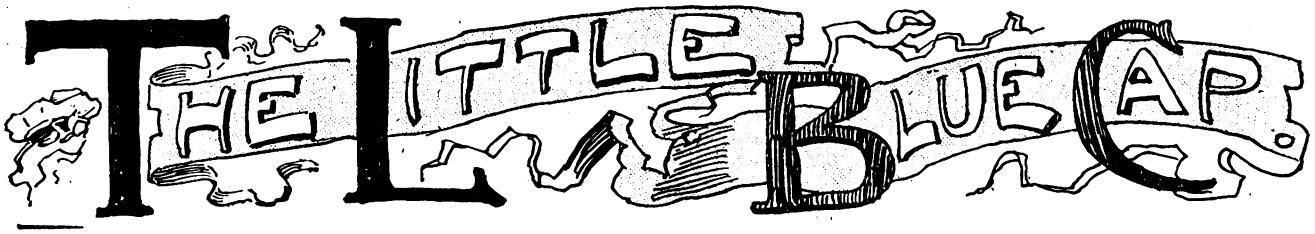
"But I lost. I was only carrying out my promise."

"You did not lose——" the dying man murmured.

"You——"

"I cheated."

And he rolled over dead!



I WAS paying a visit to my friends, the Durands. They were a simple, honest couple who lived near the banks of the river, in a tiny house, a mere bird's nest, almost hidden by wisteria and Virginia creeper. Durand's hands bore the marks of honest toil, for he had been a locksmith in his youth, and had by industry and economy raised himself steadily until he became the proprietor of a large business, and secured a competency for his old age. His wife, a quiet, gentle creature, worshipped her husband, and both of them wore on their faces an expression of serenity which betokened ease of conscience and a life of peace.

Durand was past sixty years of age, and his wife must have been fifty, yet, in spite of their wrinkles and grey hairs, these two treated each other with an affectionate deference which was a pleasure to behold.

While we were engaged in conversation just before dinner, Durand rose and opened a drawer to take out some trifle which he wished to show to me. While he was turning over the contents of the drawer, it chanced that a little cap, such as might have been worn by a doll, or an infant, fell to the floor. I picked it up, and noticed that it was made of coarse blue linen, with bits of twine instead of ribbons. As I handed it to him, I said gaily:

"Are you preparing a baby basket, Papa Durand?"

I had no sooner spoken than I regretted it, for I recollected at that moment having heard that the only shadow on my

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friend's life was the fact of their union being a childless one. For a minute Durand made no reply, but looked at the little cap affectionately; then as he laid it carefully away again, he said in a tone of seriousness:

"That is a souvenir."

Then we three sat down for dinner and talked of other matters, but as soon as the repast was finished, and the little maid-of-all-work had put cigars and liqueurs upon the table, my friend said suddenly:

"How much that baby cap reminds me of!" It was evident that he wanted to explain his remark, and I begged him to do so.

"It was a great many years ago," he said after a slight pause, "for I was about twelve years old. I was working in a large factory, and I had a companion, of the same age as myself, whom, on account of his ugly features, we nicknamed Zizi Monkey-face. He was a sly, thieving, mischievous urchin, very much given to filching tarts from the pastry-cook's counter, but a jolly little chap, and full of pluck. He was so lazy that he would have been turned out of the factory had it not been for the indulgence of the overseer, who had been a friend of his father's, and took an interest in the boy for the sake of his dead comrade. Monkey-face was an orphan, and the only relative he had ever known was the woman who brought him up, a cousin of his mother. This woman was a fish-peddler, a brawling, brutal creature, whose affection for her young charge was manifested only by blows. Perhaps if he had known a parent's love he would have been less perverse.

"One afternoon, the lad took it into his head to run away from the factory, and go vagabonding about with a gang of young ruffians like himself. As they were coming slowly home after nightfall, they heard, to their astonishment, the cry of an infant. The sound seemed to issue from a long, narrow, dirty alley which opened on the street, and at the other end of which hung a dimly flickering lamp. After a short consultation, the street boys ventured softly into the passage, and one of them espied, behind the door, a little bundle of rags which struggled and wailed. He seized hold of it, and the whole party ran into the street, triumphant, stopping under a lamp to examine their capture. It proved to be a baby girl a few weeks old, wrapped up in a series of dirty cloths, a poor little innocent whom a wretched, perhaps desperate, mother had abandoned to the charity of strangers.

"A council was held to decide what should be done with the booty, and the young captors gave free play to their mischievous imaginations. One wanted to put the baby back where they had found it; another, to hide it in a half-empty prune box which stood at a grocer's door; a third proposed to climb up to a second storey balcony and leave the youngster there, and how astonished the people would be next day! But Zizi Monkey-face scouted all these ideas, and declared that the baby must be given to the gypsies. There was a band of these people near by, who practised jugglery and fortune-telling, and instances of kidnapping were by no means rare.

"Monkey-face's decision was hailed with enthusiasm, and he claimed the right to carry the treasure-trove in consideration of his having made the plan.

"'Give us the kid,' he said. The baby had all this time been screaming piteously, but it stopped suddenly when Monkey-face took hold of it, and, while he walked along with an air of triumph, it fixed its great blue eyes upon his ugly face and smiled, at the same time stretching its tiny hands out as if to caress him.

"'She is laughing!' cried the boy in delight; 'see how she looks at me!'

"Then a new impulse seized him.

"'I will not give her away,' he said. 'I will keep her myself.'

"His companions protested indignantly, but in vain, for, as they well knew, Zizi Monkey-face had at the end of each arm an argument so strong that it would be useless, as well as unsafe, to oppose his wishes.

"When he reached home with his burden the fish-peddler exclaimed furiously:

"'Do you think I have not enough to do to fill your mouth, you lazy imp? Take that brat to the police—quick, now!' Pif, paf! A box on each ear showed the boy that she was in earnest, and he fled from the house.

"That night he did not return, and the next morning he was in the factory as soon as it opened, for the first time in his life.

"'Mr George,' he said timidly to the overseer, 'how much will you pay me if I work hard all day?'

"'I have already told you tenpence,' answered the man in surprise; and Monkey-face worked indefatigably until night. The overseer, amazed and delighted at the change, paid the boy for his work and even gave him tenpence in advance in order to encourage him.

"That night Monkey-face was again absent from his home, and his cousin, the fish peddler, went to the factory the next evening, lay in wait for him, and dragged him home in spite of his struggles, administering a thrashing on the way. But it was no use; as soon as the old woman turned her back to cook the soup for dinner, the boy slipped out of the house and did not return.

"The factory overseer having been informed of the state of affairs, made up his mind to settle the matter at once, by finding out where Monkey-face spent his nights, and for this purpose watched the lad as he left the factory. Mr George, in company with one of the workmen, followed the wanderer at a short distance, and observed him enter a bakery and buy a small loaf of bread; next he went into a dairy and came out carrying a bottle of milk, and then turned his steps towards a lonely, deserted quarter near the river. Suddenly his followers saw him plunge into a muddy alley; the place having no lamps was as dark as an oven, but Monkey-face was dimly visible as he stopped before a paling. The next minute he had scaled it with the agility of the animal which was his namesake, and was out of sight.

"The two men, determined to discover his hiding-place, climbed over the wall and found themselves in a large vacant piece of land covered with weeds and rubbish, but of Monkey-face there was not a sign!

"At last they espied in the farthest corner a low wooden shed which had evidently once served as a fowl-house, and through the cracks of which a faint light was shining. They approached it noiselessly and peered through a crack. Great was their astonishment. In the middle of the wretched hut, in which a man would not have been able to stand upright, sat the young runaway, a candle-end stuck in the ground beside him; he was gravely pouring milk into a feeding bottle, and in a corner, on a bed of dried leaves, a baby was sleeping soundly, wrapped up in an old blanket.

"Zizi Monkey-face transformed into a nurse!

"'What the dickins are you doing here?' asked the overseer, throwing open the door of the cabin suddenly; and the boy, startled at first by the intrusion, soon recovered himself and answered slowly:

"'Haven't I got a right to have a little sister?'

"Then, after a pause, he added grandly, 'I earn tenpence a day. That is enough for us both, and we don't ask anyone for anything.'"

The narrator paused, smiled softly and added:

"The next day the owner of the factory, being informed of the matter, raised my pay to one-and-eightpence — just double."

"What?" I cried. "It was you."

"Ah, I have betrayed myself," said Durand. "Yes, I was the young rascal who was in a fair way to come to the gallows, and, thanks to the blue eyes of that little girl, I became a good workman, and afterwards set up for myself. Now you understand why I kept that little blue cap; she had it on when we found her."

"And what has become of her?" I asked eagerly.

The old man answered: "We have never parted." Then, smiling, he looked at his wife and added: "Have we, my dear?"

She smiled in return, but her eyes were moist as she looked at him, and under her eyelids I saw a tear-drop glistening.

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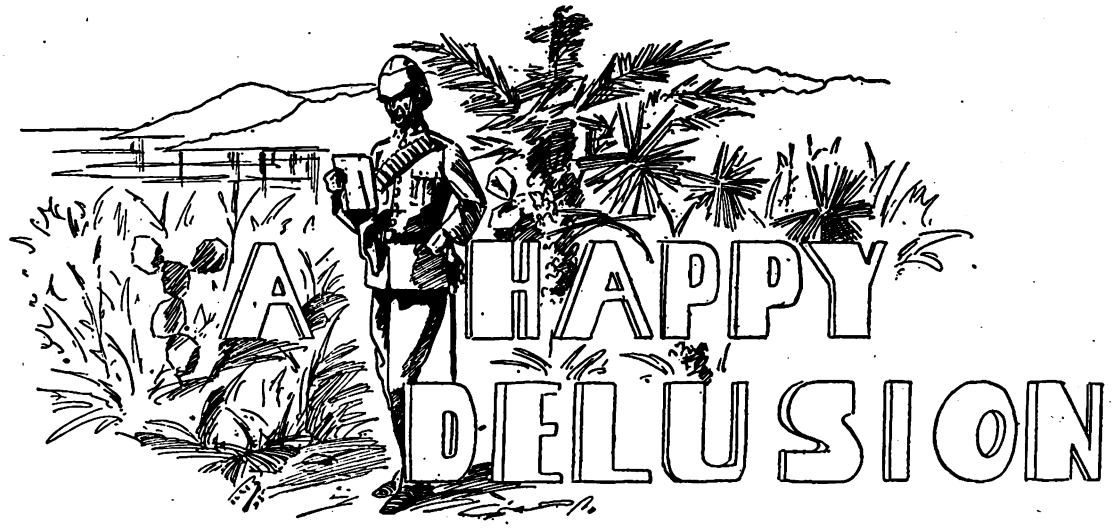

A HAPPY DELUSION

WHEN Lieutenant Skipton took the train for Portchester that August evening his heart had sunk somewhere near the bottom of his boots, for had not his regiment been ordered on active service? And even when the war scare in Egypt should be over, it was unlikely he would be able to return home for some time, for was it not next on the list for India? And so—well, it was not a pleasant thought, but he must pull himself together and face it.

He was going to say good-bye to Daisy Stuart, to look into her pretty eyes, and watch them darken whilst he told his news. She would be interested, he felt sure, but would that be all?

The stretch of dusty road from the station had never seemed so long and weary to Claude Skipton before. The air was full of sounds of the dying day, and fragrant odours from cottage gardens reached him; but he saw and heard nothing till he opened the gate of the Stuart's pretty house, and walked up the sheltered path.

Out of the French windows came the notes of Daisy's sweet voice singing. Claude paused in the verandah to listen. Ah! no more duets for them, he knew, unless——but would she? As the music died away he entered the little drawing-room unannounced. It was dark coming in out of the summer twilight, but he could see Mrs. Stuart slumbering peacefully in a chair, and the Colonel trying to read by the failing light, while at the piano sat Daisy, wearing a white dress, and somebody stood by her side—somebody who was tall and handsome, though possibly some twenty years her senior, yet who assuredly had his hand on Daisy's bent head, and who was caressing the pretty curls as Claude had never dared to do. Instinctively he felt the presence of a rival, and his eyes flashed as Colonel Stuart rather stiffly introduced "Lord Cantley."

He entered the little drawing-room unannounced.

Claude was not at his best, as he abruptly spoke of Egypt and his orders. Perhaps he wanted to cause that sudden start from Daisy, and that look, half wonderment, half pain, that she gave him.

"You will have fighting—I know you will," she said childishly.

"Possibly; that's what we're going for," he answered, and in a few moments took his leave, feeling strangely dissatisfied.

Perhaps she guessed what was passing in his mind, for she smiled sweetly at him as she gave him her hand, and, emboldened by that, he ventured to ask if she would not walk with him to the gate. She acquiesced, after a moment's hesitation, and then said:

"Why not go the field way? It is nicer."

They strolled across the lawn in silence, till Claude said: "I have something to show you," and drew from an inner pocket a small packet wrapped in white paper. It proved to be an opal, on which some hand had sketched the portrait of a pretty girl, with a sweet wild-rose face, and eyes like shady violets.

Daisy looked at it, saying simply, "This is meant for me, but it is much too flattering."

"It could not be that, darling," answered Claude.

He had not meant to call her "darling." The word slipped out, and he looked anxiously to see if she noticed it.

She bit her lip nervously, and turned her face away.

"Of course it is too pretty to be like me," she said naturally, "but I think you are very clever to paint so well,

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Lieutenant Skipton. I won't deprive you of it. You must keep it as a souvenir of our Portchester days."

She laid the little picture in his hands. He carefully wrapped it up, and replaced it in his pocket without a word. They had reached the little gate by this time. On the other side of it was a brook crossed by a plank bridge, and beyond that stretched the pathway across the fields. Daisy was the first to open the gate, and turned it idly to and fro. Then she held out her hand, saying:

"Good-bye, I must go now."

He took it, their eyes met; then she drew her hand away and would have left him, but his arm was round her.

"Daisy, Daisy, it must never be 'good-bye' between us."

He drew her closer, but she tore herself away, saying rather wildly:

"Don't, don't; it must be 'good-bye.' I am engaged to Lord Cantley."

Claude was petrified. They stood facing each other, she with bent head and nervously clasped hands.

"Don't say that, dear," said he, at last; "tell me it is not true."

"It has been true a long time," she answered.

"Then why did you not enlighten me before?" he exclaimed unsteadily.

"I couldn't," she whispered. "I thought you knew. I never guessed it would come to this, and——"

She paused.

"Do you love him, Daisy?"

She drew herself up with a quaint, womanly air.

"You must not ask me that. I am going to marry him." Then, with a pang of self-reproach at the pained look on her lover's face, she added, "We are poor, you know, and he is rich; and he will do such a lot for the boys; and Etta, and Mabel, and Charles, and Clarice can all come and stay with me. Mother wished it, and he is good and kind, and I——"

Then the brave little voice broke. She covered her face with her hands, and leant her elbows on the gate.

"I am poor," Claude muttered. "I can offer you none of these things."

Then he looked away across the fields, with a fierce hunger in his heart.

A red glow lingered in the sky, the pale crescent of the moon rose slowly, and the stars came twinkling out. A spray of honeysuckle from the adjacent hedge was blown down, and caught on Daisy's curls. Claude released it, and she, raising a very white face from the gate, once more extended her hand, and whispered "Good-bye."

She drew herself up with a quaint, womanly air.

"This is good-bye? It is only a dream, then, Daisy, and I must forget it?"

"Only a dream, but do not forget it."

They were her last words. One handclasp and the two had parted.

The spray of honeysuckle, faded and shrivelled, all the sweetness gone from it, as it had gone from his dream, was placed by Claude with the little portrait, and together they went with him to Egypt and thence to India.

. . . .

Years passed. The dust lay thick and white at Mean Meer. The insufferable heat seemed to penetrate into every bungalow. In that of Lieutenant Thurstan, where the punkah was being briskly pulled over the poor young officer, as he lay wasted from incessant days and nights of fever, it was perhaps cooler. But the throbbing brain of the lad could think of nothing but the green depths of English woods, and the dainty loveliness of the girl he had left behind him. He fancied that if her small palm could but rest upon his burning forehead he should get well.

There was a clank of spurs on the verandah, and his chum and Captain entered.

"Well, my boy, how are you?" and tenderly as a woman the elder man shook up the pillows before he sat down beside the bed. He was fond of, and much interested in his junior subaltern, the latest joined fellow in the regiment, who had not been six months in the country before the Punjab fever had stricken him down.

"I've had an awful night, Captain. If this goes on there'll be those growling volleys shot over me in a few days. And I shouldn't much care, if it wasn't for her."

He jerked his head feebly in the direction of some photographs upon a small table beside him, which his senior had not previously noticed. Now his gaze was glued to them, and he did not attempt to cheer the poor boy.

"Who's that?" he asked shortly.

It was a panel portrait of a beautiful woman in widow's weeds. There was a companion one to it of three charming girls, at which Skipton hardly glanced. Young Thurstan followed his look.

"They are all my cousins," he said.

"I used to know that one, I think, once," said the Captain slowly. "Lady Cantley, if I am not mistaken?"

"Yes. Oh! then if you knew Daisy you will not mind writing a letter for me. I've tried, and my hand's so shaky; but I could not bear—if anything happened to me, and she did not hear, she'd break her heart. But you'll write at my dictation, won't you, and then you'll send it with a line of your own afterwards?"

Skipton hesitated.

"Break her heart? Daisy? Was this boy, then, so much to her? Yet how could he refuse?"

"I didn't know that Lady Cantley was a widow?" he said, temporising.

"Yes, just a year. I never mentioned them to you because, of course, one doesn't talk about that sort of thing—unless, indeed, it happens to 'run smooth,' and our 'course' unfortunately hasn't. But if I'd known that you were friends—— Anyway, you will write, won't you? My head is pretty clear now, but I can't tell how long it will last."

"I'll fetch some paper and ink," said Skipton, rising.

"It's all on that table," said the lad, watching him with feverish anxiety.

My Darling,—By the time this reaches you it will be all over with me. I told you in my last that I had fever. Unluckily it's gaining ground, thanks to this awful climate, and I fear the next few days will see me out. I shouldn't mind so much if it wasn't for you. Life is not worth twopence in this country, and yet this is all I have to look forward to, grilling for the next ten years, at least. So much for being a beggarly sub. Perhaps it is for the best, darling; yet, when I think of you, it seems awfully hard luck. Try not to fret too much, and remember I loved you always. The past is ours; nothing can take it from us; and your future is assured to you. You have a happy home,

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and will never want for anything. That's some consolation. Some day we may meet again; for the present, good-bye. I can't write any more—at least, my captain is doing it for me; such a good fellow; be nice to him if you ever have the chance, for my sake. God bless you, my dearest.—Ever your loving THOROLD.

"Is that all?" asked Skipton, grimly.

"Yes," replied the boy; he was faint, and for the next few moments the Captain had no time to think.

Then he put the letter away carefully and waited. What would she think when she read it, he wondered. Would she recognise his writing—this sweet, false woman, who had implied the love for him that she dared not utter seven years ago—the love that he had believed in, the memory of which had sustained him and kept him straight as nothing else could? And now she had forgotten him—if, indeed, she ever really cared—forgotten him for this boy. She had been freed, and now she was free no longer. But with that came the thought that Thorold Thurstan would die, and then he crushed it as unworthy of himself and traitorous to the lad, who had been to him as a younger brother.

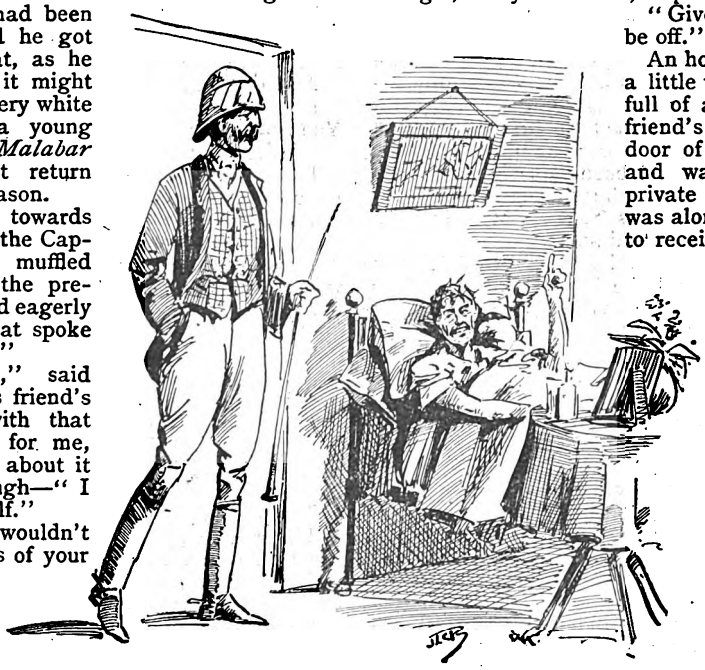
. . . . . .

Thorold Thurstan did not die. The next mail brought him news of a large legacy that had been left him unexpectedly, and he got better on the strength of that, as he remembered the happiness it might bring him. Yet it was a very white and shaky specimen of a young soldier that the good ship *Malabar* took home, upon her first return voyage the next trooping season.

As the ship glided in towards Portsmouth Harbour, he and the Captain stood on deck, warmly muffled up, but already enjoying the precarious English sunshine, and eagerly watching every landmark that spoke of that magic word "home."

"By the way, Skipton," said young Thurstan, taking his friend's arm, "what did you do with that letter—the one you wrote for me, you know? I forgot to ask about it since"—with a happy laugh—"I have been able to write myself."

"I have it safe enough. I wouldn't destroy it, lest, in the excess of your jubilation, you did some mad thing that might bring on a relapse, and then it would have come in useful after all."



His chum and Captain entered.

The joke was a bad one, ill-timed, and poor, but Thurstan felt he could afford to laugh at everything.

"Oh, keep it by all means," he rejoined, "keep it and give it to—my little girl the first chance you get."

"I shall probably not see her."

"Why, of course you will. You are not going to desert me, Captain, now, after all you've been to me. I thought you'd stand by me, and be my best man," diffidently.

"No, really, Thurstan, choose someone of your own age," replied the Captain.

The young man laughed.

"Anyway, you must see me through it. I suppose you want to be off to town at once, but you'll stop long enough to see her? You must. I wrote to her that we were coming home together in this ship, and she'll be looking out for us, and think it awfully rude of you if you go off without seeing her. They are sure to be down here—stopping at the Beach Mansions, I expect; that's where George always put up."

"Who is George?"

"Didn't you know him? The late Lord Cantley; so Daisy would be sure to go there. You see, a girl can't go about alone, so her sister would come too; besides, she lives with her at present."

The explanation was not very clear, but Skipton concluded that one of Daisy's younger sisters would be with her as "gooseberry," and he would be wanted to make a fourth, and keep the gooseberry occupied. Well, he was getting hardened, and he thought he might as well go through with it.

"All right, I'll come," he muttered. "But do you think they'll be on the jetty?"

"No. Probably not. Fancy meeting your sweetheart, 'after many days,' in the face of this crowd! Bad enough if it was one's mother or sister; but your own girl—no, thank you!"

All the same, Thurstan was feverishly scanning the welcoming sea of faces. He grew pale with excitement as the trooper was attached to the quay and the gangways let down.

"They are not here," said Skipton at last. "Take a cab and go straight off to the hotel. I'll see to the traps, and come off as soon as I can."

"Here's a letter," replied Thurstan, snatching one from the saloon table, where he had been hastily hunting among the scattered dozens of envelopes. "Yes," he added, reading it, "they are there, both of them, of course—Daisy and Clarice. I'll go; but you'll come, Captain?" doubtfully.

"Give you my word I will. There, be off."

An hour or two later Claude Skipton, a little weary, a little heart-sore, but full of an unselfish sympathy in his friend's happiness, drew up before the door of the Beach Mansions Hotel, and was shown to Lady Cantley's private sitting-room. Her ladyship was alone, and came forward smiling to receive him. Could this be Daisy—this graceful, queenly woman, with a pale, beautiful face, and hair like molten gold? The little Portchester girl he had left behind him had become a regal dame, he thought; and still Thurstan had called her his "little girl!" But as she greeted him with outstretched hands the lily blossomed into the rose, her pale cheeks were dyed with blushes, and no schoolgirl's eyes shone with a more tender light.

"All for him," thought Claude, as he bowed over her hand.

"Thorold told us to expect you. I am so glad that you have come," she said, almost shyly.

He glanced round the room.

"You have seen Thorold?"

"Oh, yes; he is here—in the conservatory with Clarice."

"I have a letter for you, Lady Cantley, which I wrote at his dictation when he was at the worst, and it was not destroyed."

She took it from him and read it slowly.

"But this was meant for Clarice," she said. "Yes. Didn't you know? Thorold and Clarice have been engaged for some time, but they had no prospect of—— Oh, Claude!"

"It was all my stupid mistake," he said, as she laid her head upon his shoulder. "I never thought it could be one of your sisters—not you."

"And I wondered all the time if you were ever coming back!"

. . . . . .

"Thorold," said Claude Skipton, when that young man had proudly presented his Captain to pretty, child-like Clarice, "I've no special objection to being your best man, but it's usual on those occasions to enlist the offices of a bachelor; and as your example is so excellent, I'm going to follow it—or, rather, lead the way; so suppose we reverse the suggestion, and you act as my best man instead. It'll do just as well, as you can get another for yourself."

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A WOMAN'S WILL.

WHERE she came from nobody knew. It was said Dorrick met her at a seaside resort, and that was all anyone seemed to know about her. He married her for her beauty: she married him for his money and social position.

That would have made no difference in the long run, if she had been an ordinary type of fortune-hunter. But she was not. She had gone into the business with her eyes wide open, and thoroughly understood that she had sold herself. She felt her degradation keenly, and within a month from her marriage began to despise herself, and wanted to be free again.

Dorrick, personally, she neither loved nor hated; he was an indulgent husband and a gentleman. But Dorrick in the abstract—the man who stood between her and her self-respect—she hated cordially.

Perhaps the last straw that broke down her endurance was when Dorrick came home tipsy from some club meeting. Dorrick was not a drinking man, and this was an exceptional case. Perhaps he had been drinking too many toasts to his young wife. But it was an offence against good form—the only thing she cared about now. When Dorrick ceased to be a gentleman the last link broke.

"My dear—" he began, and then he stopped short, for he had caught her glance. She had peculiar eyes sometimes—hard, cold, penetrating eyes—gimlet eyes, an irreverent youth had once called them. Dorrick seemed to shrink up within himself beneath her glance. In the condition he was, he seemed fascinated—"like as if he'd been mesmerised," said Mrs. Dorrick's maid under her breath; she had been to see a professional hypnotist a few weeks before. Mrs. Dorrick overheard the remark, and it set her thinking.

The suggestion of mesmerism broke in upon her like a revelation; perhaps she had found the key to freedom. She had heard of this marvellous force that science but dimly comprehends, and she was prepared to believe wonders of it. Forthwith she set about studying it.

Little by little, as she mastered the subject, she came to understand how complete is the control exercised by the mesmerist over his subjects, and found that she herself possessed marked powers of fascination. Then she began to try experiments with her husband. She had no definite end in view. She wanted to gain such mastery over him as to make him entirely subservient to her will. Then she would no longer be galled by the sense that she was part of his property. The end was a foregone conclusion.

She began tentatively. Dorrick developed a habit of dressing a little too lightly for the season of the year, and caught cold several times. His wife scolded him for the carelessness, but to no purpose. Little by little he became more careless. He neglected to see a doctor, after catching a very severe cold, though he had been in the habit of taking the utmost care of his health. Again his wife scolded him, and sent for the doctor herself. Dorrick recovered slowly, but the effects of a severe chill had left him weaker.

Then he committed the crowning imprudence of taking a cold bath in the middle of January, and neglected to thoroughly dry himself. Mrs. Dorrick scolded again, and again summoned the doctor. The doctor was angry, and took Dorrick to task sharply for his carelessness. "It's simple suicide," he said, "simple suicide!" And he left directions for Mrs. Dorrick, and drove away.

He was right; he could do no good; Dorrick had thrown away his life. In about a week he fell a victim to pneumonia, and Mrs. Dorrick was free.

Mrs. Dorrick, the bride of scarce six months, mourned deeply for her husband, and inherited his wealth. Perhaps there was just a little genuineness in her sorrow; a tinge of remorse—but nothing more. To-day she is a leader in society by right of her late husband's name and wealth, her youth, her beauty, and her sorrow. Perhaps she may marry again; this time she will not sell herself—she will not need to. And the man of her choice will be accounted happy; for no one knows of her terrible gift. Perhaps, too, rightly so accounted. Who shall say?

OUT OF RHYME.

I AM a genius. These dolts here say that I am insane. But what do they know of genius?

Bah! it is absurd. It is impossible for me to be a genius and also insane. You know that; you are a well-read man. You can recall the passage, can you not? It proves the sanity of true genius. And I am a true genius.

How do I know? Oh, I have always been a genius.

I knew it first when I began to read books. It said, in the books, that a genius and a poet are born, not made.

Then I knew at once that I was a genius.

Always, I loved poetry. I knew that some day I should write a great poem. I determined to wait for the psychological moment. Meanwhile, I was a genius.

Everything confirmed this. I was an eccentric child, wilful, visionary, whimsical. You remember, do you not, that the books say that genius is eccentric?

Day by day I became a greater genius. I wrote beautiful poems. I dare say you remember them; my name was——

Genius! Genius! It is a beautiful word, is it not?

But the world does not like it. Oh, I knew that.

I have always been a great reader. Perhaps I told you that. And genius always makes every one about it unhappy.

As I grew older I resolved to marry.

I knew we should be unhappy. Men of genius always are. You remember Lord Byron and Carlyle?

We led a miserable existence. Because I was a genius.

I wondered more and more why my genius was not conceded. I had lived up to everything as it is in the books.

I am very fond of those books.

One night I woke up suddenly.

I knew the moment was come. I was going to write my great poem. It was to be a work of infinite genius.

I got up softly and lit the lamp. My wife slept.

Quietly I took up my pen and ink.

There was a beautiful rhythm in my mind.

Then something discordant disturbed me.

Suddenly my eye fell upon my sleeping wife.

Then I knew what had disturbed me.

SHE WAS OUT OF RHYME!

Think of it! I was a poet, and my wife did not rhyme.

For a moment I was stunned. The great poem waited.

I could not go on while she did not rhyme.

If you were a poet you would understand.

I looked at her again and considered.

It was too true. She should have ended with a dactyl; instead, it was an anapæst.

She was not only out of rhyme. She did not scan.

I could bear it no longer. She must be made to rhyme.

I knew just where the fault lay. I cut off her head.

I had to cut more than once, but my razor was strong as well as sharp.

It was so sudden that she only rolled her eyes and groaned.

I did not care for that. I knew that she rhymed now.

Then I dipped my pen into the blood, and continued my poem. Oh, how the genius oozed out of my pen!

The thought, the language, the metre, the rhythm—oh, it was genius! For she was in rhyme now, you know.

So I wrote until morning.

And then, when they came to know why blood flowed under the door, I told them it was rhyme, and showed them the poem.

And they—monstrous!—put me in this place, where they keep saying that I am insane.

If you could only see my poem you would know what I am.

I am not insane. I am a genius.

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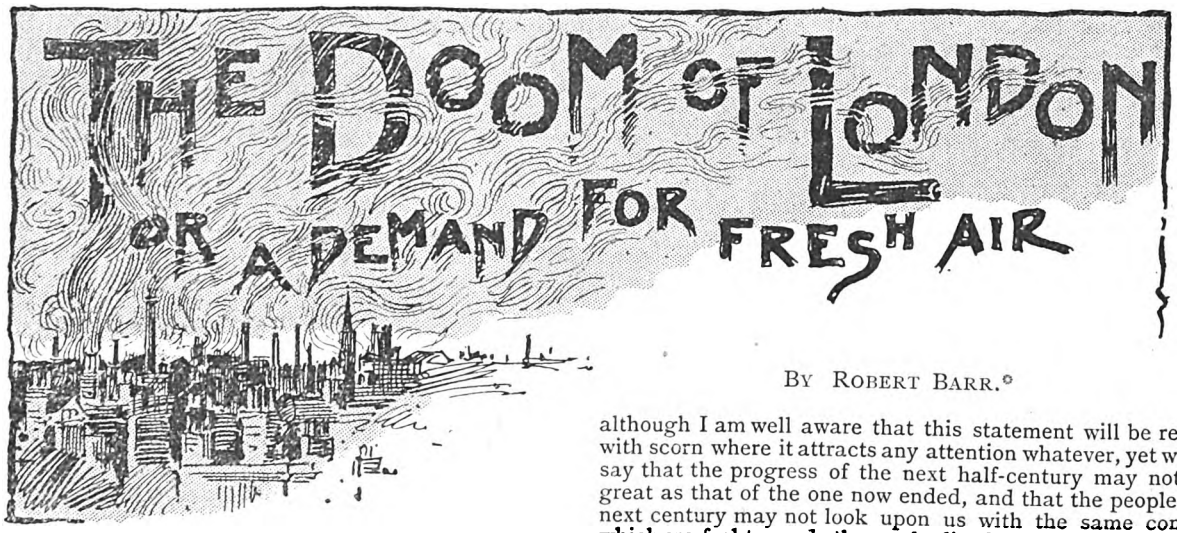
SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 338.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING JUNE 22, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.



By Robert Barr.*

I.—The Self-conceit of the Twentieth Century.

I trust I am thankful that my life has been spared until I have seen that most brilliant epoch of the world's history—the middle of the twentieth century. It would be useless for any man to disparage the vast achievements of the past fifty years, and if I venture to call attention to the fact, now apparently forgotten, that the people of the nineteenth century succeeded in accomplishing many notable things, it must not be imagined that I intend thereby to discount in any measure the marvellous inventions of the present age.

Men have always been somewhat prone to look with a certain condescension upon those who lived fifty or a hundred years before them. This seems to me the especial weakness of the present age; a feeling of national self-conceit, which, when it exists, should at least be kept as much in the background as possible.

It will astonish many to know that such also was a failing of the people of the nineteenth century. They imagined themselves living in an age of progress, and while I am not foolish enough to attempt to prove that they did anything really worth recording, yet it must be admitted by any unprejudiced man of research that their inventions were at least stepping-stones to those of to-day. Although the telephone and telegraph, and all other electrical appliances, are now to be found only in our national museums, or in the private collections of those few men who take any interest in the doings of the last century, nevertheless, the study of the now obsolete science of electricity led up to the recent discovery of vibratory ether, which does the work of the world so satisfactorily.

The people of the nineteenth century were not fools, and although I am well aware that this statement will be received with scorn where it attracts any attention whatever, yet who can say that the progress of the next half-century may not be as great as that of the one now ended, and that the people of the next century may not look upon us with the same contempt which we feel towards those who lived fifty years ago?

Being an old man, I am, perhaps, a laggard who dwells in the past rather than the present; still, it seems to me that such an article as that which appeared recently in *Blackwood* from the talented pen of Prof. Mowbray, of Oxford University, is utterly unjustifiable. Under the title of "Did the People of London Deserve their Fate?" he endeavours to show that the simultaneous blotting-out of millions of human beings was a beneficial event, the good results of which we still enjoy.

According to him, Londoners were so dull-witted and stupid, so incapable of improvement, so sodden in the vice of mere money-gathering, that nothing but their total extinction would have sufficed, and that, instead of being an appalling catastrophe, the doom of London was an unmixed blessing. In spite of the unanimous approval with which this article has been received by the press, I still maintain that such writing is uncalled for, and that there is something to be said for the London of the nineteenth century.

II.—Why London, Warned, was Unprepared.

The indignation I felt in first reading the article alluded to stills remains with me, and it has caused me to write these words, giving some account of what I must still regard, in spite of the sneers of the present age, as the most terrible disaster that ever overtook a portion of the human race.

I shall not endeavour to place before those who read any record of the achievements pertaining to the time in question. But I would like to say a few words about the alleged stupidity of the people of London in making no preparations for a disaster regarding which they had continual and ever-recurring warning. They have been compared with the inhabitants of Pompeii making merry at the foot of a volcano.

In the first place, fogs were so common in London, especially in winter, that no particular attention was paid to them. They were merely looked upon as inconvenient annoyances, interrupting traffic, and prejudicial to health, but I doubt if anyone thought it possible for a fog to become one vast smothering mattress pressed down upon a whole metropolis, extinguishing life as if the city suffered from hopeless hydrophobia.

* As most of my readers are probably aware, Mr. Robert Barr was kind enough to write an appeal on behalf of the cause of the Fresh Air Fund, a few weeks back, which appeared in *Pearson's Weekly*. At the same time he suggested that I might reprint this remarkable story which came out some little time ago in "The Face and the Mask," published by Hutchinson & Co., and, certainly, if it does not arouse the sympathy of those who read it, nothing will. Even now there remains time to do something towards improving the condition of the inhabitants of London, and what surer way than by exerting ourselves to brighten and gladden the lives of the little children who will some day be citizens themselves?

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I have read that victims bitten by mad dogs were formerly put out of their sufferings in that way, although I doubt much if such things were ever actually done, notwithstanding the charges of savage barbarity now made against the people of the nineteenth century.

Probably the inhabitants of Pompeii were so accustomed to the eruptions of Vesuvius that they gave no thought to the possibility of their city being destroyed by a storm of ashes and an overflow of lava. Rain frequently descended upon London, and if a rainfall continued long enough it would certainly have flooded the metropolis, but no precautions were taken against a flood from the clouds.

Why, then, should the people have been expected to prepare for a catastrophe from fog, such as there had never been any experience of in the world's history? The people of London were far from being the sluggish dolts present-day writers would have us believe.

III.—The Coincidence that Came At Last.

As fog has now been abolished both on sea and land, and as few of the present generation have even seen one, it may not be out of place to give a few lines on the subject of fogs in general, and the London fogs in particular, which through local peculiarities differed from all others. A fog was simply watery vapour rising from the marshy surface of the land or from the sea, or condensed into a cloud from the saturated atmosphere. In my day, fogs were a great danger at sea, for people then travelled by means of steamships that sailed upon the surface of the ocean.

Rain frequently descended upon London.

London at the end of the nineteenth century consumed vast quantities of a soft bituminous coal for the purpose of heating rooms and of preparing food. In the morning and during the day, clouds of black smoke were poured forth from thousands of chimneys. When a mass of white vapour arose in the night, these clouds of smoke fell upon the fog, pressing it down, filtering slowly through it, and adding to its density. The sun would have absorbed the fog but for the layer of smoke that lay thick above the vapour and prevented its rays reaching it. Once this condition of things prevailed, nothing could clear London but a breeze of wind from any direction. London frequently had a seven days' fog, but these two conditions never coincided until the last year of the last century. The coincidence, as everyone knows, meant death—death so wholesale that no war the earth has ever seen left such slaughter behind it. To understand the situation, one has only to imagine the fog taking the place of the ashes at Pompeii, and the coal smoke as being the lava that covered it. The result to the inhabitants in both cases was exactly the same.

IV.—The American who Wanted to Sell.

I was at the time confidential clerk to the house of Fulton, Brixton, & Co., a firm in Cannon Street dealing largely in chemicals and chemical apparatus. Fulton I never knew; he died long before my time. Sir John Brixton was my chief—knighted, I believe, for services to his party, or because he was an official in the City during some royal progress through it; I have forgotten which. My small room was next to his large one, and my chief duty was to see that no one had an interview with Sir John unless he was an important man or had important business. Sir John was a difficult man to see, and a difficult man to deal with when he was seen. He had little respect for most men's feelings, and none at all for mine. If I allowed a man to enter his room who should have been dealt with by one of the minor members of the company, Sir John made no effort to conceal his opinion of me.

One day, in the autumn of the last year of the century, an American was shown into my room. Nothing would do but he must have an interview with Sir John Brixton. I told him that it was impossible, as Sir John was extremely busy, but that if he explained his business to me I would lay it before Sir John at the first favourable opportunity. The American demurred at this, but finally accepted the inevitable. He was the inventor, he said, of a machine that would revolutionise life in London, and he wanted Fulton, Brixton, & Co. to become agents for it.

The machine, which he had in a small handbag with him, was of white metal, and it was so constructed that by turning an index it gave out more or less oxygen gas. The gas, I understood, was stored in the interior in liquid form under great pressure, and would last, if I remember rightly, for six months without re-charging. There was also a rubber tube with a mouthpiece attached to it, and the American said that if a man took a few whiffs a day he would experience beneficial results.

Now, I knew there was not the slightest use in showing the machine to Sir John, because we dealt in old-established British apparatus, and never in any of the new-fangled Yankee inventions. Besides, Sir John had a prejudice against Americans, and I felt sure this man would exasperate him, as he was a most cadaverous specimen of the race, with high nasal tones, and a most deplorable pronunciation, much given to phrases savouring of slang; and he exhibited a certain nervous familiarity of demeanour towards people to whom he was all but a complete stranger. It was impossible for me to allow such a man to enter the presence of Sir John Brixton, and, when he returned some days later, I explained to him, I hope with courtesy, that the head of the house regretted very much his inability to consider his proposal regarding the machine.

The ardour of the American seemed in no way dampened by this rebuff. He said I could not have explained the possibilities of the apparatus properly to Sir John; he characterised it as a great invention, and said it meant a fortune to whoever obtained the agency for it.

He hinted that other noted London houses were anxious to secure it, but for some reason not stated he preferred to deal with us. He left some printed pamphlets referring to the invention, and said he would call again.

V.—The American Sees Sir John.

Many a time I have since thought of that persistent American, and wondered whether he left London before the disaster, or was one of the unidentified thousands who were buried in unmarked graves. Little did Sir John think, when he expelled him with some asperity from his presence, that he was turning away an offer of life, and that the heated words he used were, in reality, a sentence of death upon himself.

For my own part, I regret that I lost my temper, and told the American his business methods did not commend themselves to me. Perhaps he did not feel the sting of this; indeed, I feel certain he did not, for, unknowingly, he saved my life. Be that as it may, he showed no resentment, but immediately asked me out to drink with him, an offer I was compelled to refuse.

But I am getting ahead of my story. Indeed, being

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unaccustomed to writing, it is difficult for me to set down events in their proper sequence. The American called upon me several times after I told him our house could not deal with him. He got into the habit of dropping in upon me unannounced, which I did not at all like, but I gave no instructions regarding his intrusions, because I had no idea of the extremes to which he was evidently prepared to go.

One day, as he sat near my desk reading a paper, I was temporarily called from the room. When I returned I thought he had gone, taking his machine with him, but a moment later I was shocked to hear his high nasal tones in Sir John's room alternating with the deep notes of my chief's voice, which apparently exercised no such dread upon the American as upon those who were more accustomed to them.

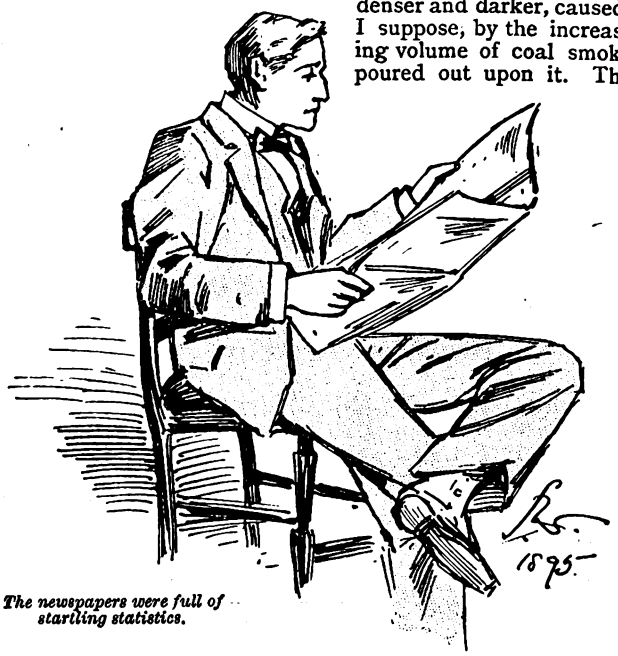
I at once entered the room, and was about to explain to Sir John that the American was there through no connivance of mine, when my chief asked me to be silent, and, turning to his visitor, requested him gruffly to proceed with his interesting narration. The inventor needed no second invitation, but went on with his glib talk, while Sir John's frown grew deeper, and his face became redder, under his fringe of white hair.

When the American had finished, Sir John roughly bade him begone and take his accursed machine with him. He said it was an insult for a person with one foot in the grave to bring a so-called health invention to a robust man who never had a day's illness. I do not know why he listened so long to the American, when he had made up his mind from the first not to deal with him, unless it was to punish me for inadvertently allowing a stranger to enter.

The interview distressed me exceedingly, as I stood there helpless, knowing Sir John was becoming more and more angry with every word the foreigner uttered, but, at last, I succeeded in drawing the inventor and his work into my own room and closing the door. I sincerely hoped that I would never see the American again, and my wish was gratified. He insisted on setting his machine going, and placing it on a shelf in my room. He asked me to slip it into Sir John's room some foggy day and note the effect. The man said he would call again, but he never did.

VI.—How the Smoke Held Down the Fog.

It was on a Friday that the fog came down upon us. The weather was very fine up to the middle of November that autumn. The fog did not seem to have anything unusual about it. I have seen many worse fogs than that appeared to be. As day followed day, however, the atmosphere became denser and darker, caused, I suppose, by the increasing volume of coal smoke poured out upon it. The



The newspapers were full of startling statistics.

Lying face downwards on the floor.

peculiarity about those seven days was the intense stillness of the air. We were, although we did not know it, under an air-proof canopy, and were slowly, but surely, exhausting the life-giving oxygen around us, and replacing it by poisonous carbonic acid gas.

Scientific men have since showed that a simple mathematical calculation might have told us exactly when the last atom of oxygen would have been consumed; but it is easy to be wise after the event. The body of the greatest mathematician in England was found in the Strand. He came that morning from Cambridge.

During a fog there was always a marked increase in the death-rate, and on this occasion the increase was no greater than usual until the sixth day. The newspapers on the morning of the seventh were full of startling statistics, but at the time of going to press the full significance of the alarming figures was not realised. The editorials of the morning papers on the seventh day contained no warning of the calamity that was so speedily to follow their appearance.

I lived then at Ealing, a western suburb of London, and came up every morning to Cannon Street by a certain train. I had up to the sixth day experienced no inconvenience from the fog, and this was largely due I am convinced, to the unnoticed operations of the American machine. On the fifth and sixth days Sir John did not come to the City, but he was in his office on the seventh. The door between his room and mine was closed.

Shortly after ten o'clock I heard a cry in his room, followed by a heavy fall. I opened the door, and saw Sir John lying face downwards on the floor. Hastening towards him, I felt for the first time the deadly effect of the deoxygenised atmosphere, and, before I reached him, I fell, first on one knee, and then headlong.

I realised that my senses were leaving me, and instinctively crawled back to my own room, where the oppression was at once lifted, and I stood again upon my feet, gasping. I closed the door of Sir John's room, thinking it filled with poisonous fumes, as, indeed, it was. I called loudly for help, but there was no answer. On opening the door to the main office, I met again what I thought was the noxious vapour. Speedily as I closed the door, I was impressed by the intense

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silence of the usually busy office, and saw that some of the clerks were motionless on the floor, and others sat with their heads on their desks as if asleep.

Even at this awful moment I did not realise that what I saw was common to all London, and not, as I imagined, a local disaster, caused by the breaking of some carboys in our cellar. (It was filled with chemicals of every kind, of whose properties I was ignorant, dealing as I did with the accountant, and not with the scientific side of the business.)

I opened the only window in my room, and again shouted for help. The street was silent and dark in the ominously still fog, and what now froze me with horror was meeting the same deadly, stifling atmosphere that was in the rooms. In falling I brought down the window and shut out the poisonous air.

Again I revived, and slowly the true state of things began to dawn upon me. I was in an oasis of oxygen. I at once surmised that the machine on my shelf was responsible for the existence of this oasis in a vast desert of deadly gas. I took down the American's machine, fearful in moving it that I might stop its working. Taking the mouthpiece between my lips I again entered Sir John's room, this time without feeling any ill effects.

My poor master was long beyond human help. There was evidently no one alive in the building except myself. Out in the street all was silent and dark. The gas was extinguished, but here and there in shops the incandescent lights was still weirdly burning, depending, as they did, on accumulators, and not on direct engine power.

I turned automatically towards Cannon Street Station, knowing my way to it even if blindfolded, stumbling over bodies prone on the pavement, and in crossing the street I ran against a motionless 'bus, spectral in the fog, with dead horses lying in front, and their reins dangling from the nerveless hand of a dead driver. The ghostlike passengers, equally silent, sat bolt upright or hung over the edge-boards in attitudes horribly grotesque.

VII.—The Train with its Trail of Dead.

If a man's reasoning faculties were alert at such a time (I confess mine were dormant), he would have known there could be no train at Cannon Street Station, for if there was not enough oxygen in the air to keep a man alive, or a gas-jet alight, there would certainly not be enough to enable an engine fire to burn, even if the engineer retained sufficient energy to attend to his task.

At times instinct is better than reason, and it proved so in this case. The railway in those days from Ealing came under the City in a deep tunnel. It would appear that in this underground passage the carbonic acid gas would first find a resting-place on account of its weight; but such was not the fact. I imagine that a current through the tunnel brought from the outlying districts a supply of comparatively pure air that, for some minutes after the general disaster, maintained human life.

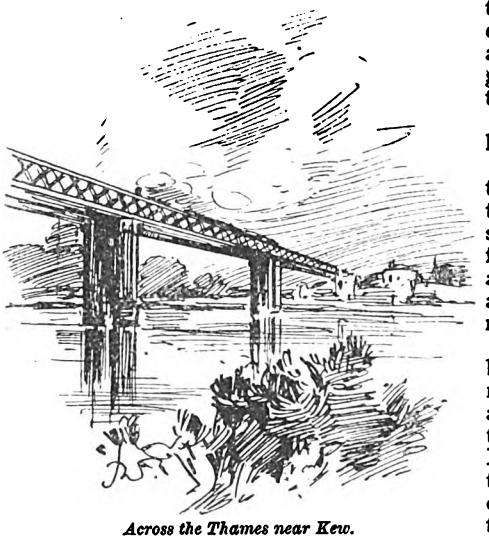
Be this as it may, the long platforms of Cannon Street underground station presented a fearful spectacle. A train stood at the down platform. The electric lights burned fitfully. This platform was crowded with men, who fought each other like demons, apparently for no reason, because the train was already packed as full as it could hold. Hundreds were dead under foot, and every now and then a blast of foul air came along the tunnel, whereupon hundreds more would relax their grips, and succumb.

Over their bodies the survivors fought, with continually thinning ranks. It seemed to me that most of those in the standing train were dead. Sometimes a desperate body of fighters climbed over those lying in heaps, and, throwing open a carriage door, hauled out passengers already in, and took their places, gasping. Those in the train offered no resistance, and lay motionless where they were flung, or rolled helplessly under the wheels of the train. I made my way along the wall as well as I could to the engine, wondering why the train did not go. The engineer lay on the floor of his cab, and the fires were out.

Custom is a curious thing. The struggling mob, fighting wildly for places in the carriages, were so accustomed to trains arriving and departing that it apparently occurred to none of them that the engineer was human and subject to the same atmospheric conditions as themselves. I placed the mouthpiece between the purple lips, and, holding my own breath, like a submerged man, succeeded in reviving him.

He said that if I gave him the machine he would take out the train as far as the steam already in the boiler would carry it. I refused to do this, but stepped on to the engine with him, saying it would keep life in both of us until we got out into better air. In a surly manner he agreed to this, but he did not play fair.

Each time he refused to give up the machine until I was in a fainting condition with holding in my breath; and, finally, he felled me to the floor of the cab. I imagine that the machine rolled off the train as I fell and that he jumped after it. The remarkable thing is, that neither of us needed the machine, for I remember that just after we started I noticed through the open iron door that the engine fire suddenly became aglow again, although at the time I was in too great a state of bewilderment and horror to understand what it meant.



Across the Thames near Kew.

A western gale had sprung up—an hour too late.

Even before we left Cannon Street those who still survived were comparatively safe, for one hundred and sixty-seven persons were rescued from that fearful heap of dead on the platforms, although many died within a day or two after, and others never recovered their reason.

When I regained my senses after the blow dealt by the engineer, I found myself alone, and the train speeding across the Thames near Kew. I tried to stop the engine, but did not succeed. However, in experimenting, I managed to turn on the air brake, which in some degree checked the train and lessened the impact when the crash came at Richmond terminus.

I sprang off on the platform before the engine reached the terminal buffers, and saw passing me, like a nightmare, the ghastly train-load of the dead. Most of the doors were swinging open, and every compartment was jammed full, although, as I afterwards learnt, at each curve of the permanent way, or extra lurch of the train, bodies had fallen out all along the line.

The smash at Richmond made no difference to the passengers. Besides myself, only two persons were taken alive from the train, and one of these—his clothes torn from his back in the struggle—was sent to an asylum, where he was never able to tell who he was; neither, as far as I know, did anyone ever claim him.

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The Supreme Sacrifice

On the banks of the Orge, but a short distance from Belles-Fontaines, can be seen an elegant little château of modern construction, roofed with slate. Standing on the hill-side, in the midst of grassy lawns, and surrounded by low trees, the house attracts the attention of the few rowers who from time to time descend the Orgeto Juvisy. Occasionally a fisherman —in search of a good place to throw his hook—has perceived, on the heights above, a woman, her face covered with a thick veil, and a young man who walked slowly beside her, leaning on her arm. At the slightest sound of an oar, both disappeared round the bend of a path or behind a clump of shrubs. The people of Juvisy had vainly employed every effort to penetrate the mystery.

After having exhausted all imaginable suppositions, the innkeeper and the grocer of Juvisy had decided that the young man was a maniac, whom his family had imprisoned in that property, bounded by a high wall on the side towards the road, and by a river on that towards the fields. As for the woman, she was a relative, or a hireling, and when a painter, returning from Belles-Fontaines, asked who was the owner of that sheltered, mysterious-looking park, without the slightest hesitation they replied: "It is a madman who lives there."

. . . . . .

On July 10, 1884, during one of those periods of heat which Senegambia envies us, the Viscount de Montbrun left his small hotel in the Rue Varnet at nine in the morning, and walked down the Champs Elysées. M. de Montbrun was one of those Parisians who never leave Paris.

"The sea," said he, "was made for fishermen and sailors. It has its beauties, but it is agreeable only one hour each day. As soon as it begins to ebb, it uncovers a lot of pestilential mud, compared with which our great sewer is a bottle of cologne. As for the country, it is always just as hot there as in Paris, with this difference—you never know what to do with your evenings."

On all sides he saw carriages loaded with trunks. The preparations for the approaching 14th of July festivities saddened his heart, for the true Parisian is the inveterate enemy of public holidays and of all manifestations which disturb his repose.

"Where can I take refuge for three days?" thought M. de Montbrun. The year previous he had gone to St. Germain, and they had made just as much racket, and shot off quite as many bombs there as at Paris. Montbrun then remembered that he had promised himself an excursion into Brittany before the vandaliser had finished transforming that old corner of his country. To see again Vitré Fougères, pass a day at St. Malo, and then return, would be just the thing. He would thus avoid the crowd and noise.

On the morrow Montbrun arrived at Vitré. It was Saturday evening. In provincial towns, to fairly judge the collective beauty of their women, it is necessary to take one's post on Sunday at the door of a church. That is why Montbrun stood as early as eight in the morning before the splendid edifice dedicated to St. Martin, waiting for mass to be over.

Before leaving Paris he had thrown into a pillar-box a few words addressed to Mlle. Paula Salimberi, an artistic dancer at the Eden Theatre. Paula was a superb girl, a native of Southern Italy, with all the ardour of that clime beaming from her large, dark eyes. She had made her début at Naples, and, after a season at the Italian Theatre at Nice, had displayed to the Parisians her irreproachable dancing and varied graces.

Montbrun was then twenty-eight years of age, a handsome man, well versed in theatrical doings, whose personal charms were augmented by an income of sixty thousand francs a year. His admiration for the charming ballet-dancer was at once reciprocated, and they were soon launched upon the waves of a desperate flirtation. But the young man's fancy was short-lived. It was not long before the shallow attractions of the Italian beauty ceased to please him, and he longed to escape from her altogether.

But Othello's jealousy was puerile compared with hers. Montbrun was fairly afraid of her. He dared not tell her outright what the gradual decline of his attentions portended. He had simply dropped a note to her upon his departure for Vitré, bidding her a long farewell, and intimating that he might never see her again. As he believed that she had no means of procuring his address, he thought himself now well out of her way.

Mass was over, and people were beginning to come out of the church. Suddenly Montbrun was seized with admiration. Amid the crowd he had caught sight of the face of a young girl. Never in his most ardent dreams had he imagined aught so lovely as that face, with its ideal lines, its more than earthly beauty—beauty so calm, so serene, so radiantly pure that it seemed that of one of God's angels.

He wondered if it were possible that such a creature existed. He held his breath as he gazed on her descending the church steps, smiling at an older woman who accompanied her—her mother, doubtless. Instinctively, Montbrun followed them from afar, and saw them enter a small house of modest appearance. Taking the number, he returned to the hotel and asked for information.

"The beautiful girl? Mlle. de Larade! Her father was an excellent man; his family was rich before the Revolution, but each succeeding generation had sold off, little by little, lands and fields and woods to keep up their rank. Finally, poor M. de Larade had taken refuge in a small building formerly occupied by his servant. There he lived, as best he could, with his wife and his daughter Jeanne. He had probably not more than twelve or fifteen francs a day income; but the ladies knew how to live on very little, while he, poor gentleman, had even given up taking snuff."

The Viscount wrote to his lawyer at Paris, requesting him at once to send him a letter of introduction to a lawyer of Vitré, and to apprise that gentleman that he, Montbrun, came of a good family, had the reputation of being a man of honour, and was not without fortune. After which the lawyer of Vitré would effect his acquaintance with a family wherein he hoped to find happiness.

Everything happened as the Viscount had arranged. He was presented to Mlle. Jeanne de Larade, found her all he had thought, came again and again to her home, and was finally accepted as her future husband, upon certain conditions. Montbrun promised everything they wished. He was in an ecstasy of bliss during the few weeks which preceded the day fixed for his marriage.

In the midst of his dreaming he received, through his lawyer—he had carefully concealed his address from all others—a letter from one of his friends, who wrote him that Paula Salimberi was seeking him in every direction, and uttering direful threats.

At length the eventful day arrived. The contract had been signed. Two friends of Montbrun had come from Paris to serve him as witnesses, and on the 10th of September, at eleven in the morning, the guests left in carriages for the Mayor's office. The Viscount, and two or three persons, were speaking with a functionary at that office, when they were startled by a piercing scream, followed by a loud clamour of voices.

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Rushing to the windows they saw a hurrying crowd, amid which a small group was massed about a recumbent form.

"What has happened?" exclaimed Montbrun, almost suffocated by dismay.

"An unknown woman has thrown vitriol in the face of Mlle. de Larade. All one side of the poor child's face is badly burnt, and an eye destroyed. They are carrying her to her home."

Montbrun fell, rigid and unconscious, to the floor.

He tried vainly during the day to be received at the home of his betrothed.

"Tell him that he will never see me again!" she cried, shedding tears that, rolling over her scarred cheeks, burnt her like fire.

The suffering of M. de Montbrun was intense; consumed with fever, his heart seemed pressed in a vice.

A little later a small package was delivered to him.

The unknown woman—arrested immediately after the perpetration of her crime—stated that her name was Paula Salimberi; her motive, vengeance.

Montbrun shut himself in his bedroom and opened his parcel, which contained a small quantity of white powder. Folding a handkerchief into a bandage, he measured out two spoonfuls of the powder and spread it on the bandage, which he then placed over his eyes, tying it in a firm knot at the back of his head.

Two hours after, he arrived at the home of M. de Larade, in a coupé, from which the lawyer of Vitré helped him to descend.

"Do not come in," said Madame de Larade, "it would kill Jeanne."

"Tell her that she may receive me now," replied M. de Montbrun; "we shall be married as soon as she is able to leave the house. For me, her image will remain eternally what it was—I am blind."

. . . . . .

M. and Mme. de Montbrun lead a retired life in their château at Juvisy. Jeanne adores the husband who for her renounced for ever the sight of sky and fields and flowers. As for the blind man, he has kept intact the picture of an ideal maiden smilingly descending the steps of the church of St. Martin. He is happy, for, in the unending night to which he has condemned himself, he sees her always young, always beautiful.

IT was a fine afternoon, towards the end of September.

In the quaint and narrow street of a little Spanish town, situated upon the shores of the Mediterranean, a crowd had gathered round a lottery office to stare at the list of winning numbers attached to the wall. Upon the outside of the crowd stood a woman dressed in rags, a lottery ticket in her hand. Unable to read herself, she was imploring others to help her.

"Has my number won?" she was crying. "Ah, poor Dios! Tell me, has my number won!"

But she could get no response. Her neighbours were too much absorbed in their own fortune or misfortune to attend to her.

While she was still reiterating her solitary question, there appeared at the bend of the street a graceful little lady, wearing a mantilla, arranged over a high comb. She had a very sweet face, upon which was stamped an expression of patient resignation. The lustre of her large, dark eyes was somewhat faded, and her dark hair was streaked with grey. But as she walked alone, more briskly than Spanish ladies usually do, much more briskly than the servant behind her liked, she smiled to herself as if under the influence of a pleasant dream, and used her fan with just enough coquetry to suggest that the dream related to an absent lover.

"Let me see your number," she said to the woman with the lottery ticket. She took the paper and compared it with the one on the wall. "No," she added presently, "I don't see your number."

"I have not lost again," cried the miserable speculator, "Say I have not lost again."

"I fear you have," said the lady gently. "But see, here is a 'real' for you."

Without waiting to hear the blessings which were invoked upon her, she walked swiftly away, murmuring, "My number has won, at any rate." And then she smiled.

As she passed by, the shopkeepers sitting within their doors cast after her sleepy glances in which could be detected an element of pity, if not of contempt.

"It is long enough she had waited for him," said an officer in artillery uniform, one of a group sitting outside a casino.

"Poor fool," said another. "He has seen many brighter eyes than hers."

"She thinks not."

"Miguel faithful!" exclaimed a third. "But it is wasting soap to lather a Moor's head!" Whereat they all laughed.

Everybody in the town knew the story of the Dona Dolores Morano de Cuesta, and no Spaniard could understand it. While a mere girl she had been betrothed to a young officer named Miguel Garciay Blanco, who had a fine long list of ancestors, but no money. For this reason the marriage had been deferred until he had gained a rank that would enable him to support a wife. He had for years been away from his native land on foreign service, and now, this afternoon, his vessel was expected home from Cuba. Judged by his letters, he still loved her; certainly she still loved him, or, rather, her remembrance of him. Their constancy puzzled all who knew them. It was only to be accounted for (so they said) by supposing that they were both a little weak in the head.

The town gate opened upon the quay. Underneath the wall lay the usual concourse of cripples, basking in the sunlight and imploring alms. Immediately in front a band was playing.

When Dolores arrived upon the scene, a troopship had just come alongside. Swarthy soldiers were pouring along the unprotected gangways, and forming in line upon the quay. Dolores, with heightened colour and quickened pace, pressed forward to join the crowd which had gathered, and eagerly scanned the face of each new arrival.

A tall, thin officer, wearing a commandant's uniform, stepped on shore, and, merely bestowing a careless, indolent smile upon the spectators, passed her so closely that she could almost touch him. She looked at his handsome, furrowed features, then her face brightened. She was trembling in every limb.

"Miguel!" she gasped, with a dart of the hand. He turned, pulled his moustache, and stared at her for several moments before he recognised her.

"What? Dolores? Is it you?" he said.

"Oh, Miguel, don't you know me?" she faltered.

"Yes, I know you now (he shook hands with her), but how

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changed you are. Your hair is grey." He was back in the bygone years, and had forgotten the change in himself.

"But my heart is unchanged," she said.

"Ah!" he replied carelessly, "how I have looked forward to this moment!"

"And now you are disappointed." She was almost crying.

"Disappointed! No. Why should you say so. But I must be going" (as a bugle reminded him of his duties). "Shall we meet to-morrow—at the old time and place?"

"To-morrow! Why not to-night? At Isabel's?"

"I fear I shall be too busy."

She looked at him in despair. "To-morrow, then," she replied, and raising his cap he went away.

Dolores remained where she was until the soldiers had marched away; then, tottering to a chair, sat down and hid her white face behind her fan.

Was it for this she had waited so patiently, through long and lonely years? "Your hair is grey," he had said to her. What did those cruel words mean? That those old days had gone, never to return? As she sat there in the sunlight her grief vanished away, and in its place there arose a fierce desire to be revenged. But now several of her friends had joined her, and although she chatted with them she found it so difficult (as most Spanish women do) to control her feelings, that, calling her maid, she soon started for home. On her way she met the woman with the lottery ticket, now in a state of great excitement.

"You were mistaken, beautiful lady," she cried. "My number has won, blessed be the Virgin!"

"Ah!" said Dolores; "it is I who have lost."

Dolores occupied the first floor of a house situated at the corner of the "Plaza," a fine open square with fountains in the centre. Once inside her room she allowed her feelings more freedom. Her maid, while engaged in changing her walking dress for a loose wrapper, was surprised to find her usually amiable mistress so petulant and out of sorts. When alone, Dolores vented her anger upon the inanimate objects around her, notably Miguel's portrait, which she threw to the ground and stamped upon. Having cooled her anger, she sat down to think out a scheme of revenge; as evening drew on, and the lamps were lighted, she was still elaborating her plans. Yet, when finished, they were very simple. She had decided to request the assistance of a cousin, a hot-headed duellist and an officer of the Marines. He was to provoke a quarrel with Miguel, call him out, and run him through the body. That was all.

Dolores began to write to her cousin, but was interrupted by the tinkling of a bell. She knew well what it signified, and seizing the lamp she hurried out to the balcony.

A procession was just leaving the monastery at the opposite corner of the "Plaza" beyond the fountains. It was headed by a boy with a bell; then came a white-hooded priest with something in his hands; then black-robed priests, who held a red umbrella over his head; and, lastly, a motley crowd from the streets around. It advanced swiftly towards Dolores, preceded by crowds of women who knelt to let it pass them, then running forward knelt again. At the ringing of the bell lamps appeared in all the balconies, and from all, as the priests glided silently and swiftly through the gloom, kneeling figures looked down upon them.

Dolores, kneeling in her balcony, prayed for the departing soul. But with this prayer was mingled another—that her revenge might soon be realised. It seemed as though a complete change had been wrought in this woman—hitherto so kind and gentle and patient in her long wait for her lover, now burning with revenge—that revenge being the death of her lover. Therefore, preoccupied as she was with her solitary idea, it was with unusual indifference that she watched the rapid approach of the priests bearing the Sacrament. She saw them pass under her balcony, and saw them turn into the street at the corner of which her home stood. Then her curiosity was slightly aroused.

"He lives in the end house, if he has gone back to his old quarters," she murmured, still kneeling. Her interest grew as the procession sped on. When was it going to stop? Now? Or now? No, it held on its way. But, oh! What was that, a cold thrill ran through her veins, it had stopped at his house. "Oh, Sainted Mother," she cried, "surely no harm has happened to him!"

Summoning her maid, she ran out into the street.

"Who is dying?" she demanded of the first person she met.

"The Commandant Miguel," was the reply.

Forgetful of appearances, of her revenge, of everything, she rushed back for her mantilla.

"It can't be," she gasped. Her maid tried to soothe her, but all to no purpose. She was determined to see him, and for this purpose again went out, passing the procession on its way back to the monastery; she sped on to his house. Arrived at the door she stopped and rang. The servant who appeared said with fear, "Ah; child of my heart, you are too late. But blessed be the Virgin, he received the Sacrament before he died."

Unmindful of her words, Dolores pushed past the excited domestic, who had thus addressed her, and entered the house. She knew the situation of Miguel's rooms, by the windows, although she had never been inside the house before. So with noiseless steps she ran up the stairs to the first floor. The door of the bedroom stood ajar, a lamp was burning on a small table by the side of the bed on which he lay.

So she could see his stiff, cold features only too plainly. Yet she would not believe that he was dead. She flung herself upon the bed, and, passionately kissing his cold lips, implored him to speak to her. Oh, why would he not answer her? Why was he so silent? Did he know what she had been doing when the bell summoned her to the window?

So passed many a weary hour, until at last they moved her gently away, and she suffered herself to be taken home, where she remained, listless, dazed, and motionless.

"He is not dead! he cannot be dead!" was her one cry.

But the next morning, when the usual black-edged card announced the time of the funeral, her passionate energy broke out afresh. Clinging to her solitary idea, she visited Miguel's colonel in order to request him to defer the funeral. This request was denied, but, thinking to pacify her, the colonel agreed to have him buried in the catacombs and a sentry put there to guard the tomb. Solaced with this promise, she went home.

The funeral was a very grand one, the procession long; but it was over at last, and the single sentry left at his post at the gate of the catacombs.

The sentry, a young Spaniard, full of Spanish superstition, did not at all relish his new duty. Shortly before dawn, while the valleys were still plunged in gloom, and only the higher peaks had as yet caught the glow of the advancing sun, a startling thing happened. A tall figure, wrapped in grave-clothes, came rushing through the cemetery, with its white drapery flowing behind. It made straight for the gate where stood the trembling sentry.

Here was the ghost he had been dreading. There was no time to turn, no time to consider, and lifting his rifle, he fired, almost at random, and fled. He heard a wild, unearthly cry, which seemed to freeze his blood; he heard it again, echoing among the mountains, but nothing else. On, on he flew, but presently, finding he was not pursued, stopped on a slight hill, and thence looked back upon the white, motionless figure, upon a coach, which was being driven at full speed along the road. Seeing that it stopped at the cemetery gate he hastened down to meet it.

"Where is he? Where is he? He was alive when I left home, I know he was!" cried a woman's voice.

"Señora, a white thing came tearing across the grass; I fired; it lies at the gates."

Dolores sprang out of the coach, and was beside the "white thing" in an instant. "You have killed him!" she exclaimed, and fell back.

"You brute!" cried her maid. "You have killed her, too!"

It was quite true. The terrible awakening had come to her lover, just as Dolores had thought, and now she had followed him to the Land of Shadows.

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THE TENTH OF JUNE.

By John K. Leys, *Author of "In the Toils," "My Hindoo Friend," &c., &c.*

Illustrated by Raymond Potter.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The End of the Vendetta.

"Backwater!" cried Geoffrey.

It is doubtful whether the three Frenchmen understood the word, but they understood well enough what was meant, for they protested loudly that the boat would be dashed in pieces—she was already overladen—she would be swamped if they took another man on board.

But Geoffrey, taking the fourth oar, held it out to the sinking man. He had just strength enough to grasp it, and Geoffrey towed him up to the gunwale of the boat.

"Pull ahead now!" he cried; and a few minutes later he and the General managed to haul the Rajah on board.

He lay like one dead in the bottom of the boat. It was impossible, cramped as they were for room, to examine his wound, or do anything beyond trying to make him conscious.

At length he opened his eyes, and said, when Leila asked him, that he was not suffering much pain. All they could do for him was to shelter him as much as possible from the rain and the spray that washed over them; and Leila made her feet a pillow for his head.

No one but Leila, indeed, had much time to think of him after he was pulled out of the sea. The question was whether they would be able to make the land. Every now and then, as the tiny craft rolled in the trough of the sea, it seemed as if she must be swamped outright. It seemed impossible to make headway against the wind.

Ernest Fresual, indeed, thought they should abandon the attempt to land that night, and let the wind carry them out to sea, where they might be picked up next day; and, the Englishmen, not being sailors, were inclined to agree with him. Jacques Fresnal, however, pulled away at his oar without vouchsafing a reply.

"Suppose the wind falls, we might keep afloat till we are picked up," he said at length. "But suppose it rises, what then? We should be swamped; that's all. Bah!"

"I think we are getting a little further in," said Geoffrey, after a long look at the horizon. "I don't think the waves are quite so high. We must be getting under the lee of the land, for I am sure the wind is stronger than ever."

Geoffrey towed him up to the gunwale of the boat.

They landed without much difficulty.

Fresual nodded assent.

"It is stronger," he said. "If we were now where we were an hour ago, we should be in the water."

There were no lights to guide them but the street lamps of the town, and these still seemed a long way off, when a loud sound like an explosion, followed by a strange rumbling noise fell on their ears.

"What can that be?" each one said, and looked at his neighbour. Even those who were rowing, stopped, and bent their heads to listen. But the noise was not repeated.

The Rajah had heard it, and had grasped the side of the boat with one hand, and pulled himself up till he was able to look out on the horizon. There was nothing but black darkness to be seen; but there was in his great eyes a look of intelligence and satisfaction.

Leila noticed it, and when she had helped him to lie down again in the bottom of the boat, she whispered to him,

"What was that dreadful noise?"

"The steamer is blown up," he said composedly.

"What!—You do not mean——?"

"Do you not remember? You made me promise to kill you, rather than that the Hindoos should keep you. There was only one way to do that and to avenge your death at the same time. I fastened down the safety-valve of the engine. Now the boiler has burst, and as she is helpless she must either go to the bottom, or those on board of her will be taken. They cannot escape."

The girl shuddered, but she said no more.

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The dawn was breaking when the boat, laden to the gunwale, drew slowly near to the beach. It was now blowing harder than ever, but near shore the water was comparatively smooth, and they landed without much difficulty.

While the General and Geoffrey were conveying Leila and the Rajah to Madame Fresual's, Linton thought of Captain Byngham, and ran off to the Villa Carnot. But the house was empty, and the two lamps that had been placed in the upper window had been extinguished. It was easy to guess what had happened. Byngham had managed to slip off his gag, and had called out; or one of the sailors, perhaps, in search of more brandy, had gone into the sitting-room and found him. Then they had released him, and they had all gone off together.

When the light grew stronger, the false *Aphrodite* was visible, a big black dot against the northern horizon. The explosion had rendered her helpless, though it had not sent her to the bottom, as the Rajah had imagined it would do.

She was still riding at anchor, when she was boarded some hours' later by a French revenue cutter, and not a soul was on board. The Hindoos, rather than be taken, had gone off in another small boat, and as they never were heard of again, there could not be a doubt that their boat had been swamped, and all on board of her lost.

A big black dot against the northern horizon.

As for Captain Byngham, he had disappeared entirely, and for some time the General and his friends were much puzzled to know what had become of him. After a time, however, it transpired that a small pleasure boat, which had been lying on the beach that night, not far from the Villa Carnot, was missing; and it seemed tolerably certain that Captain Byngham, and the four seamen, had gone off in her with the intention of reaching the steamer.

If they did reach her they must have left her again after the explosion, along with the Hindoos; but it seemed more likely that they had not come up to the steamer before the explosion, and had missed her in the darkness, there being no one on board to signal to them, and so had been blown out to sea and lost.

The story of the Tenth of June is now told

The Rajah's wound was not a mortal one. He recovered; and as the General insisted on taking him to Seacombe Towers, as soon as he could be moved there, to be nursed into convalescence, it was only natural that Jane Stoddart should be asked to take a share in the good work. The consequence was that five months later the eldest Miss Stoddart became the Ranee of Nagore.

Geoffrey's wooing prospered wonderfully after that memorable Tenth of June. Indeed the General himself said to him the very next morning:

"You remember a conversation you and I had in London just before we started for America? Well, after what has happened I wish you to forget what I said then. In short, I like you, Geoffrey; I owe my life to you; and if you can make the running with Leila, I won't play the part of the stern father. If Leila chooses elsewhere she can tell you herself; but as far as I am concerned I wish you success."

Geoffrey took the General at his word; and that same evening Leila laid her little hand in his and promised to be his wife.

Among the various wedding presents that were given and received on the occasion of the double wedding, was one which attracted great attention. This was the curious black opal which had been taken from the Temple at Churruckpore.

It was presented to the Rajah by the General; but the Ranee does not count it among her treasures. Amavati knew it from Chunder Sen's description to be the mysterious gem which the Brahmins revered as a relic of the last avatar, or incarnation, of Vishnu. He knew that in their eyes it was of priceless value, and he offered it to the priests of his old faith as a farewell gift. No white man's eye will ever behold it again.

THE END.

AT THE PRESENT MOMENT

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THE BROTHERS LORKE.

THE Hon. Richard Plantagenet Lorke differed from most Englishmen of distinction in that his breeding was as unimpeachable as his physical comeliness was striking. In conversation his tones were not self-assertive and blatant, but, on the contrary, as soft and winning as a woman's. He never bragged of his nation's achievements, nor sneered covertly at the manners and customs of the hospitable American friends that entertained him so handsomely. He did not make a practice of expressing his contempt for American society by going to dinner parties in tweed clothes, and had no fondness for indulging in heavy drinking, and then criticising the quality of his host's liquor.

He was civil to all men, and gracefully polite to all women—particularly the old ones. Moreover, he had not yet been known to play cards for high stakes or borrow money from the members of the clubs at which he had been put up. He had even been known to recognise the point of a joke, and—most marvellous of all!—occasionally crack a very fair one himself.

All this was very extraordinary to the critical American society, though, of course, no one was so impolite as to comment upon it openly. It was little Freddy Dinkelspiel, the rich jeweller's grandson, that would have obliged any foreign nobleman on earth with a loan of ten thousand, and thanked the fates for the opportunity of doing it, that confided, awe-stricken and *sotto voce*, to one of his cronies: "Of course, I like Lorke as well as any of you, but, hang me, if he doesn't seem too much of the gentleman to be the son of an Earl."

This was some six weeks after the superb figure and golden Grecian head of the Hon. Richard Plantagenet Lorke had first appeared to dazzle the youthful and gilded set of the Whipper-Snapper Club. There was a freshness about his smile, and a sunniness in the straightforward gaze of his bright, blue eyes that won him a welcome at once. Further than that, the man that had introduced him, young Caspar Van Dunk, the heir to untold millions, and the very embodiment of all that was exclusive and patrician in New York life, was not a man to be slighted. Van's word was law in such matters, and his assurance that the Englishman's credentials were unimpeachable was more than sufficient.

The newcomer's magnetic personality did the rest. Van Dunk and Lorke were quite inseparable. They walked, drove, dined, and went to the theatre together. They had made each other's acquaintance on the steamer one very stormy day, on which the latter had saved the former's sister a very ugly fall by catching her in his arms at the very instant that a plunge of the vessel had overturned the steamer chair upon which she was reclining while very, very ill.

Truth to tell, the young Briton had never quite forgotten that instant either. Edith was one of those exasperatingly bewitching creatures with the physique of a well-developed woman and the face of a child; and her pathetic glance of gratitude, as the pallor of her cheeks blossomed for an instant into a delicious rosy tint, had made him think momentarily of heaven and the angels.

After that there had been a few stolen moments on deck, when the shy pleasure in the girl's face as he approached her had set his stout British heart beating like a sledge-hammer; and he had, of course, seen her quite often at her own house, where he was a welcome and favoured guest.

But yesterday, only yesterday, when they were cantering in the Park together, with the groom a safe distance behind, she must have grown alarmed at the words he was finding himself sufficiently audacious to utter; for she told him with much stammering and blushing, of her engagement to Mr. Skinnand Fleece, a very prosperous lawyer who was expected home from Europe that very day. And the Hon. Richard Plantagenet Lorke, as they walked their horses homeward, was sufficient of a brute and beast to experience joy in the knowledge that his dainty companion's lip was all a-quiver, and her tender grey eyes melting with moisture suspiciously akin to tears.

In consequence of all of which, the Englishman, second son of an earl though he was, was not in an exactly happy frame of mind as he walked up Fifth Avenue this bright autumn afternoon on his way to his apartments. He was to dine at the Van Dunks', and would meet, among others, Mr. Skinnand Fleece. The thought brought a steely look into the sunny, blue eyes, but it departed instantly, and he found his brain shaping a wish that the girl this infernal lawyer was to rob him of might be as happy as a queen all the days of her life.

. . . . . .

The dinner was, of course, a masterpiece. Banker Van Dunk's dinners always were masterpieces. Lorke, by the way, had quite won his heart by praising them. There were some of Caspar's intimates from the club, a sprinkling of girls and dowagers, and one or two of the host's fellow magnates from Wall Street. The happy Mr. Fleece did not appear—he was expected later—and Lorke was supremely happy during the hour and a half that the beautiful Edith sat beside him.

While the people were chatting in twos and threes in the drawing-room, Lorke and Edith found their way, quite accidentally, of course, into a recess curtained off by half-drawn portières, and in which stood some great vases of ferns and palms. Someone was playing a noisy waltz on the gilt-covered Steinway, and the music quite drowned the half-whispered tones in which they spoke. Lorke's brain was on fire. He had not uttered a dozen words before he broke off short with: "I love you, dear."

The girl's head dropped. "Hush!" she whispered, breathlessly. But they were unobserved, and Lorke, after one swift look round, bent his head and kissed her on the lips.

At the instant he did so there was a commotion in the room, and everyone was welcoming Mr. Skinnand Fleece, who had just entered. As for Edith, she had turned very pale, and seemed about to faint. She managed to control herself, but leaned heavily upon Lorke's arm as they advanced to meet the new-comer.

The glance of Mr. Fleece, who was a very tall man, of perhaps, thirty-five, with a very white complexion and coal-black hair and beard, was not altogether pleasant as it rested on the couple. But suddenly the expression of his white face changed totally. He bestowed on Lorke, for an instant, a cold stare of stony contempt, and as he drew Edith's arm with an exasperating air of proprietorship within his own, he said to her icily: "I am sorry to find you in such company."

The Englishman's lips turned white, and he moved a step forward. Everyone in the room heard the remark. There was a dead silence, which was broken by Lorke:

"I have not the honour of knowing you, sir," he said simply, "but perhaps you will be good enough to explain your meaning."

"Bluffing won't go," rejoined Fleece coarsely. "Of course you don't remember me, eh?"

"I do not, sir."

"Then let me tell you," answered the lawyer, with great heat, "that I remember you—yes, very well indeed—as the accomplished gentleman that swindled me out of £400 at Algiers three months ago by palming the ace of spades in a game of Nap. Do I make myself understood?"

The look of blank amazement that came over Lorke's face gave way swiftly to one of fury. The veins in his forehead swelled. He clenched his fists and seemed ready to spring at the throat of the man that had made this fearful accusation.

"You speak falsely, sir," he said quietly.

Meanwhile horrified murmurs of amazement broke from the other guests. Before anyone could speak, Van Dunk, senior

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marched forward and said: "Fleece, this gentleman is my friend and my guest. You might have chosen a more fitting time for your denunciation; but since you have delivered it, I suppose you are prepared to prove what you have said."

"Prove it? Of course, I am," sneered the lawyer. Edith's white lips parted in a pathetic gasp, and the tears came into her eyes. "See! Previous to swindling me, this *gentleman* had presented me with his photograph. I have kept it as a pleasant souvenir of my visit to Algiers, and by the best luck in the world I happen to have it with me. Examine it, sir," handing Lorke the portrait he had wrenched from his pocket; "examine it closely, and then try and summon up the nerve to deny your own identity."

Mechanically the Englishman extended his hand and took the picture. He looked at it, and his face faded to the colour of ashes. The piece of cardboard fell from his hand, and was picked up by Fleece, who proceeded to show it to the wondering guests. The likeness was perfect—blonde hair, kindly eyes, everything.

Lorke was gazing blankly in front of him. He swayed gently to and fro as though about to faint. Young Van Dunk stepped forward and looked into his face. "Lorke," he cried, in grief-stricken tones, "say something, old man; for pity's sake say the thing isn't true!"

For an instant the Englishman returned his gaze, frankly, openly. Then, as his eyes met the agonised ones of Edith, he bowed his head and said huskily: "I have nothing to say."

A whisper of astonishment and indignation ran through the room. Fleece smiled triumphantly and replaced the photograph in his coat pocket. Then the voice of Van Dunk, senior, was heard, saying to a servant: "Jackson, a cab for Mr. Lorke."

One look the condemned man cast upon the white-faced girl that stood beside his accuser with a piteous expression of intreaty in her grey eyes. Then, without glancing to the right or the left, he strode from the room. As he did so it seemed to his dulled senses as though he heard the girl whisper to the lawyer: "I hate you."

. . . . . .

A month of healthy exposure and hardship in the Rocky Mountain hunting country exercised quite an improvement in Lorke's appearance. When he went away he had looked like a consumptive in his last stages; when he returned there was a bronze glow on his smooth cheeks, and something like the old sparkle in his eyes.

Still, he was far from happy as he walked up Fifth Avenue on his way to the Holland House, where he was to stay for the three or four days before he sailed for England. Occasionally his features contracted; his teeth clenched themselves hard as he passed one of his former friends, who, on seeing him, would pass straight by with a stony and altogether unrecognising stare.

Presently the Englishman's heart almost stood still. Coming towards him was Caspar Van Dunk. He nerved himself for the "unkindest cut of all."

But, to his amazement, Caspar stopped short and stood gazing at him with an intensely puzzled expression.

It was Caspar that spoke first. "Why, Lorke," he said, stupidly enough, "but it is not really you, is it?"

"No one else, my—er—fair-weather friend," returned the Englishman coldly.

"But it can't be—no—how did you? Pshaw! I'm hanged if I can read the riddle," stammered the other.

"What riddle?"

"I simply mean to say that only yesterday, you, or a man claiming to be you, and the exact counterpart of what you were when you left, but without the sunburn I see on your face, called on me at the club and asked me for £20. Of course, I gave it him. He was half-drunk, and—well, very shabby, don't you know."

Again Lorke grew white. "I suppose you are convinced it was not I?" he asked.

"Of course, I am," exclaimed Van Dunk, and added, holding out his hand impulsively, "Lorke, I never believed that thing. Won't you explain now?"

"I can't," answered Lorke, and then burst out passionately, "but this last is pretty nearly too much."

"Walk up to the house with me," said Caspar quietly, "and have a chat."

"No," answered Lorke.

"Yes," insisted the other; "besides, Edith will like to see you."

This was enough. As they walked on up the Avenue conversing amiably on unimportant topics, Lorke noticed that the men they passed now looked surprised, it is true, but they bowed just the same. Then it was he felt he loved this patrician American youth like a brother.

At the moment Caspar was inserting his latchkey, the door opened, and a young man came staggering out on the steps. He was the exact and perfect physical counterpart of the Hon. Richard Plantagenet Lorke, save for the absence of the latter's brand-new bronze complexion. Caspar exclaimed: "This is the fellow, Lorke."

The man started back with a maudlin exclamation of horror. As for Lorke, his eyes were blazing. He grasped him by the collar and pushed him back inside the door without a word. Caspar followed, wondering.

"Now, sir," said the Englishman, "I have borne everything thus far, and I have suffered endless tortures for you, but you shall tell me—quickly, too—what you have been doing in this house, or I'll choke your life out."

As the fellow stood swaying backwards and forwards a light footstep was heard, and Edith Van Dunk stepped into the hall. There were traces of tears in her eyes. When she saw Lorke, the light of a great, astonished joy leapt into them. Before she could speak, her brother asked gently, "Edith, what does this fellow's presence here mean?"

"He came about an hour ago," she said blushing. "I saw him from the window, and let him in myself, because——"

"Well?"

"Because I thought it was Mr. Lorke," she said defiantly. Then she broke down and began to cry.

"The mistake was a natural one," said Lorke calmly. "In one respect the resemblance is perfect; but what did he do?"

"He asked me to lend him a hundred pounds, and I let him have it, because——"

Lorke smiled grimly.

"Because you thought it was I? I seem to be an expensive luxury."

"Brother!" whined the drunken man appealingly. Whereat Caspar and his sister started.

"I would not have told it if you hadn't," said Lorke. "Yes, my dear Caspar, this is my sweet, scapegrace brother, whom I promised our mother to care for and protect. I think I've done my duty. It is he that has 'given himself away,' as you Americans would say."

"Then," exploded Edith, "it was he that—that——"

"Precisely," answered Lorke. "Percy, my boy," he added, "you'd better go away from here. Come and see me at the Holland to-night. I'll pay your way home."

. . . . . .

"It was my fault, after all," said Lorke to Edith, during a *tête-à-tête* half an hour afterwards. "You see, I wrote and told him all about my New York visit and Fleece's charge, and begged him to write to your brother and exonerate me. It seems he has used the information I gave him in quite another manner."

"I've a confession to make," whispered Edith.

"And it is——?"

"When I thought he was you—and he looked so broken down and miserable—and it seemed so pitiful that you—*you*" (she blushed divinely) "should be reduced to begging me for a hundred pounds—I think I'd have given him a thousand if he'd asked for it—that—that—you see I thought it was you—that I—I kissed him."

"But what has become of Fleece?" asked Lorke wonderingly.

"I have not spoken to Mr. Fleece," was the answer, delivered in a whisper, "since the last night you were here."

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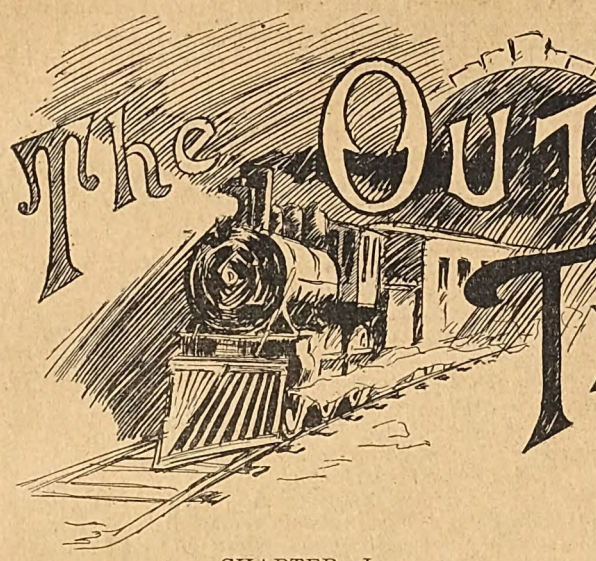

The Outlaws' Treasure.

Illustrated by MR. A. KEMP TEBBY.

—o—

CHAPTER I.

WAITING FOR THE TRAIN.

HALF-PAST nine in the evening, and still no tidings of the express, which was due at La Grange over an hour ago.

The twenty odd passengers who were impatiently looking for its coming were pacing back and forth, stamping their feet—for it was a cool night in autumn—some smoking, all grumbling, and most of them denouncing the railway authorities who had allowed this dereliction of duty to occur on this particular night of all others.

The telegraph office, where a young man continually bent over his clicking machine, was constantly besieged by the fretful passengers, who kept thrusting their heads in at the small door or window, and inquiring whether there were any tidings of the expected train.

The clerk was an exception to the rule, and was polite and communicative. He kept his patience, and answered every question pleasantly, although some of them were of a trying or ludicrous character.

"She left Brampton on time," he answered, "over an hour ago, and came into Cornwall three minutes ahead."

"And did she leave Cornwall on time?"

"To a second; but since then we haven't heard a word of her."

Brampton was twenty miles distant. The express had thundered along for five miles until it had reached Cornwall, where it left on time, and it was now somewhere along the fifteen miles of road between Cornwall and La Grange, and had been there for an hour and a half without any tidings.

Something was wrong. Had the boiler exploded? Had High Bridge, over Devil's Creek, given way with the train upon it? Or had the more harmless accident of a heated "journal" or a mere breakdown rendered the mighty iron horse powerless?

"Why don't you telegraph to Cornwall?" inquired a small man with an immense carpet bag.

"So I have," was the reply.

The corpulent gentleman gave a low whistle.

"And what did they tell you?" was his next question.

"Nothing; for they knew nothing."

"That's queer; what was the reason?"

"The accident or whatever it may be that detains the train, has taken place between here and Cornwall. It may be nearer us than there, and in that case it would be natural that they should apply to us for information instead of we to them."

"As there are only fifteen miles between us and the other station," remarked a large, corpulent man, "the train, wherever it is, must be within eight miles of one of us, and I don't understand how it is that word hasn't reached us."

"Nor I either," replied the clerk significantly. The two men looked in each other's faces for a moment, and then the man that controlled the telegraph motioned to the other to come in and take a seat beside him.

"You seem to be about the most sensible man here," he said with a smile, "and I'll tell you something which no one knows excepting myself and the ticket collector, Brooks, who is too stupid to comprehend what it means." The stout individual stared curiously at him, as if he did not himself comprehend what it all meant.

"The express left Cornwall exactly at eight o'clock," said the young man, speaking in a guarded voice, so as not to be overheard by those who were constantly passing and stopping at the window, "and ought to have made the fifteen miles in about twenty minutes, but here it is over an hour late, and no tidings of it."

"But I know all that before," said the corpulent gentleman, after a moment's pause, thinking there was nothing more to come.

"But I haven't told you that five minutes after the express left Cornwall the wires were cut between here and there."

The corpulent gentleman gave a low whistle, and looked sharply at his informant, whose face lit up with a strange smile.

"Maybe the engine smashed down the telegraph poles, and broke the connection in that way."

"Not much," replied the operator, who occasionally indulged in slang. "It wouldn't have taken ten minutes for them to have restored the connection. No, it is something more serious than that."

"Explain yourself."

"I may as well out with it; I believe the wires have been cut and the express stopped by the Mulligan brothers."

"What! the mail robbers?"

"Yes."

In place of the serial story, entitled "Sindbad's Valley," by Mr. F. Leslie, which we announced in our last issue would commence this week, we have pleasure in giving the opening instalment of "The Outlaws' Treasure," the first few chapters of which appeared some little time back in a publication from this office. We have received many requests to publish this exciting story in its entirety, and take this opportunity of so doing. "The Outlaws' Treasure" will appear in weekly instalments, and will be profusely illustrated throughout by Mr. A. Kemp Tebby. On its completion we shall hope to publish Mr. Leslie's story in these columns.

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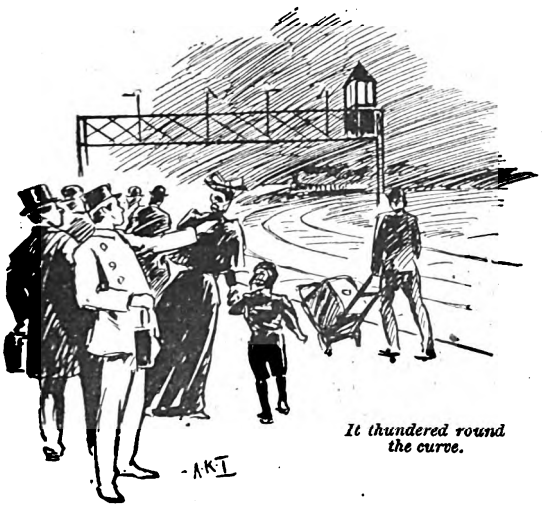

It thundered round the curve.

"By Jingo!" exclaimed the passenger, with another whistle. "I shouldn't wonder if you're right. I am from Chicago, and I didn't know that this is the part of the country where those gentry work. But how is it the train is kept so long? I understood such things were done in quick time."

"So they are: it hasn't taken them fifteen minutes to go through the train, and get all the booty they wanted."

"Then what does it mean?"

"They have thrown it off the rails, and cut the wires in several places. The train I think will be here shortly."

"Do you allow such things in this part of the country?"

"How are we going to help it?"

"Why don't you have them arrested, tried, sent to prison, hanged or shot, or something else?"

"It is very easy for you to talk," said the clerk, warming up, "but it is another thing to act. Let a man testify against these villains, or let him be suspected of wishing to testify, and his life isn't worth a pin. There isn't a judge that dare sentence one of the gang, nor can a jury be found to convict them. So what would *you* do under the circumstances?"

"Organise a Vigilance Committee, and root them out, hunt them with dogs, and never stop hunting until they were extirpated from the face of the earth."

Young Brown stroked his beardless chin, and laughed in his quiet way, but said nothing.

"How many brothers are there?" inquired his companion.

"Two: Jim and Dick."

"And are these two sufficient to lord it over all of you?"

"They are the leaders. There are a half-dozen associated with them, and a more desperate set of villains never went unhung. It would be no easy matter to capture six or eight of them, as you can well imagine."

"Of course, it would be no child's play; but I presume it will have to come to that. They will keep on, I suppose, until the people will have to rise in self-defence. Do you know these men?"

"I know them as well as I do you, or better, as I never saw you before."

"You may call me Smith. What sort of looking men are they?"

"Dick is tall, slim, with hair as long and black as an Indian's, with a sandy complexion and heavy red whiskers."

"Yes," commented Smith, in an indifferent manner, strangely at variance with the excitement he had shown a few minutes before. "Do they live anywhere near here?"

"Last summer they lived about a mile up the road, with their mother; but since her death they haven't had any regular place of residence, and I suppose spend their leisure time in the woods."

"Do you know where their hiding-place is?"

"It isn't far from here. Between La Grange and Cornwall is a tract of wood, about ten miles broad, and fully twenty miles long. It is cut up with creeks, streams, and ravines, and a good deal of it is swamp. Here these fellows have their hiding-place, and it would take a smart set of men to hunt them out and effect their capture."

"Then I presume the train has to cross this trac timber?"

"Yes; about ten miles of the fifteen between us and the other station is taken up with the forest. Were it not night you could see the edge of the woods from the platform out there."

"Have they ever attacked the train before?"

"Twice; last summer they robbed the safe of the Adams' Express Company, and a couple of months ago attempted it again, but failed, and Dick Mulligan came very nigh getting his head blown off."

"How was it that they failed?"

"They put some rails upon the line, but instead of throwing the engine off, they were knocked aside. Dick Mulligan and one of his men were in the train, and got into the forward van, where Jim Wilkins was lying on top of the safe, and attempted to bind and gag him, but the plucky little fellow bombarded them so well with his revolver that they were glad enough to jump out of the van and run."

"And all this has happened," continued the burly Smith, with a palpable sneer upon his face, "and it has been known that it was likely to happen again every day, and yet you have invited the outrage by leaving yourselves defenceless."

"Whom do you mean by *you*?" inquired Brown, with a smile.

"The railway and the Express Company, and everybody who lives in the neighbourhood, and among the latter I reckon you, of course."

"Well, perhaps I am not altogether guiltless, but still allowances must be made. I never suspected that I was the man to lead in the formation of a Vigilance Committee, but I am ready to lend a hand at any time."

"Is there are reward offered for the capture of the Mulligan brothers?"

"There is a standing reward of £2,000 for the arrest and conviction of the whole gang, or £200 a-piece for every one who may be secured and punished."

"Enough to incite some of you ambitious young men to action. That would make a good marriage settlement for a young gentleman like you."

"Yes, it is quite an inducement. I hope it may induce some outside parties to engage in it."

The two men smiled, and looked at each other's faces.

"You may not be so far——hello!"

At that instance a sharp whoop was heard, and the telegraph clerk exclaimed:

"There comes the train."

A moment later the red glow of the headlight was seen as it thundered round the curve.

The corpulent Smith rushed out upon the platform with the other passengers, leaving Brown, the telegraph clerk, all unsuspicious of the fact that he had been *tête-à-tête* with one of the most skilful detectives in the United States, and a man whose business was specially to look after these same Mulligan brothers and their gang.

Stood with his hand upon the throttle.

CHAPTER II.

THE ROBBERY.

ON that cool autumn night the express steamed out of Cornwall, and as soon as it was fairly beyond the village rapidly increased its speed. It had twenty minutes to do the fifteen miles in, and as the immense driving-wheels spun faster and faster, and the ponderous piston-rods went and came, with their smooth, easy, and momentarily increasing motion, the engine-driver was confident of going into the La Grange station not a second behind time.

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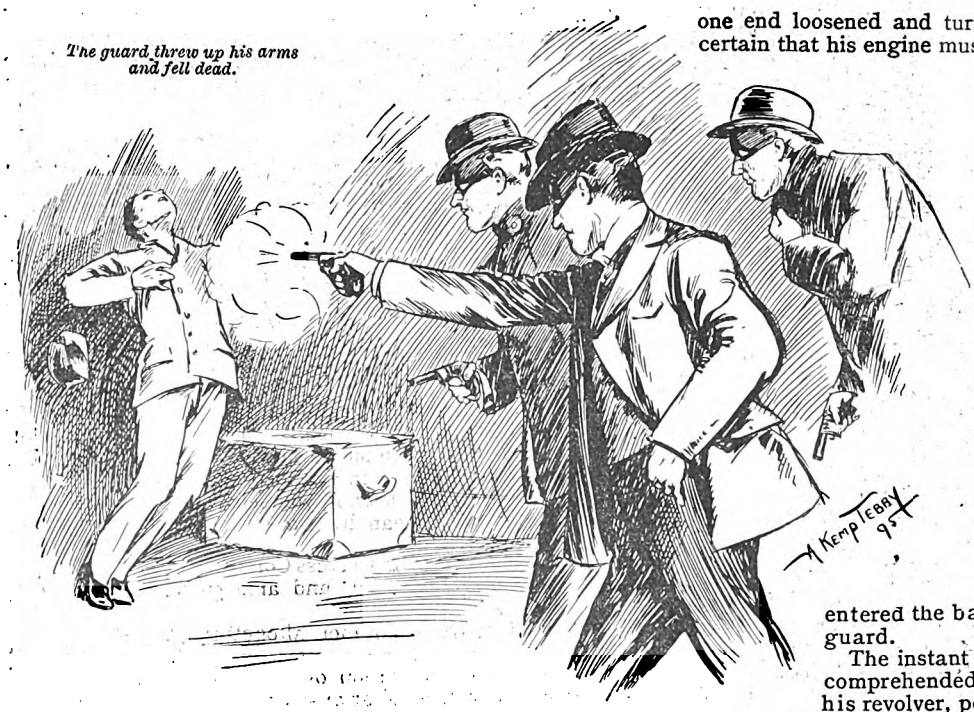

The guard threw up his arms and fell dead.

As is usual in America the train was made up of Pullman cars. There were three passenger-cars, besides the baggage and express car, and in the three former were not over thirty passengers, all told. In the forward part of the baggage-car was the huge safe belonging to the Adams' Express Company, under the guardianship of a drowsy-looking individual, who was smoking a pipe.

Near him was the guard, having in charge the United States mails—a wide-awake, nervous-looking individual, who, having just been appointed to his situation, had a large sense of its responsibilities and his own importance. The baggage-master was in the same compartment, quietly smoking a cigar, and fully as wide-awake as his companions.

Wilkins, the regular agent in charge of the valuable safe, lay dangerously ill at his home, fifty miles distant, and his deputy had been acting in his place for three days.

For a short time succeeding the robbery mentioned by Brown, an extra guard had accompanied the express; but as this involved an extra expense it was discontinued after a lapse of a few weeks, and matters were progressing in the same quiet manner as usual.

One mile out from Cornwall, and the train was tearing forward at a speed of about fifty miles an hour.

Five miles were passed in this manner, when the driver began slacking up, as his train approached High Bridge, leading over a deep, swampy stream, known as the "Devil's Creek." At the same time, his whistle sounded long and loud, its echoes reverberating for a great distance through the forest arches, as a warning to any daring pedestrians who might be meditating an attempt to cross the bridge.

The speed was considerably slackened, and the train rumbled over the bridge, the engine giving a sharp jerk forward, before it was fairly clear, and rapidly regained its terrific speed. There were woods upon every hand, while not a house was to be seen for miles.

Another mile was passed, and they were six from La Grange. The engine-driver again drew up as he neared a sharp curve, and stood with his hand upon the throttle, ready to let on or shut off the steam, as he should discover the lines clear or not.

Another second and the whistle gave two sharp screeches, twice repeated, and the wheels spun backward with lightning-like velocity, grinding and grasping until a stream of fire flew from beneath them.

What was the cause of this alarming signal?

Only a few hundred yards ahead he saw a rail displaced—one end loosened and turned aside just enough to make it certain that his engine must run off the line. Everything was done to check the speed, but no power in nature could check the fearful momentum of the train.

All that could be done was to slow the speed, and this was done so effectually that when the dangerous point was reached the engine was going less than ten miles an hour.

As was expected, the wheels ran off, ground their way down in the gravel, and then bounded over the ties and rails for a few yards, severely jolting the engine, and dragging the tender and front car after it, but doing them no serious injury. Suddenly the train halted, with the wheels of the locomotive less than a foot from the track.

At the very instant the whistle of the engine sounded, three men, their faces covered with masks, which had been placed on after passing out of the front car, entered the baggage-car, and made for the mail guard.

The instant the latter caught sight of them, he comprehended what it meant, and jerking out his revolver, pointed it at the foremost:

"Come a step nearer, and you're a dead man."

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the sharp crack of a pistol broke upon the rumble and jumble of the train, and the guard threw up his arms and fell dead, pierced through the heart by the bullet of one of the mail robbers.

While one proceeded to take charge of the bags, the other two forced their way into the room, where the sentinel over the safe of Adams' Express Company had just started to his feet, terrified at the signal of the whistle and the pistol-shot and cry that had reached his ear.

"Come on, we must leave."

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"No use!" called out Dick Mulligan, pointing his pistol at him; "give us the key."

The poor fellow stood like one dumfounded, hardly comprehending the frightful peril which was upon him.

But there was no time for delay, and the robber took the shortest method to bring him to his senses. Catching him by the throat, he whipped out a fearful-looking knife, and flashing it before his eyes, shouted, "*The Key.*"

The trembling wretch put his hand into his breast-pocket, and after fumbling about a moment took it out empty, and managed to reply loud enough for them to hear:

"It don't open with a key; it is a combination lock."

"Then open it, and be quick about it, or we'll open you."

He turned to obey, but at this juncture the car began bumping over the ties and cross-pieces so furiously that he was unable to do what they commanded.

A moment later the train came to an abrupt standstill, and the guard placed his hand upon the polished knob surrounded by its bewildering rows of figures. As he began turning it he heard voices, and made several false moves, in the hope of gaining time, until his friends could come to his assistance.

The shrewd assassins detected his purpose in an instant, and Dick Mulligan shouted in his gruff voice:

"Another dodge like that, and it will be your last. I've settled the other fellow, and I'd just as lief settle you."

There were now several other men in the car, and the fact that their faces, too, were blackened, and covered with masks, showed the express guard that he had gone too far to retreat.

Several quick, nervous movements, and the ponderous door of the safe was pulled wide open, and revealed the bags of solid coin and the boxes of jewellery within, while the keeper stepped back and waited for the robbers to help themselves.

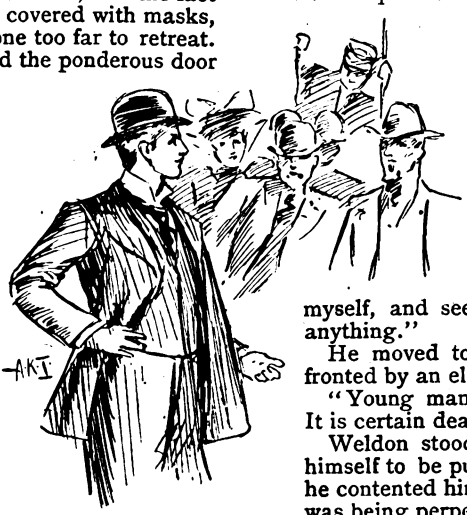
It is needless to say that they did so without any further invitation or delay.

Twenty thousand pounds odd lay nestling there, in the little heavy sacks, and a large quantity of jewellery, which in a twinkling were distributed among the members of the robber party.

In the meantime a couple of them were busy "going through" the mail bags, all unmindful of the poor fellow who lay silent and lifeless beside them.

"Never mind that, Tom," called out Dick Mulligan, looking in upon them. "We haven't time to bother with that."

"What kind of haul have you made?" inquired the individual addressed, rising to his feet, and casting about a bushel of letters from him.



"Gentlemen, how many of you have revolvers?"

"A healthy one; it won't pay to bother about love-letters. Come on; we must leave."

Two minutes later, of the eight masked men not a single one remained visible to the passengers upon the train.

The engine had not yet ceased bounding over the ties when the driver saw several men spring up from the ground, like phantoms, and make towards the car. He needed nothing more to understand what was coming, and he did all that he could do under the circumstances—remained quiescent, and left them free to do as they chose.

"Keep still," he said in a low voice to his fireman who showed a disposition to jump from the engine and run. "Just keep still and say nothing."

"But they may murder us all."

"If you make any fuss and try to run they'll put a bullet through you. They are doing nothing only robbing the express safe, and if we lie low they won't hurt us."

"But what an outrage they are committing!"

"What of it? The Adams' Express Company can stand it, and if they can't, we ain't under any obligation to be shot on their account."

The driver spoke like a philosopher, and the fireman took his advice.

With the violent stopping of the train there was naturally a great commotion created among the passengers. Several thrust their heads out of the windows, but most of them sprang to the ground before the train had fairly come to a stand, and rushed towards the front.

"What's the matter? Anybody killed? Is it a broken rail? Have we got to stay here all night?"

Such and similar were the questions shouted as the frightened men scrambled forward in the darkness. The answer to their questions came in a manner as startling as it was unexpected.

Crack! crack! crack! and several bullets whistled about their ears, and the hoarse voice of Jim Mulligan rang out upon the night air:

"Back, every one of you! Back, I tell you, if you don't want your brains blown out!"

Were it not for the tragic deed that had already been committed, the sudden obedience to this mandate would have been ludicrous. Pell-mell, leaping and tumbling over each other, rolling down the slight declivity scrambling headlong, all the passengers were back in their seats in a much shorter time than they had left them.

Among the different passengers, there was one who was not terrified out of his senses. Fred Weldon, a young man, with a clean shaven face, rose and said:

"Gentleman, how many of you have revolvers?"

After the question was repeated several times, half-a-dozen informed him that they were armed.

"Those Mulligan brothers are at the bottom of this. I propose that we make a fight with them. Besides doing the country a service, there is a chance of making a nice reward for the business. Follow me, and we will teach them a lesson or two."

But not one offered to do so.

"Very well," replied the young man, with an expression of disgust, after he had waited a minute for the response; "if you are afraid, I will take a look myself, and see whether there is a chance for me to do anything."

He moved towards the door, but found himself confronted by an elderly man in spectacles.

"Young man, you don't know what you are doing. It is certain death; remain where you are."

Weldon stood irresolute a minute, but he suffered himself to be pushed back in his seat by his friend, and he contented himself as best he could while the outrage was being perpetrated so close at hand.

When the dead body of the mail agent was found, a gasp of horror escaped the passengers, and Weldon exclaimed impetuously:

"This might have been prevented if you had done as I wished."

"You are mistaken," said the expressman; "he was shot before the train stopped. I heard the pistol."

"We might have punished them, then," he replied.

The body was laid aside, and carefully covered, while the expressman locked the door of the safe, the interior, which so short a time before was filled with such riches, being now empty.

The passengers next turned their attention towards getting the engine back on the rails.

This, it is scarcely necessary to say, was a work of extreme difficulty. All the available wood was wedged and adjusted upon the ties and alongside the rails, and the locomotive, which was blowing off its accumulating steam, lashed and plunged, ran further off, then came nearer the iron, and then missed it again, until all were ready to give up in despair.

But the driver persisted with a patience that never faltered and he was finally rewarded by seeing every wheel in its true position again.

The train resumed its progress, and ten minutes later steamed into La Grange station.

(*To be continued.*

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A CONTRARY YOUNG WOMAN.

ON a cliff overhanging the city of Port Mahon, Minorca, is a plaza, called the "Alameda," where a few ilex trees afford a grateful shade. On one of the low stone benches many a pleasant hour may be dreamed away, watching the shadows chase each other over the swelling hills and meadows beyond. Now and again the soft wind wafts perfume from the almond blossoms which lie, like flakes of snow, on the bare fields stretching away to the blue water.

One evening, not long ago, a young girl was seated on the low wall, watching the sun sinking in the cloudless sky. The usual three-cornered mantilla draped her graceful head, and her long slender fingers toyed with the ends hanging over her shoulders. She represented one of the better class, with the intense southern beauty of the peasant idealised. Her black hair waved off a low forehead, guiltless of the pointed "frizz" which disfigures the face of those who ape the Parisian fashion. Her brows were heavy, and her dark eyes, riveted on the harbour below, seemed to reflect the sunset light. She was watching a large yacht, which, with all sails set, was gliding slowly, like some stately bird, to its anchorage.

The rattling of the anchor-chains roused her, and broke the long silence which she had so persistently maintained with her companion, a young man of Spanish type. A mixture of northern blood lightened his olive complexion and refined his sensuous southern features. His waist was circled by a red sash, and his work-worn hands twisted a bright-coloured turban, fashioned from a large handkerchief.

His passionate gaze contrasted strangely with the girl's indifference. "La Bella Jacquita" she was called, and well did she deserve her name! What was he that he should win her after all?

Jacquita looked up and smiled.

As when the sun, breaking through the clouds, bathes the fields in warmth and light, so did that smile transfigure the girl's fair face.

The distant church clock struck six. Rising, she drew the folds of her mantilla closer, and, lifting her eyes to his, said softly: "A Riverdel, Felipe!"

His gaze met hers; pride—anger—passion in his eyes. Mastering his excitement, he spoke: "Jacquita—be careful! I am not like those silly lads who come and go at a girl's nod. To-day I offered you my life, my heart! A man's dearest hopes and desires have I laid bare. How have you answered?"

He waited. Jacquita pushed the gravel petulantly with her foot, watching the pebbles fly, with a half-mocking smile on her lips. Again he spoke:

"I know you are 'La Bella of Mahon,' but I, too, have pride! Keep your scores of admirers, but know that from to-day there is one less—one man more is nothing in the tale of your conquests. You are 'La Bella,' and the man who makes you love him must needs be more than human—stronger than Felipe. Never again will I be ridiculed, mocked as I have been to-day!"

Jacquita trembled slightly, but still smiled. She waited, then looking up, she said, "Felipe, I am sorry——" but Felipe had gone!

That night Jacquita wept—with fear, excitement, and the triumph of having brought Felipe so low as to beg her as he had done that evening. "He will return," thought she. "They always do!"

Next day the party from the yacht made the tour of the town. A little boy of about six years of age was the life and centre of interest of the group. Clad in a sailor suit, his golden curls waving under his white cap, he formed a strong contrast to the dark-skinned children who stared as he passed them by. A pretty blonde girl followed with an elderly gentleman, and as she went along, Jacquita, seeing her exquisite fairness, thought: "The angels must look like that!"

All that day Felipe came not, and the speech of gentle reproof which Jacquita had prepared was not delivered. She began to wonder whether she had better accept him. The fun would then be over, but—supposing the other thing! Life would be as nothing with Felipe left out!

Evening came and found Jacquita and her mother seated at their door, conversing with the neighbours leaning out of the windows or strolling past. The "summer-winter" lingered late that year.

A group gathered—among them Francesca, the rival beauty. She was larger in every way than Jacquita. To many she was more attractive—being less chary of her brilliant smiles and jests.

"Hast heard the news?" she was saying. "As the 'Inglesi' were walking back to the yacht this afternoon, down on the quay, the little boy, catching sight of a large dog ahead, ran after him along the edge of the water. Suddenly, 'Ah, Santissima Maria!' he cried out—and then the water closed over him! Felipe was there and jumped in after him. There was no danger," she added, glancing maliciously at Jacquita's pale face; "and in a moment he was being embraced by the pretty young lady.

"But, Felipe!—Milord overwhelmed him with thanks, offered him money which the silly refused, and finally asked if he knew the sea and would care to come with him as a sailor. For a moment Felipe hesitated. But——" (and here the bright look on Jacquita's face faded)—"he finally said, 'Yes, Milord,' and so he goes to-morrow! Ah, but he is a brave lad that Felipe, and a lucky one! Some of us will care; but to those who have no hearts"—(and here she glanced coldly at the girl sitting silent beside her)—"to those it will make no difference."

Just then Felipe himself sauntered up. There was a difference between this nonchalant young sailor, bearing his honours so lightly, and the passionate lover of the night before. "Good luck, Felipe!" someone called; and Francesca, again the spokeswoman, cried: "Your fame has flown before you, and your good fortune makes us envious."

Felipe turned to Jacquita. She was talking animatedly to a young fellow beside her—seemingly oblivious of all else Felipe's face darkened; then, laughing, he turned, saying: "Come, friends, let us have a merry time on this, our last night, together. Come, drink my health and prosperity with me."

"Si! Si!" they answered.

Jacquita alone declined. She was "too tired," she said haughtily. Francesca, shrugging her shoulders, murmured: "One of her ugly moods! Santissima—what a temper!"

Jacquita listened to the retreating footsteps, and her downcast eye filled with tears—why, she would not own to herself. A quick step sounded, a voice said, "Jacquita!" Something—false pride, perhaps, or fear lest Felipe should see her weeping, held down her eyes—but she smiled.

"Thou didst not say 'Addio,' or even a lucky wish, Jacquita!"

Silence,—then a few smothered words broke from his lips, and ere she could frame the words of farewell still lingering on her tongue, she heard him striding down the street. As he turned the corner, snatches of a waltz—one of Francesca's favourites—came floating back to her. Early the next morning, while the Alameda yet lay wrapped in sleep, a girl leaned over the sea-wall, gazing with burning eyes at the beautiful boat below. The bustle of departure reached her straining ear, and she saw a rowing-boat speed out to the ship. A cheer rose from those on shore as, with a final pull, the anchor was hauled aboard. The broad sails filled slowly, and she slipped away as silently as she had come—away into the purple mists of the morning—away, and bearing with her a whole life's grief and disappointment.

"'La Bella Jacquita' is going daft," cried Francesca as every night the girl walks to the Alameda, watching for a boat that never comes.

One evening she sat gazing at a "tramp" steamer just anchored. She recalled that other night—and the boat now so far away. Alas for the pride of "La Bella of Mahon!" The setting sun covered her with its golden light. Her dark eyes grew larger with unshed tears; then a voice said softly, "I have come back to see if thou wilt yet say 'Addio,' mia Jacquita!"

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SUMMER HEAT AND OBESITY.

Summer with its sultry heat, is not a source of unmixed pleasure to those who suffer from excessive corpulence. Health cannot be maintained under conditions of great obesity. In general the mental energy of the highly corpulent becomes impaired, and their capacity for the conduct of business is consequently much diminished. Our readers will therefore be interested to know it is an indisputable fact that excessive corpulency can, in all cases, be cured by the system which has now for many years been successfully practised by Mr. F. C. RUSSELL, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. Mr. Russell possesses hundreds of testimonials from persons in all classes of society, many of them holding distinguished positions in the learned professions and in Her Majesty's services, which, taken collectively, prove to a demonstration that anyone suffering from obesity who systematically applies his remedy for a few weeks consecutively can be cured. The patients under his treatment are not asked to be "fasting men"; and it is remarkable that in the case of many of Mr. Russell's subjects their appetite increases as their weight diminishes. A book (256 pages) entitled, "Corpulency and the Cure," containing most interesting and trustworthy information, *together with the recipe*, may be had by writing to Mr. Russell, enclosing 4d. stamps for postage. With such a remedial agent at their command as Mr. Russell's specific, excessively corpulent persons have only themselves to blame if their unwieldy persons are not speedily reduced to fitting proportions.—*Extract from a Leading Journal.*

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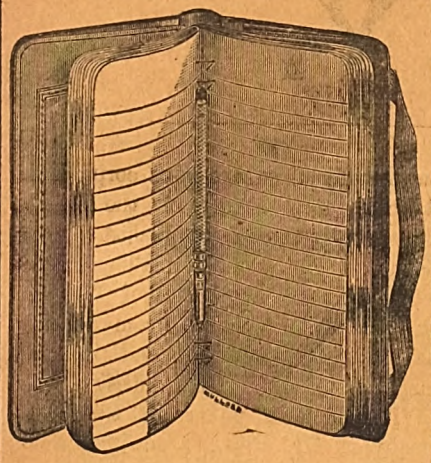

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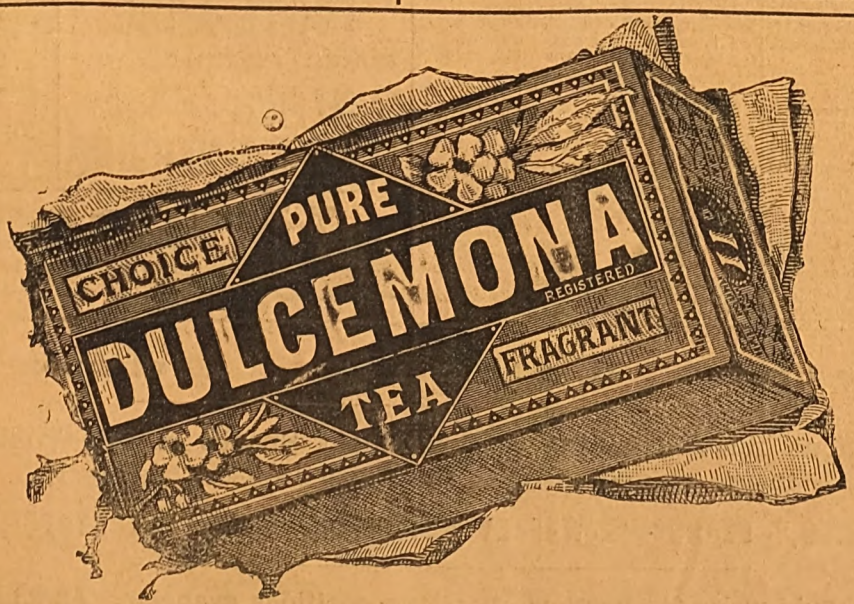

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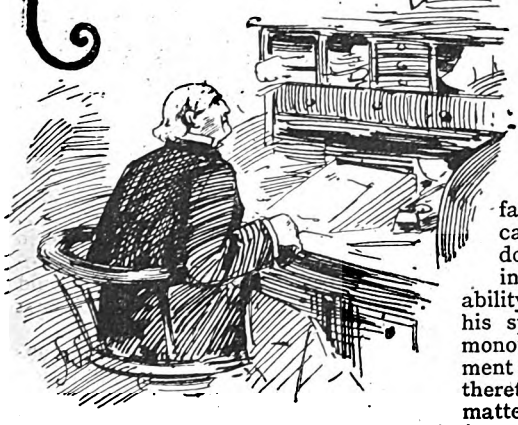
SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 339.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING JUNE 29, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

A MORAL THERMOMETER



THOSE who remember my father-in-law, Peter Trask, Esq., before he was my father-in-law, can have no doubts regarding a leopard's ability to change his spots, or the monotone integument appertaining thereto, for that matter. Then he was a terror that waked at all hours; now he is as gentle as any sucking dove. Then he was feared; now he is loved—and it speaks volumes for his legal skill that his practice has not suffered from the mutation. For a lawyer is like vinegar, the sharper, the more cutting he is, the more thoroughly is he supposed to have worked.

I had just graduated with honours at college, when I was placed as an articled clerk in Peter Trask's office. The selection was natural, but cruel, as things are apt to be. He had been a close friend of my father's—I never did understand my father—and was still the trustee of his estate. He was easily first among the lawyers in town, and being easily first, was also the crankiest, the ugliest, the most arrogant; the dread of the bar, and the torture of the bench.

I remember well the day I entered his private office, where he sat surrounded by books, like a bear with winter provender.

"Humph!" he growled, and eyed me from head to foot. How guilty I instantly felt that my hair was parted in the middle, and that I wore patent leather shoes; how regretful that I was not bald and shod with cowhide! "Humph!" he repeated. "So you are Edwin Gordon, son of my old friend James Gordon, hey? No wonder he died! What earthly use are you, eh?" And I sincerely wished that I was one of those distant hills to which his voice was so evidently directed.

"Do you imagine you can ever become a man like me?" he continued. "A pretty figure you'd make addressing a jury or a court!"

I faltered that I hoped to qualify myself for a lawyer.

"Oh, a lawyer!" he sneered, with an unpleasant laugh—that is, with his laugh. "Here, take this bundle to Mr. Matthew Sharpun, and leave these briefs at the bindery. And, mind, sweep out and dust the office every morning. That may take some of the law-school nonsense out of you."

As I passed through the outer room, old Stiles, the clerk, looked up longingly. "I wish he'd send me on errands," he said. "I'd willingly wear a Scotch cap and knickerbockers, that I would."

I must say it was a relief to be out of doors, though the weather was stormy; besides, I had a great curiosity to see Mr. Matthew Sharpun, of whom I had heard so much. He was an old friend of my mother's, a romantic old friend I've sometimes fancied; a man of substance, who lived on the outskirts of the town, and devoted his solitary bachelorhood to the investigation of scientific problems.

As I reached the corner of a bye-street, I came upon a young lady in a quandary. A pretty young lady, too, despite the knitted brows and pursed lips, indicative of that quandary. She was laden with two parcels and an umbrella, and at her heels was the daintiest little Skye terrier in the world—a knot of silver thread twisted around two diamond eyes. A tram was approaching, but she knew, and I knew, that the only unpaid advertisement on its boards was the commandment: "No dogs allowed."

"Permit me," I said, and in an instant the little terrier was safe within his mistress's wrap, and I held the umbrella and the parcels.

"Poor, dear little Judy!" sighed the maiden. "I do hope she won't catch cold." But Judy peeped out at me as if saying that it was not she that was out in the cold.

"You are so very kind," protested the young lady when she was comfortably settled, and I had cautioned the conductor to assist her in alighting, as she had a stiff arm.

And then I hurried away, wondering at the charming obtuseness which could so ingenuously blame parcels instead of terrier.

Matthew Sharpun himself answered my ring at his door—a tall, lean man, with a dark, kindly face, close shaven and deep wrinkled, and with eyes that shone with a melancholy humour.

"So you are Nellie Gordon's son," he began, and I half expected him to say that my mother ought to be dead. "Well, you resemble her a little, and that's high praise, my boy. And you've put your head into the legal lion's den, have you, and it isn't altogether snapped off? Come in and tell me how you escaped."

I told him.

"Trask is a self-made man," he explained apologetically. "There is no such lawyer as Peter Trask. The trouble is, that he knows it as thoroughly as he knows everything else."

"I think my appearance irritates him," I suggested.

"Any appearance irritates him except his own fiery visage, and if he could really see that, it would irritate him most of all. I do believe I am his only friend. We get along swimmingly, and I'll tell you why. I always ask him to do exactly what I don't want him to do, and, of course, he eagerly adopts the opposite. I might teach him a lesson if it were worth while. But there, get back to your work, Edwin. Remember you have a friend in me. If you get into trouble with him, it will be worth my while to teach that lesson, I promise you."

This kindly greeting encouraged me to persist at the office, and that afternoon an event occurred which fully determined me. I was sitting in the outer room when the door opened, and lo! the pretty young lady, prettier than before for the lack of the quandary, glided through into the awful *sanctum*

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sanctorum—Anglice, lair—beyond. Was I mistaken, or had there been a flash of recognition from dark eyes, tremulously recorded by smiling lips? If I was mistaken, that was an error which any man might be well content to hug.

Old Stiles, the clerk, was pottering away at his desk against the wall—poor old Stiles, in comparison with whose meekness Moses was a dancing dervish of impatience. An orthodox man was old Stiles; he believed firmly in eternal punishment, indeed, he sighed for it. "I think it would be cooler there," he said to me, one day, with a fearsome glance towards the rear room. Him I at once interrogated regarding this vision of loveliness.

"You'd better keep your eyes to yourself," advised old Stiles, in homely phrase. "That's Miss Alice, Mr. Trask's only child. He thinks almost as much of her as he does of himself."

Due reflection over, this excess of paternal affection might have made me cautious, but before I had time to consider, Miss Alice passed through again. I sprang forward and opened the door.

"Thank you, Mr. Gordon," she said.

"I trust you have fully recovered the use of your arm," I stammered.

"As you see," and she offered me her hand.

Another bewildering flash and entrancing reflex of a smile, and I was alone with old Stiles.

There was a Banshee wail, as if the north wind were having a convulsion. I looked inquiringly at old Stiles. "He's calling you," he said, with an indicative thumb, and a why-should-we-mourn-departing-friends' expression, and I hurried away to my doom.

"My daughter tells me that you were of some slight assistance to her puppy," Mr. Trask began. "What is that quotation about being wondrous kind? I beg to say that any such interference is as unnecessary as it is impertinent. Had they dared to molest Judy, a favourite of mine, and singularly attached to me, I would have taken away their licence in a five-minute argument. That will do; and don't let it happen again."

Mr. Trask's cool insolence made me the warmer. His contempt was a spur to my interest. A maiden is never so sought as when she is shut up in an inaccessible tower, especially if from the topmost window she waves her kerchief. Thenceforth I had one purpose—to overcome all obstacles between Alice and me.

A pretty young lady, too.

One evening I sat in old Matthew Sharpun's study before a cosy grate, and explained my fears, for my hopes spoke for themselves.

"I think I could teach Trask a lesson," responded Matthew. "It will be a hard one, and therefore well worth learning. He is universally disliked, poor man. And yet he believes himself to be not only popular, but beloved. Now, in my biological investigations I have observed that every emotion, whether pleasurable or disagreeable, causes a sensitive, impalpable essence to radiate from the person subject to it. I have discovered, too, a medium which infallibly responds to and indicates every variation of this ethereal emanation. Look here, what do you make of this?" and he showed me a small glass tube containing a blue fluid, which was delicately graduated and marked along its side with such stages as "Love," "Regard," "Indifference," "Contempt," and "Hate," reading from the bottom to the top.

"Why?" I replied, "This looks like a sort of moral thermometer."

Matthew Sharpun laughed aloud, as if taken with the name.

"Good!" he exclaimed. "That's exactly what it is. Now, if a man will wear this little instrument concealed on his person, it will indicate the exact feelings towards him entertained by whomsoever he may accost."

"Great Scott!" I cried. "No wonder its colour is blue."

"Now," continued Matthew, with an inventor's enthusiasm, "I propose to induce our self-sufficient friend to wear this silent monitor just for one day, and then we shall see what we shall see, or, rather, he will."

"But, how?" I objected. "How will you ever bell the cat?"

"Oh, I shall simply mention it in casual conversation with him as an amusing toy, and then say, 'But, of course, you wouldn't dare to wear it!' And mark you, Edwin, my boy, he would insist on wearing a hundred if I had them. What will be the consequences? Why, he'll find everyone false and hostile, except you, his faithful servitor. Naturally, then, will he cling to you and love you as a son. Besides, this rude awakening, this real view, may ——"

"Hold on!" I interrupted. "Your main hypothesis is a broken reed. Why, the moment I approached him the blue liquor would fly so rapidly to 'Hate' as to burst the tube, in all probability."

"I have provided for that contingency. Put these soles inside your shoes; they are composed of a substance which will completely insulate you. Your appearance alone will affect the register."

"I cultivate the constant smile of a Cheshire cat!" I cried exultingly. "Oh, when will the blessed experiment begin? I'm as anxious as a grand inquisitor to see him stretched on the gridiron."

"I will see him to-night," promised Matthew. "And so, courage and hope!"

The next morning, as I proceeded to the office with my feet very strong of sole, I reflected as to whether I should give Alice and her mother an inkling of this dread ordeal. In many ways Mrs. Trask had shown a limp and languid preference for my cause, this meditating revenge, amid the horrors of her connubial prison-house. Would they not both, then, redouble their fervour? But could they? Why seek for excess in intensity. Let them be natural. Trask's worst enemy could not ask for more. In their ignorance there surely would be no bliss for him.

Old Stiles was busy with some hurried task as I entered the office, and therefore undeniably cross, for old Stiles's conception of work provided frequent pauses for thought. I was scarcely seated at my desk when there came from the inner room an uproar as if a dozen steam boilers had exploded in unison, and old Stiles came flying out with a huge law tome after him. "Save yourself!" he shrieked. "He's tuk at last, as I know'd he would be," and he tapped his head significantly as he dashed out into the street.

I own I hesitated when, a moment later, I heard my name roared out on the trembling air. My flesh quivered, my toes

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contracted! Oh, lucky qualm, I felt the insulating soles, and from their mysterious substance I drew reassurance! With a smile, embodying the beatitudes, I boldly marched to my fate.

Peter Trask was standing in a familiar attitude, with his frock coat unbuttoned and his left hand holding out its lapel. So I had often seen him stand when about to address a jury; but now I knew the posture enabled him to consult the moral thermometer concealed within the folds.

"And you, too, you miserable——," he roared, and glanced, down. "And you, too, you ——," he repeated gruffly, and glanced again. "Oh, my good, true Edwin," he cried, in dulcet tones. "I merely wanted to ask you how you are getting on."

Ah, how I did smile as I answered that I hoped that I appreciated the blessing of my connection with him.

"I am sure you do, my boy," he asserted. "Your frank, ingenuous face shows your loyal nature. Will you come home to dinner with us to-night? The infamous duplicity of that reptile Stiles passes the bounds of belief. And I have warmed him in my bosom for years, and loaded him with benefits. But, there, I won't rack your soul with such enormities."

"My soles are undergoing quite a strain," I reflected, as we went out of the office together that night.

I actually felt a glow of sympathy towards the poor man as we progressed: he kept peeping quite timidly at the thermometer to see if there wasn't some mistake, and I do believe he wouldn't have noticed any difference in me had I taken the shoes from off my feet. Still, perhaps it is more prudent to be quite sure of the ground on which one stands. Moved, then, by some compunction, I administered the panacea of flattery so skilfully that ere he reached the house he was chatting naturally—that is, as if I were on the other side of the street.

A wretched tramp of a man lurched by with a meagre cur at his heels. "There goes fidelity," said Trask. "One can always rely on the affections of a dog. Why, our little Judy watches for me like a child." And, sure enough, scarcely had he withdrawn his latchkey when there was a scampering down the stairs, and there sat Judy, with devotion beaming from her bright, expressive eyes.

"You dear little thing—get out, you beast," roared Trask. And he kicked the astonished pup to the end of the hall. He had tested her "fidelity" with the moral thermometer.

The man shook as with ague. "That is too much. That settles it," he muttered. "Since there is one at least whom I can trust, I must bind him to me. Come in here, Edwin; I have something serious to say to you."

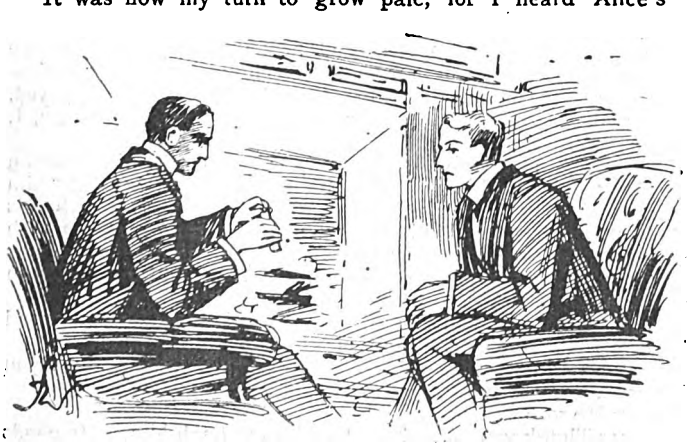
When we were seated in the library, he continued:

"Am I right in suspecting some tender passages between Alice and you?"

"I love her passionately," I protested.

"Then you shall have her, since thus I shall gain a son."

It was now my turn to grow pale, for I heard Alice's



He showed me a small glass tube.

Hid his fiery visage in his wife's lap.

approaching steps. I knew her frank, ingenuous nature. Supposing her father should apply his test? Evidently a like thought occurred to him, for he shivered and buttoned his coat tightly around him. After explanations and ecstasies had somewhat moderated: "Where is your mother, my child?" asked Peter Trask.

"She is lying down. She is not feeling very well, but nothing out of the ordinary," explained Alice, coldly.

"I will go to her at once."

"Oh, no, she didn't even want me with her! She craves rest and quiet."

"Then I will go for the doctor," and despite a gesture of restraint, he rushed away.

"An extraordinary, inexplicable interest," said Alice bitterly. "Poor mamma! As if any one could administer to a broken heart!"

We waited. Ere long there were whispers in the hall, and then a single professional tread up the stairs. Soon the dignified steps returned, and an unctuous voice spoke. "Our patient is doing finely," the doctor reported to Peter Trask. "No organic trouble; only a lowering of the nervous system, only a lack of life. I will call in the morning."

"Only a lack of life!" moaned poor Trask, as he joined us. "Come, my children, let us tell your engagement to mother; it may please her;" and we went upstairs into the sitting-room, where the invalid lay on the couch.

"See, my dear," said Peter Trask. "These young people think they love each other. Perhaps they do; but I doubt if they can be as happy as we used to be; as, as happy as—we might be." And he knelt and hid his fiery visage in his wife's lap.

I have, I think, described Mrs. Trask as limp and languid from the horrors of her connubial prison-house, and so truly she had appeared to me. But now I witnessed a wondrous transformation. Her wan and sunken cheeks grew rosy; her dull eyes softened with reminiscent tenderness. She smiled; and if ever a smile spoke, that smile uttered a blessing.

"Why, Peter, why, my own true hubby," she murmured, "one would think that the dear old days had returned, and you were my ardent fair-haired lover again"; and she stroked the shiny surface where that fair hair had been.

Peter Trask staggered to his feet and over to the light. He unbuttoned his coat, and looked down through tear-dimmed eyes. There stood the blue fluid, in the moral thermometer, constant and serene at "Love."

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THEY were telling stories of hunting and adventure after dinner. An old friend of ours, M. Boniface—a mighty Nimrod and great drinker of wine; a gay, robust man, full of spirit, of wit, of philosophy; a mocking, resigned philosophy that manifested itself in cutting witticisms, but never in sadness—said suddenly: "I know a hunting story, or, rather, a hunting drama. Strange enough, it is not at all like the general run of such stories. I have never related it, thinking that it would not be amusing. It is not a sympathetic story, you understand. That is, it has not that interest that stirs one, or charms or touches one.

"Here is the story:

"When this occurred I was about thirty-five years old and a keen hunter. I owned at that time a very isolated farm in the environs of Jumieges, surrounded by forests and well stocked with hares and rabbits. I passed only three or four days in the year there, and always alone, because the arrangement of the place did not provide accommodation for a friend. I had placed there as a guard an old retired gendarme, a brave, rather violent man, a terror to poachers, strict in his discipline, and afraid of nothing. He lived alone, far from the village, in a little house, or rather hovel, consisting of two rooms below, a kitchen and cellar, and two rooms above. One of them, which was nothing but a box, just big enough for a bed, a cupboard and a chair, was reserved for me. Father Cavalier occupied the other. When I said he lived alone in the lodge I did not express myself clearly. He had taken his nephew to live with him. He was a worthless fellow of some fourteen years, who went errands to the village, three kilomètres distant, and helped his uncle in his daily cares.

"This scapegrace, tall and crooked, had yellow hair—so light that it looked like the down on a duck's breast; so thin that he looked as though he was bald. He had enormous feet and giant hands, the hands of a colossus. He squinted a little and never looked anyone straight in the face. He seemed to me to hold the same place in the human race that poisonous beasts do in the animal kingdom. The fellow was a human fox or polecat. During my short visits at the 'Pavilion'—I called this hut the Pavilion—Marius gave up the niche to an old woman, Céleste, from Ecorcheville, who came to look after the cooking, the efforts of Père Cavalier in that line being insufficient.

"Now you know the place and the characters let us proceed to the adventure. It was on October 15, 1854. I remember the date distinctly, and I shall never forget it. I went to Rouen on horseback, followed by my dog, Bock, a great Dalmatian hound, broad chested, with massive jaws. He beat the bushes for game like a spaniel from Pont Andemer. I carried my travelling bag on the crupper, my gun slung over my shoulder. It was a cold day, with great gloomy clouds flitting across the sky and a strong wind howling.

"As I climbed up Cantelère, I looked away over the vast valley through which the Seine wound like a serpent. The towers of Rouen touched the sky to the left, and far off on the right stretched the wood-covered fields. For ten years at that same time I had presented myself in the same fashion, and the same words from the same lips had greeted me:

"'Good day, monsieur. Is your health satisfactory?' Cavalier had not changed.

"The old woman, a devoted soul, always seemed moved when she saw me, and every time I left would say: 'I think this may be the last time, our dear master.'

"This desolate, timid farewell of the poor old servant, this enforced resignation and expectation of her approaching death, always touched my heart.

"I got off my horse. Cavalier, after shaking my hand warmly, led the horse away to the little building that served as a stable, and followed Céleste into the kitchen, that was also used as a dining-room. There the keeper joined me.

"I saw at once that he did not look as usual. He seemed pre-occupied, ill at ease, anxious. I said: 'Well, Cavalier, does everything go to please you?' He muttered:

"'Yes and no. There is something I do not like.'

"I asked, 'What is it, my good fellow?' He shook his head.

"'Not yet, sir. I don't want to trouble you till it is necessary.'

"I insisted, but he absolutely refused to enlighten me before dinner. I understood it must be a serious affair. Thinking of nothing else to say, I remarked:

"'Is there plenty of game?'

"'Oh,' he replied, 'the game is plenty. You will find all you wish. Thank heaven! I can keep your eye on that.'

"He said this with so much gravity, so much grief, it was nearly comical. His heavy grey moustache drooped mournfully over his lips.

"Suddenly I bethought myself I had not yet seen his nephew. 'Where is Marius? Why does he not show himself?' The guard jumped and looked me suddenly in the face.

"'Well, monsieur, I had rather tell you that after a while; yes, I had rather. It is on his account I am worried.'

"'Ah. Well, where is he?'

"'He is in the stable, sir. I am waiting for him to come.'

"'What has he done?'

"'This is the story, sir.'

"And the old man hesitated, his voice changed, trembled. His face became wrinkled all at once with the lines of old age. He spoke slowly:

"'Well, I have seen this winter traces of poachers in the Rosary Woods, but have not been able to catch anyone. I passed night after night there, sir, to no effect. Then they began to lay snares in the woods in Ecorcheville. I had grown thin with watching; but when it came to taking the marauders, it was impossible. You would have said they foresaw my intentions, my plans.

"'But one day, as I brushed Marius' coat, his Sunday coat, I found four sous in his pockets. Where had the boy got them?

"'I thought about it for eight days, and I found he went out—he went out just as I went to bed. Yes, monsieur.

"'Then I watched him, but without his suspecting it—oh, yes, without that. And one night I went to bed before he went out; then I followed him. He could not follow as noiselessly as I, monsieur. And there I came upon him, yes, Marius, setting traps on your ground, sir—he, my nephew, I, your keeper.

"'My blood rushed to my head, and I nearly killed him on the spot, I beat him so. Yes, I beat him, and I promised him that when you came I should correct him with my own hands in your presence. This is why I have nearly perished with sorrow. He has neither father nor mother, this boy, he has no relatives but me. I have kept him, I could not cast him off, could I?

"'But if he should do so again, there is an end of it, an end of pity. Have I done right, sir?'

"I held out my hand. 'You have done well, Cavalier; you are a brave man.'

"He rose.

"'Thank you, sir. Now I will go to fetch him. He needs punishment.'

"I knew it would be useless to try to dissuade the old man. I let him follow out his own humour. He went to seek the

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rascal, and led him in by the ear. I was seated upon a straw chair, with the grave face of a judge. Marius had grown and seemed uglier to me than ever, with his shy, sullen manner. His uncle pushed him before me, with his military air.

"'Ask pardon of the landlord.'

"The boy would not utter a word. Then the old gentleman seized him under the arms, and, throwing him to the ground, began to flog him so violently that I rose to interfere. The child howled: 'Pardon! pardon! pardon! I promise!'

"Cavalier raised him from the ground, and, forcing him to his knees before me, said: 'Ask pardon.' The rascal murmured with lowered eyes:

"'I ask pardon.'

"Then his uncle dealt him a parting slap that sent him flying. He ran out, and I saw him no more that evening. Cavalier came back trembling.

"'He has a bad nature,' he said; and during dinner he repeated:

"'Oh, I am so sorry, sir; you don't know how sorry I am.'

"I tried to console him, but in vain. I went to bed early, that I might start hunting in time. My dog was sleeping on the floor at the foot of my bed when I extinguished my candle. I was awakened in the middle of the night by Bock's furious barking, and I saw instantly that my room was full of smoke. I sprang from my bed, lighted my candle, ran to the door and opened it. A whirlwind of flame entered. The house was on fire! I closed the heavy oak door quickly, and, putting on my coat, let my dog out of the window by means of a rope formed by my bed-clothes. Then, throwing my garments out, followed by my game-bag and gun, I escaped in the same manner. I cried at the top of my voice:

"'Cavalier! Cavalier!' But the keeper did not awake. He slept the heavy sleep of an old gendarme. Through the windows I saw the lower part of the house was a fiery furnace, and I saw that it had been filled with straw to favour the flames. Who could have set it on fire? I commenced to call furiously—

"'Cavalier!' Then the thought occurred to me that he was suffocated with the smoke.

"I had an inspiration, and slipping a cartridge in my gun, I fired a shot through his window. The six panes of glass fell inside in fragments. This time the old man heard, and he appeared in his shirt, dazed by the light that blazed before his house. I cried: 'Your house is on fire! Jump out of the window, quick!' The flames burst out of the door and window and threatened to swallow him. He sprang out and alighted on his feet like a cat, and just in time. The thatched roof broke in the middle and the stairway made a draught for the fire that roared below. An immense red sheaf of flame rose in the air. It spread out like a column of water and scattered a shower of sparks all round the cottage, and in a few moments there was nothing but a mass of flames. Cavalier asked in a fright:

"'How did it happen?'

"I replied: 'They set fire in the kitchen.' He muttered:

"'Who could have done it?'

"And I cried out instinctively, 'Marius!'

"The old man understood. He faltered: 'Oh, Mother of God! Was it for that he did not come in?'

"Then a horrible thought struck me. I cried, 'Céleste, Céleste!'

"He said nothing, but the house lay crumbling before us, nothing now but a fiery furnace—brilliant, dazzling, bloody, a formidable funeral pile, where the poor woman now lay nothing but a charred mass.

"The fire reached the neighbouring shed. I thought of my horse, and Cavalier ran to let him out. He had hardly opened the stable door before a rapid, nimble body rushed out, passing between his legs and knocking him on his face. It was Marius fleeing with all his strength. The old man was up in a moment. He wanted to run and catch the miserable wretch, but, knowing he could not, he was seized with an irresistible fury, and, yielding to one of those sudden, irrational impulses, that no one can foresee or hinder, he took my gun that lay near him, shouldered it, and before I could prevent he fired, without knowing whether or not it was loaded. One barrel was not discharged when I fired through the window, and the charge struck the flying boy in the back, and he fell on his face covered with blood. He pawed the earth with his hands and knees like a wounded animal that seeks to escape. I raised him up. He was already dying. He expired without saying a word. Cavalier, still in his shirt, his limbs bare, stood near us, stupefied, motionless. When the people came from the village they carried my keeper away.

"I appeared as witness at the trial and I related the facts, concealing nothing. Cavalier was acquitted. But he disappeared the next day, leaving the country. I never saw him again.

"This, gentlemen, is my hunting story."

MY HINDOO SERVANT.

My servant, Sajad, was by no means an extraordinary fellow. I picked him up in Benares, one scorching afternoon in midsummer. I was in want of a *kitmutgar*, and he seemed to have nothing to do. He could not speak one word of English, and, to tell the truth, that was the first and only recommendation upon which I engaged him.

In religion he was a Mussulman, but he was far from being devout; indeed, I very soon rated him as rather below the average in everything. However, as I did not require anything remarkable, we got on well enough to the end; for he followed me—poor fellow—to his death.

Steal? Most decidedly. He would invariably steal anything belonging to me that attracted his fancy. If I discovered it and went to work in the right way, I could usually get it back.

Sajad never left me for an hour from the time he entered my service. He followed me all day, and slept on a rug at my door or lay on the sand at my feet or just outside my tent, at night, as the case might be, and he received just as many lectures on veracity and made just as many promises as the time allowed; but I am sure that he told me just as many lies the last week of his life as he did in the first week he was with me. It is as much the nature of the Oriental to lie and steal, as it is of a dog to bark at a horse, or of a cat to help herself to cream.

One who expects too much is apt to give credit for too little. That may be the reason the Hindoo has such a bad reputation in the minds of some who mean to be just, or even generous. Many a good turn Sajad did me, right in the line of those two straits. It takes a rogue to catch a rogue, and I know that he saved me from being robbed by others many times over for all that he took himself, while he would detect a lie in what any one else told me as naturally as a duck would take to water.

We were marching through the Terai once with a small detachment. A soldier was leading my horse, while I walked upon one side of the path, followed at a little distance by Sajad, hunting for a bird I had shot and which had fallen in the tall grass. Suddenly there was a cry from those behind. I looked quickly over my shoulder.

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A hooded cobra, disturbed by the commotion I was making, had risen out of the grass just behind me. His flat head and flaring hood were already thrown back for a final fling at me. His half-open mouth was within three feet of my face when my eyes rested upon it. If I turned, I should only expose more of my face. If I lifted a hand, he would strike it quicker than lightning. There was no chance to get away, and I was utterly helpless.

Before I had time to think a second thought, however, Sajad made one leap from where he was standing, and before his feet had touched the ground he had brought his staff with a sharp whirr, as it cut the air, too quick even for a snake to dodge, and the next instant the cobra's body was writhing in the grass, while his head, completely severed, fell at my feet.

Had Sajad waited an instant he would have been too late. No one else could have reached me; yet if he had missed his aim, or the snake had dodged, his own life would have paid the forfeit. No one knew it better than Sajad himself, but he took the chance and saved my life. He had in his girdle at the time a bright-coloured silk handkerchief which he had stolen from me, and only that morning had solemnly declared that he knew nothing about it.

Up in the hills, one afternoon, I was lying on a low tent-bed taking a nap, when Sajad saw a poisonous insect, a kind of scorpion, crawling over my pillow. He had nothing near to use as a weapon, and no time to lose. He caught it in his naked hand, and threw it out of the tent-door. I woke in time to see it flying through the air, and, hurrying out, killed it before it got away.

I called to Sajad to ask if he had escaped a sting, and, receiving a cheerful reply in the affirmative, thought no more about it till, chancing to enter the tent softly and unexpectedly, I found him sucking the back of his right hand for dear life. He stopped the instant he saw me, and put the hand behind him.

The poison had already begun to take effect. The hand and arm were swelling, and before long Sajad was lying on the floor, writhing in agony. The only antidotes I had were ammonia and whiskey. Sajad knew the contents of both bottles, for he had the care of all my traps. I did my best for him with the ammonia; but utterly in vain I pleaded, begged, commanded that he take the whiskey. He would not touch it.

Why? Only because he was a Mussulman. No matter how intense his agony or determined my command, he put his left hand over his mouth and shook his head. He felt sure that he was dying, and he believed my assertion that the whiskey might save him, but that made no difference. He came so near death that he was past seeing anything and beyond hearing. He lay upon the ground, just breathing, panting, as though he was almost at the end. It seemed useless to try again, and yet, now that he was unconscious, I could at least make a last, desperate trial with the whiskey. The moment that it touched his lips, he struggled away, clutched his lips with his hand and shook his head.

I believe the very fear that I should succeed in giving him whiskey kept him alive till the poison began to lose its power. At all events, he did not die.

Sajad was as fond of hunting as I. Many a time we two slipped away from camp in the grey of early morning. Once, just before daylight, I was out with my shot-gun in a thinly-wooded jungle, a mile from camp, upon the shore of a small lake, waiting for birds.

It was just my luck. Because I came prepared for birds, there was not one in sight, but three beautiful antelopes came down to drink, within a hundred feet of us. I looked at the shot-gun in disgust; then looked again at the antelope. It was exasperating. I was determined to have a shot, at any rate, and, in the hope that I might stun one of them or at least bewilder him for an instant, I whispered to Sajad to be ready with his knife and make a dash the moment I fired.

Cautiously I raised the gun to my shoulder and was pressing the trigger, when Sajad touched me and whispered: "Wait, Sahib! Look there!"

I looked and my shot-gun fell. At a slight angle, but little more than half-way between us and the antelopes, there crouched a royal Bengal tiger. A single glance was sufficient. He was surely a man-eater. Evidently he had been on the point of satisfying his hunger with an antelope when he caught sight of us. He was within an easy leap of the antelope, but was deliberately turning away and facing us. The motion startled the deer and they bounded off, but the tiger paid them no further attention. The huge creature opened his great jaws till his head seemed nothing but a red, yawning gullet, bordered by long, ragged, glistening teeth, and, with a savage snarl, he began to approach us.

There was no need of looking about for a place of safety. The jungle was sparsely wooded at the best, and the largest tree we had passed in coming from camp would not have borne even Sajad's weight ten feet from the ground. Sajad had only his hunting knife; I nothing but my shot-gun.

"One of us must go, Sahib," Sajad muttered, without taking his eyes from the tiger. "If we run together, we shall both go; he will overtake us in a moment. Let Allah decide as it is written in our foreheads. Run that way, for your life, Sahib. I will run this way. Be quick! before he comes nearer!"

There was no time for thought. It seemed a fair proposition, and even as he spoke the Hindoo started at the top of his speed away. It was useless standing still or following him, and, acting upon his suggestion, I started in the opposite direction.

After running a rod or two, I looked over my shoulder. The tiger had made a leap and was just landing, already crouched for another spring. He was following me!

I will not admit that I hoped he would follow Sajad, but I did hope that he would not choose me. It amounted to the same thing.

I started on one more desperate struggle. I was doomed. I knew it perfectly well; yet while there is life there is hope, and I ran as I never ran before. I resolved to go as far as I could, and then whirl about and give the tiger a charge of fine shot full in the face. It might put out his eyes. There was at least that possibility to hang a desperate hope upon, and throwing my gun to my shoulder, I turned. The tiger was not there!

Looking farther back, I saw his tawny hide in the underbrush. Instantly it rose. He was making a leap, but it was not towards me! One thrill of gratitude shot through my veins, when my heart stood still with horror! There was one sharp yelp as the huge form swept through the air, and, crushing the leaves and branches as it fell, landed upon the prostrate form of Sajad, silently waiting for the blow.

I stood there petrified, the cold perspiration dripping from my forehead. There was not a sound from Sajad. There was only one fierce howl from the tiger. Then all was still.

It was only an instant, but in that instant we two, my Hindoo servant and I, stood out before me in very bold relief. I had run for my life, knowing that the chances lay between us two, and hoping, at least, that the tiger might not follow me. He had run, too, knowing that the chance lay between us, and because the tiger did not follow him he had come back again and tempted him—called him away from me, and given his life for mine.

He was a poor benighted heathen, and only an average sample of his kind. He could not help stealing pretty things. He could not help telling lies. But surely he was a truer, braver, nobler man than I, and if the image of God can be found, to-day, in any of His creatures, it would require no very deep theologian to decide which of us two betrayed it—least profaned.

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THE MYTH OF A MANIAC

FOR two weeks the *Plunging Petrel*, a big three-masted schooner, had ploughed its way through the placid waters of the Pacific with a sameness that was exasperating. Since leaving port, nothing—not even a threatened storm or a lively gale—had broken the monotony.

The ship was bound for Rio, Brazil, with a cargo of wheat, and I was her only passenger—seeking health in this manner, according to my physician's urgent request. She was commanded by a sturdy old navigator, Captain Collins, a man who on first acquaintance might appear to be cold, distant, and reserved, but who proved, in my case at least, to be exactly the opposite, for I soon found him a genial, hearty, good fellow. He was strict with his men, but not tyrannical, and he was a good story-teller.

But monotony was not to last us all through the voyage. There was soon a singular and ominous change.

One day, about noon, at the beginning of the third week, a sailor named Bates was placed in irons for striking a messmate with a marlinspike and breaking his arm. The punishment was undoubtedly deserved, but there were angry mutterings, and more than one sullen face among the crew in consequence, for Bates, whose only fault was an uncontrollable temper, was a general favourite. But when the unfortunate man was found dead the next morning things began to look black for the officers.

There was no sign of wound or struggle upon the body of the dead man, but the atmosphere of the forecastle where he had been confined was redolent with the fumes of chloroform. I called the captain's attention to this, but he thought I must be mistaken, and would not be convinced, even when the boatswain and one of the mates argued on my side. He declared that there was none of the drug on board, and never had been. And so it happened that poor Bates was buried in the deep sea, at the very hour at which he was to have been liberated.

At eight bells the following night, when the first-mate went on deck to relieve his fellow-officer, the latter had disappeared, and could not be found. I happened to be leaning against the mizzen-mast, smoking, when the alarm was given, and I could have sworn that I had been smelling chloroform for half-an-hour, although I did not call the fact to mind until the dreadful cry of "Man overboard!" was sounded and all hands piped on deck. A boat containing the first mate and four men was lowered at once, the ship was brought about, and two hours were spent in fruitless search. In the meantime every accessible nook in the ship, which was tacking backwards and forwards in the locality, was inspected with like results. At last the searching party was taken on board, and the ship resumed its course.

The captain now took turns at the watch with the mate, and everything ran smoothly till the following night, or rather the next morning—four bells of the first watch. Then, when he turned out to relieve the mate, that officer could not be found. The same efforts were made to find the missing man, and with the same result as on the previous night, and the captain was nearly frantic. He was not only deeply grieved at the death of his two officers, but greatly shocked and mystified at the strange manner of their disappearance.

On both occasions the water, apart from a heavy swell, was comparatively smooth, the wind only brisk enough to fill the sails, and the stars were shining. This, together with the fact that both the mates were known to be expert swimmers, so that they should, under ordinary circumstances, have been able to keep afloat for hours, deepened the mystery. The captain would not admit that the presence of chloroform, if it existed at all, had anything to do with the mystery.

On the afternoon following the second disappearance the captain called me into his cabin, shut and locked the door, and beckoned me to a chair at a small table. I saw nothing remarkable about this, believing that he only wished to talk over his troubles; but when he took a seat opposite me I noted that his face was deathly pale, and that his lips were tightly compressed.

"My two officers have been murdered, Mr. Vincent," he fairly gasped.

"Murdered!" I exclaimed. "I have suspected foul play from the first. Have you any evidence?"

"The best in the world. You have noticed the big Dane, Qvistgard?"

"That mild-looking fellow with the red beard?"

"Yes."

"Why, certainly; but you don't suspect him, I hope."

"Of course not. On the contrary, there is mutiny on foot, and he——. But here is a note he slipped into my hand a moment ago. Read it for yourself. Unless you and I and this faithful fellow can outfight or outwit fifteen villains we are doomed."

With a face that must have been as white as the face before me, and a hand that was anything but steady, I picked up a sheet of paper which the captain had thrown on the table, and read the following:—

"CAPTAIN,—I have discovered a horrible plot. All the crew except myself have mutinied. The mates were knocked on the head and thrown overboard. You will share the same fate when you come on deck to relieve the watch to-night, unless you heed this warning. Meet me ten minutes before the close of the second dog-watch, just aft the main hatchway, and I will tell you everything. In the meantime, do not speak to me or send for me, for we are closely watched. I am supposed to side with the crew. The least mistake would be fatal. Don't tell the passenger. He may be all right, but I doubt it. For God's sake, captain, *don't go near the rail.*"

"Don't tell the passenger!" I muttered, as I looked at the captain, not only horror-stricken at the contents of the note, but surprised and hurt at the uncomplimentary reference to myself. But the captain, who must have divined my thoughts, relieved my mind on this point by saying:

"That's all right, my dear Vincent. The fellow is only a trifle over-cautious. Don't mind him. I would trust you with the ship, and my life too, for that matter. You see I have shown my confidence by allowing you to read the note. Now, I want your advice. Your assistance I shall count on without the asking when the time comes."

"Thank you, captain," I answered. "To start with, I should certainly not go on deck till it is time to meet the Dane, if I were you."

My companion had now regained his composure to a certain extent, and sat for a moment drumming the table with his fingers.

"Who has the watch now?" I continued presently.

"Hutton, the tall seaman with the red scar on the back of his hand," was the answer. "He is acting as first mate, and I had decided to give Jones, the little Welshman, the position of second to-morrow. Both are fairly good seamen, and, by all the gods, I can't understand it! I could have sworn that these two men were as true as the dead mates ever were, until I got this warning from Qvistgard. But he is right, my boy, he is right. All this comes from that unfortunate Bates affair. I wonder who is the leader? If he could be shot or placed in irons it might quell the others. Have you a pistol?"

"A small pocket affair," I answered.

"I have two large ones, and a repeating rifle in my chest," continued the captain. "How would it do to batten down

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the hatchway of the forecastle when part of the dogs are below at supper, and pump lead into the rest of them? I don't believe they are armed, unless they have a few knives. We could then make for the nearest port."

"Better wait till you see the Dane," I replied. "He may be able to give you the name of the leader."

For an hour or more we continued to plan, but without being able to decide on anything definite. At last it was agreed that I should go on deck, and see what could be learned there. In half an hour I returned, with anything but favourable news. The men were talking guardedly in groups, and when I passed near them they quickly dispersed. The big Dane was leaning over the rail near the log, silent, and apparently watching with absorbed attention the receding, foam-capped waves in the ship's wake.

Before sundown all our weapons had been oiled, examined, and loaded, the captain and myself secreting the revolvers about our persons, and leaving the rifle for the Dane.

The sky had clouded over late in the afternoon, and night, gloomy and foreboding, settled down on the schooner.

"The very elements seem to be in sympathy with this cursed business," said the captain, when it began to grow so dark in the cabin that we could hardly make out each other's faces; "and I feel as if the jig was about up with me."

As soon as the last streak of day had disappeared, the captain, revolver in hand, mounted the companion-ladder, and stole softly on deck. I followed him part of the way, but stopped, according to his directions, and stood with my head and shoulders above the companion-way, ready, in case of an emergency, to lend any assistance that might lie in my power.

I never looked into a blacker night. The air was soft and warm, and fitful gusts of wind dashed a few cooling rain-drops against my face, as I held my revolver and tried to keep the receding form of the captain in view. But he disappeared almost instantly, and, owing to the whistle of the wind in the rigging, the groaning of the masts and the creaking of the yard-arms, I could not hear his footsteps after he had gone half-a-dozen paces. He carried no lantern, but several lights glimmered fore and aft, dancing and shifting unsteadily about, like veritable will-o'-the-wisps. None, however, were near the main hatchway, the place of meeting.

Anxiously I waited five, ten, fifteen minutes, as nearly as I could reckon time, but neither sight nor sound brought intelligence of the captain. At last I could bear the suspense no longer, and I began to walk slowly along towards the bow.

When I thought I had reached the location of the hatchway, and was on the point of coming to a halt, I struck my foot against something and fell—the planks of the deck seeming to open and engulf me.

While still descending through space I realised what had happened—the hatchway had been opened, and I had fallen into the hole. A second later I found myself lying between two bags of wheat, more frightened than hurt, and with the fumes of chloroform almost suffocating me. Before trying to rise, I discovered that I was not in total darkness, and that a dim light came from somewhere, but not from above, I was sure. Presently a muffled groan reached me from the direction of the stern, and on looking over my shoulder I saw the stooping form of a man outlined by the rays of a lantern in front of him, about twenty feet away.

I gained my feet with some difficulty, and was about to step forward when the ship gave a lurch, and I was thrown lengthwise against the hull. Before I could stand up again, the bent form assumed an upright posture, and I recognised the big Dane. Muttering incoherently, he picked up the lantern, and started towards the place where I had first fallen, off to my left.

Whether it was fear, the shock caused by striking the hull, or the effects of the chloroform that kept me from trying to get up, I am not prepared to say, but I did not attempt to move hand or foot.

As the light drew near, I discovered a rope dangling from the deck. When the Dane drew near this rope, he deposited his lantern beside him, rubbed his big, hard hands together with a loud, rasping noise, and laughed a low, fiendish sort of chuckle, which fairly chilled my blood. A moment later, his merriment subsided, and, taking hold of the rope with one hand, he picked up the lantern with the other. I expected to see him run his arm through the handle of the lantern, and go, hand over hand, through the hatchway, but he was in no hurry, and began to talk in a harsh undertone:

"So far so good, King Qvistgard," he said. "A million pounds of diamonds, sewed up in sacks of silk, and all my own. Oh, what a royal present for my ebony princess! Fifteen days more and I shall reign supreme. The two mates and the captain are now my royal subjects, and to-morrow night the passenger will join them. Then come me hearties Hutton and the little Welshman; and so down the list. Ha! ha! ha! ha!"

Never until that awful moment had I heard the blood-curdling laugh of a maniac, but I recognised it as quickly as if I had passed all my days inside the walls of a madhouse. Before I knew it, my strength, or courage, or both, suddenly returned, and I arose cautiously to my feet, discovering, at the same time, the revolver, which had fallen from my hand when I stumbled on the deck. It was lying almost at the feet of the Dane. Advancing cautiously, I stooped, and was about to pick up the weapon; but before I could get hold of it the ship lurched again, I collided with the madman, and we both went down together.

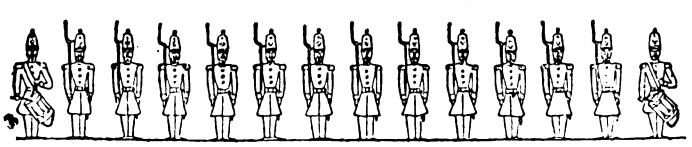
The revolver escaped me, the light in the lantern was extinguished, and there was a scream, a piercing cry of fright and anguish, such as only a terror-stricken madman can utter. And then, with that awful shriek ringing in my ears and the strong fingers of the demented Dane clutching my throat, I became insensible.

When consciousness returned I was lying in my berth; it was daylight, and Hutton was standing beside me. As soon as I was able to talk, he told me that just after dark, on the previous evening, a horrible cry was heard coming from the direction of the main hatchway, and that when the little Welshman and several other sailors rushed to the spot, the raving Dane was seen to climb up a rope from the hold. As soon as he gained the deck, he ran screaming to the rail and threw himself into the sea. I was found, more dead than alive, and taken to my cabin.

Soon after the captain and the two mates were discovered, gagged and bound near the spot where I had first seen the Dane. The captain recovered from the effects of the chloroform which had been administered to him, and was removed with the two officers, who were still alive, but too weak and exhausted to stand on their feet for many hours.

In two days all had recovered, and the *Flying Petrel* was manned and officered as before, save for the absence of Bates and the big Dane. All went well to the end of the voyage.

The mutiny was only a myth in the mind of the madman.



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THE OUTLAWS' TREASURE.

Illustrated by MR. A. KEMP TEBBY.

SUMMARY.

The mail train has been robbed between Cornwall and La Grange stations, and £20,000 worth of gold stolen by a gang of desperadoes, headed by two brothers named Mulligan.

CHAPTER III.

THE SWAMP RETREAT.

THE robbers had worked without fear upon the train. Fully armed, and desperate as they were, they would not have hesitated a moment had it been crowded with men. They showed their courage when their leader, with two men, went on board at one of the previous stations, and remained, knowing to a certainty that the engine would be thrown from the rails, with the likelihood of dragging the whole train after it, and killing and maiming those within.

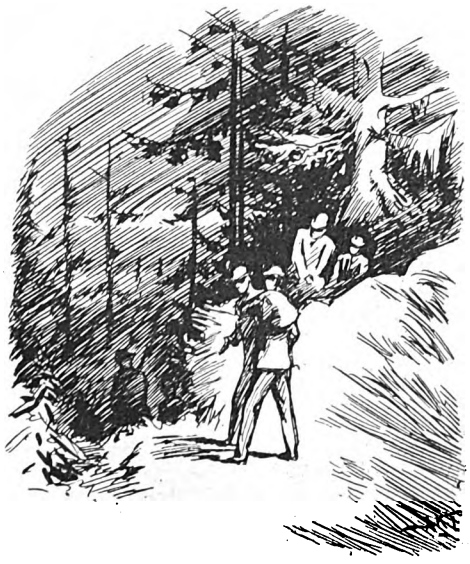
In the settlement of new countries, where the influx of the population is rapid, there is always sure to be an abnormal development of crime. The most desperate and abandoned are always drawn thither by the laxity of the legal power, and the abundant opportunity given for the commission of crime.

As an almost inevitable consequence, these men become emboldened by their immunity from arrest and punishment, and overstep the mark of prudence, until the community is aroused in self-defence, a vigilance committee is formed, and short and decisive work is the result.

The Mulligan brothers were two desperadoes, who, it was said, came originally from Texas, where, on account of their numerous crimes, they were compelled to flee the State; and when a man leaves that section of the Union for his misdemeanours, he may safely be set down as a phenomenon of villainy.

Gathering round them half-a-dozen men as desperate as themselves, they settled in one of the Western States, where they soon distinguished themselves for their disregard of all laws, both human and divine. They were engaged in bar-room brawls, in fights in the streets, murders and assassinations, until they became a perfect terror in the neighbourhood.

With the breaking out of the civil war between North and South they disappeared, and it was sincerely hoped that they would be killed in that terrible conflict; but the whole eight—after running no little personal risk—reappeared in the neighbourhood which they had left before, and renewed their outrages upon the community.



Glided away through the woods.

The authorities offered large rewards for their apprehension, and one or two men were rash enough to attempt to decoy some of them in the meshes of the law; but they failed, and were repaid by being shot down like dogs.

For convenience simply the outlaws settled in the central part of a vast marshy tract, which has been referred to elsewhere, where they made their home, and roamed over the country as they saw fit.

They had little or no fear of arrest in the community as it was organised at this time. Both Jim and Dick had openly jeered at the hand-bills which had posted them as outlaws, and emptied their revolvers after the officers of the law who had gone to the trouble of nailing up the notice.

But it was convenient for them to have a secure place of retreat, and they had chosen it well.

The form of an immense negro rose from the corner.

After the robbery they glided away through the woods like phantoms of the night. None of them had horses with them, and they stole as noiselessly and swiftly through the dark arches of the forest as so many Sioux Indians upon the trail of a foe.

They had gone but a few hundred yards when they reached the margin of Devil's Creek, at a place where it was about a hundred yards in width, and of considerable depth. There a long, narrow boat was awaiting them, and in an instant they were all within and seated. Two of them took up the oars, and the vessel progressed rapidly through the inky darkness, where it was impossible to see a foot in advance, and where their own presence was betrayed by the burning tips of their cigars.

Yet they were so well acquainted with the route that they advanced without hesitation through the blank gloom.

They laughed and chuckled over their success, and determined to indulge in a good spree for the unexpected good fortune that had attended their attempt.

A half mile up this stream, and they turned into a narrow tributary, which was ascended to about the same distance, when the stream broadened out into a sort of lake, in the centre of which was a small wooded island. Here their journey was at an end, and here they landed.

Passing about among the trees, they reached a sort of rude cabin, which had been erected years before, and which was large enough to contain them without crowding each other.

A light, burning dimly, was seen through the open window, and showed that someone was within, and Dick Mulligan, the moment he entered the door, shouted:

"Jubal! I say, Jubal!"

He waited a moment, but there was no response.

"Jubal! Confound your black hide, where are you?"

"Hello, dar!" came the response, in a voice so thick and obscured as to show that the individual was not yet fairly awake.

"Why don't you stir yourself when you know we are about? Come, you black dog, and 'tend to things!"

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The form of an immense negro, somewhat bowed with age, arose from the corner, where he had slumbered upon the ground, stumbled forward, and threw additional fuel upon the fire, which, blazing up, displayed an apartment some twenty feet square, with a ladder communicating with the storey above.

A rough deal table was at one end of the room, while nearly a dozen chairs were scattered promiscuously about. In one corner was the rudest sort of cupboard, where a few dishes and cooking utensils were kept for the use of the negro, who prepared their meals, and acted as general servant to them all.

There was no stove in the room, a broad deep-throated fireplace answering for every such necessity.

The men were in high spirits to-night. They had captured over £20,000 in gold, to say nothing of the valuable jewellery, and there was an inclination upon the part of all to celebrate it in a manner that they judged befitting the occasion.

A huge demijohn of whiskey was brought forward by the African, and, with a number of tumblers, placed upon the table.

Then the carousal began. Drink after drink was swallowed until these men, who were hardened to such excesses, began to reel in their seats, and some fell to the floor.

The carousal began

Maudlin snatches of song, jests, and meaningless remarks were muttered and mumbled, until the eight men, who, a few hours before, cowed and held a whole train in subjection, and who, at that moment, were the terror of the neighbourhood for miles, were as helpless as so many invalid children.

Had a few police appeared on the scene at this juncture, or even had Fred Weldon stalked among them alone and unattended, short work could have been made with the desperadoes.

The negro was the only sober man in the party. When he saw all the others stretched helpless upon the floor, he carefully covered them with their overcoats and blankets, and then passed outside.

The night was dark, but during the last hour a faint moon had risen over the tree-tops, and there was the faintest illumination of the lake which inclosed the island where these desperate men had their homes.

"Dem yar fellers ar ob no 'count till to-morrow," he soliloquised, as he stood meditatively looking out upon the dark, silent water. "Dey's sometimes pretty ugly when dey're comin' out dar tantrums, and de best ting dis chile can do is to keep skearce."

He had been the slave of the Mulligan brothers in years gone by, and he had remained faithful by them, through all their adventures and villainies, up to the present moment, and, coward as he was, he was ready to risk his life for them at any moment.

"De night ain't bery cool, and p'raps I'd better stay out yah—sh! What dat?

A tremour of terror shook his frame as he heard the faint ripple of water near the other shore. Stooping down, he peered long and anxiously in the direction of the alarming sound, but he could discern nothing.

"It must have bin a fish——"

He paused abruptly, for at that moment he distinctly saw a small Indian canoe gliding noiselessly along the bank, propelled by a single man.

CHAPTER IV.

The Night Alarm.

When the express train halted at the La Grange station, and the score or two of passengers that had been waiting there stepped into it, the corpulent gentleman, who had given his name as Smith, walked down the Pullman, with valise in hand, and took his seat beside young Fred Weldon, of whom mention has already been made.

The first-mentioned personage, as we have intimated, was a noted detective, whose real name was Squirrek, and who had been engaged in some of the most famous cases of recent years.

The detective, as he now appeared in his spectacles, white cravat, his clerical suit of black, and the innocent questioning stare of his big blue eyes, had a certain Pickwickian look about him that would have induced a stranger to set him down as one of the most credulous and harmless of his kind.

Before taking his seat beside Fred Weldon, he inquired with great concern, whether the place was engaged, and being told that it was not, he sank down as gingerly as though he were doing a forbidden act.

As he did so he gave one sharp, sidelong glance at the handsome young man—a glance which told him as much as an hour's fixed stare would have done—and then, with the air of a nervous gentleman who wasn't often from home, made inquiries regarding the robbery, which was just then the subject of discussion through the entire train.

Fred answered his questions with a succinct courtesy that soon left little to be told. But when he had finished, and supposed the matter done, his portly companion appeared to consider the matter only just opened.

The innocent-looking man at his side plied him so skilfully that in the space of a few minutes he had extracted everything that the young man knew or had ever heard of the noted Mulligan brothers.

After this came a moment's silence, and then it was pleasantly broken by the portly gentleman, who next succeeded in winning from the young lawyer almost as much of his own personal history as he knew himself. It was done, too, in such a quiet insinuating manner that Fred could take no offence.

By the time the express began slacking up at the station of Somerville, a town of about two thousand inhabitants, where

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He gave one sharp, sidelong glance.

the engine generally took in water, Fred Weldon began putting on his overcoat.

"Do you get out here?" inquired his new friend.

"Yes; this is where my mother lives. I am making her a short visit. You don't live here?"

"No, but I have to remain here a while—perhaps a week or so. I shall put up at the 'Drover's,' and if you have a spare evening, or an hour or so through the day on your hands, I shall be glad to see you."

Fred promised to continue their acquaintance, and, after bidding Mr. Smith good-night, the two separated, and took different directions; while the detective made his way to a hotel, the young man walked briskly down one of the bye streets, turning in at a small residence, which he entered with the manner of one who was perfectly at home.

So he was, for here lived his mother, the only relative he had in the world, and whose almost idolising affection he returned with an equally strong love.

A moment later, a handsome woman in middle life was clasped in his arms, and the son sat down to a meal which had been spread for him, and which had been waiting for the two hours that the express was behind time.

Fred explained that a slight detention, a sort of break-down, had delayed the train, but that none of the passengers had been hurt, and he was sorry that his mother had felt any uneasiness regarding him.

Fred Weldon had practised law in Brampton for two years, with a light heart and almost equally light purse. Young, enterprising, ambitious, handsome and talented, he toiled on, encouraged and discouraged, and with profound faith in the good day coming.

It cannot be said that he had nothing in the way of practice, for now and then clients did come to him, but they were not numerous by any means, and he had plenty of leisure for study and physical exercise.

He was the son of a physician, who had died when his child was quite young, leaving him enough to complete his collegiate course, and to afford a bare subsistence to his widow.

Believing there was a favourable opening at Brampton, some forty odd miles distant, Fred had started work there, and there he had toiled and hoped, and there he was toiling and hoping still.

But just now he was home for a short holiday; as he told his mother, he had arranged his business affairs so as to spend a week with her, and he told the truth when he added that he managed to do so with little difficulty to himself.

The chat was pleasant and affectionate, just as might have been expected between a mother and her only son, and at a comparatively early hour Fred withdrew to his room for the night. The next day was passed mainly at home, without seeing his friend Smith, but he was occupied until late in the evening in reading to his mother, and it was near midnight when he retired.

He had scarcely entered his bedroom, when, in the still night, he heard the gate pulled violently open, someone walked rapidly up the gravel path, stepped hurriedly to the door, and gave a ringing knock.

Mrs. Weldon was on the lower floor, and, before her son could anticipate her, she had unfastened the door, and saw before her the scared face of Jacob, one of the men-servants of Judge Woodland.

"Well, Jacob, what is the matter?"

"I am afraid something has gone wrong with the judge."

"What is it!"

"That's what I can't tell. I've come after Master Fred; the folks over at home are going distracted over it, and sent me out in search of some folks to go and hunt the judge up."

"Is he lost?" inquired Fred, who by this time had descended to the hall-door.

"I'm afraid he is. He went off to Millville this morning, and promised to be back by sunset, and he hasn't come yet."

"I don't see any occasion for alarm in that. Something may have happened to detain him."

"But the horse came tearing homeward a little while ago, all covered with froth and foam, with the harness flying about him, and with nothing of the trap at all. The women folk are sure the judge is killed. The old lady is weeping and wringing her hands, and as for Florence, she is about crazy."

"That is indeed serious," replied young Weldon, who had already begun donning his overcoat. "I will go with you; mother, good-night."

A hasty kiss was given and taken, and the two men hurried down the path and out into the road, and then up the street, and out in the country towards the residence of Judge Woodland.

"His horse has probably run away with him," Fred found time to remark as he ran along.

"No, he hasn't either," was the emphatic denial.

"How do you know that?" asked the young man, in considerable surprise.

"'Cause that yer mare never done such a thing with the Judge nor anyone else, and what's more, she wouldn't do it if she had a wild Indian a-driving of her."

"What, then, do you think was the matter?"

Fred repeated the question several times before the old man answered:

"I b'lieve it's them Mulligan brothers!"

"No—"

But the young lawyer paused abruptly as he recalled that Judge Woodland was a well-known opponent to the notorious band. He had managed to get one of them in his clutches, and had sentenced him to twenty years' imprisonment, but on his way he had escaped through the connivance of his guard, who were doubtless influenced by their fear of the desperadoes.

Furthermore, it was Judge Woodland who had been mainly instrumental in inducing such a large reward to be offered for the capture of the gang, having guaranteed one half of it himself.

All this flashed through the mind of Fred Weldon at the moment he had commenced to remonstrate with the declaration of the man, and he withheld further answer. He felt that there was a probability that the truth had been spoken.

"Only bring him back.

Judge Woodland, living but a short distance out of Somerville, probably felt secure against any personal danger from these ruffians, although it is not to be supposed that such a consideration

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would have influenced him in the discharge of his duty.

The headquarters of the outlaws was thirty or forty miles distant. While the two brothers themselves, and one or two others, were known to many of the police, yet the majority of the gang were shrewd enough to keep themselves strangers to those from whom there was any cause to fear danger.

Many of them, including the leaders, went about as they chose, sometimes going as far as Chicago and other large cities; but when they did so they were so thoroughly disguised, that it would have taken a keen-eyed detective to have suspected their identity.

But Judge Woodland was a marked man. He had received numerous warnings during the trial of one of the gang, all of which he treated with contemptuous indifference.

The horse of Fred Weldon suddenly shied.

But as week after week passed away without his seeing any of the gang, his alarmed family forgot their fears; and when, on this pleasant day in autumn, he started for a neighbouring village, there was not a word of warning uttered, and not a thought entered his head as his docile mare jogged along.

A few hundred yards, and Fred Weldon reached the residence. As he anticipated, he found the family in the greatest distress. Mrs. Woodland was wringing her hands, and was on the verge of hysterics, while Florence, more beautiful than ever in her woe, was hurrying back and forth, and doing what she could to assist the party of rescue, or rather of search, in making their preparations.

A hundred men could have been raised in the town, but they were not needed. Jacob had been sent in great haste to gather such as he thought fit, and he had selected three besides Fred Weldon—three strong, sturdy fellows, who had run with all despatch upon receiving the alarming tidings, and who were now mounted, and only awaiting the coming of the fourth man.

"Oh, Mr. Weldon, I am so glad you have come!" exclaimed Florence, as she seized his hand.

"This is, indeed, sad," said Fred; "but I hope it is not so bad as——"

"Oh, hurry—hurry! Only bring him back, and we will pray for you as long as we live."

A few moments later the four men cantered out on the road, and started in search of the missing Judge Woodland.

CHAPTER V.

THE WRONG MAN.

IT was beyond midnigh when the four horsemen took the road over which the affrighted mare of Judge Woodland had thundered home, and they spurred their animals to a swinging gallop, their whole minds and energies bent upon the work before them.

There was a full moon high up in the heavens, and they could see for a considerable distance ahead, so that it was hardly possible for them to pass any important object upon the way without seeing it.

The four were armed with revolvers, and every one of them was brave, and anxious to meet the men who had dared to offer any violence to Judge Woodland.

Fred Weldon recognised two of the men as old friends of his—one of them was a middle-aged blacksmith, a man noted for his activity, great strength, and personal prowess. He was remarkably skilful in the use of both the pistol and rifle, having won quite a name as a sharpshooter during the war.

The other was the son of the keeper of the "Drover's Hotel," who was rather dissipated at times, but who was quite an athlete, and had shown such proof of his skill and bravery that there were many disposed to overlook his failings, which at times were of a glaring nature. He was always ready to offer his services in the cause of right, no matter what parties were concerned, and he was the first man to whom Jacob hastened in his extremity.

But the third man was a stranger to Fred Weldon, and for a time he failed to make out who he was; but after they had got fairly upon the road, and he gained a view of his face, he was startled into an exclamation of surprise as he recognised in the large, heavy-set personage no less a character than the innocent-looking Mr. Smith, whom he had encountered in the express train a couple of nights before.

Scarcely a word was spoken among the party until they had ridden some distance, when the detective turned upon Weldon, having noticed his fixed looks for several minutes past.

"He is one of Dick Mulligan's men."

"You seem surprised to see me among your friends!" he remarked with a smile.

"Indeed I am; you are the last man I should have expected to see engaged in an expedition of this kind."

"I was smoking a quiet cigar with Tom here when the man came after him, and of course I couldn't let my friend go alone, and that's how I am here."

"You are aware," said Fred with some hesitation, "that there may be danger attending this?"

"Yes."

All, excepting Smith, had some theory to offer for the disappearance of Judge Woodland. The detective merely listened to the others, and held his peace.

The hour being so late, they encountered few people on the road. They were now following the turnpike, but after going a couple of miles they turned off into a branch road leading directly towards the village where Judge Woodland had been. During the few minutes that the three men had awaited the arrival of Fred Weldon, they had learned the direction by which the missing man always went to and came from his destination on this day. So there

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was no halting for conjecture as to the proper course to pursue.

"It is on this road that we'll learn something of the judge, if we learn it at all," remarked Tom Haldy, as they turned into it.

"I recollect it very well," replied Fred, "although it is a good many years since I have travelled over it."

"And I've a feeling that the murder has took place nigh to the Ten-Mile Woods," added Jim, the blacksmith, who sent a shudder over every member of the party by the mention of the word *murder*.

The Ten-Mile Woods were scarcely half of that in extent, having borne the name ever since the clearing off of the surrounding country, and they were now several miles ahead of the horseman.

"What sort of a forest is it?" inquired the detective.

"An ordinary tract of woods, extending for nearly five miles on both sides of the road."

"Is it known ever to have been the scene of any tragedy?"

"Not that I can recall——"

"Don't you remember the drover that was shot near the half-way house just before the war?" interrupted Tom.

"You are right—I had forgotten that."

"What was the circumstance?" inquired the detective, who allowed no opportunity to pass for gaining information.

"It is a story that is soon told," replied Haldy. "A drover was found shot near the half-way house, within twenty minutes after the pistol-shot had been fired. Father was riding by just after dark, and he found the poor fellow still alive, and able to describe the man who did it."

"Did he recognise the description?"

"Yes, it was old Balters, who kept the Half-way House, and, to satisfy himself, father stopped at the House, and took a drink and smoke with the old fellow, using his eyes as best he knew all the time. The result of it was that he learnt enough to satisfy himself that the old fellow was the assassin. He was arrested the next day, the crime was proved against him, and Judge Woodland sentenced him to be hanged, and he *was* hanged."

"What is this Half-way House?"

"A little dilapidated building standing near the middle of the woods. I have heard that it was built as a tavern, and old Balters used to keep a barrel of whiskey behind the counter, and generally had a stray bed for any traveller who came along."

"Did he live there alone?"

"No; he had a wife and son. The woman ran away with another man just before Balters committed the crime; and the boy, after vowing vengeance upon Judge Woodland for condemning his father to death, disappeared, and I have never heard of him since."

"Is the Half-way House occupied?"

"Not unless it has been taken quite recently."

Fred Weldon listened to this conversation, for it touched another chord which caused a new shiver of dread to run through him. Somewhere, he could not remember where, he had heard it said that young Balters was a member of the Mulligan gang; and only a night or two before, when the train was being robbed by them, he had noticed a stooping form which recalled this young villain.

By this time they had reached the edge of the Ten-Mile Woods, and the detective was busy plying his questions.

"Have either of you passed over this road recently?"

None of the three had.

"Do you know whether any attempt has ever been made upon Judge Woodland's life?"

"I have heard —— Hello! Yonder is somebody!"

Just as the horseman was entering the woods, they descried another horseman coming out. The latter appeared somewhat anxious to avoid them, but he could not very well do so, and so he put on as bold a face as possible, and rode forward. As he came up, he revealed the fact that he was a negro.

"Good ebenin', sah," he called out, anxious to conciliate the strangers.

"Who are you?"

"I's Pomp, and I works up at Massa Beckett's."

"What called you out so late?"

"I—I doesn't like to tell," faltered the African with a silly laugh.

"If you don't answer me at once I'll shoot you!" said the detective, in the fiercest voice he could assume.

"I's being to see Sally—a handsome young lady dat libes down at Gineral Jones', and dat I tuck——"

"Did you meet anyone on your way here?"

"Nobody at all. But oh, my golly, warn't dis chile skeerd!"

"Where? At what?" inquired the detective, as the four men gathered round him.

"Why, right down yonder!" replied the darkey, looking affrightedly behind him. "Down in dat holler. Oh, it was orful!"

"What was it?"

"I was ridin' long quiet-like, when I heard a groan, and I seed sumfin' lookin' like a man, and my hoss gave such a jump——"

The horsemen heard no more, but were dashing away at full speed through the woods, sure that the dead or dying body of Judge Woodland was close at hand.

Several hundred yards were passed in this manner, and then the horse of Fred Weldon suddenly pricked up his ears and gave a snort of alarm and shied to one side.

All four reined up, and the young lawyer at once dismounted.

"There is something here," he said to his companions. "Just keep an eye on my horse while I take a look round."

"Hush!" exclaimed Tom with a shiver. "I heard something like a groan. There, don't you hear it again?"

Every ear did hear something like the low moaning of a person in distress, and a shiver of apprehension ran through Fred as he walked softly towards the wood, with his eyes and ears alert.

"Do you see anything?" asked the detective.

"There he lies."

A dark form was seen stretched upon the ground by the roadside. The next moment the four men had dismounted, and while one quieted the frightened animals, the others hastened to the assistance of the dying man.

In a moment he was borne out where the moonlight could shine upon him. He was yet alive, but breathing with great difficulty.

"He is not dead!" said the detective.

"Good heavens! this is not Judge Woodland. We have the wrong man!" exclaimed Fred Weldon.

"Who is he?" asked Squirrek, equally puzzled.

"He is one of Dick Mulligan's men!" was the reply of the blacksmith.

(To be continued.)

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The Fountain of Youth

It was on the day of the summer solstice, and the glow of midday lay on the corn-fields. At times a fresh wind swept over from the mountain forest near; then the stalks bent low, and the poppies on the edge of the field scattered their delicate petals. Crickets and grasshoppers chirped in the grain, and from the blackthorn on the roadside the yellow-hammer once in a while let her gentle call be heard.

Through the corn-fields, which extended from the valley to the mountain, walked, in the narrow path, a young woman of slender yet strong figure. She wore the customary plaited skirt, and, for protection against the sun's rays, a red kerchief; on her left arm hung a basket, and in her right hand she carried a stone jug.

As the yellow-hammer in the thorn-hedge became aware of her presence he fluttered to the highest twig and called softly: "Maiden, maiden, how do you flourish?" But the bird was mistaken. The blonde Greta was a young wife, and now was on her way to her husband, who felled wood in the forest above.

When the fair one had reached the border of the forest she stood listening, and soon the strokes of a woodman's axe told her where to turn her steps. It was not long before she saw her husband, who felled a pine-tree with mighty strokes, and, with joyful voice, she called to him.

"Remain standing where thou art," responded he. "The tree will fall directly." And the pine-tree gave a deep sigh, bowed itself, and sank crashing to the earth.

Now Greta came nearer, and the sunburnt woodcutter took his young wife in his arms and kissed her fondly. Then she sat down on the trunk of the tree, and took the food from the basket she had brought. Here Hans laid down the bread, took his axe in his hands, and saying: "I have forgotten something," stepped in the direction of the fallen tree, and cut three crosses in the wood.

"Why dost thou that, Hans?" asked the wife.

"That was done on account of the wood sprites," explained the husband. "The poor creatures have a wicked enemy, who is the wild hunter. Day and night he waylays them and hunts them with his dogs. But if the pursued little women succeed in escaping to such a tree trunk, then the wild huntsman cannot harm them, because of the three crosses."

The young wife's eyes grew large.

"Hast thou ever met a wood sprite?" asked she, curious.

"No. They only rarely let themselves be seen. But to-day is the solstice, when they become visible."

And suddenly he called with a loud voice into the forest: "Wood sprite, appear!"

He had only done this in order to tease his wife; but, on the holy Midsummer-day, one should not jest about such things.

At once a little woman, three feet high, delicate of form and very beautiful of face, stood before the pair. She wore a long white garment, and in her golden hair a spray of mistletoe.

Hans and Greta were very much frightened. They rose hastily from their seats, and Greta made a bow, the best she could do.

"You have called me at a good time," said the wood sprite, and pointed with forefinger to the orb of the sun, that stood almost over her head, "and a good deed"—here the little woman pointed to the marked tree stump—"is the other reason. Gold and silver have I not to give away, but I know of something better. Come with me—it will do you no harm—and take your jug. You will be able to make use of it."

So she spoke and led the way. Hans shouldered his woodman's axe, Greta took up the stone jug, and both followed the little woman. She had a walk like a duck, and Greta plucked her husband's sleeve, pointed to the waddling little woman, and would have whispered something into his ear, but Hans laid his forefinger on her mouth. Nothing hurts a sprite more than to have a person ridicule her gait. They have feet like a duck, and, therefore, they wear long, flowing garments to protect them.

After a short time the three arrived at a clearing. Very old trees stood in a circle round the meadow; out of the grass arose lilies and bluebells, and great butterflies rested thereon, waving their wings to and fro. And Hans, who thought he knew the whole forest, could not remember to have crossed this place.

On the edge of the meadow stood a small house. The walls were covered with the bark of trees, and the roof was shingled with the scales of pine cones, and each scale was fastened down by a rose thorn. Here the wood sprite was at home.

She led her guests behind the house, and pointed to a spring whose water gushed silently from the black earth. Succulent colt's-foot and irises grew on its brink, and over its surface danced green and gold dragon flies.

"That is the fountain of youth," said the wood sprite. "A bath in its waters turns an old man into a boy and an old woman into a girl. But if one drinks the water, then does it ward off old age unto death. Fill your jug and carry it home. But be economical with this precious water; a drop used each Sunday is enough to keep you young. And yet again: As soon as thou, Hans, dost cast thy eye on a strange woman, or thou, Greta, on a strange man, then the water loses its virtue. That mark you. Now fill your jug, and fare you well."

So spoke the wood sprite, refusing the thanks of the lucky couple, and went into the house. Greta filled the jug with the water of youth, and then they hastened home as quickly as they could to their cottage.

Arrived at home, Hans poured the water into a bottle and sealed it with fir resin. "For the present," he remarked, "we do not find the water of youth necessary, and we can economise. The time will come, indeed, when we will need it." And then they placed the bottle in the cupboard where they kept their treasures: a couple of old coins, a chain on which hung a golden penny, and two silver spoons. But Greta took great care that the water lost not its virtue.

And how they did take themselves in hand! When the young forester went by the garden before the house and exchanged a greeting with Greta, as indeed had been his custom, then Greta looked not up from her vegetable bed. And when Hans sat in the evening in "The White Stag," and the pretty Lisi brought him wine, then he made a face like a cat during a storm; and finally he did not go any more to the inn, but remained at home with his wife. Thus the water must certainly retain its magic power.

So there passed for the young couple a year of love and happiness, when to the two came a third. In the cradle a chubby boy kicked and cried, so that the father's heart leapt for joy. "Now," thought he, "is the time for us to open the bottle. What thinkest thou, Greta? A drop of the water of youth would do thee good."

The wife agreed to the proposition, and Hans went into the room where the magic potion was preserved. With hands trembling with joy he loosened the cork and—Oh, woe, woe!—the bottle slipped from his hands, and the water of youth poured over the floor. He came near falling to the floor, he was so frightened over the misfortune. What was he to do now? His wife must on no account learn what had happened; she might die from fright.

Perhaps he could tell her later what he had done; perhaps, also, he might find the fountain of youth again (which he had

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certainly sought in vain), and he might replace the loss. He hastily filled a new bottle, which was just like the first, with well water; and well water it was also that he gave his wife.

"Ah, how it refreshes and strengthens one!" said Greta; "take a drop also, dear Hans."

And Hans obeyed and praised the virtue of the magic potion, and from that time each one took a drop every Sunday when the church bell was ringing. And Greta bloomed like a rose, and Hans' veins swelled with health and strength. But he postponed the confession of his deed from day to day, for he hoped in his heart to yet find the water of youth; but roam through the forest as he would, he could not discover the meadow where the wood sprite lived.

Thus passed some years. A small maiden joined the little boy, and Frau Greta's once round chin had become double. She herself certainly saw it not, for the mirror was not yet in existence in those days. Hans saw it, indeed, but avoided speaking of it, and redoubled his love for his portly wife.

Then there happened a misfortune. At least Greta held it to be such. As she swept the house one day the small Peter, her eldest, came upon the cupboard in which stood the bottle with the supposed water of youth and clumsily overthrew the bottle, so that it broke and the contents were spilled.

"Oh, thou gracious Heaven!" lamented the mother. "It is lucky, though, that Hans is not at home." With trembling hands she gathered up the fragments from the floor and replaced the bottle by another, which she filled with ordinary water. "Certainly the deception will soon be found out, for now it is all over with the everlasting youth. Alas, alas!" But for the present she did not wish to tell her husband.

Again considerable time passed, and the couple lived together as on the day when the priest had joined their hands in marriage.

Each one carefully avoided letting the other know that youth was past, and each Sunday conscientiously took the magic drop.

Then it happened that one morning a grey hair remained between Hans' fingers as he combed his hair. And he thought: "Now is the time for me to tell the truth to my wife." With a heavy heart, he began: "Greta, it seems to me that our water of youth has lost its strength. Look there! I have found a grey hair. I am getting old."

Greta was frightened, but composed herself, and, forcing a loud laugh, cried, "A grey hair! When I was a little girl, ten years old, I had even then a grey lock amid my hair. The like has frequently happened."

After that, it happened in the autumn, as Hans with his family was eating a Michaelmas goose, that Frau Greta broke a tooth. There was great lamenting, for she was so proud of her white teeth.

And when the couple were alone together, the wife said in an unsteady voice:

"This misfortune would not have occurred if the water——"

But at this Hans blurted out:

"You think the water is good for everything. Has it not often happened before that a child has broken a tooth by cracking a nut? What hast thou against the excellent water? Art thou not fresh and sound as a rose? Or, perhaps, thou hast turned thine eyes upon another that thou mistrustest the virtue of the water?"

Then the wife laughed, wiped the tears from her cheeks, and kissed her husband so that the breath almost left him. But, in the afternoon, when they sat on the stone bench before the house door and sang two-part songs about true love, the passers-by said, "The silly old people!" However, the happy ones heard them not.

So passed many years. The house had become too small for the children. They had gone forth, had married, and had children of their own. The two old people were again alone, and were as dear to each other as on their wedding day; and every Sunday, when the church bells rang, each drank a drop from the flask.

Then once again the day of the summer solstice drew near. On the evening before, Hans and Greta sat before their door and looked towards the heights where the St. John's fire blazed, and from the distance sounded the mirth of the young fellows and maids, who stirred the fire and sprang through its flames in couples.

Then the wife said, "Dear Hans, I would like to go once more to the forest. If thou desirest it also, then will we start early in the morning. But thou must waken me early, for when the elder blossoms the young women like to sleep until the sun is high in the heavens."

Hans agreed. On the next morning he wakened his wife, and they went together into the forest. They walked like lovers, and each gave a careful heed to the steps of the other.

When Hans cautiously jumped over the root of a tree, the wife said, "Ah, Hans, thou leapest indeed like a young kid!" and when Greta timidly stepped over a little ditch, her husband laughed and cried, "Tuck up your dress, Greta! Jump!" And then they selected an old pine-tree, feasting in its shade on what Greta had brought with her.

"It was here," said Hans, "where the wood sprite appeared to us that day, and there yonder must lie the forest meadow with the fountain of youth. But I have never again found the meadow and the spring."

"And, Heaven be thanked! that has mattered not," hastily interrupted Greta. "For our flask is still far from being empty."

"Certainly, certainly," nodded Hans. "But yet it would please me if we could see the good wood sprite once again, and thank her for our good fortune. Come—let us go and seek her. Perhaps I will be as lucky to-day as formerly."

Then they set out and went deeper into the forest, and after a quarter of an hour saw there, before their eyes, the sunny forest meadow. Lilies and bluebells bloomed in the grass, gay-coloured butterflies flew to and fro, and on the edge of the forest stood also the little house, just as in years before. They went towards the house with beating hearts, and, best of all, there was indeed the fountain of youth at hand, and dragon flies, in green and gold, hovered over it.

Hans and Greta stepped to the brim of the spring. They embraced each other and stooped over the water; and from out the clear surface of the spring there confronted them two grey heads, with friendly, wrinkled faces.

Then hot tears fell from the eyes of the old couple, and they stood stammering and sobbing in mutual guilt. It required a long time before it became clear to them that each had deluded and for long years had lovingly deceived the other.

"Thou hast also known that we have both grown old?" cried out Hans joyfully.

"Of course, of course," laughed the wife, amid tears.

"And I, also," rejoiced Hans. Then he took his wife and kissed her as on the day she had said "Yes" to him.

Then the forest sprite suddenly stood before them, as if she had sprung out of the earth.

"Welcome," said she. "You have not appeared before me for a long time. But——but," continued the little woman, and threatened with her finger, "you have kept a bad home with the water of youth. Wrinkles and grey hair! Ah, ah! Now," continued she again, "that is easy to remedy, and you are come at a good hour. Quick! Spring into the fountain of youth; it is not deep; dip your grey heads under; then you shall see a miracle. The bath will restore to you youthful vigour and beauty. But quick, before the sun sinks!"

Hans and Greta looked at each other. "Wilt thou?" asked the husband, in an uncertain voice.

"Never," answered Greta quickly. "Oh, if thou only knowest how happy I am, that at least I may be old! And, also, it would be impossible on account of our children and grandchildren. No, gracious forest sprite, a thousand thanks for your good deed, but we remain as we are. Is it not so, Hans?"

"Yes," nodded Hans, "we remain old. If thou couldst but know, Greta, how well thy grey hair becomes thee."

"As you will," said the wood sprite, a little vexed. "There is no ceremony here." So speaking, she went into the house and locked the door behind her.

But the old couple kissed each other anew. Then they stepped homeward, arm in arm, through the forest, and the midsummer sun shed a golden light upon their grey heads.

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THE FATAL RING

THE Abbé, Dr. Martel, and Besson sat together round the fire at the end of the large room filled with guests. The Abbé was speaking:

"Ah!" said he, "how many inconvenient people do you suppose are every year quietly got rid of by very simple means, which do not even occasion a suspicion in the mind of the family physician, not to mention the coroner, for he never sees the body? Our friend here will tell you that there are several drugs—aconitine, for example, the toxic principle of aconite—the minutest drop of which produces instant death and leaves no trace behind.

"Suppose some one, say, of these correct gentlemen here to-night is in debt and desires the inheritance of his elder brother, who perhaps is epileptic or a paralytic, whose misery it would really be charitable to end. Monsieur, the youngest brother, wears a beautiful ring—which is even more valuable than it looks, for on touching a secret spring the stone slides aside and reveals a minute vial, containing a drop of colourless fluid. This is aconitine, *mes amis*. A portion of it is injected by means of a small hypodermic syringe into the scalp, say, under the hair—*et voilà*; all is over. Martel here arrives, views the body, looks wise, and writes a certificate of death from heart failure! Later, perhaps, the murderer confesses to me, and I keep the secret with him. But you, Monsieur le Prefect, are left out of the affair! You never even heard of the man's death, unless perchance there be some legal question of inheritance to settle.

"Now," went on the priest thoughtfully, "without breaking that seal of confession, I can tell you one story of many which illustrates what I have been saying.

"It happened forty years and more ago, when I had barely entered upon my duties as curé of a small country parish. In fact, he was my first penitent.

"I can see him now, as he rushed into my little garden, where, one exquisite June evening, I was watering my roses. His boyish face was white, his yellow hair hung in damp locks to his temples, he was splashed to the waist with mud. On the thumb of the hand which held his riding-whip gleamed a great blood-red ruby set in an antique ring.

"He made me understand finally that he had something to tell me, and insisted that I should take him into the little chapel, 'where we should be safe.' Then he poured out his wretched story, telling that he had chosen to come to me 'because I, too, was young and of good blood, and would understand him.'

"He had married six months before, without the knowledge of his family, a burlesque actress of considerable beauty but doubtful reputation. At the time of his marriage, however, the boy, in his blind passion, had believed her a much-abused woman, and a good one. Tiring of pretence, she undeceived him soon after the wedding day. And then, as he could not provide enough money to keep her in luxury, she gave him notice that she should return to Paris and to her old vocation and her old life of dissipation. And, enraged by his reproaches, she further announced her intention of using in her profession the ancient and honoured name which he had given her. Mad with shame, the young man remembered the poison in his ring, a fancy of his freakish student days, and used it to avert the threatened disgrace. 'It would have killed my mother!' he said with a sob. A certificate of death from heart disease was given by the local physician, and by this time the woman had been in her grave a week.

"At the time of committing the crime, the lieutenant said, he had felt perfectly justified in it, and therefore calm; but, as I pointed out to him, the passion of anger had nevertheless blinded him. Asked whether he had slain the woman that she might be withheld from further sin, or in order to shield his own pride, he admitted that the latter was the true reason, but still declared that he could not have done otherwise. Indeed, he was not even now repentant, only disturbed and miserable. What could I say? I exhorted him to repent, and commanded him always to wear the fatal ring, as a perpetual reminder of his crime.

"I never saw him again. He sold out of the army, and, I think, left France; though I did hear a faint rumour some time afterwards that he had married again, a rich demoiselle of noble family, and had taken the name of her estate."

The Abbé's last words were interrupted by the butler's long-expected announcement:

"Monsieur le Comte de Brignolles."

A universal sigh and murmur of relief softly heralded the new arrival; the hostess went eagerly forward. A loud voice broke out, drowning her reproachful questions.

"Absolutely desolated, Madame my cousin, but believe me, it was not my fault! I have been in the house fully ten minutes. You see, the carriage broke down in one of your abominable mud-holes about a mile from here, and I was fain to bestride one of the horses and make the best of my way onward. I arrived somewhat dishevelled and muddy, as you may imagine, and so was forced to delay presenting myself for a few moments——"

Smilingly cutting short this voluble greeting, the hostess hastily presented the Count—a stout, blonde, florid gentleman, faultlessly attired—to her guests, and then the procession, forming in accordance with previous instructions, moved out across the wide hall into the dining-room, glowing with shaded light and soft colour.

The Abbé was separated from his two comrades by the whole length of the table. He sat at the hostess's left hand, and opposite him, on Madame's right, sat the Comte de Brignolles.

Dinner was scarcely on its way, the Abbé paying silent attention to his plate, yet somehow not duly appreciating its contents of oysters, alive only the instant before, when the Count leant forward, and remarked confidentially over a silver *épergne* of roses:

"I know now why your face seems familiar, father. I remember you perfectly, for I never forget a face—only you were not an Abbé then!"

You would have thought that the dignified prelate had been the culprit—he grew red and white almost as though he could have foreseen the next words.

"My cousin," said the Count, raising his voice, and glancing genially round the table, "I have been fortunate enough to meet at your table to-night a friend of my youth—my reckless youth, of which you have doubtless heard so many sad stories! In fact I was the first penitent of Monsieur the Abbé here—and I promise you I made him a confession that astonished him!"

The Count laughed loudly and emptied his glass of white wine. The soft buzz of talk began again, and the Abbé was thankful, for it drowned his incoherent reply. His neighbours found him unusually silent throughout the meal. In fact, the reverend father was completely dazed by this freak of fate.

He knew that his two friends—whose eyes he carefully avoided—were absolutely to be trusted; but he writhed, as though the hum of voices there seemed to penetrate Martel's suggestive cough and Besson's malicious chuckle. He knew also that they would already have ascertained that the ruby ring no longer ornamented the Count's thumb—it was one more thorn in his self-complacency.

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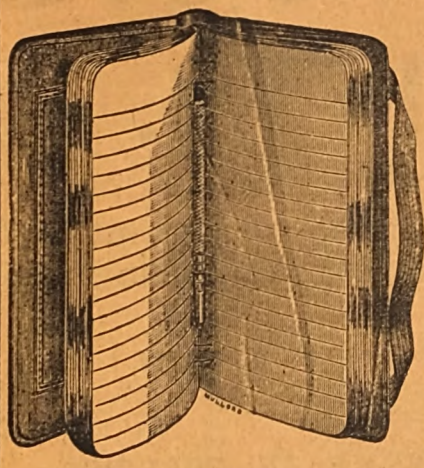

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 340.] FOR THE WEEK ENDING JULY 6, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

The Enchanted Necklace

My father was an officer in the British army, my mother an Italian lady. The latter dying a few months after my birth, and my father's regiment being about the same time ordered off to India, I was taken in charge by my paternal grandmother, living on her estate in Somersetshire. In this sheltered seclusion I remained for eighteen years, when my grandmother died suddenly of heart disease, and I was sent out to India under the care of a minister's wife who had been home on a visit.

I was a slip of a girl, with a paucity of worldly experience which made me appear pathetically childlike. Physically and mentally I had been about equally endowed by both parents, and, in consequence, was made up of strange contradictions and startling contrasts. My golden-brown hair and fair complexion inherited from my father accentuated my classic features and large, dark eyes, which came from my mother; while my impulsive, warm-hearted Italian temperament was modified by a thin stratum of English reserve, making my moods as variable as the wind, which bloweth where it listeth. They gave to my manners a hint of fickleness, more apparent than real.

I had never seen my father nor his family, and felt fully what I was, a stranger in a strange land, my heart torn and bleeding from the wrench given it at parting from all I knew or loved. I stood on deck like one spell-bound, when I felt myself encircled by a pair of strong arms, while a deep, sonorous voice was saying in my ear: "My daughter, welcome to India," and, swinging round, I beheld my father, a middle-aged, soldierly man, with iron-grey side-whiskers and a sun-tanned visage.

He conducted me to his victoria (the only familiar-looking object I saw, and even this had native coachman and footman), and we were bowled rapidly along the smooth streets, whose quaint scenes with kaleidoscopic change flashed past us, out into the suburbs, along a line of Parsee residences, with their white walls and brilliant flower-beds, up on Malabar Hill, where my father's bungalow sat in a grove of tamarind trees, some distance from the road.

On the low, vine-draped verandah stood my step-mother, with her children, waiting to welcome me. She was a washed-out looking little woman, indolent and amiable, evidently a victim to the enervating climate, and her three children—all girls, and aged respectively nine, six, and three—bore a striking resemblance to her.

Her greeting was not lacking in cordiality, but the little ones drew back in round-eyed wonder, regarding me as though I were some strange animal. The look on their faces brought a sob to my throat, and oppressed me with a feeling of intrusion and superfluity. It seemed impossible for me to take the stamp of my new environments, and adjust myself to an insignificant rôle—I, who had been all my life the central figure and spoiled darling of my grandmother's household.

We were playing with her three Persian kittens.

I lived exclusively on fruits and boiled eggs—for palate and stomach alike rebelled at the curried dishes which at first I vainly essayed to eat, with the tears streaming down my cheeks to the no small amusement of the children, and disgust of the servants, who regarded as a personal insult my inability to appreciate the native cuisine.

From the soft-voiced ayah, who had charge of the nursery, down, through the different grades, to the old punkah-puller, squatting all day in the basement, and jerking the cord which kept in motion the fans about the house, I was made to feel an alien.

Like the Queen of Sheba before King Solomon, there was no more spirit in me.

"Send me a cobra stone by Bentley. He is ill, and is coming home on furlough," my school chum, Caroline Rochester, had said as she kissed me good-bye at parting.

Bentley was her brother—a captain in the cavalry. On the third day after my arrival I was sitting on the matting-covered floor of the library with Dorothea, the youngest child, who evinced a growing fondness for me. We were playing with her three Persian kittens, curled up on my lap like fluffy white pompons, when Captain Rochester was announced.

He was six-and-twenty (I had learned this from Caroline), tall and slender, with languid, thoroughbred, *nonchalant* manners, very white teeth, a blonde moustache, chestnut hair, and earnest grey eyes, fringed with dark lashes; but

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Pausing often to inspect the novelties.

he was too emaciated to be even moderately good-looking.

I suppose it was our unconventional introduction and his relationship to Caroline that took away the constraint of a first meeting. Besides, he had been in India but a few months, and his easy reference to people and places that I knew was like balm to my aching heart. I was soon babbling to him with the familiarity of an old acquaintance, while Dorothea and the kittens climbed about over our knees. "Have you ever taken the walk through the woods to the beach?" he asked, when he had exhausted home topics.

"No," I replied, all my discontent surging back, "I have never left the house since I entered it. I am afraid."

"Afraid? Why, what are you afraid of?" he queried, with an amused look on his face.

"Tigers, and lions, and snakes, and—and—everything." The ready tears sprang to my eyes as I continued hotly: "Oh, I hate this country! I shall never, never feel at home here!"

"What a child you are—not much older than Dolly," he said, softly, as he leant over to pull her tip-tilted nose. "Why, there's no more danger of wild animals in this part of India than there is in England—a few snakes, perhaps, but they are timid and keep out of the way. You will feel differently when the strangeness of it all wears off." Pressing my hand encouragingly as he rose to go, he added, "But you must get out, where you will see many things to divert you."

In compliance with Captain Rochester's suggestion, I asked permission of my stepmother to drive into the city the next day shopping. She readily consented upon condition that I would excuse her from going, and take the ayah and Dorothea instead, adding as an afterthought, that I must be careful to avoid exposure to the sun, as it would be apt to bring on fever.

As soon as tiffin was over, we started. The top of the victoria was thrown back, for the sun shone fitfully, and clouds looming up from the ocean horizon portended rain.

We drove through the copper bazaar, but when we came to the flight of stone steps, leading down to the ancient town, we abandoned the carriage and proceeded on foot, pausing often to inspect the novelties that met us at every turn.

Just as we left a Chinese shop with its, pervasive odours, and were shaking our heads discouragingly at the almond-eyed Celestial standing bowing before us, and repeating persuasively: "Wantee anytling aday?" a sudden shower poured down. We scurried into the next door, where copper and brass vases, jars, and bowls were piled in artistic confusion.

Hearing a laughing ejaculation, I looked round, and my heart gave a leap which sent the blood to my neck and face, as I saw Captain Rochester standing in the room shaking the rain-drops from his hat. "I learnt from your *gari-mala* that you were in the town, and just caught a glimpse of you as you vanished in here," he explained, taking my hand, and kissing Dorothea.

Just then, remembering Caroline's request for a cobra stone, I asked our host if he could supply one. He hobbled to his feet with an alacrity which I should have thought impossible to one of his cumbersome dignity, and disappeared into an inner room. Hastily returning, he placed before me a small lacquer box, and with folded arms stood watching me keenly. But the ayah had thrown herself on her knees at my side, and with rolling eyes and trembling voice implored, "Don't buy them Missus, don't buy 'em. They devil-stones, an' bring bad luck," and she tried to take the box from me.

"They will not harm me. I am not superstitious," I said, defiantly, shaking off her detaining hand, and, opening the lid, I saw several small, yellow, semi-transparent pebbles, oval in shape, with flattened sides, lying imbedded in a nest of cotton.

"Is it true that the cobra de capello carries these stones in its mouth?" I asked of Captain Rochester, who was teasing Dollie.

"Yes," he replied, as he picked up the largest stone, and, turning it idly in his hand, continued, dreamily, "if tested by psychomancy, what tales of horror these innocent-looking pebbles might reveal of the jungle and death." He laughingly placed it against my brow, at which the ayah uttered a piercing shriek, and, seizing Dorothea in her arms, rushed to the door, and even I drew back with a feeling of awe. Recovering myself by an effort I pushed the box out of reach and persisted, deeply interested: "Tell me all about them. Of what use are they to the snake?"

"The most rational theory, I think," he said, absently twirling his moustache, "is that the cobras use them as decoys. The stone is a rare variety of fluor-spar, found in dry river-beds. It emits in the dark—especially when previously warmed—a greenish, phosphorescent light. Now the cobra has a peculiar fondness for a diet of fire-flies, and by coiling itself in the grass with the *najá-kallu* near, the fire-flies swarm round it in numbers, being easily deceived by its resemblance to the glow-worm, which, you know, is the female of the fire-fly, but crawls upon the ground, having only rudimentary wings. In this way the cobra obtains an easy supply of food, and will defend the stone with its life."

"But why is the ayah so afraid of them?" I asked, looking to where she stood with an ashen face, muttering rapidly to herself in Hindustanee.

"Oh, the natives have a superstition that their light comes from the spirit of those the cobra has killed, and that it grows dim if not supplied with fresh victims, which is an easy task, since there is no known antidote to the bite of the cobra."

"What a dreadful country to live in!" I said with a shudder, as he extended his hand to assist me to my feet.

I paid thirty rupees for three of the largest stones, and we crossed the street to a jeweller's, who agreed to polish and attach them as pendants to a delicate filigree necklace of silver, which I selected.

The sun was setting when we reached the victoria, and Captain Rochester, taking the seat at my side, with Dorothea

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on his knee, ordered the *gari-mala* to drive to the fort, that we might hear the band play. My eyes welled over with tears when the soft strains of "Annie Laurie" throbbed and swelled on the pulsing air.

"This looks like a bad case of home-sickness," said Captain Rochester, with sympathetic inflections of voice, as he laid his hand an instant tenderly over mine, behind Dollie's little plump back, and out of range of the ayah's sharp eyes, and, though my tears continued to flow, I do not think they were those of sadness. At the park gate Captain Rochester mounted his horse, which the groom was leading, and rode back to the city.

The following day the necklace was delivered, and I was fascinated with its quaintness. Half-an-hour before dinner I clasped it about my neck, and went into the library to write to Caroline an account of it. My father sat reading his paper, while Mildred, the second child, played with her blocks on the floor. From some indefinable cause, I suddenly raised my eyes, and found my father intently regarding me.

"Your mother was a very beautiful woman, my dear, and you are strikingly like her," he said feelingly. "Won't you come and sit by me?" There was an expression on his face which I had never seen before, and his eyes were full of retrospection.

"Ah, first love is strongest and best after all," sang my happy heart, as I hastened to him; but Mildred, pert and officious as usual, anticipated me by throwing herself in his arms, and, while she motioned me away, showered kisses on his face, crying:

"He is my papa! He is my papa!"

I returned to the desk—my father resumed his paper and mask of reserve, and never again was it lifted between us. After dark we sat on the gallery, when the *najá-kallu*, warmed by my neck, gave forth a lovely light, which terrified the servants, who all shared the ayah's belief in its sinister omen.

When I went to my room, I laid the necklace on my dressing-table and stood threading my white fingers through the meshes of my golden hair, as I gazed at myself in the mirror, with my father's words in my mind. Perhaps I was really beautiful. It seemed to me that I looked different from the girl I had been in England. A new feeling had certainly come over me, but I did not wish nor attempt to analyse it. That night my sleep was fitful and disturbed, and half-waking, half-dreaming, I heard gliding noises about my room, with the faint, resonant click of metal. When the ayah came in the morning to bring my little cup of black Mocha coffee, she found me up and dressed, instead of asleep as usual.

I did not think of my necklace until after breakfast, and then when I went to look for it, it was nowhere to be found. Sadi, the young Hindoo man who did the chamber-work, when questioned, denied most earnestly having seen it, which, however, failed to convince the *consarmi* of his innocence, judging from the sound of blows and yells, which afterwards proceeded from the stable-yard. My father employed a native detective, who assured him that the necklace would be restored in a short time.

Three weeks had waxed and waned since I reached India, and during the time I had seen Captain Rochester almost daily. But the easy familiarity of our intercourse was succeeded by a certain constraint, which jarred like a discord; and often, when I suddenly raised my eyes, I found his fixed upon me with melancholy intentness. For four days his visits had been discontinued altogether, without any assignable cause, and I grew restless and miserable. Next week he would leave for England, and might bring back a wife on his return. I was too much of a child, too undisciplined, to dissemble. When I was hurt I cried out like any other savage.

In a heedless, desultory way I strolled through the park out into the dusty road. How funereal the passing black-topped *shegrams!* How suffocating the air! I hurried on towards the beach, when, turning a sharp curve, where the road hugged the bank, as though dizzy at the precipitous depths below, I saw Captain Rochester coming towards me, his head bent down, and flicking the pebbles out of his path with a small cane. Returning health was transforming him into a remarkably handsome man. He had not seen me, and I would not force my company upon him. With my heart beating like a sledge-hammer I stepped behind a rock for concealment, when a large lizard darted across my feet, and I sprang back. I bit my lips in chagrin at my cowardice, but the action was unconscious and automatic. In an instant he was at my side, holding my hands with such a glad, happy look in his honest grey eyes.

"Where are you wandering to, all by yourself?" he asked, retaining my hands.

"Oh, I started out for a little stroll, but that nasty lizard has frightened me so that I believe I'll turn back," I said petulantly.

"Those lizards look formidable, but are harmless," he replied, smiling at my vehemence, as he poked about in the leaves until it ran away.

Still I stood irresolute, for I was suddenly confronted with the fear that, if I went home, he could do nothing less than accompany me, and thus I should make his visit compulsory.

"Let us sit here a while," he said, selecting for me a smooth stone, and seating himself on a gnarled root by my

Gazed at myself in the mirror.

side. A soft breeze was blowing across the purple ocean—blowing from the direction of my home. I turned my face towards it, and held out my arms longingly.

"Do you love England so much?" he asked, softly, while the troubled look came back to his eyes.

"I would give my life to return to it," I answered, choking back a sob.

"And do you think you will never grow reconciled to India?" he queried, gently.

"I would not live here, if I had any choice in the matter—not if you made me empress of the whole country," I answered with an aggressive tilt of the chin. The consciousness that I was appearing at a disadvantage added to my irritation, and made me say things that went like dagger-thrusts to my own heart.

"As this is your father's home, your only chance of escape is to marry some man who can take you away" he said, as though thinking aloud.

"Yes," I responded recklessly, driven to bay by his cool

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assumption of such a possibility. "Yes, I would marry an ogre to escape from this country."

Then he rose, and we walked slowly through the gathering twilight, the moon appearing like a fairy boat in a luminous archipelago of stars.

"Ah, what a large and brilliant glow-worm!" I exclaimed, pointing to the dark shadow of a date-tree, standing in front of the bungalow. "After what you have told me about them, I must certainly examine it," and I started on a run to the spot, when, with a cry of horror, Captain Rochester seized me in his arms, and bore me back to a young palm. He put me on my feet, and leant trembling against its slender stem.

"What is it? What is the matter?" I screamed, clinging to him, for he still kept his arm about my waist, and strained me to him with a pressure that was painful.

"There! There!" he gasped, with his eyes fixed on the date tree. "Oh, my darling, you were walking straight into the jaws of death!"

"Where? How?" I faltered.

"That is no glow-worm, little one. It is a *najâ-kallu*, and the cobra is not far distant. See, its light is continuous, and that of the glow-worm is intermittent. My God! what an escape you have had!" and overcome by his emotions, he folded me to his heart, kissing passionately my lips and eyes. "Ah, you will dislike India more than ever now!" he said, this thought ever prominent in his mind.

But I was wildly, deliriously happy, after my depression and fright, for a new light had dawned upon me, and I saw the cross-purposes at which we had been playing.

"I don't dislike India—I love it," I whispered, hiding my burning face on his breast.

"Did the Sahib call?" asked the old *consarmi*, standing before us, but discreetly turning his head to cough in his hand.

"I would marry an ogre to escape from this country."

The *consarmi*, like all native servants, seemed ubiquitous, and had a habit of appearing and disappearing most unaccountably.

"Get me your master's pistol, quick! There is a cobra under that tree," said Captain Rochester, pointing to the star-like glimmer in the grass.

Contrary to his usual alacrity when given an order, the *consarmi* stood as though paralysed.

"It is the devil-snake, and his *najâ-kallu!* Don't shoot, sahib!" he panted with chattering teeth. "Hindoo fix him. Make him kill hisse'f—you see," and, without awaiting permission, he disappeared round the bungalow.

"What does he mean? I don't understand," I asked.

"It's only another of their superstitions," Captain Rochester replied. "They believe if the cobra is killed that another will come to avenge his death, but if it can be made to commit suicide the evil power of the stone is overcome. I am glad you will have an opportunity of witnessing their jugglery."

We sat down on a garden-seat in the white moonlight, with our hearts too full for words. The cobra was now distinctly visible, in a brown coil, with its head waving slowly to and fro above the stone, as it skilfully snapped up the fire-flies that came within its reach. Soon the *consarmi* returned, with all the men about the stables and house, each with his arms full of cocoanut fibre, which they noiselessly heaped in a circle about the date-tree, and then commenced to sway their bodies and chant in a low voice, while some boys sat at their backs, and beat loudly on tom-toms.

It was a weird, truly Oriental scene. The night-winds rustling the tall palm-tops, the half-clad natives, with their barbaric incantations, and the death-dealing cobra before its shining stone, no longer heeding the fire-flies, but apparently hypnotised, and keeping perfect time with its head to the strokes of the tom-toms.

At a signal from the *consarmi*, the cocoanut fire was ignited, the tom-toms were beaten furiously, and the chant arose to almost a shriek. My father and mother, attracted by the noise, drew near, while the ayah ran about, madly tossing her arms and shouting: "A devil-snake! A devil-snake!"

The cobra, at the first flash of the flames, raised its terrible crest, striking out blindly in its rage, as it circled round and round the stone. As the din increased, and the fire leaped higher, it seized the *najâ-kallu* in its mouth, and made a dash to escape. Time and again it tried, but was driven back by the heat, when in a seeming frenzy of despair it dropped the stone, stuck its fangs into its own body, and, with a convulsive quiver, stretched itself out, dead.

There then went up a triumphant shout, in which we joined, and Sadi, who had been flogged for stealing my necklace, sprang into the circle, clutched the now harmless stone, and laid it at my feet. Imagine my surprise at finding that it was my lost necklace, and that the cobra had been the thief. The snake was an unusually large one, and had possibly lived about the house for years, feeding on mice. It undoubtedly gained access to my room through a rat-hole in the floor.

A week later, when the *Alexandria* steamed out of port, bound for England, I stood on deck at my husband's side, waving a brief adieu to India, and in my trunk, packed in soft cotton, was coiled the *najâ-kallu* necklace, for Caroline.

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The Voice of Fate

EIGHT years ago I was foreman in the Carnford powder works.

It was a dangerous situation, and not altogether as pleasant as it might have been. But the salary was larger than I could obtain in any other place just then, and this, to a man with an invalid mother and a little sister to support, was no mean object. Besides I hoped at no very distant day to have a home of my own, presided over by the girl of my choice—beautiful Marion Ware. This dream of happiness in the future made me better contented with my life. I was willing to work for a competence that she would share with me.

We were to be married in November, and as the time drew near an intense desire seized me to escape from the momentous, dangerous existence I led in the mills. A few weeks would make no difference to my employers, I thought, and so when I gave my notice to leave I gave it for the 14th of September instead of November, as I had first intended.

My employers were very sorry to part with me, and they offered to raise my salary, but I had decided and was not to be turned from my decision. The last day of my stay passed quietly enough, and at night I left the dark buildings behind me with a thrill of relief.

That was a happy evening. Marion had been spending the afternoon with my mother, and I had walked home with her, and it was near midnight when I got home. Soon after I fell asleep, but my rest was troubled. I supposed I must have been dreaming, but it seemed a vivid reality to me then.

I was standing in the thick forest which surrounded the works, at the very point where the path to the village diverged and led it over the hill and through the field to the mills. There was a struggle in my mind; I thought I could not decide which path to take—the one leading into the distant village, or the old accustomed one to the mills. While I was sitting I heard a voice, clear, solemn and strong, that seemed to come from the ends of the earth, and it said:

"Go to the mills! Your work is not yet finished."

I awoke. The moon was shining coldly in at the window, and the great arms of the elms moved slowly to and fro in the night wind. I lay down again, thinking of little but my dream, save to rejoice that it was only a dream, and shortly after I fell asleep.

Again was that vision repeated with singular minuteness, circumstance for circumstance, and again I awoke. I thought it extremely remarkable that I should dream twice on the same matter, but explained it to myself that I had been thinking so much of my departure from the mills. It was a coincidence, nothing more, I said, and turning over I soon lost my consciousness.

For the third time that dream visited me, and this repetition was almost frightfully vivid. Everything about it bore so strongly the semblance of reality that I started up covered with cold perspiration.

I tried to shake off the spell that was on my spirit, but in vain.

I rose, and dressing myself went down to work in the garden. I was restless and uneasy, labouring under a consciousness of some duty unfulfilled.

At last I put down my hoe and went into the house. I put on my mill clothes and sought my mother. She looked up in surprise as I said:

"Mother, I am going to the mills."

"Indeed! I had hoped you were done going there, Edward. Yesterday was the fourteenth, was it not?"

"Yes; but I feel obliged to go to-day. My work is not yet done; it will be finished soon, I think."

I kissed her and went out. At the door of the grinding mill I met Mr. Morton, the senior proprietor. He grasped my hand eagerly.

"Ah, Green, glad to see you! What's this I hear about your leaving us? Lincoln was speaking about it last night. Why, we couldn't part with you at all."

"I did give notice to leave last night, and intended yesterday for my last day in the mill; but circumstances have decided me to remain some time longer—a month perhaps."

"Right; only you must set no time."

"Thank you; I will think of it," I said, and went on with my duties as usual.

Everything went quietly on in its accustomed routine. I began to smile at the absurdity of my last night's vision. "I had eaten too much supper; stayed out too long whispering soft nothings to Marion," I said to myself.

Towards night a party of visitors arrived. Such things were frequent. I went out to meet the party and to assist them in changing their shoes and garments that might have buttons of any metallic substance, for it was one of the cardinal regulations that no persons should be allowed in the interior mills who had a particle of metal about them, or nails in their shoes, for the fear of combustion by friction.

Our visitors were two gentlemen and three ladies. The two elder ladies I did not notice particularly, but the younger one attracted me in spite of myself. Why, I didn't know. She was not really beautiful—Marion was much more brilliant—but there was something about her better than beauty.

The gay company, laughing and joking, and bantering each other in regard to their fear, followed me in. The lady in blue walked quietly by my side, saying very little, barely replying to the lively sallies of her companions—perhaps she thought it ill-timed mirth; I don't know.

We had been all the rounds and had returned to the reception room, next to the drying room, at one end of the main building. This apartment overhung the pond, from whence came our supply of water, the basin of which was formed of a large dark gorge in the hollow of the wooded hills. There was a large swinging door opening from the room directly over the pond for the convenience of casting out rubbish, and this door I threw open for the visitors to obtain a view of the prospect beyond.

They soon tired of this, all but the lady in blue, who still stood looking out over the dreary scene, lighted by the departing rays of the lurid sun.

Suddenly I heard a low, ominous hiss from the adjoining apartment, a sound which once heard is always remembered; my blood turned to ice in my veins.

I recognised my fate—in another second's time we should be in eternity.

I snatched the woman by my side and plunged through the gaping doorway. Simultaneously a deafening roar burst upon my head. Down, down we went, it seemed, to an interminable depth, but that plunge saved us.

When we came up everything was still. A deathly silence had fallen on all nature—the place reeked with a suffocating smoke, rolling up in clouds from the ruins, dumb as the vapour of death.

I swam to the shore with my companion and supported her up the bank. She was not unconscious. Her dress was drenched with blood. I lifted my arm to seek the wound, and saw that the crimson tide flowed not from her veins, but from the mutilated stump where once belonged my own right hand. It had been blown off.

I went home as one in a walking dream. I remember very little of it except that the lady in blue was with me, and that

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she talked soothingly to me in a sweet voice, and that afterwards, when I suffered untold agonies from some sharp instrument, she stood by me with words of gentle rest and peace; after that, all was blank.

There was a little snow on the hills that I could see from the window. When I awoke to consciousness I spoke my first thought, "Where is Marion?" Mother tried to put me off with an evasive answer, but I would know the whole truth. She told it to me with great reluctance.

Marion had not been to see me since the day of the accident, and then at the sight of me she uttered a shriek of horror and fled from the room.

"But has she brought no message?"

"There is a note, but you must not read it till you are better. You have been eight weeks delirious, and the excitement may be fatal."

"Give me the letter," I said, with all my stern self-will in my voice. "If not, I will get up and seek it myself."

She brought it to me, the delicate, rose-perfumed thing, no more heartless than she who dictated it. It was elegantly got up altogether.

Miss Ware sympathised with me deeply—hoped and trusted I would be restored to health, and ended in releasing me from my engagement. She prayed I might be granted resignation, and closed by saying she was my most sincere and attached friend.

I crushed this scroll in my hand. I would have ground it to powder—annihilated its very dust from the face of the earth if I could.

Every day there was a fresh bouquet of hothouse flowers on the little stand by the bedside. After awhile I began to feel curious about them. I asked my mother where they came from.

"Miss Gaylord sent them."

"Miss Gaylord? I know no such person."

"The young lady you saved from the explosion. She is a Miss Adele Gaylord, and to her you owe an everlasting debt of gratitude, Edward. I often think she saved your life, for when you raved in delirium and would have torn off the bandages from your head when the surgeon had trepanned your wound, she alone had the power to quiet you."

Miss Gaylord called in several times during the next three weeks.

How beautiful she was to me now!

By the first of December I was able to sit up most of the time and go out a little.

One clear starlight night my mother left me for the first time during my illness. I brightened the fire on the hearth, drew up a great armchair and sat down to a quiet hour of dreaming. At the moment the door opened softly and Adele Gaylord came in.

Blushing and hesitating at seeing me alone, wrapped up in rich furs and crimson hood, she paused on the threshold. I rose to meet her.

"Come in, Miss Gaylord; I am glad to welcome you."

"Where is your mother?"

"Gone to the village with Effie. Let me take off your wraps, will you?"

"Indeed, I ought not to stay, Mr. Green; papa was going for a ride, and will be back at eight, and will take me home then. I called to say good-bye, Mr. Green," said she in a subdued voice; "I am going away to-morrow. We sail for Australia the first of February. Papa has business there which will detain him there for some years and he wishes me to go with him."

"Bon voyage. May Heaven prosper you."

I gave her my one hand. She laid hers in it, cold and trembling, and our eyes met. There were tears on her cheeks. They dropped down and fell on our clasped hands. A wild, beautiful hope sprung up in my heart, and yet hardly a proper move of a revelation.

"Oh, Adele, have I found life's sweetness to lose it for ever and ever? Would to Heaven I were well and strong once more!"

"And what then?" she said softly.

The next moment I held her in my arms.

The Recall

PAMELA stood in the centre of a low, square room in the "Heavenly Mansions"—large white buildings, with marble staircases, and flats in which only the wealthy could indulge.

The green lights in lily-shaped globes of electricity, held by a bronzed figure on a pedestal, cast a ghastly shadow over her face. Perhaps she was fatigued with the excitement of gambling, which had killed time for a set of worldly men and women, after a luncheon party at Pamela's, that Sunday afternoon.

The day being dull, they had called for lights; money chinked, and cards passed, while eyes grew greedy for gain. The light laughter and chaff gradually subsided, and as Pamela proposed higher stakes, her guests caught the infectious eagerness. Though ill-fortune claimed her for its own, her ardour seemed undamped. She was not to be hampered by ordinary limits; yet a keen observer might have noticed that her hands trembled, and when the company rose to go she steadied herself by grasping the back of a chair.

One by one they bade her farewell, with murmured compliments and thanks.

"How charming you are, my dear!" cried a gaily-attired widow, imparting an airy kiss on Pamela's pale lips, "always the life and soul of everything. While *you* are in the world, there can be no such word as *ennui* in your friends' vocabulary."

"So kind of you to come," was the faint reply, and, as she spoke, Pamela fancied the room swam in a chaos of light and colour, while a sudden wind seemed to blow dust into her eyes.

"Your boudoir looks terribly dissipated," laughed Charley Elkin, scattering the cards on the floor. "There's an effect for you, Pamela! Stand in the midst of your fallen Kings and Queens, and pose as a new model for the 'Road to Ruin!'"

"Ha! ha! capital joke that!" laughed a red-faced army man, mistaking her tragic expression for a jest. "Here, Charley, my boy, give me some wine, and let us drink the health of our fair hostess."

She stood statue-like, as the speaker bowed low, and held up his glass.

"Will they never leave?" murmured a voice at her elbow. Pamela moved away quickly; it froze her blood. Yet to the man addressing her she merely appeared somewhat listless and indifferent. Gradually they straggled out, these society puppets, who turned night into day, and day into night, ignoring all lofty principles, and wasting every moment of their reckless, ill-spent lives.

"Pamela!" It was the same voice again, low and alluring. "Won't you listen to me now?"

Her wild despairing eyes read in the man's face a hateful fact. He loved her. Arnold Craven, with his boundless wealth and unscrupulous nature, was ready to lay it all at the feet of the woman who despised him. She glanced at her luxurious surroundings, but in the soft velvet draperies and costly furniture she saw only the black word "Ruin!"

In a few days Pamela Pemberton would be a bankrupt. The life of ease and pleasure faded from her sight, and poverty—grim, stark, inexorable—stared her in the face.

"Escape!" The word rang in her brain. Oh! blessed cry of harassed souls, who see the possibility within their grasp! "There are two roads," she said to herself, as Arnold Craven lingered alone, "two distinct roads, which lead away—away—from poverty and wretchedness."

Numb and pulseless, as though some invincible power had turned her to stone, Pamela walked restlessly to the window, staring down on the vast city. The mists of evening gathered thickly, spreading over church spires and gloomy roofs,

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steeped in the soot of ages. Involuntarily she stretched out her arms to the sky, fancying the densely-clouded heavens reflected her own misery.

The man watched her with eager eyes. "What is the matter?" he asked.

Pamela gave a short laugh.

"I was only looking at the world," she replied. "It is such a queer unreasonable place, and the sky, too—what an odd mixture of light and shade! In these days of rush and hurry, Nature passes unnoticed, unappreciated."

"You have a beautiful mind," he said, "and a sweet unselfish disposition, which is very scarce in this distracted age. Oh! Pamela, won't you give me a ray of hope? I have a right to plead my love!"

"Yes; I will hear you," she replied, with an effort at calmness. "I will hear you, Arnold, but not to-day—not to-day!" Her face set in rigid lines, and her breath came and went unevenly. "I am not well," she continued, pressing her hand to her throat, and speaking in a half-strangled whisper. "Please go."

He seized her hands, and kissed them passionately.

"May I carry away with me the one word—hope?"

"Yes," she replied, "hope always. It is the sap of life. When hope leaves us we are indeed desolate."

He tried to draw her closer, but she started back, yet concealing the loathing she felt. "Good-bye," she faltered, as he turned to go.

"When may I see you again?" he asked, pausing at the door, and devouring her with his eyes. "When will you make me the happiest man in the world?"

"When I ask you to return," she answered. "I shall give the sign, Arnold, and you will know then that I am ready to accept your—your offer."

She had intended saying "love," but the word stuck in her throat.

He bowed his head and left her, still with the same wild look on her face.

"Love," she muttered; "his love and his money. It would be easier to pass through the eye of a needle than to——." She broke off with an exclamation of disgust, and, leaning her elbows on the mantel-piece, gazed with a sense of horror in the mirror.

Her colourless lips were parted, her cheeks drawn and thin. She had pushed a mass of waving curls far off her high white forehead, and pressed two burning hands against her temples. They were throbbing and racking with sharp, unbearable pain. Through the open window chimes of evening bells reached her ears.

"I am weather-beaten with the storms of life," she said mournfully, listening to the monotonous ticking of the clock, for the loneliness of the room oppressed her. She was very cold, but did not move to close the window, though the air blew in upon her.

It was bleak, dark, and rainy without.

Suddenly an expression of exquisite tenderness stole over Pamela's face, at some recollection of her lost girlhood. Her eyes softened, while an infinite pity beamed in their depths for her own misguided career. But it was only for a moment, and then the memory of those two roads leading in such opposite directions returned with redoubled force.

Rousing herself, she opened a drawer, taking something small and heavy from a leather case. It lay a moment in her grasp, then fell from Pamela's trembling fingers. With a cry she clasped her hands before her eyes, and drew herself cowering to the further side of the room. She watched it lying on the hearthrug, her wide open eyes strained and bloodshot, her lips parted with overmastering fear.

The pale electric light gleamed in the dying day, as a weak, exhausted woman decided upon the road.

Someone below commenced playing the soft, slow music of a waltz. Breathless and panting Pamela rushed to the door, and whistled down to inquire if Mr. Craven had already left the building. Only a few moments since they parted, yet to her hours had elapsed.

"No."

The answer sent a thrill through her. Had he expected this recall?

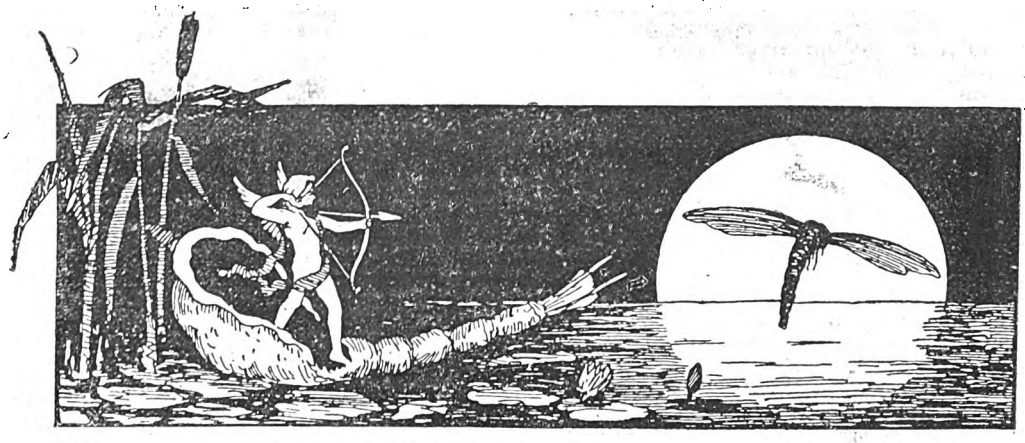
"Ask him to come up," she said.

Then Pamela walked across the room, her trailing skirt brushing the fallen cards, and snatched that "something" off the hearthrug.

In the meanwhile Arnold retraced his footsteps, enraptured at the message. The woman he loved had called him back of her own free will, and his longing, hungry heart beat high with feverish expectation. Already in imagination he could feel the fragile form in his arms, and the touch of warm lips on his forehead. She had given the promised sign and relented—at last! at last!

He heard the swinging, dream-like waltz below, as he approached her door—a languid three-time melody, and his happiness was such that he knew not of care in the present, or a soul to be saved in the future. He would have suffered years of anguish for this one moment's anticipation, as he burst into her presence with a half-smothered cry of joy—"*Pamela!*"

The word rang out in the silence of that awful room, while Arnold Craven recoiled shuddering from the sight which met his startled gaze. The rigid figure of a woman lay stretched upon the hearthrug, grasping a revolver in one hand, and the page of Pamela's life had closed for ever.



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THE OUTLAWS' TREASURE.

Illustrated by MR. A. KEMP TEBBY.

SUMMARY.

The mail train has been robbed between Cornwall and La Grange stations, and £20,000 worth of gold stolen by a gang of desperadoes, headed by two brothers named Mulligan. Two passengers on the train—Adolph Squirrek, *alias* Smith, a detective tracking the Mulligans, and Fred Weldon, a young lawyer—who have struck up an acquaintance on the way, alight at Somerville, where the former stops at the "Drover," and the latter at his mother's house. During the night a message comes to say that Judge Woodland's horse has come back alone, and Weldon, together with Squirrek and two other men set out to find him, and discover one of Mulligan's confederates lying senseless on the road.

CHAPTER VI.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM.

GREAT were the amazement and relief of the four men when they found that instead of the body of Judge Woodland they beheld that of one of the outlaws. A brief examination showed that he had been struck upon the side of the face and terribly bruised, and a closer examination revealed that the bruise had been made by the hoof of a horse.

"What is the meaning of this?" asked Fred Weldon, looking up in the faces of his companions.

"It is a good sign, and affords more grounds for hope than anything that has happened since his absence."

All the three looked inquiringly at the detective.

"This villain has attacked Judge Woodland, with the purpose of killing him, and while the affray has been going on, the horse has had a hand, or rather a foot in the matter, and knocked this dog out of time entirely."

"But where is he?"

"That I cannot tell. We can't do anything for this scamp at present, so you may lay him down by the roadside, and you may keep watch of the horses, while Weldon and myself take a look further down the road."

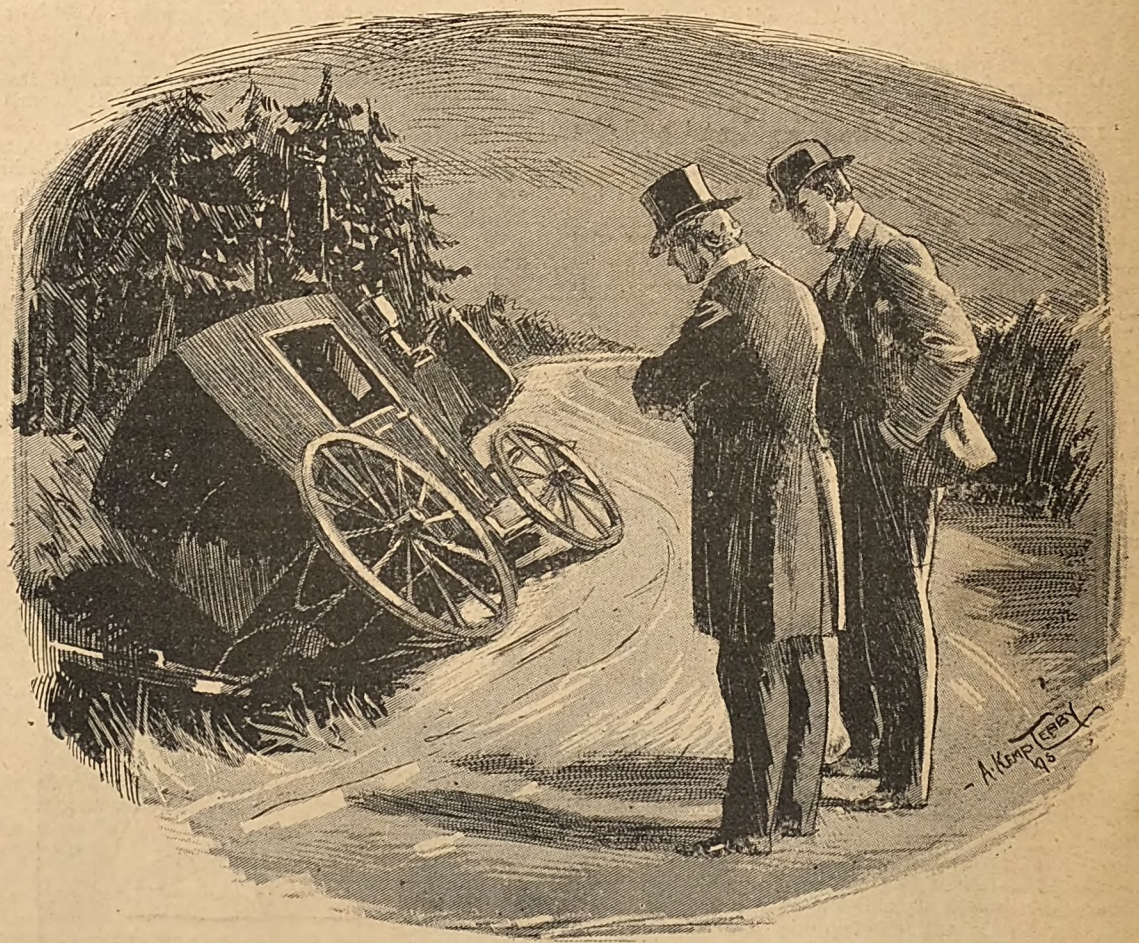
The two men walked quietly along, speaking in a low tone.

"I only fear that some more of the gang are near," said Fred, "and they may steal a march upon us."

"There is not one of them in the vicinity."

The confidence with which this was uttered reassured the young lawyer, and satisfied him at the same time that the man was more than he suspected him to be.

"Don't trouble yourself any further with speculations re-



They came upon the wreck of the carriage, lying in a heap at the side of the road.

garding *me*," said the detective, with a smile, as if he read his thoughts. "Call at the hotel to-morrow, and I will have something to say to you. At present we must attend to the business before us."

A few steps further, and they came upon the wreck of the carriage, lying in a heap at the side of the road.

"That will tell the story!" exclaimed the detective, moving towards it. "Not too fast, or you will hide the evidence by

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your foot-prints. Suppose you remain still, and let me look round for a few minutes?"

Fred gladly did this, and the detective made a long and careful examination, walking so far from the road that he was lost to view for nearly half an hour. When he came back he went to the battered hulk of the carriage again, all the time never exchanging a word with the wondering young man, who was intently watching his movements. Finally he finished.

"And what have you learned?" inquired Fred.

"All!" was the reply, uttered with a confident smile; "let us go back to where our friends are waiting, to save telling the story twice."

"The way of it was this," said the detective, when the four men stood together again, "but in the first place oblige me with a light, as my cigar has gone out."

The Havanna was deliberately lit, and the detective proceeded:

"Judge Woodland was delayed yesterday very much beyond the time he anticipated getting home. It was late in the evening when he drove through these woods, and he overtook a man on foot, who asked to ride. This man was the groaning scamp who lies out there, and he was waiting for the purpose of killing the judge; and I shouldn't wonder if this outlaw was the very one you speak of as having been rather heavily sentenced by that functionary several years ago. Well, the judge picked him up, of course, and all went along quietly until they reached a point a hundred yards or two down the road, when the fellow drew a pistol and attempted to shoot the old gentleman. I think his weapon missed fire, although I cannot be sure upon that point, and the two grappled and rolled forward out of the carriage under the feet of the horse, which had been so frightened by the report of the pistol and the struggling that she let out with her feet, kicking the assassin, and freeing the judge from his troublesome parasite.

"How far off did this happen?"

"Quite a way down the road. The mare has kicked herself loose and then dashed for home, and this man has crawled away for help, but has not been able to get far."

"But where is the judge?" inquired Fred Weldon.

"That is a question which I cannot answer positively. I consider it certain that he has not been killed, although he may have been hurt. My belief is that, if hurt, he is at the nearest neighbour's, and if not injured, he has gone home by a different route from the one he usually takes."

"What shall we do?"

"Go back home."

The advice of the detective was followed at once. The outlaw had ceased his moaning and lay quiet, as if listening to the remarks of those round him.

"Before we take him in hand we had better make an examination," said the detective, and, stooping over, in common parlance, "went through" him, discovering two pistols and an immense bowie-knife.

"We may as well take charge of these, as they're not very good medicine for a well or sick man, and this dog may take it into his head to recuperate a little on the way."

The body was lifted unresistingly upon the horse in front of the officer, and the party started homeward. In the course of a mile they reached a farmer's house, standing some distance from the road, where they halted, and one of them roused up the people. Nothing was known of Judge Woodland, and the party resumed their way homeward.

Just as they struck into the main turnpike, day began breaking, and it was broad daylight when they reached Woodland's residence. All were anxious and nervous as Fred dismounted and walked to the door to knock.

Before he could do so he was encountered by Jacob, whose first greeting caused the heart of the young man to sink:

"Did you find the judge?"

"No."

"Of course you didn't," laughed the man, "'cause he came home last night."

"He did, eh? At what time?"

"About an hour after you left."

The detective, who had heard every word uttered, now indulged in a quiet smile as his words were verified.

"Was he wounded?"

"Not a scratch, but he was very tired, and I don't s'pose he will be up for an hour or two."

"Give him our compliments and congratulations, and tell him I will call during the forenoon to see him."

She observed that he took extra care in preparing his toilet.

Fred Weldon's horse belonged to Judge Woodland, so he walked to Somerville beside the others. When they reached the main road, the prisoner made a desperate struggle to escape and well-nigh succeeded. But he was more firmly secured, and a short time after was placed in the county gaol at Somerville, while the three men separated to their homes.

Fred Weldon sought a few hours' rest, but woke again ere the forenoon was half gone, and, after eating his dinner, told his mother he would go over and see how the judge was getting along. She observed that he took extra care in preparing his toilet for the occasion, and she shrewdly suspected that it was not the old gentleman alone whom he was so anxious to see.

The truth of it was, that Florence Woodland was a star whom Fred Weldon had worshipped from afar. Beautiful and accomplished, she was the centre of admiration for more than a score of the leading young men of the town and neighbourhood.

Fred Weldon remembered her as the "bright particular one" of his childhood—the one who figured in his dreams of a roseate future, and whom, some day, when he had won the grand position towards which he had turned all his energies, he should claim as his bride.

But here the young lawyer was twenty-four years along life's pathway, and that glorious day seemed farther away than ever. The daily hand-to-hand encounter with the realities of life had sufficed to take a great deal of the romance out of his disposition, but it had not clouded the vision which still floated before him in his night and day dreams.

Outwardly calm and self-possessed, but inwardly faltering

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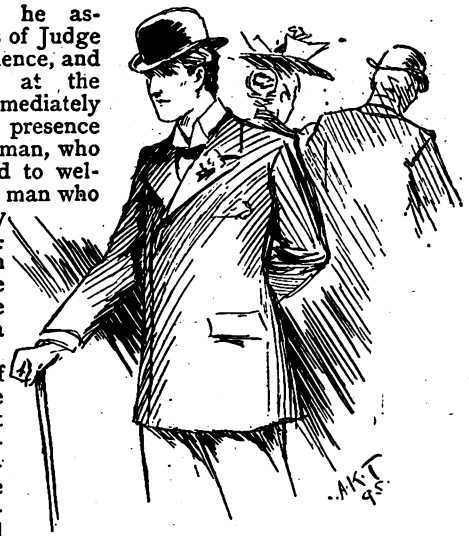
and distrustful, he ascended the steps of Judge Woodland's residence, and gave a knock at the door. He was immediately ushered into the presence of the old gentleman, who was heartily glad to welcome the young man who had been so ready to go to his assistance, and in whom, ever since his childhood, the judge had felt a warm interest.



With the pleasant words of Florence ringing in his ears.

The facts of the case were found to be almost precisely as stated by the detective. The judge had been delayed much beyond the time anticipated, and it was already dark when he reached the Ten-Mile Woods. Here he picked up a traveller, who attempted to shoot him, and would have done so had not his pistol missed fire.

The old gentleman grasped the man, and a furious struggle followed, terminating by the parties rolling under the heels of the mare, that kicked the assassin with almost fatal violence, and then broke away.

The judge easily disentangled himself and started homeward. He freely confessed that he was thoroughly frightened, and instead of keeping to the road, he travelled across country, wandering astray, and reaching his distracted household in the small hours of the morning.

The interview was very cordial, and when Fred bade the old gentleman "good-day," Florence went with him to the door, there took hold of his hand, and turning her deep blue eyes upon him, said:

"I thank you for your promptness in coming to us when we were in distress. To-morrow evening there is to be a gathering of a few friends here, and you must promise me that you will come."

"I promise you," replied the young lawyer, who felt that it would have been a pleasure to have promised his life under the circumstances.

CHAPTER VII.

AT JUDGE WOODLAND'S.

As Fred Weldon walked homeward from his visit to Judge Woodland's, with the pleasant words of Florence ringing in his ears, and with the delightful anticipation of fulfilling the promise made her, he unexceptedly found himself in view of the Drover's Hotel, and he recalled the engagement he had made with his friend, Mr. Smith.

A few minutes later they were seated together in the apartment of the detective, with the door securely locked.

"You probably have suspected my identity," said he with a smile, as he proceeded to light his inevitable cigar.

"I suspect you to be a detective."

"Correct."

And thereupon Mr. Squirrek proceeded to state as much regarding himself as is already known to the readers, and adding:

"For the present I am your friend, plain Mr. Smith, John Smith, if you so wish, travelling for my health, and as such you will remember to address me when others are within hearing. My sole object in this neighbourhood is to settle matters with these Mulligan brothers."

"Why do you make such a confidant of me?" inquired Fred, who thought the proceeding a rather unprofessional one, but who for all that was not a little flattered by the mark of confidence.

"Simply because I can't very well help it. However, if you have any objection, our intercourse can continue without anything further being said upon the matter," said Squirrek.

"Not at all; don't misunderstand me," Weldon hastened to say. "Upon a matter like this, I wish simply to understand everything, the preliminary steps as well as those which follow."

"Business is business," said Squirrek, in his easy, off-hand manner. "You will admit that my profession requires a tolerable knowledge of human nature. Not until I was satisfied of the timber of which you were made did I determine to take you into my confidence. I have been studying you ever since you caught my eye in the train, and the result is the satisfaction of knowing you are the man I want."

"State your case," said the lawyer.

"The man who succeeds in breaking up this gang under the leadership of the Mulligan brothers makes £2,000, and here is the man who is going to do it!" exclaimed the detective, slapping his hand upon his knee.

"I fervently hope so."

"But I want a partner, and you're the man!"

"Ah! I begin to understand."

"The last case that I was in was in Cincinnati, and while there I gained a thread which has drawn me into this."

"Have you undertaken it alone?"

"I have. There is not a living man who suspects my errand except yourself. I could have brought a dozen men with me, all of whom are used to this sort of business, but I prefer to select my material from this neighbourhood, and to follow out my own ideas."

"We two men against eight?"

"There are only seven," interrupted the detective.

"Three and a half men apiece. I don't see the prospect of success."

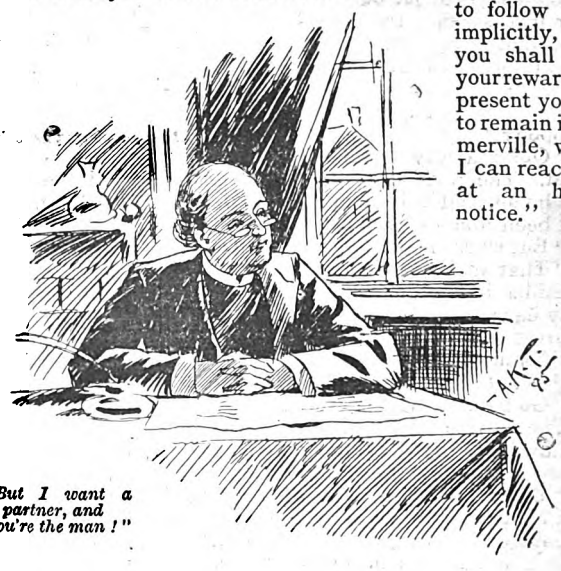
"The way isn't clear to me, but I have some experiments which I wish to make. Very probably we shall have to organise a vigilance committee, and it is hardly to be expected that we shall receive the whole reward ourselves; but there is no good reason why we shouldn't wind up the career of these scamps within a few weeks or months. Am I mistaken in conjecturing that some hundreds of pounds will not come amiss to you?"

"I rather fancy not," laughed Fred; "you might hunt a long time before finding one who would be happier to receive it."

"Precisely. Then the partnership of Squirrek and Weldon begins from date."

"I am willing. What is my first duty?"

"To hold yourself in readiness to receive my commands, to follow them implicitly, and you shall reap your reward. At present you are to remain in Somerville, where I can reach you at an hour's notice."



"But I want a partner, and you're the man!"

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"My intention is to spend a week here, at least."

"That is good! When I have anything to communicate I will see you. I presume I shall meet you at Judge Woodland's to-morrow evening?"

"Will you be there?" asked Fred, in pleased surprise.

"The Judge and myself are old acquaintances. I knew him when you were a schoolboy in this town."

"Does he know you are here?"

"Not at all, and I have no invitation to his party; but I shall go, nevertheless, and he will be glad enough to see me."

"Then he, too, will know your errand?"

"I think he has dealt with criminals long enough to be intrusted with a secret," said the detective, with another bland smile.

"No doubt of that."

The interview lasted half-an-hour or so longer, and then Fred Weldon bade his friend good-day and repaired to his home.

When he reached the residence of Judge Woodland on the evening of the following day, he found a large assemblage there, and almost the first thing that attracted his attention was the old gentleman and the detective sitting apart in the most cordial converse.

Florence Woodland received him with a warmth of manner which set his heart all of a flutter and raised his happiness to the highest point.

But the rose had its thorn, and the powerful emotion that had taken possession of him was alloyed by the sharp pangs of insipient jealousy. A tall, dark, and handsome Spanish-looking gentleman whirled past him, with his arm encircling the slender waist of Florence Woodland, and Fred felt as if he could have knocked him down.

But, when he was introduced to Señor Alvarido Almanaz, a gentleman from Cuba, he bowed low and expressed himself happy to make his acquaintance, although, at the same moment, he would have given anything in the world could it have sufficed to banish the noble señor to his home in the tropical isle.

He was introduced to Senor Alvarido Almanaz.

"I believe I have seen your Cuban friend before," remarked Fred, when he gained the coveted opportunity of speaking a word or two to Florence.

"No! he is a stranger in Somerville."

"May I ask you where you first met him?"

"At the sulphur springs last summer. You know father always spends a few weeks there during each August."

"He seems to be quite a prepossessing gentleman."

"He is very accomplished—plays and sings beautifully."

"Is he staying in Somerville?"

"He is spending a few days with us. He was so kind and attentive to father when we were in Virginia the last time, that we urged him to make us a visit, and he surprised us yesterday by coming. I am so glad he arrived in time to be with us to-night."

A few minutes later and the señor was seated at the piano, running his long, jewelled fingers over the keys, while his really fine voice filled the room with music of a Spanish serenade. The whole company were hushed into silence, while the melody delighted their ears, and when he rose from the instrument there was a universal clapping of hands, and even Fred Weldon could not but admit that the plaudits were well earned.

The Cuban showed such marked attention to Florence Woodland that there were none who failed to notice it. He was a good dancer, and there was not a woman present who did not prefer him as a partner to anyone in the room; but, for all that, he appeared to see none but his hostess, and he followed her as the loadstone follows the magnet.

At the supper table he sat beside her, and when the night wore into the small hours, and the company began separating, the last couple dancing were he and Florence.

Fred Weldon was racked with jealousy. From being the happiest, he was the most miserable of mortals, and he felt like rebelling against the fate that had ever brought him and the fascinating girl together.

"And yet what right have I to any such feeling?" he asked himself, when he had time to collect his thoughts. "What claim have I upon her? There has never a word of love passed between us."

As he was ready to depart, he made a search for his friend Smith, the detective, and learnt that that gentleman had left several hours before, so he walked home alone through the still autumn night, his reflections tinged with a sadness he had not felt for years.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TRIAL.

"FREDERICK WELDON,—You are hereby notified that if you appear as witness against poor Jim Borie, that got kicked by the horse when he was riding with Judge Woodland, you shall not live ten days longer. A word to the wise ought to be sufficient."

This was the missive our young friend received a few days subsequent to the social gathering at Judge Woodland's. It was placed under his door at night, and was given to him at the breakfast table by his mother. He read it carefully through twice, then placed it in his pocket, and finished his morning meal, without enlightening his mother as to its character.

Fred reflected that the captured outlaw, who was then lying in gaol, had so far recovered that he was to be brought to trial during the present term of the Court, which was then in session. Judge Woodland had so expedited matters that it would probably come on the very next day. Being a witness

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himself in the case, of course it was out of his power to preside at the trial, but there was little doubt of the conviction of the scamp, who richly deserved hanging.

A few minutes later Fred Weldon was closeted with Detective Squirrek, who, with his chair tipped back, his heels on the table, and a cigar between his teeth, scanned the missive as he would have done a bill of fare at the restaurant.

"What do you think of it?" inquired the young lawyer.

"It is a genuine document," he replied, as he turned it over in his hand, and looked at the back of it. "My young friend, that letter means business. Just so sure as you testify against that villain will your life be attempted."

"My heavens!" exclaimed Fred, as he excitedly walked the floor. "Isn't it a satire on a government? To think that a man cannot give testimony without his life being threatened!"

"Tut, tut, not so fast. There can be no form of human government that can prevent such things entirely. When you get to the top rung of your ladder, no doubt you will make all things right. Just now we have got to face the practical facts."

"If subpœnaed I shall testify, if the whole Mulligan gang stand between me and the court-house. I shall go about as I always do, and if I am assassinated, it will be done when I am asleep. I wonder whether Jim and Tom have been warned?"

"Yes; both received letters precisely the same as yours, and both have been so thoroughly frightened that they have gone away, and won't be back till the trial is over, so that *they* are out of this business, and, beyond the judge himself, you will be the only witness."

"But *you*?"

"Will not be subpœnaed."

"But you can tell as much and more than I can."

"All very true; and I asked the privilege of testifying, but the judge thinks it better for me to remain in the back-ground, as there is no real necessity for the statement of anyone beside the one whose life is attempted. That, you know, will send the man up for twenty years."

"After which, comes the journey to the state prison, when we shall have to run the gauntlet of the gang again."

"I think it can be done successfully this time. About this

"My young friend, that letter means business."

The black eyes of the Cuban seemed to burn into the young lawyer.

warning. I observe that the three are in the same handwriting, which is evidently a disguised one, and there is the curious fact that only the three who were subpœnaed have been warned. I, who certainly know as much as the rest of you, and who am as accessible, have received never a word. Rather singular, isn't it?"

"What does it indicate?"

"It looks to me as if those three missives were written in Somerville by some person whom we have met."

"Have you encountered any person who looked suspicious?"

Fred Weldon recalled afterwards that the detective avoided making a direct reply to this question.

"You must not suppose the eight, or rather the seven, as it now stands, are all rough, desperate-looking chaps, who herd together, and show to any countryman that they are outlaws. They may occasionally meet together, but I am well satisfied that some of them pass as gentlemen, and are never suspected of being anything else."

This was rather startling information, or rather conjecture, and gave Weldon a powerful realisation of the extraordinary power which this organisation of criminals wielded, and of the vast difficulty in bringing all of them to justice.

"Have you any particular advice to give?" inquired Fred, when there had been a moment's silence between them.

"Nothing; except that you must go to the trial to-morrow, and give your testimony in as straightforward a manner as possible."

"Will you be there?"

"Yes, I shall."

As a matter of course the court was crowded on the succeeding day to suffocation, and there were scores who were turned away, unable to gain admission. When the prisoner was produced, all eyes were centred upon him, for it would be impossible to tell how deep was the terror inspired by this association of men.

The prosecuting barrister, when he arose to his feet, showed that none held the gang in more abject fear than did he; and his speech of half-an-hour's duration was one of the most windy perorations, full of fury, and at the same time containing absolutely nothing.

The counsel for the defence was feelingly eloquent, for he was inspired by the most powerful motives which can sway an abject mind.

But the evidence could not be gainsaid. "Poor Tom

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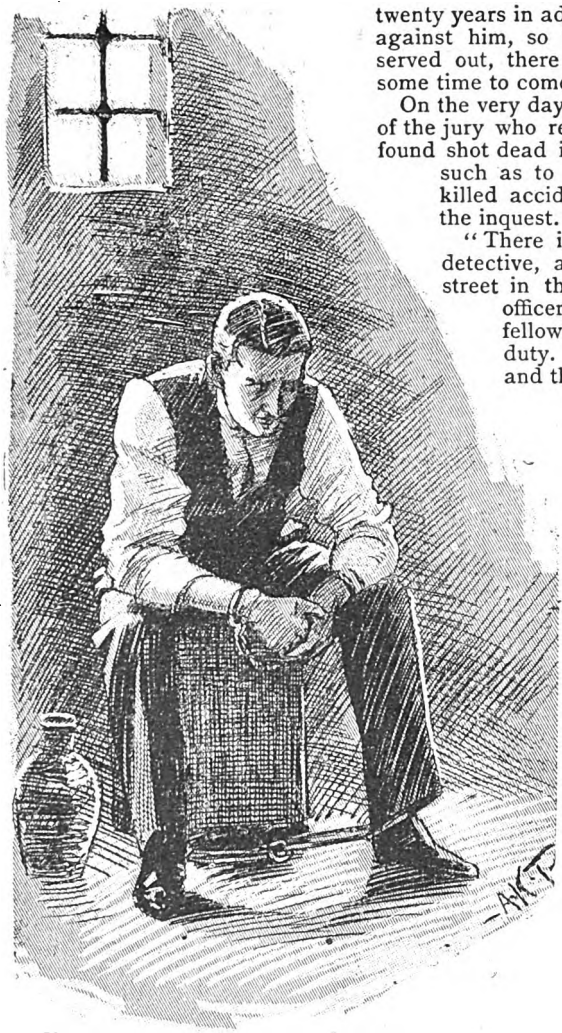
Borie" was positively identified as the one who had attempted the life of Judge Woodland, and he was further recognised as the identical villain who still had twenty years to serve for his having been rescued while on his way to prison before.

The judge's charge to the jury was so pointed that none of them durst shirk their duty, and they were forced to bring in the prisoner guilty, when he was remanded back to gaol to await sentence.

During the proceedings it became known that each member of the jury had received a warning letter precisely similar to that which had been sent to Fred Weldon and his friends. The detective managed to obtain a glimpse of several of these and found, as he anticipated, that one hand had written them all.

Among the spectators, Fred noticed two who manifested the most intense interest in the proceedings. One of these was Squirrek, the detective, and the other was Señor Almanaz, and rather curiously the two sat side by side. The black eyes of the Cuban seemed to burn into the young lawyer, and he bowed pleasantly to him, as their glances met.

There was nothing to be apprehended from an open attempt at rescue in a town of the size of Somerville; but there was reason to believe that everything would be done to get the outlaw out of gaol. Consequently the utmost precautions were taken. He was heavily ironed, and placed in the most secure cell, while the guard looked in upon him every half-hour during the day and night.



He was heavily ironed, and placed in the most secure cell

A few days after the trial, "poor Tom Borie" received twenty years in addition to the twenty which still stood against him, so that if the sentence were faithfully served out, there was very little to fear from him for some time to come.

On the very day that the criminal was sentenced, one of the jury who resided a mile or two out of town was found shot dead in a wood. The circumstances were such as to render it possible that he had been killed accidentally, and such was the verdict of the inquest.

"There is no doubt in *my* mind," said the detective, as he and Fred sauntered down the street in the gloom of the early evening, the officer smoking his Havana. "The poor fellow has paid the penalty of doing his duty. A little more of this kind of business and the whole country will be aroused."

"Don't you think the Mulligans are too wise to overleap the mark, and push things too far?"

"Their long immunity has made them careless. I think it will come to this in the end."

"They haven't made the attempt on *me* yet."

"That's no reason to think they will not do so. You may depend upon it, you are a marked man."

"Am I to remain here indefinitely through fear of these miscreants?"

"Not at all; I have been thinking to-day that it is nearly time you returned to your office at Brampton. But the time has hardly come yet. Wait a little longer. You will soon be swept into a current of events which will make your blood tingle with excitement."

"I do not understand you."

"I cannot explain at present," said the detective, slipping his arm into that of his young friend, as they turned to retrace their steps, and then he added in a low voice, and in a tone thrilling with meaning:

"There is a prize awaiting success of which you little dream."

(To be continued.)

THE MISSING FINGERS.

THE index and middle fingers of the left hand were missing. The two remaining fingers and thumb were well-formed, delicate and tapering. A palmist would have said that the formation of the hand denoted character.

Ethel Allen could not possibly have failed to notice such a hand especially as it lay on the *table d'hôte* of the Antrim Arms, immediately adjoining her.

Its owner manipulated his fork with singular grace and seemed to take pride in his three-digit dexterity.

The Allens, *en route* for the States, after a six months' tour of Europe, were giving a few days to the north of Ireland and the Giants' Causeway, and it was at the railway hotel at Portrush that they made the acquaintance of the Baron du Rhem, as the man with the missing fingers called himself.

The Allens were of that delightfully popular set of middle-class Americans that "do" Europe "regardless of expense," and keep alive in the minds of foreign hotel and shop-keepers the prevailing belief that all Americans are walking gold-mines.

Not only were the Allens—Mr., Mrs., and Miss—truly democratic in their tastes; they were positively bewildering in their habits and manner of making friends.

"I always judge a gent by his jewellery," was one of old Josiah Allen's maxims.

"A lady proclaims herself such by her dress," was an adage of Mrs. Allen.

And the daughter laid down her axiom: "If a young feller's well turned out, he'll do."

It was natural, then, that the Baron du Rhem, scion of the ancient and noble house of that name, should have made a most favourable impression upon these people.

The Baron wore diamonds and rubies, gems every one of them—a four-carat stone of matchless brilliancy on the little finger of the stumpy hand, a huge pigeon-blood ruby of perfect purity on the third finger of the sound right.

In evening dress the Baron flashed like a retired plumber of the comic weekly. His shirt-front was a sea of dazzling light, and the Baron's various chronometers, watch-chains, charms, jewelled cigarette and cigar case, called forth exclamations of

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admiration from Mr. Allen, who pronounced him the first foreigner of real distinction he had ever met.

Ethel thought the Baron just too sweet for anything. He had such a dear little broken-English, heart-breaking drawl; he was so courtly and chivalrous, so romantic and interesting, with his coal black hair and eyes, his classic Grecian features, and his poor maimed hand.

The two fingers, he informed Miss Allen, five minutes after exchanging common *table d'hôte* civilities, had been blown off by "the explosion of his fowling piece while hunting on his estates in the south of France." The gun had burst in his hands, lacerating two fingers so badly that amputation had been necessary, she told her father who was trying to understand him, but could not. The Allens were charmed, delighted with the Baron.

"He has the *genuwine* Burgundian look, Josiah," remarked Mrs. Allen to her husband, as they were preparing for bed.

"Bourbon, you mean, my dear," he timidly corrected.

"Oh, as you please, Josiah," she replied airily; "the words are *anonymous*. What a ketch for Ethel! Jest fancy our bringing back to Ditchfield a real live French baron of the old *reejyme*. He showed me some photographs of his chateaux at Nay in the south of France. He sighed as he showed them to me. I fear his estates are encumbered, Josiah: old ancestral mortgages. How few Americans can boast of mortgages a century old, Josiah!"

"He's a nobby little dresser, Maria; I never see such diamonds before."

"Baron," said Mr. Allen the next morning, as the two leant against the bar of the Antrim Arms, where they had been chatting with the barmaid for over an hour, "Baron, what do you say to a run across the pond with us? We all like you so much that we want you to make us a visit at Ditchfield. And, Baron," here Josiah Allen's voice sank to a confidential whisper as he softly dug the Baron in the ribs, "that gal of mine seems to think a lot of you. He! he! she told her ma so!"

"Indeed!" murmured the Baron, a pleased and amused smile playing about his lips as he stroked his piratical black moustache reflectively. "America! the great country I have heard and read so much about," he said pensively; "the land of the free and the home of the brave. You do me much honour, my dear friend, and it would afford me much pleasure to accompany you, but——"

Here the Baron made a judicious pause.

"But what?" impatiently demanded Mr. Allen.

"The fact is, my dear friend," went on the Baron, "I could hardly visit America—the land of the Anarchist and Socialist, the home of the Interviewer, the great American Reporter—in my true character. I should have to conceal my identity and travel *incognito*. If I could sail under your name—as one of your family let us say—a son or a very near relative, I might escape the disagreeable notoriety that would surely be attendant on the arrival of the Baron du Rhem in the United States. I have various reasons, my dear Allen; one, the best, is that I am connected with a political movement afoot, the instigators of which are supposed to be continually under the surveillance of the secret agents of the French Government. Here in the north of Ireland, at this little inn, I have permitted myself to be known to you by my true name and title; but on leaving this place I shall be forced to assume a different name and character."

"I think I understand you, Baron; you are more or less a political exile, and are endeavouring to keep your movements as quiet as possible in order to baffle the Government's secret service?"

"Exactly," answered the Baron.

"Well," said Mr. Allen, decidedly, "when we take the steamer at Queenstown you shall go on board as my son, Mr. Maurice Allen. Our quiet little home circle at Ditchfield will only know the Baron du Rhem, the last of the Bourbons."

When the *City of Madrid* took on the mails at Queenstown, the tender brought on board a number of passengers, among them the Allens, and their newly-found French friend, now known and treated as one of the family.

To the great surprise of the Allens, the first person they met as they came on board was young Treadwell Slote, of Ditchfield, one of Ethel's most ardent admirers. He informed them he had run over for a little trip, having guessed successfully a newspaper problem involving the placing of the first, second and third horses in the big race of the year—the prize being a first-class circular trip to London and Paris, with four weeks to make it in, the newspaper defraying all expenses.

"Well, you was always lucky, Treadwell," observed Mrs. Allen, and then she grew somewhat confused, for he was gazing curiously at the Frenchman devoting himself to Ethel, and Mrs. Allen did not know exactly how to introduce the two.

"Treadwell," said she, "he's the Baron du Rhem, one of the Burgundy people. He's *incog*. Call him Allen, for that is the name he has assumed travelling with us."

Slote looked at her in surprise.

"I don't quite understand," he said; but the introduction was forthcoming, and he bowed to the new Mr. Allen.

Young Slote was very much disgusted with what he termed their "gullible incredulity."

Whoever had heard of the Du Rhem family, or read of them? he asked. This man might be an adventurer for all they knew.

Mr. and Mrs. Allen put down these remarks as prompted by jealousy, and Ethel turned up her nose at him when meeting him on deck the next morning, giving him an awful snub as she passed clinging to the Baron's arm.

Slote was sitting in the smoking-room of the vessel an hour later, moodily meditating on the tomfoolery of the world in general, and his friends, the Allens, in particular. He was puffing away at his pipe in an exceedingly irritable frame of mind, when a fellow voyager entered to order a drink and enjoy a smoke.

The steward had taken his order, and left them alone.

The stranger sat down on the seat next to Slote.

"Pardon me," he said, "but I should like to ask you a question."

His manner and tone were so abrupt, business-like and brusque, that young Slote stared at him in perfect astonishment.

"Well, what is it?" he stammered.

"Are you travelling with a party on this ship by the name of Allen?" asked the stranger.

"No," replied Slote. "Why do you ask?"

"I thought not," pursued the stranger, with a smile. "And you are not acquainted with the Frenchman they have with them?"

"No, I never heard of him before," answered Slote, "but the Allens are friends of mine. Don't think me impertinent if I ask *you* what business it is of yours to ask me these questions?"

The stranger laughed, and for an answer took from out his hip pocket a small glass bottle. With both hands he covered its contents.

"There's a story inside that bottle. Would you like to hear it?" he asked.

Not knowing whether he was dealing with a lunatic, an inventor or a detective, Slote resolved to humour his *compagnon de voyage*, and replied that it would give him great pleasure to listen to what he had to say.

"I am the traveller and buyer for a large diamond-importing house," said the stranger. "My name is Lewis. About a year ago I was in Paris on business for the house I represent.

"You must know that we diamond men, who carry so many thousands of pounds' worth of precious stones about our persons, are objects of interest to criminals that play for big game and make diamond men a special study.

"A great deal of '*body*' smuggling is indulged in by foreign buyers, especially those that are 'in touch' with the Customs. I never trust stones off my person when travelling. As it is, at this moment, young man, I am lined throughout with stuff—to be declared, of course, duty to be paid; for it is a regular consignment I have with me.

"Well, a little over a year ago I was in Paris, and feeling as gay as that gay capital. I'd done a good stroke or two, and was leaving for Havre the next morning to take the steamer for home.

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"I thought one parting drink of Paris life was what I needed, so I sallied forth that night loaded down with my stuff, as was my wont, a revolver in one pocket and a sharp knife in a coat-pocket cut expressly for it. There's not a hotel-safe in the world I'd trust my diamonds in. I met a number of convivial friends and drank heavily—enough to make me reckless and forget that I had over £5,000 worth of stuff on my person.

"It was in some third-class café chantant that I met one of its singers. She left me alone in an anteroom where I had gone for a quiet drink, pleading sudden indisposition. I had already doffed my very valuable overcoat and thrown it on the only available article of furniture in the room—a low divan against the wall at the farther end of the room. The only precaution I took (which was an exceedingly lucky one, as subsequent events proved) was to remove my knife and revolver from their respective pockets.

"Presently a slight, creaking noise caused me to turn my head in the direction where my overcoat lay.

"Imagine my consternation to see a hole in the wall, and a hand inserted through it in the act of lifting my very valuable garment. You may have observed that I am a very quick man in my movements. It didn't take me more than five seconds to grab revolver and knife and make for that hole in the wall.

"They must have heard me, but secure as they thought themselves (she had locked me in the room), the owner of the hand—it was a man's—was deliberately slow in gathering my coat up, so slow, that in pulling his hand out of sight, he left two fingers on the floor of my room. I both fired and swished at the hand.

"The bullet missed it, but the razor-like blade of the heavy knife did its work.

"I shall never forget his yell of pain and rage!

"When I burst open the locked door and explored the place, I found myself in an almost deserted and unfurnished house.

"The room was the only one the panel workers had fitted up.

"I hastily left the house.

"In their wild flight they had failed to close the outer door.

"Wrapped in my handkerchief were the ghastly souvenirs of the evening's entertainment—a pair of fingers.

"I have kept them in spirits, in the hope of some day meeting their owner and returning him his lost property."

The narrator paused and tossed off the cocktail the steward had placed on the table before him.

"Didn't you inform the police at once?" breathlessly inquired Slote.

"Of course not. Had the story reached the firm's ears they would have discharged me—my reckless conduct would have cost me my position."

"Well, what is this story of yours apropos of?" asked Slote, a vague suspicion astir in his mind.

"Are you acquainted with the Frenchman who knows your friends, the Allens, so well?"

"No. I answered you that question once before. I don't know where they picked him up. He poses as a cousin of the Duc de Penthièvre, the son of the Prince de Joinville, who, you know, is a descendant of Louis Phillippe, the 'citizen King.'"

"Rot," said the diamond man; "you don't believe any of that?"

"Certainly not. Do you know anything of the fellow?"

"I know that two of the fingers of his left hand are missing, and I'll bet a ruby to a rhinestone that I carry the missing fingers in the bottle I showed you."

"What?" almost screamed Slote. "Are you crazy?" he demanded, staring hard at him.

"Wait and see," was the diamond man's reply.

"What do you intend doing?" asked Slote, excitedly.

"I shall tell him the story I've just told you, and I want you to watch his face while I do. Wait till we're off quarantine and the crowd's gathered in this room celebrating the quick passage we shall have made. Can I depend upon you?"

"Here's my hand!" cried Slote, and the two men shook hands and rang for drinks.

Young Slote sat at the captain's table with the Allens, directly opposite the Baron. That night he observed the mutilated hand very closely.

Just above the knuckle of the middle stump was a slight blue mark on the flesh that looked as if made by a tattooing needle—a slight, blue discoloration that on second thought could be attributed to the effect of an explosive.

The Baron was quite popular in the smoking-room with men of sporting proclivities. He played a stiff game of poker, and made up pools on everything one could guess.

Sandy Hook was passed, and the *City of Madrid* lay anchored off quarantine. It was long past midnight, but the steamship's smoking-room was a blaze of light and a flood of champagne. Lewis, the diamond man, had just roared out a toast: "Gentlemen, here's to the American Eagle! May he drop feathers all over the crown of Great Britain, and wipe his feet on the lilies of France!"

The Baron and a number of Englishmen took exception to this patriotic toast. A drunken brawl was imminent.

"Gentlemen, gentlemen! my friend will apologise!" cried Slote.

Lewis made some remarks to the effect that he had quite forgotten himself in his enthusiasm at getting back home again, and volunteered to tell a rattling good story to square himself with the crowd.

"Let's have it!" they roared.

The diamond man commenced his recital. Slote leant against a table where he could command a good view of the Frenchman who sat underneath the electric light by the side of old Allen.

The Baron's face preserved a sphinx-like expression until Lewis came to that part of his story where he described the room; then the Frenchman's face grew several shades paler, and his hand sought his trouser-pocket.

"At first I thought I was dreaming, gentlemen, when I beheld the hole and saw that hand—dreaming, only dreaming. The room was dimly lighted, and, as I remarked before, there had been nothing done to arouse my suspicions."

The Baron had risen, and was about to seek the deck.

"Wait a moment, let's hear this," begged old Allen; "it's excitin'!" and he pulled him down beside him.

Slote saw huge beads of perspiration gather on the guilty wretch's forehead.

He sank limply in a heap and thrust his telltale hand deeper into his pocket.

"My £5,000 overcoat was about to disappear, but my movements were so lightning quick that I slashed the keen edge of my knife across the hand just in the nick of time. What do you think I caught with my knife?" he demanded savagely of the trembling Frenchman, who cowered behind old Allen.

The Baron vouchsafed him no reply; he was deathly white and in a half-fainting condition. All eyes were turned upon him.

"I caught the contents of this bottle," cried the diamond man, flashing it out of his pocket.

"Here!" he shouted at the top of his lungs, his excitement making his voice crack, "here are the two fingers I lopped off, and which I have since kept in spirits as a living memento, as two silent witnesses to the truth of my story."

The Baron had fainted.

"Observe," said the diamond man, recovering his usual composure, "how the restored finger meets the blue mark above the knuckle, thus completing the base of the Maltese cross that is tattooed on the finger. I don't say this is the man that tried to rob me, gentlemen," he added, very quietly, "but he's helped to make my story a realistic one."

Slote, who was bending over the prostrate form, suddenly raised his hand for silence. "He's dead!" he exclaimed. "Heart failure is convenient, sometimes."

. . . . . .

The Prefecture of Police at Paris received the following cablegram from the Central Office Detective Bureau at New York a day later, "Man arrived *Madrid* dead. Property recovered."

When old Allen read the account of the clever French thief's wonderful career and numerous robberies in a New York newspaper, he remarked confidentially to young Slote, that "he never again should judge a gent by his jewellery."

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THE SENTRY'S STORY.

"TROFIM STOYAN," said the President of the Military Court, "you have been found guilty of the crime of aiding the escape of Prisoner No. 279 from the mine of Gorkaya-Balka. Before sentence is passed the Court desires to hear from you your version of the circumstances of the prisoner's escape, and the motives which induced you to be so false to the trust imposed on you. We understand that you dispute the correctness of some of the witnesses' statements. We warn you to speak the truth. Stand at attention!"

As the President finished, a slim young fellow, standing between two glittering bayonets, glanced round the spectators, drew himself up to attention, and faced the Court.

"Go on," said the President.

"Your Excellency," began the soldier, "I don't want mercy, and I don't look for it; but you have asked me to tell the truth, and I tell it. It was a Saturday night, snowing hard, and bitterly cold. Sergeant Petroff marched me up to the Gorkaya-Balka mine, and I relieved the sentry on duty there. I was to remain on duty until midnight, and I received the usual orders to stop anyone who attempted to enter or leave the gallery, and to shoot them if they persisted. I was shivering with cold, and kept tramping about in front of the entrance to keep warm. A little after the barrack clock had struck ten I noticed that there was someone crouching in the shadow of the old tool-house—a woman, I thought. It seemed to be darker there than out in the open. The snow was driving in my face. I felt queer and timid that night.

"Turning sharply round at the end of my beat furthest from the tool-house, I saw approaching me the figure of a woman, dressed all in black. I got opposite the entry into the gallery, and stood still. I don't know why I felt scared. There was no one else about, or nearer than the overseer's house. She came swiftly over the snow, and her face was covered with a veil. She came right up to me and threw back her veil. I couldn't speak; it was as if my tongue was frozen. She put her hands on my shoulders and looked up into my face."

"What was she like?" demanded the President.

"Your Excellency, I cannot describe her. I only saw her eyes then, and they were on fire and went right through me. She told me much that I cannot recall, for I was looking, not listening. But at last I understood her to be talking of her brother in the mine. She said she had come all through the snow from Russia to see him, and that he was dying. She said, if I would let her into the mine for a few minutes she would always pray for me, and devote her whole life to making me happy. Her great black eyes bewitched me, and I believed her. I said nothing, but pointed to the mine, and in a moment she had fled into the dark opening to the gallery.

"I never thought of what I was doing. I was dazed, and stood stock still; and the snow kept falling all the time, and the night was growing darker. I had my eyes fixed on the entrance and saw the figure emerge and run towards me.

"'Soldier,' she said, 'you have made me happy for life; make yourself happy and fly with us. Let my brother pass. I will lead you and him to a place I know of where we will all be happy together. Be good to me, soldier, and I will give you all you ask from me. I'll be yours. I'll live for you, and die for you.'

"Don't smile, Excellency. I was intoxicated with her words. I believed her. Her arms were round my neck, and her face was lovely as the Madonna's. I seized my rifle and flung it with all my strength out into the snow. She put a file into my hands, and I followed her into the gallery. There the darkness was thicker still, but we groped our way to where a man stood chained to a thick wooden stanchion. I knew what to do. The man said nothing, but the woman kissed me; kissed me, Excellency. So I worked like a madman. He was soon freed. We reached the entrance as the barrack clock was striking eleven. There was a whole hour yet before the guard would be changed. We ran through the little wood and crossed the frozen river; and away beyond a wide open space, where the snow was very deep, we entered the pine woods. The woman knew where she was leading us, for we came to a little hut, where we found clothes and food. I buried my uniform in the snow.

"All that night we moved rapidly through the woods, hardly speaking to one another at first. But the man and woman went on in front, walking arm-in-arm, and often they kissed one another, laughing and crying in turns. When I was close to them they sometimes spoke French. As soon as it was a little lighter, I never let my eyes leave her face. Her eyes were large and dark, and her hair was like gold, and hung down her back wet on her black *shouba*."

"Stand at attention!" said the President, sharply.

The prisoner stood erect again, and resumed—

"The morning was clear and frosty. The man had fallen several times during the night. His strength was gone. I saw he was as pale as death, and blood oozed from his mouth. The woman grew frantic with fear that he would be caught. The man, however, could go no further. He lay down on the snow, just as we were leaving the woods and coming out on the steppe. I thought he would have died.

"I took him in my arms and carried him. I carried him verst after verst, until my own strength was all gone, and I felt fever come over me. But the woman never noticed me, and once or twice when I turned to look at her from under my burden, I saw that her eyes were fixed on the face of the man I carried. I could hold out no longer. I fell on the snow and fainted. How long I lay there I cannot say. Whether or not I dreamt I am unable to tell the Court. I don't think it could have been a dream. I thought I saw a *troika* come noiselessly over the snow, and heard the breathing of horses."

The President interrupted. "Do you mean to tell the Court this was a dream? Can you give no further particulars about the *troika* or its driver?"

"No, your Excellency; the horses were black, I thought, and I know their eyes shone brightly; the sledge also seemed to be black. It came silently, it went away with gently ringing bells, like silver bells. When I came to my senses it was again snowing fast. The wet flakes wakened me, I think. I gazed around me on all sides. I was alone. I thought of my dream. There were no hoof-marks, no traces of sledge-runners, nothing but the level, trackless snow. Perhaps the snow had filled up the track, perhaps—perhaps there was some other reason.

"Your Excellency, I felt myself forsaken. I could not understand it. I was mad, and cried aloud. Suddenly I noticed, pinned to my coat, a scrap of paper with pencil writing on it. It was taken from me when I gave myself up, but I'll never forget the words: 'We cannot take you with us further. Save yourself as best you can. My husband and I will always pray for you.' Oh, Excellency, I saw it all then, and sat down in the snow and wept. I loved that woman. Yes; I was a fool."

"And a traitor," interrupted the President.

"And a traitor, if your Excellency says so; but I did not think of that then. I thought only of my love, of how I had been betrayed, of the wound to my pride. Your Excellency knows the rest."

"The sentence of the Court is that Private Trofim Stoyan take the place of the escaped Prisoner No. 279 in the mine at Gorkaya-Balka. He will remain there during the pleasure of His Imperial Majesty."

That evening he was chained to the stanchion.

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SUMMER HEAT AND OBESITY.

Summer with its sultry heat, is not a source of unmixed pleasure to those who suffer from excessive corpulence. Health cannot be maintained under conditions of great obesity. In general the mental energy of the highly corpulent becomes impaired, and their capacity for the conduct of business is consequently much diminished. Our readers will therefore be interested to know it is an indisputable fact that excessive corpulency can, in all cases, be cured by the system which has now for many years been successfully practised by Mr. F. C. Russell, of Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C. Mr. Russell possesses hundreds of testimonials from persons in all classes of society, many of them holding distinguished positions in the learned professions and in Her Majesty's services, which, taken collectively, prove to a demonstration that anyone suffering from obesity who systematically applies his remedy for a few weeks consecutively can be cured. The patients under his treatment are not asked to be "fasting men"; and it is remarkable that in the case of many of Mr. Russell's subjects their appetite increases as their weight diminishes. A book (256 pages) entitled "Corpulency and the Cure," containing most interesting and trustworthy information, *together with the recipe*, may be had by writing to Mr. Russell, enclosing 4d. stamps for postage. With such a remedial agent at their command as Mr. Russell's specific, excessively corpulent persons have only themselves to blame if their unwieldy persons are not speedily reduced to fitting proportions.—*Extract from a Leading Journal.*

TO METAMORPHOSE FAT PERSONS

"We were reading in the *Penny Illustrated Paper* how to reduce obesity, wherein it says in that very excellent publication: 'The corpulent will be glad to learn how to lose two stone in about a month with benefit to health, strength, and muscle, by a comparatively new system. It is a singular fact that the patient, returning quickly to a healthy state with increased activity of brain, digestive, and other organs, naturally requires more food than hitherto; yet, notwithstanding this, he absolutely loses in weight one to two pounds daily, as the weighing machine will prove. The Book, "Corpulency and the Cure" (256 pages), containing the "recipe," can be had gratis from Mr. F. C. Russell, Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C., by sending cost of postage, fourpence.' He has discovered a simple herbal remedy, most pleasant to the taste, which entirely disposes of the necessity of starving oneself in endeavouring to be rid of all superfluous matter. An interesting point, which goes to prove that the almost magical compound is beyond doubt harmless, is that in prescribing it in a tentative way to lean persons, or rather to those who carry no superfluity of fat beyond that which is required as fuel for Nature's furnace, the medicine is absolutely inoperative, attacking only that unhealthy, disease-creating waste accumulation which is the burden of the fat creature's existence. In many cases where people take decoctions reputed to be new medical discoveries to cure some specific disease, they may recover by the action of the medicine, or Nature may have effected her own cure. In the case of corpulency, if a simple remedy undertakes to reduce a person, say, 7 lb. in a week, all that one has to do is to get weighed, and thus prove it conclusively. So it is with Mr. Russell's compound, but he asks you to prove it in twenty-four hours only."—*Coventry Standard*, January 18, 1895.

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BETWEEN INCOME AND OUTGO.

TRY to fancy this, now. You and I are standing side by side in some country place, on the shore or margin of a little pond. At one end of this pond there is an inlet, at the other an outlet. The water runs in, the water runs out, equally, evenly. The constant gain, the constant loss—with the pond—the product of both, lying quiet between. So Nature balances all things, only you don't observe it.

Well, you say, what of it? Very much of it as you will see if you read on a bit further. Here, for example, is a trifle of personal history told by a lady whose name will be found at the end of it. It is a story of pain at first. We name this so you can drop it now if you don't like such tales. But you would better go on with it.

She says she has—or had up to a certain date—suffered all her life from illness. Her feelings were the same as the feelings of millions—your own for aught we can tell. She felt tired, weary, and heavy. Her mind was burdened also, as if some coming evil had cast its shadow before. Her skin was sallow, and the whites of her eyes turned yellow. She had an abiding sense of sickness at the stomach, pain in the *right* side, and spat up a watery fluid. She had no desire for food, and when (as must be) she took any it seemed to cause pain, and tightness at the chest, and under the shoulder-blades.

This was often so bad that the poor woman actually regarded her meals with terror, as though bread and meat were deadly poisons, instead of being among the most precious gifts of God; so for days together she fasted through fear of them.

From this came weakness, of course, we see. She could hardly pull herself upstairs, and her breathing was short and laboured. After a little she got nervous and irritable, and trembled and shook all over, so she says, and we believe it easily enough. At night, when we all ought to be sound asleep and sweetly dreaming, this woman tossed and tumbled on her bed. There was no gentle spirit to seal *her* lids, and so she felt more tired in the morning than when she lay down hours before. Time ticked along and brought no comfort nor betterment. She took medicines, lots of them, but couldn't point to any good they did. Doctors? To be sure. It's always that way. The doctors have the first chance to show what they can do. "I consulted several doctors," says the lady. Did they help her? They should; it's their business. Alas, however!

In this case they failed, as they so often fail. "They gave me no relief," she tells us. Why not?

Her narrative concludes thus: "On August 18th, 1887, whilst living at Wakefield Street, Gray's Inn Road, I went to the Royal Free Hospital and was under treatment there for six weeks. Afterwards, in 1888, I attended the Waterloo Road Hospital as an outdoor patient for two months. Several doctors there said I was suffering from liver complaint, but *their physic did not do me the slightest good.*

"In this condition I continued until August, 1889, when I made my first trial of Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup. The first bottle relieved me, and I kept on taking it. Soon my food agreed with me, and I knew no more sickness or nervousness. My spirits were good and I felt better than ever I did in my life. From that time I have had no return of my old complaint. I will gladly answer any inquiries.—Yours truly, (Signed) (Mrs.) Annie Palmer, 9, Lambeth Palace Road, London, S.E., July 18th, 1892." Wife of Mr. George Palmer, Grocer and Provision Dealer.

One word more about that pond. The human body is like it, being composed of, and sustained by, the food we eat. When the food is properly digested, and the useless portions carried away through the organs of outlet, we are in health. When either fails we fall ill and may die. This failure is indigestion and dyspepsia. It was Mrs. Palmer's ailment which the doctors treated in vain and Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup cured. This medicine helps Nature to restore her lost equilibrium, leaving the body safe and strong between its income and its outgo.

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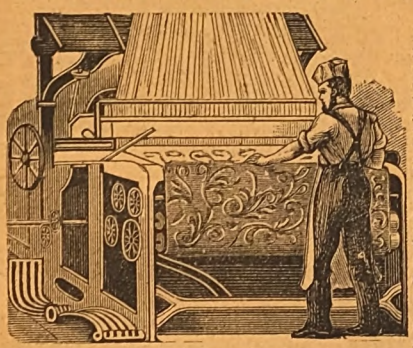

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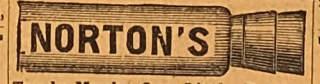

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 341.] FOR THE WEEK ENDING JULY 13, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

A DELICIOUS freshness pervaded the woods. The sparrows flitted in and out among the branches, and sang to one another their sweetest songs. On a projecting bough a finch had comfortably settled himself, and was whistling with the utmost nonchalance the sole number contained in the poor rascal's *répertoire*.

It was a rare delight, indeed, to wander through this natural loveliness after leaving, scarcely two hours before, the stifling atmosphere of a railway-carriage; and the pathway, through which I loitered in happiest mood, was a narrow one. The highway, indeed, would have conducted me more quickly to the desired haven, but on this most magnificent summer day I very naturally chose the longer walk through one of the most beautiful bits of forest in the neighbourhood.

Suddenly the sunshine glinted more brightly through the trees. It must be that I was approaching a clearing, and, in truth, a few more steps brought me to an open place, which spread itself out like an island in the heart of the wood. Near the edge of the clearing knelt a man who was industriously filling a sack. Could it be earth that he was scooping up—and for what purpose?

I stole nearer. That which the man was gathering was the peculiar nest of the wood ant, cunningly put together from bits of plants and pine needles. All this the man put into a wire sieve, through which the ants and their white larvæ fell into the sack.

"Good success?" said I, with friendly greeting.

The ant-hunter looked up, and pushed back a little his old felt hat. Then he said: "It will do, sir. There isn't anybody in the neighbourhood who cares to be a rival in the business."

"Indeed! Has anyone any objection to it?"

"Hm! yes. The work makes one look so!" said the ant-hunter, and his eyes ran over his own shabby exterior.

He wore a dirty and ragged brown coat, was bare-footed, and pressed upon his frowsy head was a crumpled hat of doubtful colour. Between his teeth he held a short pipe, the rudely fantastic head of which he might have carved himself. The old stump must have been the dearest thing he called his own, for even when he spoke it did not leave his lips.

I had never before seen an ant-hunter, although he is a characteristic feature of the Alps, so I sat down upon the stump of a tree to watch him at his work.

"You won't see anything very remarkable," said he, shaking the sieve. "My work is simple enough."

He spread out a linen cloth, fastened down its four corners with wooden pins, and surrounded the whole with pine branches. Then he took the sack and shook its contents out upon the cloth. Immediately the lively little creatures seized their babies, and sought to hide them among the sheltering twigs. Thereupon the ant-hunter carefully brushed these twigs with a coarse rag, and the ants remained hanging to the twigs, while the larvæ lay clearly distinguishable upon the cloth spread out below.

"My crop is gathered for to-day," said he, thrusting his booty into the sack.

"And does this business bring you in a living?" I asked.

"Oh! it'll do. The dealers pay me pretty well, and the amount I need for my living——" He did not finish the sentence, but a sad smile flitted over his face.

While his work had been going on, his pipe had gone out, and he drew out now a closely-tied tobacco pouch. It was empty. I could see that the old man was greatly disappointed, and that after his hard work he had counted upon this modest enjoyment. Help, however, was at hand; for although no smoker myself, I always carry tobacco with me on these mountain excursions. It is an "open sesame" when even the jingle of coin is ineffectual—no Alpine shepherd can resist it. Such a packet I took from my pocket now, and opening it, offered it to the ant hunter.

"Here is some. Try it, and see if it suits you."

What had I done? The man stood as though transfixed, his eyes staring. A shudder ran through his body.

"Sir!" he burst forth, but excitement would not let him proceed further.

"Take it! I beg of you," said I.

Upon this a curious change came over his countenance. A suspicious moisture appeared in his eyes. His bosom rose and fell, and involuntarily he stretched out his hand for the little packet.

"Sir," he faltered; "sir, excuse me! but it is fully twelve years since a human being has offered me a kindness."

"You—avoid people?" said I, perplexed.

"Or they me, which amounts to the same thing," said he bitterly.

I looked narrowly at him. He dropped his eyes.

"But they are right!" he went on, as if talking to himself. "It is indeed a disgrace to associate with a gaol bird!"

He stopped as though he expected me to order him off. He waited in vain, however; for, though astounded at his disclosure, I said not a word.

"Forgive me, sir," said he with surprising quietness. "The miserable business belongs to years gone by. I never like to stir it up. But as you have been so kind, I would not have you get a wrong impression of me; so listen, and despise me if you can."

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He packed up his implements, threw his sack over his shoulder, and started on his way.

"I'm bound for S.," said I. "Are you going the same way?"

"The same, whichever way you go. I am everywhere—or rather, nowhere—at home."

We walked on, and soon entered again the magnificent wood. But its beauty found me indifferent now. I was all absorbed in the mysterious man at my side, whose eyes were fixed intently upon the mossy earth.

"You were going to tell me your story," said I, taking up the conversation where we had left off.

"I was going to—yes. But really, now, I'm almost sorry I said so. However, I promised, and I must keep my word—for, somehow, you're different from the rest."

He struck a match and lighted his pipe, which he had already filled with my tobacco.

"One would never think, to look at me now," said he, after a few pulls at his pipe, "that I was the son of a rich farmer. Ah! truly, time can do strange things with men. My father—blessed be his memory!—was wrong when he so often said, nearly thirty years ago, that his wild boy wouldn't live to see many years. I've seen only too many of them!

"There was my brother Xavier—an entirely different sort of fellow—my exact opposite. While I wandered the whole day long in the woods, he would sit poring over books thick with dust even in our grandfather's day, which he found in the garret. In the catechism he stood at the head. The pastor had not met so industrious a boy in years.

"And I? Oh! I was good for nothing, who deserved a whipping every day. I got it often enough, too, and it didn't agree so badly with me either, for I grew to be such a big fellow as couldn't be matched in the neighbourhood.

"I think at one time there wasn't a village fair in the vicinity where I didn't play the rowdy. This would have been a pretty bad state of affairs if it had lasted long, but an end soon came to it—an end which I would gladly have exchanged for an honest stab in a public-house brawl. It happened thus:

"Can you see, sir, that old tumble-down hut over there, between those two firs? Twelve years ago that was the home of an old day-labourer. It is easy to be seen that wealth had no place there; but the house was kept by Marie, the old man's daughter, a girl so pretty that the angels in heaven might have rejoiced to look at her. What wonder was it that I often stopped to chat with her over the fence, or fasten a nosegay in her bodice, on my way home?

"Marie, the old man's daughter.

"Well, the summer passed away; and when winter came on, raw and cold, and I had no excuse for wandering among the mountains, still something drew me irresistibly to those old paths, and I could not let a single day go by without seeing Marie.

"Her father saw how matters were going, but he made no objections; for while he knew that I was a wild sort of a scamp, he did not believe there was anything really bad in me. And he was not mistaken.

"The time came at last when I must acquaint my father with the state of affairs. Oh! but you should have seen, sir, the storm it raised! It had never entered into my lovesick brain that Marie was the daughter of a poor peasant! The old man was stubborn, and I equally so. For six weeks I did not sit down to a meal with him. Xavier, in the meanwhile, was all devotion. And he was right—my noble brother!—for was I not making my choice between Marie and my share of the property?

"Just then it seemed as if heaven itself meant to spoil his calculations. The dreaded day for the military draft came on. I had the year before drawn the lucky number which exonerated me from service. It was now Xavier's turn to try the wheel of Fortune.

"He drew a blank—and, unless a substitute should be provided, he must within a few days join the army.

"My father was inconsolable. A substitute was no easy thing to obtain, especially as the very air seemed full of ominous portents, and any day might come the news that war had been declared.

"A thought flashed through my mind. I swallowed my pride on the instant, and once more entered the old man's presence.

"'Father,' said I, 'if you will give your consent to my marriage with Marie, I will be Xavier's substitute.'

"Three days later, I was wearing the Kaiser's uniform."

The ant-hunter stopped for an instant, and looked about him in silent admiration.

"It is a beautiful little bit of earth—this fatherland," he went on to say, "and I have always loved it. My grandfather gave his life for it. He was killed in the year 1809 in a battle with the French. He little dreamt, good man, that a grandson of his would cover his untarnished name with disgrace, and, shut up in a fortress as a cowardly betrayer of his prince, curse the day that ever he was born!

"And can you imagine, sir, who brought me there? A miserable rascal! The offscouring of humanity!—may the earth swallow him up! By heaven! I was not bad, but they were bound to have me so, and the one who can most congratulate himself on his success is no other than Xavier—my precious brother Xavier!

"It was not enough that he had robbed me of my father's heart; he must take from me that for which I had sacrificed my freedom.

"Through what treachery he managed it I could never find out. Suffice it to say, I had been scarcely six months in the army, when a fellow from my native village did me the friendly service to tell me that the names of Xavier and Marie had been called out three times from the altar.

"At first I only ridiculed the idea, but later I was convinced that it was only too true.

"Do you see that blade of grass there, sir? Whichever way the wind blows strongest, that way it blows—a picture of a woman's heart! From that day I lost my faith in humanity.

"Oh, but it was a fearful blow to me! I thought I was going to lose my mind. Only one thing seemed plain to me. I must see the miserable pair, and avenge myself.

"The day on which they were to be married, I was on my way home. I had asked for no furlough; I had thought of none. All unwittingly I had become a deserter.

"At last I was within sight of my goal. Already I could hear the church bells ringing, and shuddered at their tones. They were the funeral knell of my fool's happiness. Oh, how I longed for wings! Perhaps I could get there yet, and stop this horrible thing, and then—but no! strength failed me. My limbs were like lead, and only with difficulty could I drag myself along.

"When I reached the church I was too late. The bridal procession was just coming out. I can see them now as if it had happened only yesterday. Oh, that a thunderbolt had fallen from heaven and transfixed them all! But, ah! no. The sun up there shone brighter than ever, the birds sang in

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the great linden trees, and underneath them the village musicians struck up a lively waltz.

"It was as if everything had conspired together to mock me. I could bear it no longer. In a rage, I picked up a stone from the road and dashed towards Xavier. One shriek, then another—and then all was still."

"You killed him?" said I, horrified.

"Killed him!—A fortnight later I found myself imprisoned in a fortress. To-day, by particular favour of the Kaiser, I am again free—a ragged ant-hunter. And Xavier? Do you see, sir, that big house over there? It is the finest in the neighbourhood. There my brother lives with his wife and several children. Behold the righteous reward which Heaven metes out! Can one be surprised that I have lost my faith?"

The ant-hunter pressed his hat low upon his forehead, gruffly bade me good-bye, then struck into the path among the bushes on our left which led over a stony hillside to an isolated farmhouse, where he hoped, without doubt, to dispose of his curious wares.

Lost in thought, I picked my way along the rough path to the village, whose church steeples were reflected in every direction by the glowing rays of the sun, which, in its setting, looked like a magnificent carbuncle.

Slowly and laboriously the dark shadows climbed from the valley up the mountain. But no sweet, refreshing breeze announced the approach of evening. A sultry oppressive heat hung over the entire region, and a black cloud, like a chariot drawn by invisible horses, came up in the farthest west as the advance guard of a menacing storm.

S—— is one of those pretty little villages which these high mountains hide by the hundred among their valleys. Its largest building, next to the church, is its tavern, which offers the friendliest of hospitality.

As I entered the public room in my easy-going manner, the lamp was burning. By a corner table sat several peasants, with their beer mugs before them. I stepped past them towards an open window and looked out.

It had already grown very dark, and the whole heavens, as far as the eye could reach, were enveloped in black, dangerous-looking clouds. Every now and then there would be a bright flash on the farthest horizon where the mountain peaks kissed the clouds, and then would come a response in low, heavy growls from unfathomable abysses.

Scarcely ten minutes later a wild hurricane was in full blast. Heavy drops fell pattering upon the ground. Lightning flashes came thick and fast; and from the church tower pealed forth the storm bell.

The bar-room door creaked on its hinges, and a man, bent and dripping with rain, appeared within it. Without a word, he stepped in, and retired quickly to a dark corner. It was the ant-hunter.

The landlady sat by the stove and knitted. Only from time to time, as an especially blinding flash would shoot across the heavens, would she let her work fall in her lap and make quickly the sign of the cross. She had indeed noticed the new guest, but evidently did not think him worthy of a second glance.

"A dram!" said the ant-hunter roughly. The landlady went on with her knitting.

"A dram!" came more violently from the corner. That took effect. Slowly the woman got up; more leisurely than was necessary she went to the cupboard, and finally placed, with scant courtesy, the desired liquor before her guest. The latter looked at her in a curiously mocking way.

"Aren't you glad to see me?" said he. "I have the same right to sit here as the others. I pay my bills."

At the table where the peasants sat, there had been a great commotion ever since the arrival of the ant-hunter. There was much putting of heads together, very animated whispering, and an industrious passing about of the pitcher.

"Landlady!" finally cried the principal speaker of the company, a broad-shouldered, thick-set man, "the pitcher is empty. If you want to fill it again, please to notice that we're not going to sit in the same room with a gaol bird."

The ant-hunter shrank at the tones of his voice.

"Xavier!" he faltered.

The man so designated caught the word, and, with flushed face, and holding his oaken stool in his hand, took a few steps forward.

"Now," said he, trembling with excitement, "there is the door!"

The ant-hunter had risen. He seemed strangely calm.

"Xavier," said he, "you are giving yourself unnecessary trouble. Your scorn no longer irritates me. Once have I raised my hand against you in revenge, but I ought not to have done it. Now I am waiting until the hour itself comes."

A blinding light flooded the whole room. Then came a fearful clap. The windows rattled. With a shriek, the landlady sprang up, and all rushed to the window.

"That struck!" said the ant-hunter, and sat quietly down again.

Outside, deepest darkness reigned. In vain did we seek to pierce it. Suddenly, a column of fire mounted to heaven; the whole village was as light as day.

"O God! my farm buildings!" cried Xavier, burying his face in his hands.

"I believe the hour is here!" said the ant-hunter, and emptied his glass.

From the towers sounded again the storm bells. Gruesome were the shrill tones as they rang through the darkness of the night.

"Fire! Fire!" was next heard through the village, and the startled people ran hither and thither in the wildest excitement. Windows were thrown open, doors creaked on their hinges, and everybody rushed towards the wooded ridge, from the foot of which a mighty pyramid of flame rose towards the sky.

Shrieking and crying, the frightened women and children begged their husbands and fathers not to expose themselves to danger.

But their alarm was groundless. They had nothing to fear from that scene of horror. Not a finger was lifted to bring help to that stricken home. God Himself had hurled the thunderbolt, and where He kindles the fire—so it is related shudderingly from generation to generation of the peasant folk—billows of water are powerless to extinguish it.

Idly, therefore, stood hundreds of people before the finest farmhouse in the valley, and gazed with impotent horror into the flames which would soon engulf it.

Placed . . . the desired liquor before her guest.

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With dishevelled locks, and wild despair in his eyes, Xavier appeared now and then and threw out whatever came to his hand, howsoever worthless it might be.

The wretched man had lost his senses. A group of women had gathered about the well, and in their midst lay the farmer's wife, who had dropped down there utterly exhausted from fright and excitement. She had been with the children in the house when the lightning struck the adjoining barn and set it on fire. When she flew from the house, the rafters were already ablaze.

The women were bathing her head with the fresh well-water when she opened her eyes and looked anxiously about.

"Friedel, Lorie!" she cried, and, with the words, pressed the sobbing children to her breast.

"Merciful Heaven! My little Tony!" she suddenly shrieked, springing to her feet. "He lies up there in his cradle, and will be burned to death!"

Horror held the bystanders spell-bound. It was heartrending to see the poor mother in her despair. It did not seem possible for a human being to offer help. Already the flames were bursting from the windows. Even Xavier had been forced to desist from his labours. With singed hair and clothing he appeared now in the doorway.

"My baby! My baby! Save my baby!" moaned the mother, wringing her hands.

"He lives."

No one stirred. Any attempt would have been foolhardy.

"Give me my child, or I shall die!" she cried again, and rushed herself towards the scorching, fiery furnace as if to snatch her darling from its depths. Just then a heavy hand was laid upon her shoulder, holding her back.

"Don't do that, Marie," she heard a rough voice say. "You have made me a criminal, now I will take my revenge."

An icy chill ran through my veins at these words. It was the ant-hunter who spoke.

"Joseph! Good heavens! Would you kill my child?" cried the mother, and in her desperation she clung about his knees.

Quick as lightning the ant-hunter pushed her from him and rushed himself into the billowing flames. A cry of horror burst from all who saw him. The unhappy man had voluntarily gone to his death. Any instant the rafters might fall in, and if he were not suffocated with the smoke they would bury him in their ruins.

A few breathless, horrible moments went by. Silently all eyes were fixed upon the fire-wreathed windows; when, suddenly, there appeared at the top one a figure holding a black object high in his hands.

"Catch it!" sounded from above. Twenty hands were stretched into the air, and caught the cradle which the ant-hunter dropped down to them.

A low whimpering issued from it.

"He lives!" were the joyful words that rang from the heart of the mother.

"He lives!" fell with a hollow sound from the window above; and the whole house, with a fearful crash and tumble, seemed to repeat the words.

The handsome farmhouse disappeared as if by magic, and in its place a charred ruin yawned horribly.

"Joseph!" shrieked the farmer's wife, bethinking herself of the rescuer of her child.

All was still.

"He is avenged!" said I, half aloud, and turned away to hide my tears.

MILTON'S TRANCE.

It was ten years ago that the facts occurred of which I am about to tell you. I was then a young fellow of eight-and-twenty, and I had an office and growing practice in London. My patients were all of the wealthier class, and, as a rule, very highly educated. By my constant intercourse with this class of people I obtained an insight into, and information about, subjects to which I had formerly never given any attention. I also made many acquaintances, who were valuable helps to me, both in an intellectual and professional way.

One of these acquaintances was a young lawyer, who had a fair practice, notwithstanding the fact that he had been in London for less than a year. Perhaps, as my story concerns him, a brief description of him will not go amiss. He was rather tall, of a commanding figure, and was what you would call a handsome young fellow. But the most striking thing about him, and that which invariably attracted a stranger's attention, was his eyes. They were piercingly black, large and brilliant, and, when he looked at you, he seemed to read your very thoughts. He was well educated, and a good conversationalist.

His one hobby, however, was hypnotism, and, as I was much interested in the matter myself, we made our investigations and experiments together. One evening he entered my office, where I was busy at my desk, and said rather excitedly, "I have just made a discovery. I possess the hypnotic power!"

I at once became greatly interested, and asked him to give me an example of his newly-acquired power. He agreed to do it, and, calling my attention to my office cat, which was asleep by the fire, he bade me watch his experiment. Fixing his eyes upon the cat, he willed her to get up. In a moment she stirred uneasily, then she rose and her eyes met his. The effect was startling. "Die," he said, in a monotonous tone of voice. "Die, die, die!"

The cat staggered like a drunken thing, walked a step or two, and then fell on her side. I went over and picked her up. She was dead.

"Are you satisfied?" he asked, turning to me with a smile on his face.

"Perfectly," I replied.

There was nothing very marvellous in it to me, as I had seen others make people and animals do their every wish, but I had never seen anyone sap the entire life out of a creature as he had done, and I knew that he possessed the hypnotic power to a degree that was startling.

Long into the night we discussed his power, so lately discovered, and I proposed a plan by which he might do some experimenting, and aid me in my practice at the same time. I knew that he was about to take a holiday for two months, and I suggested that he should give up going away, and enter my employ as an aid. I would then give him a chance to operate upon my patients in the case of amputation and painful operations, when I should otherwise be obliged to use chloroform or ether.

He fell in with the idea eagerly, and the next week entered

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my employ as an assistant. Whenever there was a painful operation to perform, Kegerly first hypnotised the patient, and then I would perform it. The knowledge that he possessed such a power was, of course, a secret, for it would never have done to have had it known that I was employing such a power in my practice. We had wonderful success in working together. In every case he controlled the patient beautifully while in the hypnotic trance.

At that time comparatively little was known of hypnotism, and we made some important discoveries in regard to it. We found that the hypnotic trance resembled sleep to a great extent, the only radical difference being that, whereas anyone can awaken a sleeping person, only the operator who puts the person in a trance can awaken him; also that sometimes breathing was imperceptible.

One night we were both seated in my office, when there came a summons for me to go at once to the house of a rich M.P. named Milton. The messenger simply knew that his master had met with a bad accident. Not knowing how serious it might be, I told Kegerly to get ready and accompany me. We drove to the house, and then I found that Milton had fallen from his horse while riding and sustained a compound fracture of his right leg.

The operation of setting the broken limb would be one of extreme pain; therefore, when we three were alone in the room, I told Kegerly to hypnotise him. Milton succumbed in an instant, much to our surprise, as it usually took from one to three minutes to put a patient in a trance.

"Your power must be unusually strong to-night," I remarked to Kegerly.

"I never felt it half as strong before," he replied.

I immediately went to work on our patient, and in an hour I had the leg nicely set in splints. Then I told my assistant to awaken Milton, and I started to put up a window. Just as I turned to come back, I heard Kegerly cry out, like a tortured soul, "My God! I cannot awaken him!" I jumped to Milton's side, a horrible fear besetting me, and placed my hand over his heart, My worst fears were realised; the man was stone dead.

Kegerly and I stood there and stared at each other for a few dreadful moments, during which neither spoke. The look on his face was horrible. We both realised that he had, by an over-application of his fiendish power, sapped the life out of the man before us, even as he had the life of the cat in my office.

Suddenly Kegerly started for the open window. As he reached it, he turned to me, and said, in a voice that was husky with agony: "When this is discovered, tell the whole truth; that will absolve you. As for me, I am branded with the brand of Cain; I am a murderer, but I will never be taken." As he spoke, he sprang from the window and disappeared.

My situation can be imagined. I shudder even now as I think of that moment. I had been called in to perform a simple operation, which, though painful, could not have proved fatal to any one, had I been content to employ natural methods. I realised then for the first time, in all its intensity, the wrong I had been doing in allowing such a power to be used upon my patients.

I did not dare, I could not, face the wife and children of the dead man, and tell them that I had allowed their husband and father to be murdered. For the first time in my life I was a coward.

Seizing my hat and coat, I lowered myself from the window, and passed into the street. Hailing a passing cab, I drove to the police-station, and made a clean breast of the whole affair, and implored the sergeant to send some friend of the family to break the fearful tidings. I was promptly locked up, accused of being an accessory to the crime, and spent that night in prison. What a night that was! I knew that, if I escaped sentence, my practice in London, or even anywhere in England, was ruined. I never could be anything again.

At first I thought I could not bear it, the shame, dishonour, and condemnation of my brother physicians. Then I thought of poor Kegerly, and realised that his lot was worse than mine. I paced my cell all night. Morning brought a piece of startling intelligence. A messenger hurriedly entered my cell, and told me that Milton was not dead, but in an hypnotic trance so nearly resembling death as to deceive even myself. This was a great relief to me, and threw a terrible burden off my mind.

Then came the thought, could I find or communicate with Kegerly? If he was seeking to hide himself from the consequences of his supposed crime, would he not go where he might not hear that Milton was not dead, or might he not, in his terror and despair, have committed suicide?

I was free, and went back to my office to await events. There I discovered two things—that I had but few friends, and no practice; but I made it my one object in life to find Kegerly. I put advertisements in all the papers, and I knew that, if he should chance to see one, he would come back to London.

Week after week passed, and Milton still lay in that death-like trance. It was a mystery to the profession and to the world. The papers were full of it, and it was the talk of the day. I was in my office one night, feeling discouraged in regard to ever hearing anything from Kegerly, when there came a knock at the door. I called out, "Come in!" and in response to my invitation a tall, dark-complexioned man, wearing a full beard, entered, closing and locking the door behind him.

I sprang to my feet, thinking that some trick was about to be played upon me, when he tore the false whiskers from his face. It was Kegerly. My surprise was great, but no greater than my joy, when I realised what his coming might mean to both of us.

He was greatly changed and fatigued, but he immediately told me the story of his escape. He had fled from the house that night, partially insane, donned the disguise that he now wore, and shipped in a vessel for America. They had encountered heavy storms on the way, and were a month in reaching their destination. He did not hear of the fact that Milton still lived until he had been in America two weeks. He took passage at once for England, and, on arriving in London, had come direct to my office.

"You know why I have come back," said he. "Since I was the one who put Milton in his trance, I am the only man who can bring him out of it, and perhaps I cannot, but I mean to make the attempt. If I fail—well, let the law take its course."

I thought that, as he was very tired, he had better get some rest before he made his supreme effort, for it would require immense mental power; but he said that he felt as though he could do it that night, if ever. He donned his disguise, in order that his appearance might not cause comment, and possibly some interference with our plans, and we proceeded to Milton's house.

When we arrived there, I asked to see the eldest son. To him I explained the matter, and requested him not to tell any other member of the family, as I did not wish to arouse any hopes which might possibly be vain. He admitted us to the room where his father lay, and then left us alone. The supreme moment had arrived. Kegerly stepped over to the bedside, and fixing his eyes on those closed lids of Milton, said in a low tone which showed that all the will-power of the man was thrown into his command, "Awake, awake!" at the same time striking him sharply on the breast. The eyes slowly unclosed, Milton's breath came faster and faster; he moved; he awoke to consciousness; then Kegerly, with a cry of joy, fell in a faint.

There is not much more to tell. Milton got well, and when he first awoke, he asked if we had finished setting his leg, thinking he had been asleep but an hour or so, at the most. He had slept just two months and sixteen days. One peculiar feature of this sleep was that his leg had been healing all the time, and when I removed the bandages and splints it was almost well.

Kegerly was ill for two months with nervous prostration, and upon his recovery he went to Rome, where he still practises law. I hear from him occasionally, and he writes me that never from that time has he been able to exercise any sign of hypnotic power whatever.

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THE SONG, AND THE GIRL WHO SANG IT.

DOWN the street, a few yards from where the old "Anchor Inn" stood, was the tavern presided over by Mother Griffin. The building had always been a tavern. Long years before, when Apple Alley did not figure to any great extent in the metropolitan financial mind, Bacchus claimed the little two-storey place for his own. Gradually the alley passed through various stages of existence, until it finally became a nest of speculators. Money, margins, stocks, bonds, and quotations obtained a foothold in the place, and stayed there, driving out everything else but the tavern.

Mother Griffin succeeded the late priest of the shrine. Nobody seemed to know what her real name was, or where she came from. Nobody cared, for the bull and bear denizens of the alley were usually too much engrossed in the music of their tickers to think of speculating on her past. In winter, Mother Griffin served a fragrant steaming punch; in summer, a delicious, cooling draught, known as "Mother Griffin's Icebergs," went over the bar.

These were her specialities. Far and wide they became famous, to the detriment of business in the neighbouring taverns. One could get toddy at the old lady's not to be beaten, and, when summer came, the "iceberg" was like a breath from the Pole.

So the business flourished and grew apace. Finally, the exigencies of trade, and the accumulation of gold in Mother Griffin's cash-box, drove her to the extremity of securing "help." Help came in the shape of a stalwart lad who had crossed from Dublin under the name of Maurice O'Brien; but who, on his arrival, was promptly supplied with the nickname of "Shamus." After awhile Mother Griffin stopped dabbling in rum, lemons, and ice. First swearing Shamus to secrecy, she imparted to him the recipes for toddy and icebergs.

So Bacchus had his high-priestess and his assistant. The high-priestess superintended the business from the depths of a deck chair in the window corner, while she knitted grey woollen stockings of interminable length, the final fate of which never became known.

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Up at the Hi-diddle-diddlety Music Hall, in the heart of the Metropolis, a woman with the voice of a siren sang topical songs. She was known to fame chiefly as Merrie Maywood. Merrie was the newest thing in this line which the indefatigable manager, Bosker, had yet found. She was "the rage" with the blooded patrons of the Hi-diddle-diddlety Music Hall and "the staff," with its plebeian attendants. She was also tall, golden-haired, handsome in a semi-coarse way. But who could resist her "Drinkety-drink, boys, drink!" or "Mother, God bless you!" The first was a wild gyration of music and dance, dedicated to the great thirsty world. The second was one of the sickly-sentimental ditties which the morbid lower class catch and sing threadbare.

Of course, Merrie's fame had reached to Apple Alley. In an evil moment, Shamus, Mother Griffin's attendant spirit, yielded to temptation, and went to hear "Drinkety-drink." The lightning struck, and Shamus came home "half seas over," with a vision of gleaming gold hair and white arms before his eyes, and the memory of a witching voice in his fuddled Irish head. Oh! if it had ended there—but it didn't.

The next day Shamus whistled "Drinkety-drink, boys!" as he mixed icebergs, and hummed it as he waited for trade. By-and-bye Bosker's advertising man wandered into Apple Alley, and sought to paste up posters in its precincts. Thirst drove him to Mother Griffin's, and Fate made Shamus whistle "Drinkety-drink" as he came in.

Now Bosker's bill-sticker was a man of fine business instinct. "Barman whistles 'Drinkety-drink,'" said he to himself; "seen Merrie—likes her (couldn't help it)—good place for Merrie's mug—can see it all the time then." So he tugged out a poster and broached the matter to Shamus.

The lad hesitated—what would Mother Griffin say? No theatrical posters ever went into that big front window—she said she hated "theayters"—no good comes from 'em; she might kick—but— Here the bustling bill-poster saw Shamus hesitate. In an instant two tickets for the Hall were flashed before the Irishman's eyes.

Shamus bit, like a big Irish gudgeon. When Mother Griffin came in from her marketing, one hour later, Merrie's face smiled out from the bulk upon the hustle and bustle of the Alley, and in Shamus's inside pocket were two free passes to the Hall. Shamus nursed his tickets two days too long. On the second day after Merrie's advent in the Alley, Mother Griffin discovered the poster in the window. She looked at it for a moment, and then became ghastly pale. "Shamus," she called. Shamus was in the cellar bottling up a cask, but he answered at once, "Yes'm."

When he emerged from the depths, Mother Griffin questioned him:

"Who brought that—that picture here?" she demanded.

"A gintleman," responded Shamus, thinking of his free tickets.

"Was he one of the customers?"

"He was that," answered the witness. "He had an iceberg. He ain't a regular, though."

"Whose picture is it?"

"Bedad, the swatest gurrel in the world, mum; she sings 'Drinkety-drink, boys, drink!' up at Bosker's. Have yez heard her, mum?"

Here Shamus launched out into Merrie's praises, feeling that there was a gleam in the eyes of his mistress which required dissimulation on his part. Mother Griffin listened; but her poor old face grew even older-looking and more care-worn as Shamus went on.

"The gintleman gave me two free tickets for the show, mum, just for the honner of stickin' the thing in the windy," said he, as a *finale*, "and I'm going there th' night. Sure, to hear her sing 'Drinkety-drink, boys' is finer than wan of yer own icebergs."

Mother Griffin sat down in her corner, but not a stocking did she knit that day. She just sat and rocked, looking out into Apple Alley with eyes that seemed to be looking years back into the past. Once Shamus saw a tear trickle down her face and drop into her lap.

When the establishment closed for the day, at six p.m., Shamus was asked to disgorge his tickets. The Irish lad looked crestfallen for a moment, as his visions of a night at Bosker's faded away into nothingness. But a bright idea struck him.

"Yez don't want both of 'em?" he asked wistfully. "Me and Paddy Long was goin', but I can make Paddy pay."

Mother Griffin smiled sadly, and said one would do, upon which Shamus departed, thinking he had "shut up the owld lady's eye."

That night any Apple Alleyite, who chanced to be near the stage at Bosker's, might have seen an old lady, all wrapped up in a veil, seated at a table, eagerly watching the different acts. He might also have seen her get up after Merrie's turn, and stagger out of the place as if intoxicated. Inside all was applause and encore: "Drinkety-drink" held high carnival; but outside, where the big arc-lights shed their pitiless dazzle, tottered a broken-hearted old woman, whose soul was hearing a refrain as sad as Merrie's song was joyous. "Oh, if God had only taken little Mary; if He had

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only taken me before she was born." And, still muttering, the old lady shrank from the dawdlers round the entrance, and passed into the darkness beyond. In an hour she found Apple Alley and the tavern.

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When Mother Griffin came downstairs in the morning to see if Shamus had made everything ready for the day's business, she looked as if she had passed a sleepless night. Shamus—always quick to note a change in his mistress—remarked the fact, and was told that "nooralgy" had got in its work between sunset and dawn. But when the big Irishman caught Mother Griffin sobbing to herself over in the little corner where she always sat, he concluded that something beside neuralgia was to blame for those sleepless hours.

What had the old lady to worry about? Nothing, as far as he knew. Business was good; and even if it wasn't, there was a goodly pile of gold in the bank to Mother Griffin's credit. He knew that, for he had seen her bank-book. So, after the first discomforting vision of bankruptcy, the sheriff, and consequent loss of his job, Shamus gave up the idea of business troubles, and sought another cause for his mistress's tears. Towards night she gave him a surprise, equally great as the sight of her in tears.

"Shamus?" asked she, "what have you done with that other ticket for the Hi-diddle-diddlety Theatre that the man gave you?"

Here Shamus did something he had never done before—he told the old lady a lie. Afterwards, when he and Patsy Doolan sat sipping their beer in the Hi-diddle-diddlety, he excused the act to his chum by saying: "Me wages ain't so big, Pat, that Oi can affoord to lose a ticket loike thot. Oi giv' her wan av thim, and she warn't contin't, so Oi towld her Oi loosed it."

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So the summer wore on, and winter came. Merrie Maywood still sang at the Hall.

Down in Apple Alley things had changed a little—icebergs had resigned in favour of hot toddy Shamus was still there, hale and hearty, but Mother Griffin looked as if her days were numbered and her reign at the tavern would soon be at an end.

One day—a dreary, cold December day—when the streets were like glass under the sleet and ice of a fierce north-easter, one of the denizens of Apple Alley sat in his office opening his morning mail; "Handsome Dennison," his fellow brokers called him. The whole alley, even to Mother Griffin, knew him as a man who had plenty of money, made plenty, and spent it proportionately.

There was one letter in Handsome Dennison's pile, however, that was not turned over to the chief clerk to be answered. It was a little tinted thing, not over-beautifully addressed, but still evidently precious to Dennison, as he smuggled it away into his pocket to read at leisure. An hour later, as he went off to the Stock Exchange, Dennison stepped into Mother Griffin's, got a glass of toddy to keep out the cold, and glanced over the note.

"Dear Jimmie," it said, "your confounded advice to a poor woman who needs every penny she can get has just lost me a thousand on Kaffirs. I'm coming down to the office this afternoon, and you must make it good. If you don't, somebody else will."

The note was signed "Merrie," nothing else; but Dennison looked up at the poster of Merrie Maywood, still hanging in the window, and muttered something about "blood-sucker."

Trade at Mother Griffin's was always better between three and four in the afternoon. On the steps of the Exchange, shortly after three o'clock, Dennison and a trio of broker friends stood for a moment, putting their umbrellas up before going down to Mother Griffin's. Dennison started across the street first, just as a hansom came slipping along the icy asphalt, and had to dodge between it and a dray which was on the other side of the hansom.

As he did so, a blonde head and a pair of broad, fur-wrapped shoulders thrust themselves out of the window of the carriage and looked towards him.

A moment later and a shrill cry stopped Dennison's friends, and they wheeled about. The hansom was empty, its driver climbing down from his seat in a hurried, excited way. The big dray on the other side was slipping along the icy street with wheels locked, and behind it, bending over a mass of fur and golden hair, was Dennison. Grimsby caught a glimpse of a stylish hat lying in the sleety mud of the street, and a glint of silk from the figure over which Dennison knelt.

"She's been hurt, Paulson," exclaimed Grimsby, darting back to the spot. Paulson followed, reaching them in time to help lift and carry the limp, nerveless form to the pavement.

"It's Merrie," gasped Paulson, who was evidently in a shaky state, and could only stare at the dirty, bedraggled garments of the woman.

"Yes, it's Merrie. Don't stand there that way. We are going to carry her to Mother Griffin's. Tell the ambulance to come there."

Paulson hustled off, breaking through the gathering crowd, while Grimsby and Dennison, with the driver, lifted the body, and began to carry it tenderly towards the little tavern. A street arab ran ahead and opened the door, only to be followed by the crowd.

Dennison, his face white and set, entered first, supporting in his arms the head and shoulders of his burden. Down on the floor they laid her, Shamus coming out from behind the bar, excited, nervous and useless.

Dennison still kept close to the injured woman; but now, when the head, with its wreath of golden hair, lay on the sanded floor, his nerve gave way. If he had ever quarrelled with her for her faithlessness to him he forgot it; if he had shuddered at her reckless nature, he also forgot that; if he had sometimes, even with his love, loathed the ignorant, untrained nature under the superficial exterior, he lost all knowledge of it. Only the closed eyes, and blue, pain-drawn lips, and the pallor of approaching death, appealed to him now.

"Merrie, Merrie," he whispered hoarsely, "it's Jim Don't you know me. Are you hurt very much?"

But there was no answer, and Dennison's face began to show signs of a fear which had not before suggested itself.

"Merrie," went on Dennison, "Merrie! Why doesn't that ambulance come? Are they going to let my Merrie die here like this?"

Suddenly the door of the back room, Mother Griffin's particular haunt, opened, and the old lady stood in the doorway. her eyes taking in the scene of half-a-dozen men kneeling by a prostrate woman, and her ears catching the words: "Are they going to let my Merrie die like this?"

Sometimes the truth strikes us mortals like a lightning-flash—there is an instant's illumination of the mind, and we have the whole story.

The next instant Dennison saw another face beside Merrie's, and another figure kneeling like himself, and, strangest of all, Mother Griffin's eyes peering at Merrie's closed ones, and Mother Griffin's voice softly calling "daughter" into Merrie's ear.

Suddenly there was a rattle of wheels outside, followed by the appearance of Paulson, and a tall, whiskered young man in blue. The young man pushed Dennison aside, and he, too, knelt by Merrie. Grimsby told him that she had been run over, "right across the body"—the young surgeon took no heed.

"You had better get the crowd out and notify the police. I can't do anything. She'll be dead in ten minutes," was all he said.

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Dennison's office is still down in Apple Alley, and Dennison still inhabits it, but with the air of a man who is trying to outdrink and outlive his memory. There is still a saloon at the old stand, but Mother Griffin doesn't run it, although icebergs and toddy are still the specialities. Shamus, whose patronymic—O'Brien—hangs over the door, has been to the "Hi-diddle-diddlety," time and time again, since he had the business given to him; but he has not forgotten a woman who once sang "Drinkety-drink, boys," to the tune of a thousand applauding beer-glasses. There has been no other like her.

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THE OUTLAWS' TREASURE

SUMMARY.

The mail train has been robbed between Cornwall and La Grange stations, and £20,000 worth of gold stolen by a gang of desperadoes, headed by two brothers named Mulligan. Two passengers on the train—Adolph Squirrek, *alias* Smith, a detective tracking the Mulligans, and Fred Weldon, a young lawyer—who have struck up an acquaintance on the way, alight at Somerville, where the former stopped at the "Drover," and the latter at his mother's house. During the night a message comes to say that Judge Woodland's horse has come back alone, and Weldon, together with Squirrek and two other men set out to find him, and discover one of Mulligan's confederates lying senseless on the road. The man, who had made an unsuccessful attempt on the life of the judge, is sentenced to forty years' imprisonment. At Judge Woodland's Weldon meets a Spaniard named Alvarido Almanaz, and the two men become rivals for the love of Florence, the judge's daughter.

CHAPTER IX.

THE SHADOW AND THE VISION.

(From the Journal of Frederick Weldon.)

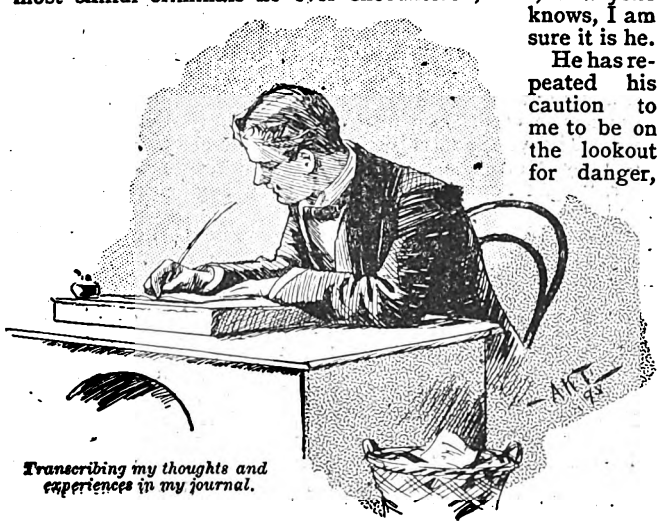
THURSDAY, October 19th.—Here I am again in my office, which I left a week ago on a visit to my home in Somerville. Into this one brief week there have been more events crowded than in any year of my life, and as I sit here, late in the evening, transcribing my thoughts and experiences in my journal, I find myself at a loss where to begin and what to say.

I am here by the commands of Adolph Squirrek, whom the longer I study the more I respect.

"Poor Tom Borie," as he was pathetically termed by his pal, is now safely lodged in the prison at Clayton, and has already served two days of the forty years' confinement which lie before him. I had the pleasure of acting as one of the guards, and we never caught a glimpse of the distinguished Mulligan brothers, although they could not but have known what was going on.

It cannot be that they have made up their minds to be law-abiding citizens, and to give up their nefarious practices. Squirrek tells me they have men among them who are the most skilful criminals he ever encountered, and, if anyone knows, I am sure it is he.

He has repeated his caution to me to be on the lookout for danger, and I am as wide awake as a man can well be, but I haven't been disturbed yet, although a suspicious circumstance occurred last night, when I got out of the train. When I was walking from the station to Mrs. Spriggins', my good landlady's, I became sensible of some man following me.



Transcribing my thoughts and experiences in my journal.

It makes a fellow feel anything but comfortable to become conscious, on a dark night, that there is someone treading softly behind him, very likely searching for some place in his back where he can drive his stiletto or bowie, and I did some rather "tall-walking"; but the stranger, who had on a pair of squeaking boots, maintained his distance, and the only escape left for me was to break into a run, and, as it was by no means certain that I could outrun him, I gave heed to my pride, and kept up a brisk walk, which would have looked very natural on such a cool evening.

I had come up the walk, and thrust my key in the door, when I heard the squeak of a pair of boots, and, turning my head, was just in time to catch a passing sight of a tall form, walking very rapidly, by the gate. I could not gain the slightest view of the face, nor even of the particular character of the dress. The night was quite dark, and the man, whoever he was, looked very much like the shadow of a man as it is seen to whisk along the side of a house when passing a street-lamp.

An interesting question presents itself at this point, as to the identity of the individual who has taken such an interest in my welfare. Squirrek would doubtless set him down as one of the gang, who is following me with a fell purpose, and if Squirrek said so he would be right.

I am certain only of one thing, and that is, the gentleman who just now is occupying my thoughts is certainly over six feet in height. Hold—I have another point—he wears squeaking boots.

Item. Henceforth tall men in squeaking boots are to be viewed with suspicion.

SATURDAY EVENING.—For the first time since taking up the honoured profession of law I have my hands full of business, although it cannot be said to be strictly of a legal character.

To-day I received a letter from Squirrek—a brief note, saying that the shadows which had been flitting so tantalisingly before him are beginning to take the shape of realities, and he has already secured several interesting threads in the tangled web that he is endeavouring to unravel.

Nothing very definite in that, truly; but on the whole it is encouraging. Squirrek is a man of business, and he seems to have got fairly to work. He has taken me into his confidence, which doesn't mean a great deal at present. I know nothing of his plans, nor which particular trail he is following just now. He isn't apt to be over confidential, and I have to wait until he chooses to explain what he is doing.

He instructs me to watch every visible straw, and to do my utmost in a cautious way to find out who are implicated in the wholesale criminalities of the Mulligan business. It is pretty evident that Squirrek is going into this thoroughly, and with the resolve to make a complete job of it. He is very cautious in his utterances, especially when he has a pen in hand; but I think I can detect in the studied brevity of his epistle the

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exultation of a man who has made an important discovery. He asks me for any item of news, and I don't see what I have to give him.

One or two things have occurred since I last had my journal in hand, which, perhaps, might interest Squirrek, although I can't see anything particularly remarkable in them.

Upon calling at the post-office this afternoon, I learnt that some gentleman had been there before me, and taken out a missive addressed to me, saying that he had been requested to call, and I was too much occupied with my law business! He must have been a malicious wag, and the pursy post-master a veritable Mrs. Partington.

I became sensible of some one following me.

But who was he? This is the question I have been continually asking myself, and am still unable to give a satisfactory response. The most that I can learn is that he was rather a tall man, which makes it possible that he may have my shadow; but whether he wears squeaking boots or not is a question which cannot be solved until he is seen again, or our post-master acquires more observing habits.

After all, it may have been a mere joke played upon me by some friend, and the only thing that troubles me is as to whom this letter was from. It cannot be from my mother, as she invariably answers my letters on Sunday, and if there were anything serious at home she would have telegraphed.

It must have been a second note from Squirrek, and if it has fallen into my shadow's hands, it may play the very mischief with the plans of that detective. That is the great thing to be feared. If it doesn't turn up by Monday I shall feel decidedly uneasy about it.

The second point that occurs to me is regarding the same shadow, which begins to make me feel like a haunted man. There is scarcely a walk that I take after dark but I do not see evidence that I am watched, and yet, when I undertake to turn the tables, and follow the ghostly personage, it flits out of sight like a veritable creation of the fancy.

I have more than once been tempted to send a few shots of my revolver after it, but the possibility of killing a man who has done me no personal harm deters me, and I can hardly bring myself to a point to take the risk. All that remains is for me to continue, or, rather, to increase my vigilance, and I stand a chance of tripping my shadow yet.

The third circumstance is the one that gave me the greatest surprise. In walking down the single street which Brampton can boast, I encountered Señor Almanaz, the Cuban, who made himself such a lion the other evening at Judge Woodland's—that is, in the opinion of the ladies.

The brilliant exquisite was dressed in his most elaborate style, and is truly a gorgeous personage. He looked keenly at me, as though he had forgotten my face, and then made a most polite bow, smiling so broadly that his white teeth gleamed like a wild animal's through his black moustache.

Perhaps it was rude in me to give him a short, businesslike nod, but I feared he was going to stop and speak to me, a catastrophe which I would have done anything to avoid. The young gentleman who is transcribing these lines in his journal has no special desire to cultivate the acquaintance of the distinguished Cuban.

In the meantime, nothing new is heard of the Mulligan gang. No new robberies, no new murders, no other trains thrown off the line.

There has been an additional reward of £1,000 offered for the extirpation of this gang, so that if Squirrek and myself really accomplish it there is quite a handsome sum awaiting us.

I don't see how I am to earn one half of it for thus far the work has been done entirely by him, while I have been simply an onlooker. My turn may come by-and-by.

CHAPTER X.

WELDON HAS AN APPOINTMENT.

SUNDAY.—As these pages are intended for no eye but mine, there is no longer any need of attempting to keep the secret from myself.

Surely there is enough to occupy my mind. Another note from Squirrek assures me that matters are progressing better than he had anticipated. I have learned that the intercepted note was simply a business letter of no importance. He is confident of a successful result. My shadow still haunts me, and I know that I am a marked man, that there are men seeking the opportunity to take my life, and that I can only escape by the kindness of heaven and my own vigilance.

The ghostly personage flits out of sight.

And yet there is another vision that haunts me, that is more continually before me than is anything else, and that the vision of Florence Woodland.

When on that terrible night she took my hand and asked me to bring back her father, and I turned and left her, I left my heart with her, and there it will ever remain.

WEDNESDAY. No use struggling against fate, and I have given up

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I encountered Señor Almanaz, the Cuban.

struggling against it. Unless peremptory orders come from Squirrek within a week, I shall go back to Somerville, seek her out, and ask her whether I may be allowed to hope—whether in the firmament one single star, faint though it be, shall shine for me.

I know I shall make myself ridiculous, but the suspense is becoming too great to bear. If nothing occurs of a startling nature between this day week, I take the express to Somerville, and then——.

A WEEK LATER.—It has come at last. A letter from Squirrek, and it shows that he has sanded the decks, preparatory for action:

"DEAR WILSON,—You remember the High Bridge across the stream they call the Devil's Creek, a short distance beyond the point where our Mulligan friends saved the United States the trouble of transporting the mails any further? Well, you are to take the seven o'clock train to-morrow and get off at Cornwall, or the nearest station, and walk out to this bridge, where you will find me and a friend waiting for you. Come without fail; if anything should occur to prevent, telegraph me. SQUIRREK."

This was the letter which reached me this evening, by the last post.

Fortunately my legal business is not so pressing as to confine me to the house continually. I can afford to take a holiday of a day or two at least.

I find myself in quite a pleasurable excitement over the prospect of the stirring scenes before me and disposed to treat the matter of my shadow quite lightly.

He hasn't forgotten me entirely. This evening I heard the squeak of his boots, and feeling as though it was about time I got my hand into the detective business, I turned about and gave him chase. I got near enough to see his horizontal coat-tails, but he proved that his fleeting was greater than mine, and he speedily gave me the slip.

This shadow has come nearer running against a bullet than he, or, rather, I imagines. I have held my revolver in hand more than once, but something has restrained me.

I have come to the conclusion that the shadow is the visible form of one of my enemies, who is going to strike, but is not yet prepared to do so.

What brings my noble friend Señor Alvado Almanaz so often to this part of the world? This afternoon I encountered him again, gotten up in the same gorgeous and overwhelming manner. He didn't observe me, but I followed him with my eyes until he disappeared out of sight round the corner.

I have a suspicion of that man. I believe he and Squirrek are acquainted. I fancied they exchanged looks at Judge Woodland's the other evening, which meant something, although I did not see them address each other.

I am growing into the conviction that the señor is mixed up in this Mulligan business in some way or other, and, if in any way at all, it must be as a secret detective, who is watching me.

I am not pleased at the thought. Squirrek is a man that I respect, as I do any expert in his profession, and there is a certain feeling, not exactly awe, which comes over you when he turns those cold steel-grey eyes of his upon you, and makes you feel that you are standing in the presence of a man who can read your inmost secrets.

The confidence he has shown in me has inspired a reciprocal emotion, and I already begin to look upon him as my friend.

And this makes it disagreeable to associate the Cuban with him. I loathe the sight of that man, and I know the feeling would have been the same whether he had come between me and Florence Woodland or not.

I must manage to give the shadow the slip to-morrow, for I don't wish him to follow me to the High Bridge. If I discover Señor Almanaz in the train, I shall be well satisfied that he is following the same trail as Squirrek, and that the two will unite right speedily.

What means this business at night near the Devil's Creek? It is rather a lonely part of the country for a man to venture without company.

Why doesn't Squirrek make a flying visit to Brampton, and call at my office? Somebody would see him enter, and he would be set down as one of my clients, and we could arrange matters more comfortably in this room than near a high railway bridge at night.

Such a proceeding as his calling upon me might create suspicion. But he understands the art of disguising himself so thoroughly, that no one could suspect his identity unless it might be the——

Shadow! Has he a suspicion of that being who follows me so continually, and that might penetrate his own disguise?

I may set it down as a surety, that if Adolph Squirrek sends for me, it is to my interest to go. So I start to-morrow, and on my way to the depôt I will send him a telegram, that there may be no mistake.

Whatever the danger, there is the thought that I will be so many miles nearer to Somerville, and so many nearer her, whose name my pen shall not write.

(End of the Journal.)

Telegram from Frederick Weldon to Adolph Squirrek:—

"Am about to start to meet you as requested at the rendezvous this evening.—F. W."

The reply, which reached Brampton ten minutes too late:—

"Don't go; it is a trap for your destruction.—A. S."

CHAPTER XI.

THE REV. J. SKIGGS STARTS IN PURSUIT.

(*From the Journal of Adolph Squirrek, Detective.*)

I LAY it down as an infallible rule that the man who is liable to fall in love will never do for the noble profession of a detective. There are channels in the Orkney Islands where if the pilot turns a hand's-breadth to the right or left he goes to destruction.

The life of the detective is one of those Orkney channels, and if he halts a second to look at a pretty face or figure down he goes. The detective, above all things, must keep his head level.

My young friend Frederick Weldon never would make a detective. He is lacking in several essential qualities, too obvious to be mentioned in detail.

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In looking over his journal I find he has quite a facility in the expression of his thoughts, and if it were not for his twaddle about the shadow, and the vision of Judge Woodland's daughter, it would make passable reading.

I was just beginning to get my work in hand when a telegram from Fred Weldon informed me that he was on the eve of starting for the place appointed for our meeting. The instant that dispatch was placed in my hands, I understood what it meant, and sent my reply, which I learnt reached here a few minutes too late to intercept him.

Being certain that there was mischief in the wind, I took the midnight train for Brampton, and owing to its being several hours behind time, I reached this antiquated town just as day was breaking.

At the hotel my name is recorded as Rev. J. Skiggs, from Chicago. My appearance is ministerial, and if the shadow is hovering round this office, I have no objection to his discovering all that he chooses regarding me and my errand in this quiet place.

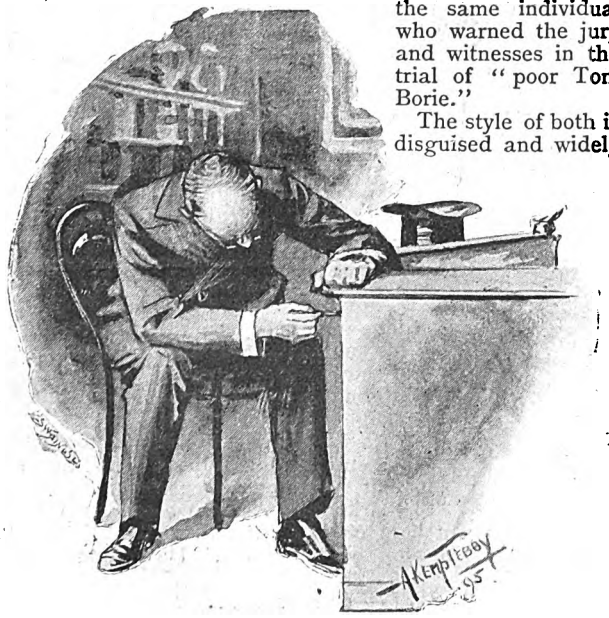
As a matter of course, I expected to find the lawyer's office locked, and so I came provided with the keys to let me in; and, getting in, it was very natural that the secretaire should be found in the same condition as the door. None of my keys would fit this lock, and so I was compelled to resort to the undignified proceeding of picking the lock for myself.

This was done, and upon opening the desk I found an inkstand, a gross of Gillot's pens, a few quires of paper, several sheets of which were covered over with the name of Florence Woodland, written in every sort of hand, but with the manifest purpose of doing it as well as possible, while in one place I observe the name of Frederick Weldon is in immediate juxtaposition to it, and both are surrounded by a net-work of flourishes, exceedingly suggestive of Cupid and that sort of thing.

Tucked off in one corner was Weldon's private journal, whereupon I locked the door, lit my cigar, and sat down in his chair, and have very leisurely read it through.

He shows an undue sensitiveness as to my detecting his secret, when I learnt it all on that evening we spent together at Judge Woodland's. With that, however, I have nothing to do at present, as there is a more important matter to occupy my attention, and that is the personal safety of Frederick Weldon himself.

Lying between the leaves of his journal was the note which has my name forged at the bottom of it. Something in the penmanship struck me as familiar, and a little closer examination revealed the interesting fact that this note was written by the same individual who warned the jury and witnesses in the trial of "poor Tom Borie."



The undignified proceeding of picking the lock.

The style of both is disguised and widely different, but there are earmarks which unmistakably show that one hand penned them all.

It is a bad looking place.

For the present the Mulligan Brothers must be left to themselves, as their case will bear a little postponement, while there is no time to be lost in looking after the welfare of my young friend.

It is plain that Weldon has implicitly followed the direction of the note, and gone to the High Bridge. Then one of three things has followed: he has been set upon and killed; he has been entrapped, and is now a prisoner; or he has gained a suspicion of his danger in time to make his escape.

Were he not in love, there would be some hope of the latter; but as it is, I shall hold no faith in it until the proof is before my eyes. If the first, or even the second contingency is the true one, it is pretty certain that some evidence has been left behind that will serve as an indication. Consequently my first duty is to go to Cornwall.

CHAPTER XII.

THE REV. GENTLEMAN LOSES HIS SERMONS.

CORNWALL, EVENING.—Carefully locking Weldon's journal in his desk I fastened the door of his office, and half an hour later stepped out of the train in this dingy little village. Upon inquiry I learnt that the High Bridge is four miles distant, and I started at once for it, walking with a heavy staff, and a very ministerial air, as though I were a shepherd in search of some wanderers from my flock.

I made no further inquiries, as it is important that no suspicions should be awakened at this point, and it isn't possible that I could have gained any information of benefit.

After a weary tramp, I entered the woods, and finally reached the railroad bridge over Devil's Creek. It is a bad-looking place, the rails being fully a hundred feet above the dark, narrow, sluggish stream flowing below, while there are silent, sombre woods on every hand. If the railway authorities should neglect this structure, what an opportunity for a great accident!

After reaching the bridge, my first proceeding was sharply to scrutinise every point that came within my range of observation, to make sure whether any one was watching me. I saw no signs of any one and began my work.

I first walked very carefully over the trestle work, and came within an ace of being run over, for just as I was on the centre I heard the rumble of the approaching train, and had barely

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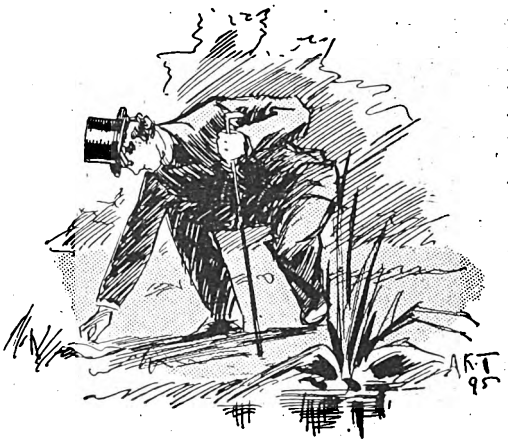
time to get out of the way when it thundered out of the woods, and was gone almost on the instant.

I returned, twice walked the entire length of the bridge, but without discovering the slightest trace of anything of a suspicious nature, in which I was not disappointed; for it is not to be supposed that a man would venture out upon a dangerous railway bridge to meet a friend, although it seems to me that there is hardly anything too ridiculous for a man in love to do.

It is still more unlikely that he would have crossed the bridge to the other side, and, as a natural consequence, whatever occurred of a tragic nature in my friend's history, must have taken place on the side of the stream which was first reached.

To this I therefore confined my observation, and for several hundred yards back and forth I walked, with my eyes fixed upon the rails and ties, but still without attaining any definite result. The hard gravel between the timber is not very susceptible to the impression of a foot, but no violent struggle could have taken place here without leaving some trace, which I am sure I would have detected.



It lay just on the edge of the water.

My next point was under the bridge, and as I turned my steps in that direction, a shudder came over me. When a man is approaching alone a dismal place where there is reason to believe a recent murder has been committed, and where there is an equally strong probability that the murderers have their eyes upon him, he is apt to feel somewhat squeamish, and to carefully look at every step he takes, ready at any moment to draw back to the cheerful sunlight he is leaving behind him.

An atom of success rewarded my search under the bridge. The stream at this point, I should remark, is less than ten feet in width, and a man could easily ford it without wetting his knees. The water is very clear, but with a black, clayey bottom, which at the first appearance gives you the impression that you are looking upon a stream of ink; but the clear glimmer of a white pebble here and there shows you your error, and proves that the water is remarkably pellucid.

It would be a physical impossibility for the body of a dog to be hid in this portion of the Devil's Creek; and as I stood on the bank, carefully scrutinising the inky bottom, the conviction became stronger and stronger each moment that Frederick Weldon had not been murdered here.

I was on the point of starting down stream, when I caught sight of a bit of paper on the bank, and at the same moment saw there was writing upon it. It lay just on the edge of the water, and was quickly in my hand.

I was somewhat disappointed when it proved to be part of a printed blank, such as lawyers use. There was visible on it the printed word, "presents," while below there could be seen in script the words, "of sale."

These proved that the bit of paper had been torn from a "bill of sale," the printed word being the last of the well-known phrase, "Know all men by these presents," while below the words "of sale" had been written with the pen.

The fact that this is written with violet ink, which just now is beginning to become popular—that, although dashed off hastily, it shows a beautiful round hand, makes me suspect (nothing more) that the paper, no longer ago than yesterday, was in the hands of Frederick Weldon, but whether dropped from the bridge above or not can only be conjectured.

Hoping that there might be something more than this, I turned to move further down the stream, when a footstep arrested me, and I found myself suddenly face to face with one of the Mulligan gang.

The man was dressed in the garb of a simple farmer, and was covered with dust and dirt, as though he had just come from the plough, while there was a simple, half-idiotic look in his face and an ordinary garden-hoe balanced over shoulder. I would have been an ass had I failed to detect his disguise on the instant.

"Hullo, stranger! ain't you lost?"

"Hullo, stranger! ain't you lost?" he asked with the peculiar accent of the illiterate Western farmer.

"I almost fear so," I replied with as bland a smile as I could put on. "I am sorry I had to make this tramp, for it is harder work than I have been accustomed to."

"What made you do it then?"

"I couldn't very well avoid it. You see, when I engaged to preach in Cornwall last Sabbath, I sent a package containing several of my sermons by train. The messenger is a young friend of mine, and he gladly took charge of them, without charging me anything for his services. But when he reached Cornwall he amazed me by informing me that they were lost. He said that when they reached the High Bridge—as I believe they call this place—the engine gave a whistle of danger, and he hastily stepped out upon the platform to see what it meant—holding my package in one hand.

"As he did so, the conductor followed him, striking his elbow, and the same instant my sermons went spinning down in the darkness. As soon as I discovered my loss, I started out here on foot after them, and I'll give any man a sovereign who will find them. Do you feel able to help me?"

(To be continued.)

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THE BLACK CROSS.

I MADE his acquaintance during an altercation he was having with a Neapolitan cab-driver. The "Signor," it would seem, had "seven times tried to mangle him" during a sevenpenny ride across the city, and on the eighth attempt had apparently accomplished his design.

When a free and enlightened American citizen who has spent the best years of his life roughing it on the prairies and a child of sunny Italy, of the Neapolitan cabdriving persuasion, come to loggerheads, the atmosphere round the parish in which they are disputing is apt to become a trifle sultry. Certainly it did on this occasion.

I was some use, I think, in smoothing Mr. Plummer's plumage, and from that moment we were fast friends. Indeed we went up Vesuvius together the next day. It was whilst in the train going to Pompeii that he told me the following incident, but for the sake of brevity, I have omitted the conversation that led up to it:

"A black cross had been set against Judge Hawkins's name. Why, it is not for me to say. We were not accustomed to explain our motives or to give reasons for our deeds. The deeds were enough, and this black cross meant death; and when it had been shown us, all that we needed to know further was at what hour we should meet for the contemplated raid.

"A word from the captain settled that, and when the next Friday came a dozen men met at the place of rendezvous ready for the ride which should bring them to the Judge's solitary mansion across the mountains. I was among them, and in as satisfactory a mood as I had ever been in my life, for the night was favourable and the men hearty and in first-rate condition.

"The house towards which we were riding was built on a hillside, and the first thing we saw on emerging from the forest was a light burning in one of its distant windows. This was a surprise, for the hour was late, and in that part of the country people were accustomed to retire early, even such busy men as the Judge. He must have a visitor, and a visitor meant a possible complication of affairs; so a halt was called, and I was singled out to reconnoitre the premises.

"The house, which had now become plainly visible, was a solid one of stone, built, as I have said, on the hillside. It faced the road, as was shown by the large portico dimly to be discerned in that direction, but its rooms were mainly on the side, and it was from one of these that the light shone.

"As I came yet nearer I perceived that these rooms were guarded by a piazza, which, communicating with a portico in front, afforded an open road to that window and a clear sight of what lay behind it. I was instantly off my horse and upon the piazza, and before I had time to realise that my fears had returned to me with double force, I crept stealthily towards that uncurtained window and looked in.

"What did I see? At first nothing but a calm, studious figure bending above a batch of closely-written papers, upon which the light shone too brightly for me to perceive much of what lay behind them. But gradually an influence, of whose workings I was scarcely conscious, drew my eyes away, and I began to discover on every side strange and beautiful objects which greatly interested me, until suddenly my eyes fell upon a vision of loveliness so enchanting that I forgot to look elsewhere and became for the moment nothing but sight and feeling.

"It was a picture, or so I thought in the first instant of awe and delight. But presently I saw that it was a woman, living, and full of the thoughts that had never been mine; and at the discovery a sudden trembling seized me, for I had never seen anything like her beauty, while she saw nothing but the man who was bending over his papers.

"But it was her face that held me, and made of me from moment to moment a new man. For in it I discerned what I had never believed in till now—devotion that had no limit, and love which asked nothing in return. She seemed to be faltering on the threshold of that room as one who would like to enter but does not dare, and in another moment, with a smile that pierced me through, she turned as if to go.

"Instantly I forgot everything but my despair, and leant forward with an impetuosity that betrayed my presence. She glanced quickly towards the window, and, seeing me, turned pale, even while she rose in height till I felt myself shrink and grow small before her.

"Thrusting out her hand, she caught from the table before her what looked like a small dagger, and holding it up advanced upon me with blazing eyes and parted lips, not seeing that the Judge had risen to his feet, not seeing anything but my face glued against the pane, and staring with an expression that must have struck to the heart as surely as her look pierced mine. When she was almost upon me I turned and fled.

"How soon I met my mates I cannot say. In a few minutes, doubtless, for they had stolen after me and had detected me running away from the window. I was forced to tell my tale, and I told it unhesitatingly, for I knew I could not save him—if I wanted to—and I asked that she be spared not only from sharing his fate, but from the sight of his death, for she loved him.

"This from me! No wonder the captain stared, then laughed. But I did not laugh in return, and, being the strongest man in the band, and the surest with my rifle, he did not trifle long, but listened to my plans, and, in part, consented to them, so that I retreated to my post at the gateway with something like confidence, while he, approaching the door, lifted the knocker, and let it fall with a resounding clang that must have rung like a knell of death to the hearts within.

"For the judge knew our errand. I saw it in his face when he rose to his feet; and he had no hope, for we had never failed in our attempts, and the house though strongly built, was easily assailable.

"While the captain knocked, three men had scaled the portico and were ready to enter the open windows if the judge refused to parley, or offered any resistance to what was known as the captain's will.

"'Death to the judge!' was the cry, and it was echoed not only at the door but round the house, where the rest of the men had drawn a cordon ready to waylay any one who sought to escape. Death to the judge! And the judge was loved by that woman and would be warned by her still. But a voice is speaking, a voice from out that great house, and it asks what is wanted and what the meaning is of these threats of death.

"And the captain answers short and sharp:

"'The regulator commands, but he never explains. What he commands now is for Judge Hawkins to come forth. If he shrinks or delays, his house will be entered and burnt, but if he will come out and meet like a man what awaits him, his house shall go free and his family remain unmolested.'

"'And what is it that awaits him?' pursued the voice.

"'Four bullets,' returned the captain.

"'It is well; he will come forth,' cried the voice, and then in a huskier tone; 'Let me kiss the woman I love. I will not keep you long.'

"And the captain answered nothing, only counted out clearly and steadily 'One—two—three,' up to a hundred; then he paused, turned and lifted his hand; when instantly our four rifles rose, and at the same moment the door, with a faint grating sound I shall never forget, slowly opened, and the firm, unshrinking figure of the Judge appeared.

"We did not delay. One simultaneous burst of fire, one quick crack, and his figure fell before our eyes. A sound, a cry from within, then all was still, and the captain, mounting his horse, gave one quick whistle, and galloped away. We followed him, but I was the last to mount, and did not follow long, for at the flash of those guns I had seen a smile cross our victim's lip, and my heart was on fire. I could not rest till I had found my way back to that open doorway and the figure lying within it.

"There it was, and behind it a house empty as my heart has been since that day. A man's dress covering a woman's form—and over the motionless, perfect features that same smile which I had seen in the room beyond, and again in the quick glare of the rifles."

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A SHEEP IN WOLF'S CLOTHES

MR. AMORY CABOT GORDON had been everywhere, knew everybody, and had done everything. He was an "American citizen," and therefore beyond the contagion of foreign influences.

It was in the full consciousness of this fact that Gordon promenaded the broad deck of the Cunarder *Lucania*, bound New Yorkward, looking about the motley crowd to discover whom there was on board worth speaking to, or, even, worth speaking of. For the most part Gordon's journeys across the Atlantic had been made in the solemn silence of social exclusiveness. He always read over the passenger list while sipping his coffee on the first morning out, and occasionally he came across a name he knew.

But upon this particular voyage the ship carried no one of whom he had ever heard before. At dinner, for two days, he talked to the captain, at whose side he sat, but outside of such infrequent discourse his communications were limited to the matutinal colloquialisms and unwarranted greetings of absolute strangers. Gordon never could understand why he should be expected to talk to somebody he had never before seen, simply because they both were, unfortunately, fifteen hundred miles from land.

It rained the third day out. There had been awnings to leeward during the afternoon, which had made the deck endurable, but later these had been reefed, and everything was in a spongy condition. The smoking-room was full of Jews, squabbling over cards, and was certainly a place to be avoided; but, as there was no other refuge in which to indulge in a post-prandial cigar, Gordon entered reluctantly.

As he went in he cast his most scrutinising glance through the murky atmosphere; physiognomies of all countries and conditions met his gaze, and in a distant corner he discovered a vacant seat next an Englishman. The man was smoking a briar pipe, and wore rough grey tweeds and huge boots that could only be dignified as "clod-hoppers."

Five minutes passed with the monotonous puff-puff of pipe and cigar, and then the Englishman, with that sort of bold shyness which is a national characteristic, turned more directly towards Gordon and inquired whether he was an American.

"I am a Bostonian," said Gordon.

"Oh!" said the Englishman, "I—er—thought you were—different."

"Different from what?" asked Gordon.

"Different to the—er—others," he replied with a gesture that included the occupants of the smoking-room.

Gordon shuddered. "Foreigners will never realise our class distinctions," he began, rather stiffly. "As a matter of fact, our lines are as rigid as—as yours. Of course, we have no royalty and no nobility, but our old families occupy much the same position."

"How interesting," said the Britisher, resuming his pipe. "Were you much in England?"

"I go to London every season—just run over for a little shopping, go to a ball or two, and do a few theatres," said Gordon.

"What a bore that must be," declared the other slowly. "I hate good old London. I live in the North."

Gordon saw visions of Liverpool manufacturers and Yorkshire tradesmen.

It transpired that the Englishman's name was Loame. He pointed it out to Gordon on the passenger list—T. Loame, Esq. It was not the sort of name that evoked vistas of ancestral grandeur; nevertheless, there was something in the man's manner that inspired the Bostonian with the feeling that he had not made a mistake, and on the following morning, when the two men met, he greeted him with a not uncordial nod.

Loame was of the type which is called "big." He was over six feet high and turned fourteen stone; but his solidity was all bone and muscle, and there was not a superfluous ounce of flesh on his stalwart frame. Gordon could not help admiring the fine animal type which was in such contrast to his own blue-blooded refinement.

Gradually the two men drifted into conversation again, and Gordon discovered that his chance acquaintance had travelled widely and was well read.

By the end of the voyage the acquaintance of the two men had assumed a mild semblance of friendship. And it was not without some sensations of regret that, as the Liberty of Bartholdi loomed in sight one bright November day, they realised that they must part.

"Well," said Gordon as he held out his hand, "I hope we may meet again some day."

"Oh, thanks!" replied Loame.

"And if you—come—to Boston," added the Bostonian, hesitatingly, "I shall—be glad—to—see—you."

"Oh, thanks!" replied the Englishman again.

"I should like to show you some civility, in a quiet way, you know," Gordon went on, slowly. "Of course, I couldn't do much, you understand. My people's set is very—well, er—exclusive, I might say. We don't care much for strangers—without proper introductions."

"I see!" said Loame.

"Have you brought any letters?" probed Gordon, who liked the man, and would have allowed himself some enthusiasm in his behalf if he had been sure of his perfect eligibility. He racked his brainr for any connection possible between "Loame" and the peerage. The name conveyed nothing to him but misty visions of sooty cities in midland counties.

"Letters?" repeated the Englishman. "Yes; I have a few, but I shall not deliver them. I never do. I don't believe in credentials. There's many a good horse without pedigree. I carried letters about once—when I was too young to know better. I was a sort of amateur postman in those days, and after I delivered them I was bored to death. There are two sorts of kindness in the world—that which asks you to dinner, and that which doesn't. I prefer the latter."

"Of course, we feel differently on those subjects," said Gordon. "Anyway," he added, "let me know when you reach Boston. Every Englishman likes a club, and I'll put you up at the tavern. It isn't the 'Somerset,' you know: but you can get a grilled bone there, and have a comfortable smoke."

Then, with another handshake, they parted. Loame went in search of his portmanteau and gun cases, while Gordon left his man-servant in charge of his numerous articles—hat-boxes, shirt-cases, and trunks.

II.

Boston was very gay that year—gay, at least, for Boston. Several débutantes had been sacrificed upon the High Altar of Fashion at "Teas" given in their honour. Mrs. Pushing was a very great lady, even among such people as the Baylees, and the Brayers, and the Trimmers, who never condescended to know anybody whose grandfathers and grandmothers their own grandfathers and grandmothers had not known.

Poor Mrs. Pushing! She was, no doubt, easily queen, but she realised that her throne was in danger. She already had invitations out for a big crush on the following Wednesday night, but there was no lion to roar. Of course she had

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captured a dozen tame celebrities, but everybody had heard their little plaintive social whines.

She met Amory Gordon one day, and buttonholed him at once. "What shall I do?" she exclaimed with her most fetching accent. And then she explained the situation.

Later, Gordon was walking towards his club trying to solve Mrs. Pushing's riddle. He had not gone very far when his mind was diverted by finding himself face to face with a familiar countenance and the realisation that a hand was held out to him.

"Oh—how d'y'do," said Loame, in his perfectly modulated British monotone, as if they had parted yesterday and were sure of meeting to-morrow.

"How are you?" ejaculated Gordon. "Well, you are the last man I expected to see. Now that you have come," he went on, as he took in his friend's attire, and recognised, with some chagrin, those same old grey tweeds and clod-hoppers, "now that you have come, you must let me do something for you. Shall I give you a card for the Tavern Club?"

"I've just been to the Athletic and had a Turkish bath," said Loame. "Some one who came over on the Pullman with me introduced me there. His name is Snopper."

Gordon winced. The Athletic Club was as plebeian as a policeman. Snopper, he knew, made boots—the best boots, to be sure—but, a tradesman! "Where are you stopping?" he demanded, and was told the name of one of the commercial hotels. "You ought to have on an overcoat," he said again, as he was preparing to break away from his steamer acquaintance, with the inward conviction that he had been a great ass to pick up promiscuous friends.

"Why? To cover up these old togs?" asked Loame ingenuously, with a glance of affection at the grey tweeds. "My dear Gordon, I wouldn't part with 'em for anything; there are fourteen pockets in 'em. Besides, I never wear an overcoat except at night."

Gordon held out his hand, not very cordially.

"I must go," he said. "I have no end of engagements. We are rushing things in our set just now—busy times, you know. Half a hundred things on hand—dinners, balls, and all sorts. Mrs. Pushing has a big affair on for Wednesday, and I'm kind of envoy. I wish you had come with a few letters—just as credentials."

Loame laughed good-naturedly.

"I shall not present any letters," he said. "Perhaps I may meet you again, or we may possibly run across each other in England. *Au revoir!*"

He walked away briskly with his long, clod-hopping stride, and was soon out of sight.

It could not have been said of Loame that he was in any way vain. The tweeds proved that, although they were unquestionably becoming to his big, blonde manliness; nevertheless, as he walked along he could not help thinking to himself "that he would like to take it out of that little Gordon, somehow." He did not resent the Bostonian's inferences of his inferiority; some natures are above such smallness. He realised perfectly well that, so far as Boston was concerned, Gordon was pretty sure of his ground—such insecure ground as it was—but he did wish, with a not unkindly smile, "that he could have that little popinjay just half an hour in England." . . . And then, suddenly, a brilliant idea struck him.

He went back to the Commercial Hotel and packed his Gladstones, strapped his gun cases, paid his bill, tipped the servants and called a cab. In less than half an hour he was at the Hotel Brunswick, where he registered as Lord Rayne, and took the most expensive apartments in the house.

On the following day all the morning papers announced his arrival, and in the afternoon several cards were brought to him. Among them was that of Mr. Richard T. Pushing, and Mr. Pushing was received.

Lord Rayne appeared faultlessly attired in a black coat, which made him look very tall and dignified. He welcomed Pushing cordially, and the two men discussed current topics, and mundane affairs, with the cognisance of men of the world. They soon discovered that they had many mutual friends, and, in fact, one of Pushing's sisters had married a cousin of Rayne's, and lived not far from the family seat at Haylestone.

"Now, you must let me do what I can for you while you are here," he said. "I shall send you a card for the 'Somerset' at once, and on whatever night you are free you must dine with me and some of my cronies there. In the meanwhile my wife will send you an invitation to some big 'jamboree' she's got on to-morrow, and if there is anything I can do in any way I shall expect you to let me know at once."

Thus, on the night of the "jamboree," Mrs. Pushing was in high feather. She had secured a foreign lion to roar in her menagerie. The great double house—two houses, indeed, thrown into one—was resplendent, and Mrs. Pushing was the most resplendent thing of all.

She was smiling radiantly when Amory Gordon arrived, and he understood at once that she had secured some innovation with which to titillate the jaded palate of her social epicures. "Such a piece of luck," she said to him the first thing. "Lord Rayne has just come to Boston, and I made Dick hunt him down immediately, and he is sure to be here to-night."

It was very late indeed when Lord Rayne was announced. There was a momentary cessation in the buzz and hum of conversation as the Englishman appeared.

Mrs. Pushing went forward and met her guest of honour graciously, who bowed over her hand. Gordon, standing near his hostess, looked as if he saw an apparition.

"Let me introduce you to Lord Rayne," said Mrs. Pushing smiling.

The two men bowed.

"I think we have met—before," said the Englishman.

"Possibly. I am not clever at remembering *names*," replied Gordon stiffly.

"Nor faces, perhaps?" asked the other. "Recollecting people whom one has met before is more often a matter of good manners than of good eyesight." And then he turned away to follow his hostess, and to go through a series of presentations.

That evening added to Mrs. Pushing's reputation. She was hostess *par excellence*, and Lord Rayne made himself very popular indeed.

When it was all over, and everybody was making preparations for departure, Gordon went up to his quondam friend.

"See here, Loame," he said slowly, "this may amuse you immensely, but *I* don't see the joke."

"I think it's awfully funny," said the Englishman. "I've been laughing in my sleeve the whole time," and he broke into his big, hearty, boyish guffaw.

"It must stop," asserted Gordon, sternly. "These people are my friends, and I won't have them imposed upon."

"I told you we might meet somewhere," replied the Englishman, with great quietness: "and I thought it far more likely that I should see you in your set than that you would ever see me in mine. So I simply registered at an hotel as Lord Rayne. I am not imposing upon anybody in the least, my friend—unless it be upon you, because, you see, I really am Lord Rayne—and here are some of the letters which I didn't think it worth while to present." He handed one letter to Gordon.

It was addressed to Mrs. Richard Pushing, introducing Lord Rayne, the only son of the Marquess of Haylestone and Snowdowne, and was from the Duchess of Harchester.

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A TALE OF INDIAN SORCERY.

SOME fifteen years ago, while quartered with the ——th Native Infantry at Seceune, Madras Presidency, I was an interested eye-witness of a strange case of Indian necromancy.

My wife Laura, three children and myself, occupied one of the smaller bungalows in the regimental lines. In India the houses are built low, of only one story, with a thatched roof, and, mostly, with a covered-in verandah going straight round the house.

The servants do not live or sleep in the house, but occupy each a separate *godown*, or hut, in the compound, which is inclosed in a high brick wall or natural hedge. The garden gate opening from the carriage drive is kept shut, as a rule. I was very particular in this, as my wife had a horror of the countless beggars and lepers who are always hanging round in the hope of obtaining stray coin.

It was the eve of the Residency ball, the largest and most important dance in the season's festivities, and one at which every lady donned her smartest finery. My wife had, as usual on such occasions, spread her ball dress upon the bed early in the day; her fan, gloves, bangles, together with my studs and sleeve links, she put on the toilet table. A quaint, massive gold collarette, with a heart-shaped locket attached, she placed round the neck of a little marble figure which always stood in the centre of her dressing table, and served for a stand for her watch and chain.

The dressing table stood by the open window, and was easily seen by anyone in the verandah or garden outside.

Our bungalow was then undergoing the usual whitewashing deemed necessary in India every six or eight months.

The two men employed on the work—a father and son—were well known to me as thoroughly honest workmen. We had, therefore, no scruples in giving them free access over the house. Our servants and ayahs had been with us some years and were most trustworthy.

At eight o'clock, Laura retired to her room to dress, while I smoked a last cheroot in the verandah. I was startled from my pleasant reverie, about half an hour later, by Laura rushing out of the bedroom with her hair only half done and in evident distress.

"Oh, John, what shall I do? I can't find my gold necklace anywhere, and I am sure I put it on the toilette table this morning."

Of course a search was immediately made, and the room turned upside down; but the locket and chain had completely disappeared.

Several days went by and the necklet was not found. We had reluctantly been obliged to call in the aid of the police. Even they were at fault. The missing jewels had been spirited away, leaving no trace behind.

One morning, after turning out the bedroom, looking under the mats, shaking the curtains and moving the furniture for the ninety-ninth time, our Durzee, or tailor, asked permission to speak to me.

"Please, sare," he said, with a low salaam, "master, missus, servant—all no find chain; pleeceman, too, no find. Master please let me call one black Fakir man. He know everything; he soon find thief."

Of course I laughed and pooh-poohed the idea; but Nadiussen got round my wife, and she at length persuaded me to consent to his calling in a Fakir or fetish man to charm back the stolen article.

On Monday morning, about ten days after the theft, all our servants, the two white-washers, Laura, the children, and myself assembled in the front garden.

The Fakir, a weird, gaunt old man, rolled in a cumley (or blanket), and whose face and body were smeared with greasy white and yellow paint, directed us to sit on the short, dry, grass in an unbroken circle.

Standing in the centre of us, he soon lighted a small fire of dried twigs and grasses. As the flames leapt up and licked his face and hands, he chanted a peculiar low sing-song, and from time to time threw sweet-smelling aromatic herbs into the fire.

After this had gone on for about twenty minutes, he asked a few questions as to when and how the necklace had been lost; also, if all those in and about the house at that time were now present.

Being answered in the affirmative, he took a flat tin platter in his hand, which contained a small quantity of unboiled rice. Carefully making the round of the circle, he bade us each take a few grains of the rice in our left hands. When all had been supplied, he went back to the fire and told us to chew the rice carefully, watching us closely the while.

Uncooked rice is not pleasant to eat at the best of times, but under the present circumstances I, for one, had some difficulty in masticating it. The children rather enjoyed the fun; and just as I thought we had all safely accomplished our task, Punnyiah, the baby's nurse, and Kurroo, the white-washer's son, spluttered and coughed, and nearly choked themselves in endeavouring to swallow the raw grain. Their efforts were useless, and they were both obliged to spit out the half-chewed rice.

Immediately the Fakir started forward, and, clutching the woman and boy by their arms, dragged them within the circle. Still holding them, one with each hand, his body became perfectly rigid, his cumley dropped from his shoulders, his eyes nearly started from his head, and from their vacant look and the appearance of his body he had evidently gone off in a sort of trance.

Punnyiah turned a sickly yellow, and trembled in every limb. Kurroo's teeth chattered.

Slowly letting each word drop from his mouth, the Fakir began to speak in his native tongue.

Clearly and minutely he described the interior of the ayah's *godown*, and made us understand that the lost necklace (which he described as clearly as if he held it before him), was lying across one of the stones which form a native fireplace.

It seemed that Punnyiah was quite innocent of the theft, and her *godown* had only been used as a hiding place by the whitewasher's son.

This young man, though brought up conscientiously by his parents, was led astray by some wild young companions. Having lately taken to gambling, and being in much need of money, the lad was tempted by the sight of the jewels on my wife's dressing table, and had taken the chain and locket with the intention of pawning them, hoping to replace them when his luck had turned. Caution prevented his pawning the necklace at once.

On this particular morning, hearing that a Fakir had been sent for, and having all the superstitious beliefs of his class, he threw the necklet (which he always carried on his person) on the fire as he passed the ayah's *godown*, in the hope that it would be destroyed.

When the Fakir ceased speaking his fingers relaxed their hold, his eyelids quivered, and his body regained its normal state.

Folding his dark-brown blanket closely round his shrunken form, he made several low salaams, and informed me that his work was done.

Motioning all to keep their places, I and my head Peen went to Punnyiah's *godown*, and, sure enough, lying across the stones of the ayah's fire was the locket and chain, blackened and charred by the half-smouldering fire.

On the police being informed that the necklace was found, Punnyiah was taken to prison. My wife was beside herself with grief at the loss of baby's nurse.

The white-washer, in grief and sorrow at his son's disgrace, brought the boy up and forced him to make a confession. I did not press the charge, and Kurroo was let off with a light sentence.

Punnyiah returned to our household, to be petted and made much of by Laura and the servants.

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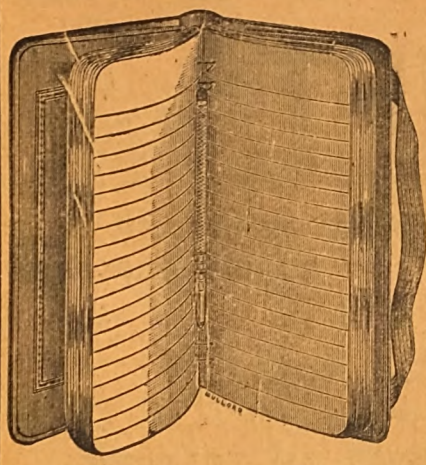

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 342.] FOR THE WEEK ENDING JULY 20, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

A RUSSIAN TRAGEDY

I WAS eighteen years old, and had been two years an ensign in the regiment of *Paulovsky*. The regiment was quartered in the great building that still exists on the other side of the Champ de Mars, fronting the summer garden. The Emperor Paul I. was then reigning, and had been for three years. He resided in the Red Palace, which had just at that time been completed.

One night, after I don't remember what escapade, the leave of absence which I had asked for, in order to join a few comrades, was refused, and I remained in the barracks almost alone. I was aroused from my sleep by a voice that whispered in my ear: "Dimitri-Alexandrovitch, wake up and follow me!" I opened my eyes. A man was before me, who repeated to me the invitation which he gave me while I was half-asleep.

"Follow you!" said I; "where?"

"I cannot tell you. But take notice that the order comes from the Emperor!"

I trembled. From the Emperor! What in the world could he want with me, a poor ensign—of a good family, no doubt, but far too distant from the throne to allow the name to reach the Imperial ear? I recalled the sombre Russian proverb that came into existence in the days of Ivan the Terrible: "Close to the Tsar, close to death!"

But there was no help for it. I jumped out of bed and dressed myself. Then I looked with some attention at the man who had come to arouse me. All wrapped up as he was in his overcoat, I thought I recognised in him an old Turkish slave, at first the barber, and finally the favourite, of the Emperor. This examination, moreover, was brief. It might, perhaps, have been dangerous to prolong it.

"Follow you!" said I; "where?"

"I am ready," said I, at the end of five minutes; and I buckled on my sword carelessly. My nervousness increased when I found that my guide, instead of taking the usual door of the barracks, descended through a little winding staircase into the lower portion of the immense building. He lighted the way with a sort of dark lantern. After several turns and detours, I found myself fronting a little door, the existence of which I had not known before. During all the route we met nobody. One could imagine that the building was deserted. Certainly I fancied that I saw one or two shadows pass, but they disappeared, or rather vanished in the obscurity.

The door in front of which we stood was closed. My guide knocked in a certain fashion, and it opened, evidently put in motion by a man who was waiting on the other side. As a matter of fact, when we passed through I saw distinctly, notwithstanding the darkness, a man, who closed the door again and followed us.

The passage which we entered was subterranean, about eight feet wide, and the moisture oozed through the brick walls.

At the end of about five hundred paces this passage was closed by an iron gate. My guide took a key from his pocket, opened the gate, and closed it behind us. We continued our route. Just then I commenced to recall the tradition according to which a subterranean gallery existed between the Red Palace and the barracks of the Grenadiers of *Paulovsky*. I knew that we were in this gallery, and that inasmuch as we had left the barracks, we were on our way to the palace.

We arrived in front of another door, similar to the one through which we had passed in the first instance. My guide knocked at this door in the same manner that he had knocked at the other one, and it opened like the other, set in motion by a man on the inside. Here we found ourselves at the foot of a staircase, which we mounted. It led to the lower apartment of a building; but, from the atmosphere, it was easy to discover that we were entering a well-warmed establishment. This building soon revealed the proportions of a palace.

Then all my doubts ceased. They were bringing me into the presence of the Emperor, the Emperor who sent for me, an obscure ensign, almost hidden in the lower ranks of the Guard. I remember the story of the young ensign whom he had noticed in the street and placed behind him in his carriage, appointing him successively, in less than a quarter of an hour, lieutenant, captain, major, colonel, and general; but I had no hope that he sent for me with the same intention.

However, we arrived at last before another door, in front of which a sentinel was pacing up and down. My guide put his hand upon my shoulder, and said to me, "Keep up your courage; you are going into the presence of the Emperor." Then he whispered something in the ear of the sentinel, and the latter moved to one side. My guide opened the door, not by

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putting the key in the lock, so far as I could see, but by some secret means.

A man of small stature stood before me. He was dressed in a Prussian uniform, with boots that reached above his knees, and an overcoat that touched his spurs, and wore a gigantic plumed hat. I recognised him as the Emperor. It was not difficult; he reviewed us every day, and I remembered that at the review of the day before he fixed his eyes upon me, called my captain from the ranks, asked him some questions in almost a whisper, while looking at me, and then spoke to an officer of his staff in a tone in which one gives an absolute order. All that only increased my nervousness.

I recognised him as the Emperor.

"Sire," said my guide bowing, "this is the young ensign whom you desire to speak to."

The Emperor approached, and, as he was of small stature, he raised himself on the point of his toes to look at me. No doubt he recognised me as the man he wanted, for he made a sign of approval with his head, and then whirled round, and said, "Go!" My guide bowed, went out, and left me alone with the Emperor. I assure you I would almost have preferred to be left alone in an iron cage with a lion.

His Majesty at first appeared to pay no attention to me. He walked up and down, taking long steps, stopping now and then before a window with a single pane of glass, and opening it to breathe the fresh air. Then he returned to his table, upon which his snuff-box was placed, and took a pinch of snuff.

This was the window of his bed-chamber, the room in which he was afterwards killed, and which, they say, has remained closed ever since. I had time to examine it thoroughly. Near one of the windows there was a desk, and on the desk a sheet of letter-paper. At last the Emperor appeared to notice me. As he advanced towards me his face had a perfectly fiendish expression, although, in reality, that was only the result of his nervousness. He paused in front of me:

"Dust," said he, "you know that you are only dust, and that I am everything."

I don't know how I had strength enough to reply: "You are the elected one of the Lord, the arbiter of the destiny of men."

He grunted, and, turning his back upon me, began once more to pace the room, and, after opening the window as before, and taking another pinch of snuff, he returned to me for the second time.

"And you know, too," said he, "that when I command I must be obeyed implicitly, without observation and without comment."

"Just as one would obey God; yes, Sire, I know that."

He gazed at me. In his eyes there was such a strange expression that I could not stand his glance. He seemed pleased with the influence that he exercised over me. Then he went over to his desk, took up the letter, read it carefully, folded it, put it in an envelope, and sealed this envelope, not with the Imperial seal, but with a ring which he wore on his hand. Then he returned to me.

"Remember," said he, "that I have chosen you out of a thousand to execute my orders, because I have thought that by you they would be well executed."

"I will always have in my mind the obedience that I owe to my Emperor," said I.

"Very well. Remember that you are only dust, and that I am everything!"

"I await the orders of your Majesty."

"Take this letter," said he, in a nervous and husky tone, "take it to the Governor of the Fortress, accompany him wherever he wishes to bring you. Be present at everything that he will do, and come back and say to me, '*I saw!*'"

I took the envelope and bowed.

"*I saw!*" he repeated in a cavernous voice. "You understand?—'*I saw!*'"

"Yes, Sire."

"Go!"

The Emperor closed the door behind me, muttering the word "dust."

I remained stupefied at the threshold.

"Come," said my guide; and we again stepped out, but by a different road, which led to the exterior of the fortress. A sleigh was waiting in the courtyard, and we both got into it. The great door of the fortress, leading to the bridge of the Fontanka, opened and the sleigh started out, the horses trotting rapidly. We crossed the entire square until we found ourselves on the banks of the Neva. Our horses started out upon the ice, and, guided by the steeples of Peter and Paul, we crossed the river. The night was obscure, and the wind howled in a terrible fashion. I could hardly perceive, on coming again upon the other shore, that I was on solid ground.

We were now at the gate of the fortress. The soldier on guard took the countersign from my guide and allowed us to pass. We entered into the fortress, and the sleigh was stopped at the Governor's door. The countersign was given the second time, and we entered into the Governor's apartments, just as we had entered into the fortress.

The Governor was in bed, but they woke him up with the all-powerful command, "By order of the Emperor!" He approached, hiding his nervousness under a forced smile; for, with a man like Paul I., there was as little security for gaolers as for captives.

I gave him, without saying a word, the order of the Emperor. He brought it up to the candle, examined the seal, and noticed that it was the private seal of the Emperor, which was used for secret orders only. Then he bowed, and, after crossing himself rapidly, opened the letter. He read the order, looked at me, read it again, and then said:

"*You must see! You have to see?*"

"*I have to see,*" I replied.

"Do you know?"

"No."

Then he remained an instant thinking.

"How many persons can your sleigh hold?"

"Three."

"Is this gentleman coming with us?" said he, pointing to my guide.

I hesitated, not knowing what to say.

"No," said the latter. "I will wait here."

"What will you wait for?"

"The close of the act."

"Very well; get ready another sleigh, select four soldiers, let one take a crowbar, the other a hammer, and the two axes."

The man to whom the Governor addressed these words went out immediately. Then, turning to me, the Governor said, "Come, and *you shall see!*"

He walked in front of me, lighting the way. I followed him, and a turnkey walked behind us. We proceeded until we came in front of the prison. The Governor pointed to a door, and the turnkey immediately opened it, passed in first, lighted a lantern and carried it in front of us. We descended ten steps, and found ourselves in the first section of the dungeon, but we did not stop there; we had to go down ten steps further, and even there we did not stop but went down five more, and there we stopped.

The doors were all numbered, and the Governor stopped in front of No. 11. He made a sign to the turnkey, without speaking. One would imagine that in this tomb people had lost the faculty of speech.

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The door was opened and we descended six more steep and damp stone steps. Here we found ourselves in a cell about eight feet square. In the light of the lantern I saw a human figure move in this cell. We could hear a dull and strange rustling noise. I understood at once what it was, and whence it came. It was the water of the Neva rushing against the walls of the fortress. The cell was below the level of the river.

"Get up and dress yourself!" said the Governor.

I looked to see to whom the order was given, and, as the turnkey threw the light of his lantern upon a far corner of the cell, I noticed a thin and pale old man, with white hair and long white beard. No doubt he was put into that cell with the clothes he wore when he was arrested; but these garments had worn away, piece by piece, and he was now only half clad in a tattered cloak. Through the torn rags I could see his shivering and bony body, which, perhaps, at one time was dressed in splendid garments. Perhaps the insignia of the most noble orders were once fastened upon that fleshless breast. Now he was a living skeleton, without rank, without dignity, and even without a name. He was simply "Number 11."

He got up and wrapped himself up in his tattered old cloak without a murmur. His body was bent, broken down by long imprisonment, darkness and perhaps hunger; but his glance was still proud, almost threatening.

"All right," said the Governor. "Come."

The prisoner cast a final glance round his cell. For an instant his eye rested upon his stone seat, his water pitcher and his musty straw. He heaved a sigh! Great heavens! Could it be possible that he could regret anything there? He followed the Governor and passed in front of me. I can never forget the look which he gave me as he moved by, and the depth of reproach that was in that look.

"So young," he seemed to say, "and already at the orders of tyranny!" I cast down my eyes. That glance went to my heart like a poignard. How long had he been in that cell? Perhaps he didn't know himself. Probably he had ceased to measure the days and nights in the depth of that abyss.

He passed on and I walked after him. The gaoler followed us and carefully closed the cell door. No doubt it was needed for another. Outside, the two sleighs were ready. The prisoner was placed in the one that brought us. The Governor, myself, and the old man sat down—the Governor at his side, and I in front of him. The other sleigh was occupied by four soldiers.

Where we were going, or what we were about to do, I could not imagine. The affair itself was not my business. I was to see, and that was all. But, yes, there was something else; I had to say, "*I saw!*"

In the light of the lantern I saw a human figure move in this cell.

We started off. In my position I found my knees touching the knees of the old man. I could feel him trembling. The Governor was wrapped up in furs, and I was buttoned up in my military overcoat, and still we felt cold. The old man was almost naked, and the Governor offered him nothing to cover him. For an instant I had an idea of taking off my overcoat and giving it to the poor old man; but the Governor, guessing my intention, remarked, "It isn't worth while."

We had not gone far before the storm burst upon us with all its fury. The snowflakes became so thick that we were in danger of being lost in perfect walls of snow. At last we stopped, when, as I imagine, we must have been about one league from St. Petersburg. The Governor alighted, and approached the second sleigh. The four soldiers had already got down, each one holding in his hand the instrument he was ordered to bring.

"Make a hole in the ice!" said the Governor.

"Ah," muttered the old man, in a tone so strange that it might be taken for the unearthly laugh of a skeleton, "the Empress remembers me. I thought she had forgotten me!"

What Empress was he speaking of? Three Empresses had succeeded each other—Anne, Elizabeth, and Catherine. It was evident that he thought he was still living under one of them, and that he was ignorant of even the name of him who had decreed his death. What was the darkness of that terrible night compared to the years of darkness in his cell?

The four soldiers went to work. They cut the ice with their axes, and lifted up the block with their crowbars. Suddenly they jumped backwards. The work was done, the water appeared. "Get down!" said the Governor to the old man, turning to the sleigh where he expected to see him. The order was useless, for the old man had already come down. Kneeling upon the ice, he was praying. Then the governor gave an order in a low tone to the four soldiers, and returned and seated himself beside me. At the end of a minute the old man rose. "I am ready," said he.

The four soldiers seized him. I closed my eyes, but if I did not see, I heard. I heard the splash of a body thrown into the hole. In spite of myself I turned round. The old man was gone! I forgot that it was not for me to give orders, and I cried out to the driver, "*Pachol! Pachol!*"

"*Stoi!*" cried the Governor.

The sleigh, which had already started, was stopped. "All is not finished," said the Governor to me in French.

"What have we further to do?" said I.

"Wait," said he.

And we waited half an hour.

"The ice has again formed over the hole, your Excellency," said one of the soldiers.

"Are you sure?" asked the Governor.

The soldier struck the place with his crowbar. The water had already become solid.

"Now, let us go," said the Governor.

The horses started off in a gallop. One would have imagined that the demon of torments was pursuing them. In less than ten minutes we returned to the fortress. There I found my guide.

"To the Red Palace!" said he to the driver.

Five minutes afterwards the door of the Palace was opened for me. The Emperor was up and dressed, just as he was when I left him.

"Well?" said he.

"*I saw!*" was my answer.

"*You saw? saw? saw?*"

"Look at me, Sire, and you won't doubt it."

I was in front of a mirror and noticed my appearance. I was so pale and my features so altered that I scarcely recognised myself. The Emperor looked at me, and, without saying a word, took from the desk a paper.

"I give you," said he, "between Troitza and Pereslof a piece of land with five hundred peasants. Leave now, this very night, and never come back to St. Petersburg. If you speak, you know how I can punish. Go!"

I left, and never saw St. Petersburg again while Paul I. lived, and never before told a living being what I have now told to you.

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The Fatal Letters

THE men at the club remarked to one another that Remington was making a mistake in marrying a girl hardly out of her teens. To Remington, however, they wisely said nothing, and many of them went to his wedding, which was their reward for knowing when to speak and when to be silent.

Remington was forty if he was a day. His hair was scant on the crown, and very white on the temples; and in a certain unbecoming light the crow's-feet about his eyes showed deeply. His figure, though, was youthfully slender, his step elastic, and he clad himself with the up-to-date taste of a University undergraduate. He was dignified, suave, and polished. By many he was deemed cold and calculating; but the many had not pierced the armour of his reserve. His wealth was enormous, which was sufficient of itself to make his bride envied by her sisters.

Louise Baldwin was as fair as a lily. Her education had been such that she came to him knowing as much about the management of a great establishment as a babe in arms. Her simplicity had been her chief attraction.

The first week of their honeymoon was spent in Paris, but her demeanour during the whole time was cold and callous.

Then they met some friends, and to Mrs. Remington the meeting seemed to be a glad one. Remington was not so well pleased, save that the association made a change for the better in his wife's mood. In their presence she laughed now and then, as she had been wont to do before the wedding, and the occasions when he chanced upon her gazing out of her window at the Hotel Bristol, upon the Column Vendome, with tears streaming down her pale cheeks, became fewer and fewer.

Her husband's efforts to win the love that he craved, and that had so mysteriously eluded him, were not aggressive. He adopted a course of passivity, but not of indifference. Not for a moment did he relax his attentions. Not a wish of hers, either spoken or implied, did he disregard. For six months they travelled about the Continent, frequently being in the company of those friends they had met in Paris and often in the company of others. It was, in fact, seldom that they travelled alone.

At Zermatt, under the shadow of the Matterhorn, they stumbled upon Remington's nephew, a brawny youth, who a few years before had rowed in the Oxford eight. He had not been in England for the wedding, but he remembered the bride very well indeed. He recalled that they had been neighbours when he was in knickerbockers; and he recollected distinctly the time when she and he, under the care of their respective nurses, trundled hoops in the local park.

Remington chose Zermatt, of all places in the world, in which to be laid up for three days with a bilious attack; and his nephew, Yorke Ledyard, endeavoured meanwhile to make his old playmate find the time hang lightly on her hands.

One day they travelled on donkeys to the Gornergrat; on another they walked to a mountain gorge near by; and the third, which happened to be Sunday, they sang together in the volunteer choir of the little English chapel that raised its cross opposite the hotel.

II.

LEDYARD spent the following winter in London. He was studying law in a desultory way, and he found he had much time at his disposal. A goodly part of it he passed pleasantly enough at his uncle's home, to which he had been given a key, with the information that a knife and fork always awaited him, and that the third floor front was ever ready for him.

Mrs. Remington was singing that January night, soon after their return, as he let himself in; and, drawing off his overcoat, he handed it to the footman, who had been drowsing in one of the carved hall chairs. Her voice came to him from the drawing-room, and it seemed to him, even then, as he stood straightening his white tie before the mirror in the hall, that there was something pathetic in its ring.

He sought her unannounced, as was his habit, and stood for a moment on the threshold, gazing at her, seated at the piano, before she was aware of his presence. He observed that there were tears in her eyes and instinctively his resentment rose against Remington, who, he believed, was responsible for them. She impressed him as very beautiful.

He had always thought her pretty, but there was something in the glow that the red lampshade shed upon her at that moment that reminded him of a portrait he had seen in the Luxembourg. A portrait of the "Duchess de M." it was marked, and he had gone day after day to stand before that picture and drink in its wondrous charm. He now thought that the reality with this suggestion was far more alluring than the original.

For a week Ledyard had been devoting himself energetically to the reading of law; but now, suddenly, all that he had read was gone from him, and in its stead had come this one figure—this woman that filled his whole soul. All his youthful spirits stirred within him. The resentment against Remington engendered a burning desire to recompense the wife for what he believed was her husband's neglect.

He stepped forward, and would have thrown his arms about her; but she looked up, with tears still trembling upon her lashes, and in her eyes was not what he had expected to see. There was confident reliance, rather than a longing for consolation.

"You have been crying!" he said, bluntly.

"Yes," she answered, without any effort at prevarication; "there is no use denying it. You can see for yourself—you are not blind."

"He has been unkind to you?" he went on, with a statement that was more than half question.

"No," she answered, "not unkind. I cannot say that he is unkind." And then she was silent.

He led her to a seat that occupied a corner of the room.

"Tell me," he pursued, taking her hand, "tell me what is the trouble. There is something wrong!"

She sat mute, her eyes fixed on the rug at their feet.

"I have heard the talk," he went on; "all the fellows at the club are saying, 'I told you so.' He was not the man to marry a young girl, as you are. You did not love him, as you should have loved him?"

Again it was a statement, but there was an implied question.

And she, wrought to a pitch that reckoned not the words, but spoke the truth, no matter who might be the hearer, responded:

"No! No! I did not understand. I was a child."

And then she fell to weeping again. Ledyard scarcely realising what he did, put his arm about her.

"Louise!" he urged. "Louise!" It was the first time he had called her by her Christian name, but he did not notice it; nor did she. "Louise! Don't. I beg of you. I cannot bear to see you unhappy. You——" and then, suddenly, "where is he?"

For a moment she did not answer.

"Where is your husband?" he again asked.

"I do not know," she said at last. "I told him to go out. I could not rest with him here, looking at me, contented, asking nothing, receiving nothing. He does not understand me. He made me so nervous. He drove me mad!"

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Still she was sobbing. Yorke drew her closer to him. On his cheek he felt her warm breath.

"It was a mistake," he cried. "It is horrible! You were not meant for a man of ice. You were meant for me!" His lips were upon her mouth. She struggled for a moment, but he held her closely.

Again and again he kissed her. And then, when for a moment he relaxed his grasp, she did not try to escape him.

Round his neck she fastened her bare arms and returned him, kiss for kiss, every caress he had given her.

III.

IN the spring Yorke Ledyard went abroad. Mr. and Mrs. Remington decided upon Devonshire for the summer, and their cottage was gay with a life it had not known for years.

All the world heard, a few weeks later, how Remington, at the risk of his life and at the expense of a broken collar-bone, saved his wife from probably instant death, by springing in front of a pair of spirited horses which she had attempted to drive, and which had got beyond her control. The incident was telegraphed everywhere and the society papers commented upon the loss that the fashionable world would have suffered had not Remington rushed to her rescue.

There was, however, no mention made of the fact that from that moment dated the birth of a wife's appreciation of a husband.

Remington's patience was at last rewarded.

In other words, Mrs. Remington had suddenly fallen head over ears in love with her husband. That her love was not untinged with remorse added rather than detracted from its strength.

Again and again she was tempted to make confession of that which stared her continually in the face, as a ghost of her unhappiness. but she was far too timid, and valued her new estate too highly. She consoled herself by the reflection that although she had been tempted severely enough she had never been untrue to her wifely vows.

Remington was in the seventh heaven of bliss. He had waited patiently and confidently. At last he had achieved his reward, and he envied no man. A few months slipped away and, for what reason nobody knew, he appeared at the club one afternoon offering wine to everyone that would drink it. A few months more and Remington seemed at all times perturbed.

One afternoon a messenger came to him at the club, and, hurriedly excusing himself, he rushed out and took a cab home.

"It is all over," said the footman, who opened the vestibule door. "Perhaps, sir, you had better go into the library until the doctor comes down."

Remington made no reply. He threw off his overcoat and had his foot on the stairs when the doctor intercepted him.

"One moment," he said.

"Ah! yes?" returned Remington, controlling himself with an effort.

"A boy!" returned the doctor.

IV.

THE funeral was over. Mother and child had been buried in the same grave; and the father sat crushed and alone in the boudoir that his young wife had illumined with her fresh, rare beauty.

He had been sitting there for hours, with his head buried in his hands. Now he rose and turned on the electric light. He made an effort to throw off his despondency, and told himself that it was unmanly to give way to grief. He turned to her escritoire at his left hand, and drew out a drawer. He might, he thought, find here some recollection, some souvenir of their married life, before—and then he hesitated.

If, he thought, he could only find something among her treasures that would signify that she had loved him all these months. There was no question as to her subsequent affection; but he longed to think that while he was patiently waiting for some sign, she, too, had been waiting, with her heart overrunning for the love that he longed to bestow.

The drawer contained only blank stationery.

He drew out another. It was filled with bills that he knew nothing of, that she had paid from her own private account.

He drew out a third. There were letters there from her girl friends. He read several, in the hopes of finding some allusion to a love that he only suspended. But he found nothing to gratify him.

He drew out a fourth. It contained a bundle of letters, tied with a blue ribbon. From the packet he abstracted one. The envelope was addressed in a masculine hand. The inclosure was a revelation.

He glanced at the clock. It indicated twenty minutes to midnight. He descended to the hall, gathered up his fur coat, and went out without a word.

At the corner he found a cab.

"Drive me to the Vladimir!" he said.

Mr. Ledyard had just returned. Would the gentleman send up his card? No; the gentleman would not send up his card. He was sure that Mr. Ledyard would receive him; he would go up.

The boy on the lift noticed that the gentleman's lip was bleeding.

V.

MR. YORKE LEDYARD rose from his easy-chair with an evening paper in his hand. He had returned late, and had just taken time to glance over the day's closing prices. At the entrance to the room stood his sombre-clad uncle, a sheet of notepaper in his hand.

Neither spoke. The elder simply extended the sheet of paper, and the younger, scarcely realising the gravity of the action, took it, as invited to, and read it.

Remington waited patiently.

"Well," he said, evidently restraining himself to the utmost until Ledyard had finished reading, "what have you to say?"

Ledyard crumpled the paper in his hand and threw it upon the floor.

"Nothing!" he returned.

"You have no defence?" continued the widower.

"None. Think and say what you like of me, but no blame attaches to your wife," replied the younger man.

Remington was very cool. He took a step further into the room.

"Do you know," he began, "what this means to me? Do you know that that piece of crumpled paper lying there is the wreck of my life? Do you know that it has robbed me of every tender remembrance of the woman and child that I have buried to-day? Do you know that? Do you understand that? And do you dare to confess that you are the author of it?"

Ledyard was silent.

"Answer it!" cried the elder man, with sudden vehemence.

"I know it!"

For an instant the lights in the room swam round as in a vortex; a table was knocked over and went spinning to the wall; a rug was turned inside out; there was a fall, and then all was still. For fully a minute one man stooped over the other. Then he rose to his feet, and, going out, quietly closed the door.

. . . . . .

The investigation of the coroner is of necessity hasty. A verdict found in accordance with the evidence declared that Mr. Yorke Ledyard came to his death from heart disease, from which, according to the testimony of his uncle, he had been subject for years.

And the undertaker, who found the marks of four fingers and a thumb upon the young man's throat, receipted the bill, when Remington handed him a cheque, without so much as a sign that he disagreed with the verdict.

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THE OUTLAWS' TREASURE.

Illustrated by MR. A. KEMP TEBBY.

SUMMARY.

The mail train has been robbed between Cornwall and La Grange stations, and £20,000 worth of gold stolen by a gang of desperadoes, headed by two brothers named Mulligan. Two passengers on the train—Adolph Squirrek, *alias* Smith, a detective tracking the Mulligans, and Fred Weldon, a young lawyer—who have struck up an acquaintance on the way, alight at Somerville, where the former stopped at the "Drover," and the latter at his mother's house. During the night a message comes to say that Judge Woodland's horse has come back alone, and Weldon, together with Squirrek and two other men set out to find him, and discover one of Mulligan's confederates lying senseless on the road. The man, who had made an unsuccessful attempt on the life of the judge, is sentenced to forty years' imprisonment. At Judge Woodland's Weldon meets a Spaniard named Alvarido Almanaz, and the two men become rivals for the love of Florence, the judge's daughter. Weldon is inveigled to a lonely bridge near Cornwall, and disappears. Squirrek pays a fruitless visit to the spot.

CHAPTER XII. (*continued*).

The stranger listened very attentively during the recital of my pleasant yarn about the lost sermons, and I could see that he swallowed it all. It is not probable, at the first sight of me, that he suspected anything more than that I, Squirrek, was some friend searching for the body of Weldon.

A vast deal hinged upon the man's answer to my next question.

"I suppose, perhaps, the package fell into the stream, and has floated further down into the wood. Do you think there is any use in my searching further in that direction?"

Now, if he had said "No," it would have looked very dark for Frederick Weldon; in fact it would have said, "His dead body lies in that direction, and you will find it there, or at least you will discover enough to learn his fate."

But the man, without hesitation, replied: "Perhaps it is, and perhaps it isn't. It won't do any harm for you to look."

There was more in that reply than the man imagined, for it satisfied me that Frederick Weldon was still alive, although as to where he was, or what he could possibly be doing, was a matter of conjecture.

I hesitated awhile, undetermined whether to go further down the creek or not; but, on second thought, I ventured down, my country-looking friend going with me to look for the package of sermons, which I was pretty sure he would not find.

As may be supposed, I used my eyes with the keenness of a Comanche Indian; but I absolutely failed to discover anything, and, after going a distance of several hundred yards, I heaved a great sigh.

"I suppose these sermons will never be found again. The fact of it is, I don't believe he dropped them here."

I dropped in incidentally at his mother's.

"Maybe he sold them?" ventured my companion.

I smiled at this desperate attempt at a witticism, and putting on an expression of lugubrious alarm, I said:

"I tell you what, I begin to feel a little frightened."

"What about?" he asked.

"Haven't you heard of those dreadful men, the Mulligan brothers? They say they live somewhere about here, and only a little while ago they stopped and robbed the express train."

I scanned the counterfeit farmer, who scanned the counterfeit minister as closely; and, as each did his utmost to conceal his thoughts, it isn't probable that either was particularly enlightened. At any rate, I am certain he had no suspicion of the object of my question.

"I b'lieve there is such a gang," said he, "but I don't know anything about them. You ain't looking for anybody, are you?"

"Bless me!" I gasped, staring wonderingly at him, "what do you mean?"

"Nothin'. I didn't know but what you might be searching for some one."

"I'm afraid there will be some of the Mulligans searching for me," I returned, "so I'll leave."

As I turned about I saw the fellow's black eyes fixed searchingly upon me, as though a faint glimmering of the truth was creeping through his brain. He also changed about, and, side by side, we walked up out of the ravine, through which flows Devil's Creek.

If I could have felt certain that there was no one within call, I would have told this scoundrel plainly that a crime equivalent to murder had been committed there, and he knew all about it.

If he had attempted to bluster, I would as lief have put a bullet through his head as smoke my cigar, and it would have made the final extirpation of this gang so much the easier.

My object was now to draw him from the ravine as far away as possible, so that if any *coup d'état* should come about, I would have a clear track to Cornwall, without any danger of being thrown down the embankment. In my experience I have been compelled to give leg bail more than once, and have always found it a good thing to have the track clear ahead of you.

I think if I could have induced my companion to accompany me a few hundred yards further, an affair would have occurred which would have ended in a final extinguishment of one of the Mulligan gang; but unexpectedly he bade me good-day, and moved abruptly away.

I walked back to Cornwall, from which place I shall take the first train to Somerville, where I see a prospect of picking up and uniting a broken thread in this web of crime.

SOMERVILLE, FRIDAY.—I had a faint hope of finding my friend Weldon in this town, but was disappointed. He has not been here for a week, but as yet no concern had been excited by his absence. I dropped in incidentally at his mother's, who is a good, genial soul, and who received me with the politeness of a lady of the old school.

Her son, she said, was in Brampton, in his office, and would not be home for several weeks, as he told her he had important business on hand, which would probably keep him there longer than usual. But he writes home regularly every week, and she was looking daily for a letter.

To keep her mind at ease I will drop her a few lines from Brampton, with his name signed, the next time I am called to that town. His hand is easily imitated, and it will be an act of kindness towards her, although it may make some trouble if the poor fellow has really gone under.

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The evening is a mild and pleasant one, with a bright moon, and my next point is Judge Woodland's, where I am to hunt for the broken thread.

CHAPTER XIII.

FLORENCE HAS A VISITOR.

(From the Journal of Florence Woodland.)

SATURDAY, October.—I had a strange call last evening. Mr. Smith, a ministerial-looking gentleman, who is an old friend and acquaintance of father's, came to the front door at quite a late hour, and inquired who of the family were at home.

Father was away at Meltonville, and doesn't expect to be back until this evening. When informed of that he asked to see me.

When I came in I found him looking over my album. He proved to be very polite and entertaining, and after several inquiries regarding the health of father and myself, he began a general conversation, in which he showed such learning and information, that I was as much delighted as surprised. He has travelled from one end of the country to the other, and when I expressed some wonder at his cause for doing so, he admitted that he had been a spy for General Grant during the war, and he related a number of his adventures in such a manner that I listened like one charmed for fully two hours.

He held my album in his hand.

Then he made some reference to Frederick Weldon, and complimented him so pointedly—all the time looking keenly into my face—that I am sure I showed considerable embarrassment. He interested me greatly in the old playmate of my childhood, for whose talents and nobleness of character I always held the highest respect. Indeed, he brought him so prominently before me that I dreamt of him, and, singularly enough, it was as my plighted husband. Strange!

All this time he held my album in his hand, now and then looking casually in it. Finally, he remarked that he observed a beautiful piece of penmanship, but the words were in a language which he did not comprehend.

Upon looking over his shoulder I saw that he had it open at the place where Señor Almanaz had written, under my name, the well-known quotation from Don Quixote:

"A ella no la llega Elena, ni la alcanza Lucrecia, ni ostra alguna de las famosas mujeres, que viéron en las edadas pretéritas, griega, latina, ó barbara."

"If the sentiment is as beautiful as the penmanship, it is creditable to him certainly."

I translated it, "She is unexcelled by Helen, unrivalled by Lucretia, or any other heroine of ages past, whether Grecian," etc., etc., remarking at the same time that it was distasteful to me to repeat such hyperbolic flattery.

He then leant towards the lamp, scanned it very narrowly, glanced through the book in an indifferent manner, and laid it away. A few incidental inquiries regarding my Cuban friend followed, and then he bade me good evening, apologising for having remained so long.

In recalling the interview, I find that it leaves one name in my thoughts—Frederick Weldon.

Since his departure from Somerville I had almost lost sight of him; but I now see him as he was when a boy—handsome, talented, and chivalrous. He it was who carried my books to school for me; who helped me in my lessons; who was respected by his teachers, and loved by his playmates; who carried off the first prizes, and who bore his honours so modestly that none felt envy, but rejoiced in his success.

He it was who was the means of saving the child of the Widow Elsington, when her house was burned, and there was no man dared to climb through the fire and smoke to the blazing room. I can see him now, when he was only a boy, as he held the little one in his arms, and made his way over the flaming roof to the ladder, while we all shuddered and held our breath in an agony of fear.

But what does this mean? Surely my pen is wandering strangely—my mind must be still more out of its usual course.

CHAPTER XIV.

MR. SMITH GETS A WARNING.

(From the Journal of Adolph Squirrek, Detective.)

WEDNESDAY, October ——.—Eureka! I have it! The broken thread has been found and joined. Suspicion has become conviction, and a great obstruction is cleared from my path.

Events have crowded each other in such rapid succession that several days have passed before I could find time to take my pen in hand, and for some time I have been a sort of comet on its travels.

I found Florence Woodland a charming lady, and I can comprehend how a young volatile fellow like Fred Weldon should lose his heart entirely in her presence. The emotion of love, except in an incidental way, doesn't come within my province, yet it was no mistake of mine when I say a lurking fondness for the young man displayed itself during our interview. There is a clear field for him, the only danger being that of an ardent admiration for the handsome Cuban, Almanaz, upon the part of the young girl.

The admiration was duly magnified, as I discover from the private journal of my friend, who finally gets the suspicion that the señor is a detective working to accomplish the same ends with myself. If the black-eyed foreigner is such a character, he has thus far managed effectually to conceal it from me.

Upon reaching Brampton I sat down and penned a few lines to Mrs. Weldon, purporting to come from her son; but on second thoughts I concluded to destroy the note, as I can see, from the shape matters are taking, that it would seriously embarrass my plans. Much as I regret it, I fear the parent must undergo great agony in order to assist us in the recovery of her child.

From Brampton I reached Cornwall late on Saturday night. On Sunday, as is generally my custom, I attended divine service, and rested and thought.

Fred Weldon has not been missed yet, and several weeks may pass before his disappearance will attract the notice of his friends, except from the fact that it is known that he is a marked man

The only method of extirpating this gang is by organising a vigilance committee, and the moment is close at hand for doing it. There must come a sudden gust, a whirlwind that will set the community on fire, their passions must be roused to the fever heat, and these men must be hunted like wolves.

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This will end on the Mulligan gang, as they are generally known, but it will not reach them all—it is my work to add the finishing touches.

Feeling dissatisfied with the survey I made of Devil's Creek, I visited the place again on Monday. I passed several hundred yards up and down the stream, but discovered nothing out of the way, and did not even get a glimpse of my quondam acquaintance, the burlesque farmer.

But as I climbed up one side of the railway bank, a tall man did the same on the other side, directly opposite, and coming face to face, I recognised my gorgeous friend, Señor Almanaz.

The man was plainly surprised at seeing me here, and showed some embarrassment. As we have never been on very intimate terms, he merely lifted his hat, and walked down the line, while I took the opposite course towards Cornwall.

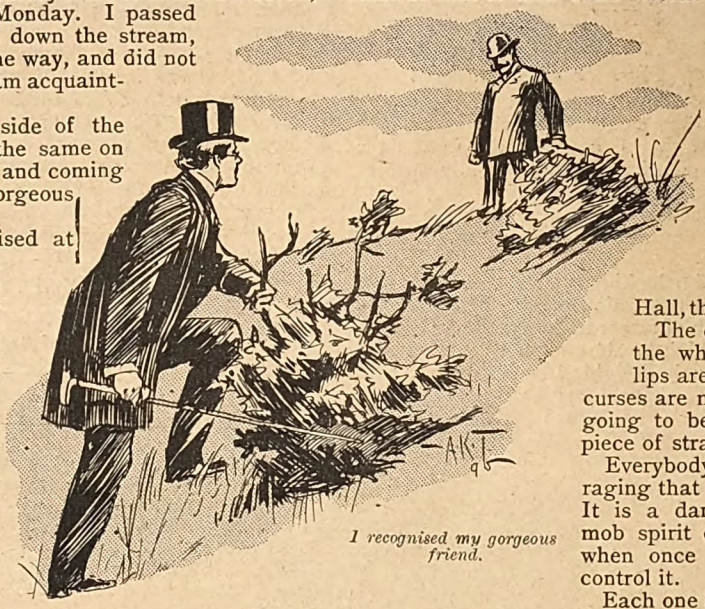
Reaching my hotel, I found a letter shoved under my door, which must have been placed there while the señor and myself were exploring the mysteries of Devil's Creek.

It contained only a few lines, but these were to the point:—

"Mr. Smith is hereby warned that his errand in this part of the country is understood, and that if he remains three days longer his fate will be that of his friend Weldon, and all others who make the attempt that he did."

The letter gave me great consolation, for it proved conclusively that Fred Weldon is alive, and is held somewhere as a sort of hostage, to be used in some contingency.

The time has come to strike!



I recognised my gorgeous friend.

CHAPTER XV.

THE VIGILANCE COMMITTEE.

THURSDAY, November 1. When the town of Cornwall rose this morning they found the fences, houses, gate-post, and every available place, covered with the following flaming posters:—

"*Citizens, Arouse!* — The time to strike has come! No man is safe! Crime stalks on every hand! Our brothers are murdered — unless checked it will soon be our turn! You all know what murders have been committed during the last few months. Frederick Weldon has been spirited away by the same red hands and Mr. Smith, his friend, has been warned that if he does not leave the country his fate shall be that of their other victims.

"Citizens! The Mulligan gang have put the last feather upon the camel's back! We have borne this too long! Let us band together, and swear not to stop until these wretches are hunted from the face of the earth!

"All in favour of organising a vigilance committee for the purpose of going to work, will meet at the Town Hall, this forenoon, at ten o'clock."

The excitement is at fever heat; the whole town is boiling over; lips are pressed, brows are knitted, curses are muttered, and I see there is going to be practical results from this piece of strategy.

Everybody is furious, everybody is raging that this has gone on so long. It is a dangerous thing to rouse the mob spirit of the American people, for when once aroused no one man can control it.

Each one is wild at his neighbour and wild at himself that they have been such cowards as to permit all this. If I should go in the street, and attempt to say a word in favour of the Mulligan gang, I would be torn limb from limb. If the outlaws have any friends, let them beware, for the murmuring I hear on every side is the subterranean warning of a Stromboli.

The first outburst has already taken place. An old man was selling vegetables at the corner, when a savage-looking fellow began bartering with him. The farmer could not avoid making a reference to the all absorbing theme of the outlaws and posters, whereupon the stranger said the Mulligans would soon settle all who had a hand in the business.

The words were scarce out of his mouth, when the farmer struck him a fierce, sudden blow, and at the same instant a shout was raised that he was one of the outlaws. In a twinkling a crowd was swarming round him, all yelling for his death. He struggled desperately, but, finding it useless, he started to run. He was fleet of foot, and might have made his escape, had he not been felled by a stone hurled at him. Before he could rise, he was set upon, and ten minutes later he had a rope round his neck, dangling from the sign

The excitement is at fever heat.

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Felled by a stone hurled at him.

of the hotel where I was stopping while in this town.

I went down and took a look at him. He proved to be the farmer, with the hoe on his shoulder, that I encountered the other day at Devil's Creek, so there is the satisfaction of knowing that the mob made no mistake in their victim.

Long before the hour of ten o'clock such a seething multitude had gathered round the Town Hall that it was plain that not a quarter of them could enter it. No one knew who had put up the hand-bills, and, seeing that the crowd needed a directing mind, I mounted a barrel, and shouted, "*Fellow Citizens!*"

In an instant every eye was upon me, and I heard the question, "Who is he?" repeated a score of times, in as many seconds. Had any one whispered at that moment that I belonged to the Mulligan gang, my life would not have been worth a rush.

"I am the Mr. Smith mentioned in the hand-bills," I shouted, and instantly there fell a hush upon them, and they were all my friends. "It is I who have been warned to leave this country, under pain of being put to death."

I then began a harangue. I pitched into the Mulligan crew and said that every minute's delay was a day's strength for these outlaws; that by this time they had learned of what we were doing, and they would be prepared for us; that we were *already marked men*, and if we didn't kill them, they would kill us.

Heavens! how that last remark had fired them up! It was like a torch thrown into a powder magazine. Men were darting hither and thither in search of arms. I called upon them to elect their leaders, and not to do it too blindly. Before I knew it they vociferously demanded that I should be their captain, and I consented, because there was no avoiding it, although there wasn't a man of them who had ever seen me before, except casually during the few days past.

The driver of the train, whose whistle was heard at the station, was ordered to wait fifteen minutes, until the vigilance company was ready, and upon repairing to the station, over a hundred armed men, many of whom had been veterans in the war, followed me while others tramped along in the rear.

I took a hundred with me, and ordered the driver to stop at the spot where the late robbery occurred, and let us out.

Those who could not go with us would not remain behind, and there must have been several hundreds who followed along the line on foot, behind us.

In the centre of the woods the train slackened, and disgorged my men. We were somewhere near the retreat of these outlaws, and were fully resolved to smoke them out.

It was known that the way to reach them was to follow up the creek, which led into swamp, but at this point we found ourselves somewhat at a disadvantage, as we had no boat, but I learnt from one of them, a daring young scout, who a few days before had explored the place at night, that the cabin in which they lived was upon a small island, only accessible by water.

The fever, which had maddened my men since morning, had had time to cool by this time, and I had them under control. I had appointed two lieutenants, the first of which was Belknap, the scout referred to, and the other a comrade, both of whom, it was evident, were very popular among their friends.

While we were discussing the best manner to overcome our disadvantage, an unlooked-for occurrence brought the solution.

CHAPTER XVI.

BEARDING THE LIONS.

SUDDENLY a small boat rounded a curve in the creek, in which were seated two men, with a negro rowing. I had not even seen them, when shouts were excitedly uttered by half my company, and as many fired a volley into the canoe.

Almost at the same instant Belknap leapt into the water and swam to the boat, the inmates of which, it was safe to say, were riddled with bullets.

Upon towing it ashore, the two white men were found stone dead, but the negro still breathed. Understanding that they were from the island, and, seeing that he could live but a few moments, I leant over him and asked him whether the Mulligans were at their cabin, but the faithful fellow shook his head and refused to answer. I then asked how many there were there, but he would not be caught. Then I put the most important query of all:

"Is there a young man held prisoner there, or do you know whether your men have any such person in their power anywhere, or whether they have killed such a man within a few days?"

He looked earnestly at me for a few minutes, and then opened his lips to speak. He did utter something, but I failed to catch it, and ere he could repeat the words he died.

Here were three of the Mulligan gang, counting the one lynched a few hours before, and omitting the negro, who

Fired a volley into the canoe.

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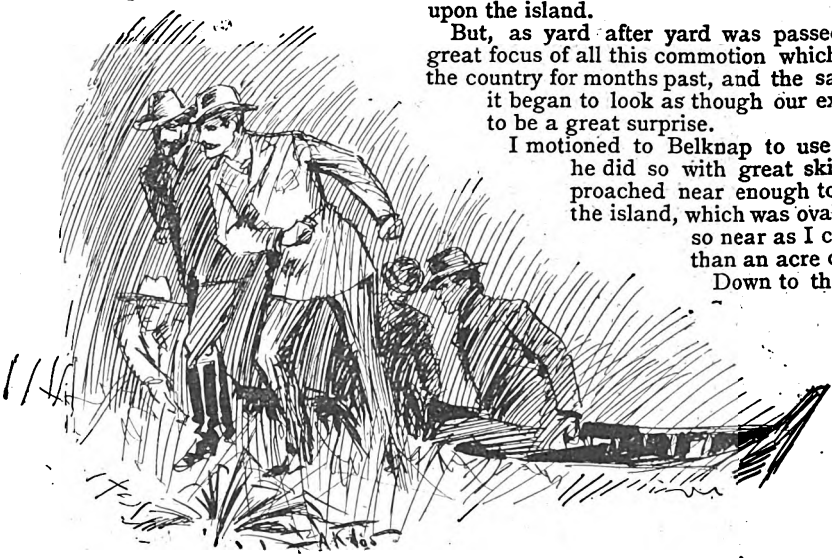
were already killed, and a fourth, "poor Tom Borie," secure in gaol, so that my friends were disposed already to look upon the work as half done.

Two plans of procedure were now discussed. One was to go back to Cornwall and secure a small cannon with which to bombard the island from the shore, a proceeding which would incur no personal risk upon our part, and at the same time be attended with sure results. The second plan was to go ahead.

In support of the latter it was argued that there could not be more than four or five men upon the island at the most, and what little risk there was to run in capturing them was not to be considered.

So the latter was agreed upon, and we began swarming and tramping up the marshy bank of the creek, Belknap somewhat ahead of us in the canoe, on the lookout for danger, and ready to apprise us of anything that might be descried.

The bodies of the two outlaws and negro were allowed to lie on the shore, near where they were shot. "Let the dead bury the dead," was the thought of each, "for we are after the living."



We stepped out like phantoms.

It was a long tramp up the creek, and at times I thought we should be compelled to give over the effort of forcing our way through the swamp; but we persevered, and after making several turns, Belknap held up his hand as a signal that he descried something.

Paddling cautiously back again he announced that the island was just ahead, but there were no signs to be seen of any person upon it.

"That amounts to nothing," said I. "If they were there, of course they would take pains to conceal themselves."

"I am ready to make straight for the island," he replied, "if half a dozen will go with me."

The whole hundred were ready, and, as leader, it never would have done for me to refuse, although there was no question about the rashness of this blind proceeding.

So I took my seat in the canoe, with five others, which sank it down to its gunwales, and Belknap headed straight towards the island. As we skimmed lightly across the smooth lake I am sure each one in the boat was reflecting upon the fact that we could not have made ourselves finer targets for those upon the island.

But, as yard after yard was passed, and we neared the great focus of all this commotion which had spread out over the country for months past, and the same silence continued, it began to look as though our expedition was destined to be a great surprise.

I motioned to Belknap to use his oars silently, and he did so with great skill. We had soon approached near enough to gain a correct view of the island, which was oval in shape, and covered, so near as I could judge, a little less than an acre of the lake.

Down to the water's edge grew a rank, exuberant vegetation, resembling the tropical luxuriance which I have seen in the Carolina swamps; but there were no trees, and we could barely discern the outlines of the cabin roof, where those famous outlaws had made their home.

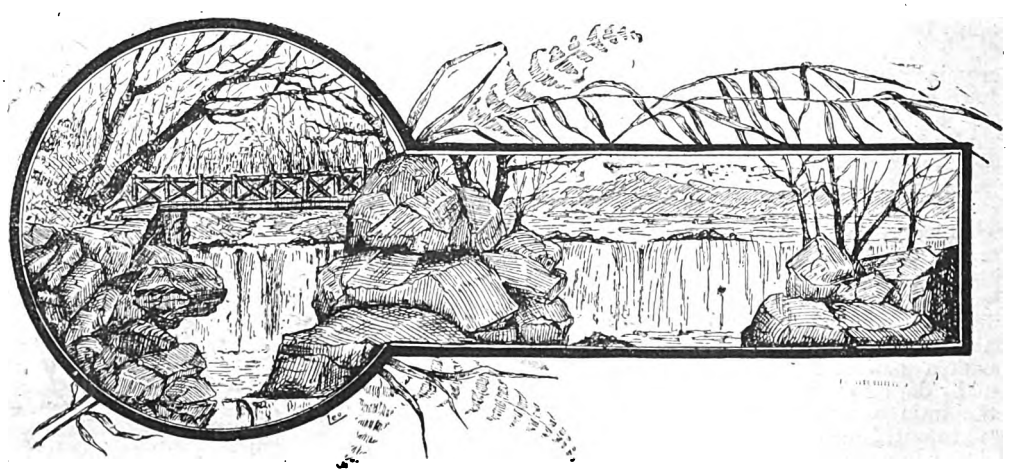
A silence rested upon the scene, which was made more impressive by the faint wash of our canoe against the current, and the soft ripple of Belknap's oar.

None of us spoke. All seemed to hold their breath in the intensity of expectation. A moment later the prow softly touched the green bank, and we stepped out like phantoms.

The Rubicon had been crossed, our bridges were burned behind us; there was no retreat, and if Dick and Tom Mulligan with their two desperate companions were there, a fight was inevitable—a fight that was to be "to the death."

Realising this, we carefully examined our rifles, and then headed by myself, moved stealthily towards the cabin.

(To be continued.)



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Robin Hood up to Date

It was not for nothing that Charlotte d'Urlac had been a wife for five years. To-day, when she wanted anything from her husband, she set about it in the simplest possible way. A bit of a gourmand, he loved good cheer, and knew not how to refuse his wife anything when he had dined and wined particularly well.

Naturally, then, I say, when she specially desired something, she carried him off to some famous restaurant, and, the proper moment arriving—between two glasses of sparkling Pomard, or perhaps Yellow Seal—gently glided her confidences into his ear.

Well for more than a week now she had been revolving in her naughty head a project how to make her husband proffer her a certain beautiful little pin—three dainty, ruby-studded little beetles quivering on a golden stem—that she had seen in the window one day in passing Sarony's, and that would look so well, she thought, at her pretty throat, with a velvet love-knot tied beneath it.

Unfortunately, the trinket cost 300 francs, and the matter would truly be difficult to bring about. No matter; Charlotte was brave—"nothing venture, nothing have!" When Gerald returned from business that evening she baited her hook at once with the usual temptation.

"Only," she said, "let us try to-night the Restaurant Peter's, for nowhere else in the city can one find such lobster frappe."

Gerald objected a little at first, for the sake of form, but yielded graciously, and they were soon installed at a table for two in the Peter's Café, and busily engaged in discussing a dinner that this wise little woman, charged with the ordering of the same, had seen to it should be lacking in nothing.

Fifteen minutes after the opening *consommé*, and a slice of turbot, Gerald d'Urlac smiled like a new made bridegroom, found everything delicious, and his wife so unusually charming, that in spite of the five years of married life between them, beamed upon her like a lover and declared himself "almost ready to commit any folly for her."

"Good!" said Charlotte, smiling a little at the success of her ruse, "some day, soon, perhaps, Gerald, I'll remind you of that."

"As you like, dearest; but, see you, Charlotte, what are you plotting now in that sly little head of yours? No matter; pass me the truffle; we'll talk of this later on."

And the dining went on so beautifully that Master Gerald was decidedly in a good humour, when, all at once, he ceased to smile, set down his wine-glass hard, and said in an undertone to his wife:

"That man below there, to the left—why does he stare at us so? No, don't look; all the same, it's annoying."

The "man to the left," in fact, was only some two or three tables back, and dining alone. A very elegant gentleman, besides, but of an elegance a trifle suspicious, and under which the practised eye would have divined the adventurer.

"Oh, well, never mind," said Charlotte cheerfully, "try these *entrées*, Gerald."

But the charm was broken, the end of the dinner suffered and M. d'Urlac, his cigar well lighted, the change from a 500 franc note safe in his pocket, was ready to depart.

Charlotte was uneasy. Clouds were gathering on the domestic horizon—the risk, however, worth taking, she'd make at least the effort.

"Let us talk of it now," murmured she softly in Gerald's ear, "that folly you were so ready to commit for me; you are—you are willing still, I suppose?"

"Yes, yes, certainly—that is, if it's reasonable."

"Of course it's reasonable; only to go down the boulevard with me as far as Sarony's."

"Boulevard! Sarony's! But, Charlotte—ah-h, I begin to see!"

"What if you do, Gerald? Didn't you say, a while ago—but come on, come on, Gerald, do come on."

And Gerald permitted himself to be led, but without enthusiasm, from the café to the boulevard, and thence on till they reached Sarony's.

Charlotte breathlessly clutched her husband's arm.

"There," she said, "there, see for yourself!"

That beautiful little pin, all glowing and flashing with crimson splendour in the white light of the electric light!

But scarcely had Gerald set eyes on it and the price beside it when his wife saw him start.

"Three hundred francs, Charlotte, for a thing like that! It's madness, madness, my dearest, sheer madness! What could you have been thinking about?"

"But you said, Gerald, you said awhile ago——"

"I know, I know exactly what I said, but, of course, I meant a reasonable folly, Charlotte! And—and—300 francs, you understand. Come, come, dearest, we must go on——"

Just at this moment the crowd about the window gave a sudden surge, and Gerald d'Urlac fancied that he felt a blow in the chest. He wheeled about fiercely to find himself nose to nose with an elegant gentleman.

The elegant gentleman of the Peter's Café? Precisely; who, with a thousand and one excuses for his unavoided awkwardness, glided down the boulevard with a rapid step.

"How queer!" cried Gerald, as he vanished from sight, "that man was still at the table when we left the restaurant; he must have followed us. Charlotte"—a sharp suspicion flashing into his mind that possibly his wife's beautiful face had something to do with the pursuit—"our business is finished here. It is time to go home."

But Charlotte did not respond. Home or elsewhere, it was all one to her now. All chance of the pin gone, like a child whose caprice has been crossed and refused, nothing longer had power to please her. Mechanically she accepted her husband's arm, and they regained their dwelling without speaking a word, in the sorrowful disenchantment that always follows a pleasure that has missed its end.

. . . . . .

Scarcely, however, had they entered the house, the silence between them still unbroken, when Gerald uttered an exclamation.

"Charlotte! Charlotte, I say!"

"Well, what is it, Gerald? Why do you cry out like that?"

"My pocketbook's gone, my cards, my bank notes, all the change returned me at the restaurant—over a thousand francs in all!"

"This finishes it!" cried Charlotte, tragically. "Everything has gone wrong to-day. But how careless, Gerald, to have dropped the book from your pocket like that."

"Careless! Dropped it from my pocket! You've lost your senses, Charlotte. Stolen from my pocket, you should have said. That man at the restaurant—that man who ran into me in front of Sarony's—'twas he, 'twas he! I know it was he!"

"Pooh! Nonsense! You dropped it, I tell you—perhaps at the table, paying the bill."

"Maybe I did. At all events, I'll stop at the café on my way to the station."

Vain hope! Vain trip! Forty minutes later Gerald returned, with face gloomier than ever. The restaurant had seen

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nothing of the book, and the police promised still less of the thief.

"But for that pin, it wouldn't have happened!" cried Gerald angrily.

"And had you bought the pin for me, as I wanted you to do," Charlotte returned with equal fervour, "there would only have been 1,000 francs, less 300, for the thief to have stolen!"

"Good! Excellent! Admirably reasoned! But if you really think, Charlotte——"

"Nothing, nothing, whatever, save that I'm sleepy, that I'm going to bed; we'll continue the dispute to-morrow, if you will. Good-night, M. d'Urlac."

And Charlotte was gone.

At dawn, however, the discussion was recommenced. It lasted till breakfast time, and also through breakfast more and more stormy. They were still at table and still wrangling, when the bell was pulled violently, and the servant entered with a package for Mme. d'Urlac.

"Good gracious, Gerald, your papers!" Charlotte cried out, as the wrappings fell apart.

"By George so they are—minus the pocket-book! But, quick, go on, Charlotte. Is there nothing else—no word, no sign of any kind?"

"Yes, how odd, and—and a little box—my pin, my beetles, Gerald!" throwing up her hands with a cry of bewilderment, "and see—a note with it!"

And Charlotte began to read it feverishly.

"MY DEAR MADAME,—Once upon a time, as you doubtless remember, recalling history, there was a certain bandit of a certain century, who possessed at least the virtue of being gallant. He ruthlessly robbed men, it is true, but never a lady, particularly those that had youth and beauty as great as your own. Robin of the Woods' case was my case also. Briefly, I have robbed your husband—a man—but to you, a lady, I beg leave to offer this little trinket I know you greatly desire, since I stood immediately behind you when you vainly besought M. d'Urlac to give it to you—beg leave to offer you, I repeat, this little trinket, in testimony of the great respect I feel for all your sex.

"Such ungallant conduct on the part of a man and husband required a lesson. I have, therefore, no remorse in retaining for personal use seven hundred and odd of the thousand and odd francs contained in the pocket-book. The three hundred others, be good enough to explain to him for me, having permitted a great criminal to repair, in a measure, the wrong committed by an honest man. The book itself—a very convenient one, by the way—I also retain, but herewith inclose the papers and cards of which I should be grieved to longer deprive M. d'Urlac.

"Pray believe me, Madame, in the sentiments of respectful humility, &c., &c., "THE GUILTY MAN."

"And also, Charlotte, if you please," cried Gerald d'Urlac, with eyes from which amazement and mirth had long since driven the anger, "in the respectful humility of a fool; for fool I was that I did not then, and do not always give in to your caprices. Heaven wills that wives and women will, and husbands always have to pay the piper. Come, kiss and be friends."

A PRECIOUS RELIC.

"BUT, uncle, I love Rose!" I protested once more.

"Go about your business."

"Give her to me."

"You will weary of her!"

"I would die for her!"

"You would soon be consoled."

"But——"

My uncle turned from me, as red as scarlet, and struck his fist upon his desk. "Never!" he cried. "Never! Do you hear me?"

I looked at him with supplicating eyes and clasped hands, while he continued: "Look at this nice husband, who is penniless and thinks already of beginning housekeeping. A pretty mess I should make to give you my ward, who is to inherit all I have! I have said no, and it is useless for you to try to make me say yes!"

I insisted no longer. I knew that my uncle was the most headstrong of men.

I simply heaved a deep sigh, and resumed the scouring of a long gun covered with rust.

This memorable conversation took place one morning in summer in the shop of my maternal uncle, an established dealer in antiquities and objects of art, in Wardour Street. It was a shop having an excellent patronage, and it was a veritable museum.

On its walls hung *faiences* from Marseilles and old Rouen, while opposite them were old coats of armour, sabres, guns, and boxes of pictures. In all directions were old sideboards, chests of all sorts, statuettes of saints, armless or legless for the most part, or from which the gilding was fast fading; books, large and small; all forms of lachrymatories, tiny urns, rings, precious stones, fragments of marble, bracelets, crosses, necklaces, medals, and little images in ivory, whose yellow tint would appear for an instant in the sun to have the transparency of real flesh.

The shop had belonged to the Stimsons from time immemorial. It had passed regularly from father to son, and my uncle, according to what his neighbours said, ought to be pretty well off, for, besides his business, he held office for the County Council. He was a large, fat man, short of limb, very quick-tempered and headstrong, but not unkind in the main. Such was my Uncle Stimson, my only relative on earth, who had educated me, and then raised me to the dignity of first and only clerk in his shop.

But my uncle was not only dealer in antiquities and clerk of the County Council. He was also, and above all, the guardian and sole protector of the beautiful daughter of an old friend, who had left her to him. Her name was Rose, and I was hopelessly in love with her. And do you ask, how did she look? Why, what shall I say? Is not the one we love always beautiful, and does she not seem to be the best of all good maidens? I loved Rose with my eyes, as with my heart; and, to tell the truth, I knew that I was not displeasing to her. It seemed as if we had always loved each other, since the far-off times of the holidays, when I had picked for her the most beautiful flowers of the garden, or when, seated on the grass, we took our lunch together.

I return now to my uncle, who, at my side, without heeding my sighs while I continued to clean my long gun, was examining, glass in hand, a lot of old medals, brought in that same morning.

Suddenly he raised his hand. Five o'clock struck.

"Ah, that reminds me," said my uncle, "that I must go to the station to get a parcel which was to come to-day."

Rising, he put the glass upon the table, and called, "Rose, my stick and my hat!" Then turning towards me, "As to you"—he spoke very low and very rapidly—"do not forget our conversation. If you think to force me to say yes, try it; but I doubt your ability. In the meantime, not a word to Rose, or believe me, I will put you out of the door immediately."

Rose quickly entered, bringing the stick and hat, which she held towards her guardian; he kissed her upon her forehead,

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then, casting on me a last eloquent look, he went brusquely out. I continued to burnish my gun. Rose gently approached me.

"Why, what is the matter with him?" she asked. "One would think he was angry with you!"

I looked at her. Her eyes were so dark, her expression so angelic, her lips so rosy, and her teeth so white that I told her all my love, and of my demand and my uncle's brutal refusal.

Rose answered nothing. She lowered her eyes and blushed like a cherry. I stopped. "Are you angry with me?" I asked trembling all over. "Rose, you do not wish to have me for a lover!"

She extended her hand to me. Then my heart bounded, and my head took fire. I cried, "Rose, I swear to you I will be your husband!" As she shook her head, looking at me sadly, I added, "Oh, I know my uncle is obstinate, but I will be more obstinate than he! I will force him to say yes!"

"But how?" asked Rose. It was just there that the difficulty lay! No matter. I would find a way. Just then we heard a step in the street. Instinctively we separated. I recommenced my scouring, and Rose, to keep herself in countenance, began to wipe with a corner of her apron a little statuette which rested on a cushion of faded velvet.

My uncle entered. He was evidently surprised to see us together, and looked suspiciously first at me and then at her.

We rubbed away vigorously, without raising our heads.

"Here, take this," he said abruptly, extending to me a large packet which he carried under his arm. "It is a superb purchase, you will see."

I did not care at all about it, but I opened the package. From its wrappings emerged a helmet—not at all an ordinary helmet, but a superb casque of monumental size, with a collar-band and pointed visor of singular shape. The visor was raised. I turned the helmet between my hands. My uncle approached. "Oh, it is impossible to shut the visor! The hinge is strained. The helmet is, nevertheless, a superb piece, and well burnished will have a beautiful effect. That will be your work to-morrow."

"Yes, uncle," I murmured, for I dare not yet raise my eyes to his face.

That evening I retired early to my chamber and went at once to bed. I wished to be alone, so that I might think things over. "The night gives council," is an old adage, and I had great need that the proverb prove true. In an hour or so I fell asleep. Not till morning did anything occur to me but indifferent dreams; then I had a strange vision. I saw Rose coming out of church in the lovely toilette of a bride. She wore an exceedingly tall head-dress, yet it was very pretty. Then suddenly the picture changed. It was moonlight, and there was a frightful crowd of helmets and old china, with my uncle brandishing a halberd in his hand and conducting a dance.

. . . . . .

The next day! Ah! the next day! I shall never forget it. Although I was madly burnishing the enormous helmet which had been brought in the previous evening, and grinding my teeth with rage, yet all my energy could not suggest to me a way out of my dilemma.

The helmet shone like the sun. My uncle smoked his pipe, all the while looking at me, but not a single idea came to my assistance. No plan had revealed itself to me to force him to yield to me the hand of his ward.

"It shines finely," he said. "Now leave it." I left it. A storm was brewing surely. Would it break on me? I determined to let it pass, if possible. Suddenly, seized by a strange idea, my uncle, taking the helmet in his hands, turned it round, studying all sides of it. "A beautiful piece, indeed, but my faith! it must weigh heavily on one's shoulders!"

I know not what good spirit impelled him, but he shook the helmet, put it on, and tightened the neck-piece.

Amazed, I looked at him. Certainly this head-gear was anything but becoming to him. At that moment the sound of a rusty spring which unbinds itself was plainly heard, and bang! the visor flattened, and behold, my uncle had his head completely shut up behind immovable bars, and the prisoner was gesticulating and crying like a heathen.

I burst out laughing. Indeed, my uncle, with his enormous girth and short legs, and with this casque on his head, was a grotesque spectacle.

He advanced towards me.

"The hinge!" he cried. "The hinge, imbecile! Did not you hear it crack?"

I kept on laughing, and could not speak a word. The helmet wriggled about so comically on his shoulders, and his voice sounded to me so queer from within it, while he was gesticulating and screeching and threatening me, that I could not stop laughing to save my life.

At this crisis two o'clock struck.

"The Council!" murmured my uncle in a stifled voice. "Get this helmet off from me as quickly as you can. We will settle our differences afterwards."

But happily an idea had come to me. I had become desperate. I responded, "No, I will not get the helmet off."

My uncle drew back thunderstruck, and again the helmet began to rock on his shoulders.

"No," I again responded with a firm voice. "I will not help you to take off the helmet until you promise to let me marry Rose."

From beneath the visor came forth no longer a cry, but a veritable groan.

"And if you will not give her to me," I added, "I will not only refuse to unclasp the helmet, but I will run to the door and call in all your neighbours. I will go to the County Council and report your condition to them."

"You shall perish upon the scaffold!" came in husky tones from beneath the helmet.

"The hand of Rose!" I cried. "You have said nothing should force you to respond yes; but respond yes you must. Decide quickly!" I cried. "Some one is coming."

"Oh, yes! yes!" murmured my uncle, "yes, but do hurry!"

"Your word!" "My word."

Then I went to him, and with a resolute snap of my finger unlocked the spring.

The visor yielded, the neck-band also, and the head of my uncle emerged from beneath, as red as a poppy.

It was time. A friend of my uncle in the County Council entered immediately.

"Come!" he said, on the threshold, "we are late!"

"I am coming!" responded my uncle, and without looking at me he took his hat and stick and went out.

. . . . . .

Alas! all my hopes now fled. My uncle would surely not pardon me.

That evening, when the dinner hour came, I sadly seated myself at the table opposite him. He ate without saying a word. I thought he was only waiting till dessert to give expression to his wrath.

Rose looked at me, but I avoided her glance. At dessert my uncle lighted his pipe, and raised his head with an air of decision. "Rose!" he called.

Rose approached. "Do you know what this great boy demanded yesterday?"

I trembled like a leaf. So did Rose.

"Your hand!" he continued, and then, "Do you love him?"

Rose lowered her eyes.

"Well!" continued my uncle, "in that case the matter is settled. Come here to me."

He began to laugh. "Marry her, then, imbecile, since you love her, and I give her!"

Rose and I cast ourselves into his arms.

"That is good, very good, do as you wish, and be happy, that is all;" but in turning he leant towards me and added, "I will not give her yet, silly fellow, unless that incident of the helmet remains a secret between us."

My word for it, I have never until now related it to anyone but Rose, my dear little wife; and if ever you pass along Wardour Street, come in, and in a place of honour in the old shop I will show you my uncle's helmet. We have never wished to sell it.

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At His Mercy

It was my first *table d'hôte* dinner at the Hotel de Nice. As it was only nearing the end of October, visitors to the South were as yet few and far between, and of a distinctly uninteresting order. Whilst my eyes were straying over the elderly commonplace Darby and Joans gathered round the festive board, I began to regret my choice of a domicile, and involuntarily formed plans for beating a speedy retreat on the morrow.

I was what is known as a crusty bachelor, and, worse, of uncertain age. The former fact troubled match-making mothers more than myself, as my comfortable independence rendered me comparatively content, and I did not yearn for the joys of a fireside of my own and someone else to spend my money.

My greatest and most absorbing interest was centred in humanity. I was an ardent psychological student, and, in consequence, liked to surround myself with youthful society and watch the buds unfold, as it were.

As I disconsolately finished my bottle of Beaune—I was feeling very dull—a rustle of feminine garments attracted my attention, and, as I slightly turned my head, a stately lady, dressed in black, accompanied by a singularly pretty daughter, passed the end of the table and were accommodated with seats exactly opposite to me.

The experience of years at once told me that the younger lady would form a most interesting psychological study, and I immediately resigned all thought of giving up my room on the morrow and busied myself with attending to the small wants of my charming *vis-à-vis*. She could not have been more than nineteen years old, and her face was as sweet and innocent looking as a child's, though her principal beauty lay in her eyes, which were of a deep, intense blue, and very large and full, with a dreamy, unfathomable expression.

Later in the evening I smoked a cigar with the manager and in the course of conversation learnt that the lady in black was a Mrs. Hillyard, widow of a county magnate, and that she was wintering abroad for the benefit of her daughter—a highly nervous and delicate girl.

In the course of a few days I was able to render Mrs. Hillyard some slight service, and the acquaintance thus begun soon developed into a sincere friendship. She was a very chatty, well-informed woman, and I passed many pleasant hours in her society while silently pursuing my investigation of her daughter. The latter required a lot of knowing, and it took quite a month of constant intercourse with her before I felt that we understood each other. I discovered her to be an unusually pure-minded, and high-souled girl of a very quiet and reticent disposition. Her mother frankly confessed that to her she was a complete enigma.

"She has never been different, Mr. Blaine," she said, sadly; "it seems impossible to interest her in anything. From her earliest years she has been the same, and never took to romping or toys like other children. If I were superstitious—which, thank goodness, I'm not—I should believe that poor Evelyn was under some malign influence. When she was at a boarding-school her fellow pupils used to say that that far-seeing look she has in her mournful eyes betokened an early death or a tragedy. Of course, that is all nonsense; still, I would give a good deal to see her different."

I suggested that there may have been an unfortunate attachment to account for Miss Hillyard's despondency, but this her mother vehemently negatived.

"She has never shown the slightest partiality for any one," she resumed. "I only wish she would, for it might be the dawn of a new existence for her. She has had many admirers and several offers of marriage, but she has refused them all. She likes reading, though, not novels, as you may suppose, but what I call creepy literature; and if she has a real liking for anything it is music. I have seen her spellbound at a Paderewski recital or listening to an oratorio."

"Alas, we have no Paderewskis here to wake the sleeping soul," I observed, glancing round the stiffly furnished apartment and its inmates, some of whom, ensconced in armchairs, were sleeping, not wisely, but too well, as various stentorian snores testified; while others were absorbed in their game of chess or backgammon—clearly not an assemblage to interest a young girl. In point of fact, Miss Hillyard always made a rule of retiring to her own room immediately after dinner.

A day or two later I was smoking and lounging in the reading room, when I heard some one performing magnificently on the Erard grand pianoforte in the drawing-room. I don't set up to be a musician, or even to understand the art, but it would have been an unfeeling soul indeed which could remain unmoved at that glorious harmony of sound.

I threw away my cigar and sallied forth to see who the unknown genius could be, when, just as I reached the hall, I met Miss Hillyard at the foot of the stairs. The girl was completely transformed. Her eyes glittered with some strange emotion and a mist of unshed tears; her face was flushed crimson and her lips trembled. She passed me without recognition and I could see that her hands were clasped convulsively. She stole into the drawing-room so softly that the player was unconscious of her presence, and I, seeing how deeply she was moved, forbore to intrude, and took a seat in the vestibule instead.

When the music ceased I heard the sound of voices. The kindred souls had discovered each other. I do not know how long they remained together, as I went for my usual constitutional, and when I returned, the gong had already sounded for *table d'hôte*. If it had not been for my afternoon experience I should have marvelled at the change in my young friend. I had never seen her look more lovely.

She was dressed in cream, and wore a great bunch of red roses at her waist—the first touch of coquetry I had ever observed in her. I also noticed that the stranger had been placed on the same side as myself, a little higher up, and that he and Evelyn were constantly looking at each other. As her eyes met his a faint blush would steal over her face and she would look down confusedly.

After this I was not surprised to find that she no longer absented herself in the evenings. Mr. Gerard, the new-comer, proved unremitting in his attentions and music now formed the principal attraction of the drawing-room. He was certainly rather good-looking, of the bold brigand type, which some women find so irresistible, and it was easy to see that he soon obtained complete mastery over Evelyn, and that his will was her will.

Personally I never liked him, although he strove to ingratiate himself with everyone. To me there was something mysterious about him, and I warned Mrs. Hillyard not to let her daughter become too friendly. I am afraid she rather resented my interference, thinking herself capable of managing her own affairs, and so she drifted on to the rocks like many a good woman has done before her. She protested that the love of music was the sole bond between them, and so I let her have her way.

One afternoon I was standing in the conservatory which opened out of the drawing-room and was concealed by draperies, when I heard the sound of voices, which I immediately recognised as belonging to Gerard and Miss Hillyard. Before I had time to move, a fragment of their conversation reached me, which made me feel extremely uneasy. Gerard's

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tones sounded pleading, yet imperative and I could just see through a division in the drapery that her hand was closely clasped in his.

"You want money, and you must have it," I heard him say.

"I want money and I must have it," she repeated after him. Then their voices dropped to a whisper, but I had heard sufficient to give me food for reflection. Here was a girl environed with luxury, with a parent of undisputed wealth who never refused her anything, making confession of poverty to a man to whom a few weeks before she had been an absolute stranger. I decided to say nothing to her mother, but to await further developments quietly. But a new sensation was preparing, which, for the time, turned my thoughts in another direction.

For some time past a series of cleverly-planned robberies had taken place in the hotel, watches, jewellery, and cash had disappeared from the visitors' rooms in the most mysterious manner. Among the greatest victims was Mrs. Hillyard, who missed a splendid tiara of diamonds. The manager, who was a thoroughly honest, straightforward fellow, was greatly upset, the more so as Mrs. Hillyard had threatened to bring an action against the proprietors for the value of her property. As I had plenty of time on my hands, I promised to assist him in trying to discover the thief.

As a rule I never entered my room after dinner till I finally retired for the night, but on this particular evening I discovered that my cigar case was empty, and went upstairs to replenish it. The door was slightly ajar, and what was my amazement on walking in to see Evelyn Hillyard with my cashbox open before her and the contents in her hands.

I was too startled to say a word, and stood rooted to the spot inside the doorway through which she must pass. In silence I watched her drop the gold pieces into her pocket—there were but five of them—then she closed the lid, locked it with a key which she carried, and walked out of the room. Her eyes had the same peculiar expression that I noticed in them the day I met her on the stairs when Gerard was playing, and now, as then, she seemed quite unconscious of my presence.

This was a psychological study indeed! I felt it was well worth the £5 I had lost and more, too. I was greatly perplexed as to the best course to take in this most difficult position. The poor child was undoubtedly acting under the influence of the scoundrel Gerard; to expose her was out of the question. It would deal a death-blow to her mother and herself.

I determined to tackle Gerard, make him acknowledge his villainy, and return all the stolen articles which were undoubtedly in his possession. But in this I reckoned without my host, for the following morning the gentleman had gone. On making inquiries, I was informed that Mr. Gerard had received an urgent telegram summoning him to the deathbed of an uncle.

Poor Evelyn was very despondent all day, and her animation a thing of the past. I obtruded my society upon her very persistently in the hope of gleaning further information. I even asked her point blank where Gerard had gone, but she confessed herself to be in complete ignorance, and I am sure she spoke truly. He would soon return, she said, and he had promised to write. She also spoke accidentally of the wholesale thefts, and regretted the loss of her mother's jewels. I pitied her from the bottom of my heart for being such an expert criminal, and withal such an innocent one. I then and there made up my mind to track the real criminal, but as it happened I was saved the trouble.

After dinner I persuaded Evelyn to put on her hat and take a turn with me in the garden. It was a lovely moonlight night, clear as day, and with the soft balmy air redolent of roses. I was discussing the approaching Battle of Flowers with my companion, when she suddenly stood still, while a look of intense horror appeared upon her face and her eyes grew wild and unnatural. I could see nothing to account for her sudden terror, and was about to question her, when she gave a low wail of agony and fell unconscious at my feet.

It was a week before I saw her again, and then it was to say good-bye. She was altered beyond recognition and was only a wraith of her former self.

"You have been very kind to me, Mr. Blaine," she said simply, "and I feel that I owe you some explanation. You have perhaps guessed that Mr. Gerard was a dear friend of mine——" here she caught her breath and resumed with difficulty——"the night I was with you in the garden I saw a ghostly vision. Mr. Gerard stood before me, and as I looked he raised his hand and drew a knife across his throat—then I remembered no more." She shuddered violently as she spoke and sank exhausted into a chair.

"My dear child, why distress yourself with idle fancies?" I began, but she held up her finger to enjoin silence, and pushing a paper towards me said, "read that."

My eyes followed the paragraph, which ran as follows:—

"TERRIBLE TRAGEDY AT LIVERPOOL.

"Last evening, between eight and nine, a terrible tragedy was enacted in this city. The police having obtained a clue as to the whereabouts of the accomplished burglar, George Daly, *alias* Cecil Gerard, arrested the unfortunate man as he was about to embark on a large liner bound for New York. The criminal made a desperate resistance, and, eluding the officer's grasp, suddenly drew a sportsman's knife from his pocket, and before he could be prevented gashed his throat across from ear to ear. The occurrence was witnessed by a number of passengers, some of whom fainted, and the deepest gloom prevailed on board the *Vulcan* when she finally steamed away. A large quantity of valuables were discovered in the suicide's portmanteau, including a tiara of diamonds, several rings, watches, and other costly articles."

I passed the paper back in silence. It was dated the 7th inst. The terrible deed was committed on the very day and hour that it was witnessed by Miss Hillyard some hundreds of miles away.

Poor Evelyn! She and her mother left the same day for England, and I have never met them since. The unhappy girl was as utterly unconscious then as she is now of the part she herself played in the miserable drama. In a letter recently received from Mrs. Hillyard she states that her daughter has taken the veil, and the great iron gates of the convent of the Sacred Heart have closed upon her for ever.

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Who Killed Paul Ferrol?

THE doctor paled; decidedly it was something more than mere embarrassment that caused his unwillingness.

"I have given it up, ladies," said he; "I have nothing more to do with magnetism."

"But why, why, doctor?" the pretty pleaders persisted. "Put us to sleep—one of us—you must, or tell us the reason why."

"Well, so be it," said he, at last, still visibly reluctant. "I will tell you why; it may teach you a lesson.

"Eighteen months ago," he began, "I went into the country to see a friend—we will call him Paul Ferrol, if you please. Though old comrades and devoted 'chums,' for a long time the chances of life had separated us, particularly his marriage, which, for certain reasons, had obliged him to live for a while upon one of his properties, situated, as I have said, in the depths of the country. But often and often my thoughts carried me—a trifle enviously, in the midst of my hard work—towards that forgotten corner, where his hours were passed in the quiet routine and bliss of a domestic life.

"Nor was I mistaken in the picture my fancy had drawn; peace, serenity, repose, breathed from the very trees, with their great moss-covered trunks, against which an old mansion leant in the mingled shade and shine of the sunny woods.

"Paul met me at the station. His wife I did not see till later—just before dinner, indeed—a beautiful woman, with dark, brilliant eyes, which flashed, when not shielded by the long curling lashes, with the light of burnished steel. She had a superb figure, and a complexion the tint and texture of old ivory, through which was flowing vigorously the rich red current of a healthy blood. Very, very beautiful she was, but oddly enough, as I looked at her I felt a sense of a deception somewhere under that fair exterior.

"We were not alone; another guest had arrived—a young man and a near neighbour. From the moment of his coming, too—or did I fancy that, also?—Paul seemed less genial.

"Dinner was nearly over when a chance word or question turned the conversation upon a subject no less absorbing then than now, ladies"—and the doctor bowed courteously to the circle of eager listeners closely clustered about him—"turned, I say, upon the subject of hypnotism and hypnotic suggestion.

"My friend, from the first discoveries, had watched the advance of these studies with the liveliest interest, and many and frequent had been the discussions between himself and his wife concerning them, she denying the phenomena arising from these experiments, and stubbornly pronouncing them humbug and charlatanism; and he affirming that strange things could and did happen, as he knew from his own experience.

"Forced to take sides, I was obliged to admit that I myself was deeply interested in these matters, and had witnessed things that I did not dare to doubt. She was still obstinate, still mocking; she would believe what she saw—no more, no less.

"'If Paul is a subject, as he declares,' said she, 'the thing, too, is easy enough; convince me you have done such things, as you say, by trying it here and now.'

"Paul was willing. I looked intently at him; his eyes wavered curiously away from my gaze; he was a marvellous subject and fell immediately under my will.

"We passed into the drawing-room, placed him in a chair, and I had not made six passes over his brow when he was in a sound hypnotic sleep.

"'Well, he is off,' I said.

"'Impossible! No!'

"She bent over him, called him, punched him—no movement; raised his arm—it fell inert like a log.

"'Quick, quick, suggest something!' said she, a strange eagerness showing suddenly in her face.

"'You would, perhaps, feel the proof stronger, did you make the suggestion yourself.'

"She appeared to think, murmuring half aloud: 'It must be an unaccustomed act, something unusual, that he cannot divine; that does not enter into his habit of life.'

"She looked about her. Near by on a table a magazine lay opened at a recent article on 'Hypnotic Suggestions,' a slender, mother-of-pearl paper-knife thrust between the folds. She turned the leaves hurriedly.

"'Ah-h, we have it at last!' said she, putting her finger upon a certain paragraph; 'an experiment just made—successfully, they say. Repeat it with Paul, and I shall be convinced.'

"The experiment was to suggest to the patient at a fixed hour a predetermined act—the act in this case suicide with some harmless object that the 'subject' should be made to believe a poniard.

"'Willingly,' I responded.

"She handed me the paper-knife. 'This is harmless enough, isn't it?' she said, yielding it to me with a charming smile; 'it wouldn't hurt a fly.'

"'Perfectly harmless,' and I held up the little pearl dagger before Paul's eyes.

"'Do you see it, Paul?' said I, slowly and impressively, 'this poniard here? Well, I am going to put it on that table yonder; to-morrow, when the luncheon bell rings — the luncheon bell, remember—you will come here, take this poniard and—*kill yourself!*'

"Then I roused him. He remembered nothing and felt nothing, only a little uneasiness concerning the act that he was to accomplish, and from which he was determined to defend himself.

"The evening finished gaily with a rubber of whist, ending at ten in order to give the handsome young neighbour—a silent listener to what had been going on—time enough to reach home at a reasonable hour.

"We were walking, Paul, his wife, and I, on the lawn next morning, when the luncheon bell rang. Paul raised his head, listened a second, turned brusquely, and re-entered the house. His wife had become very pale.

"'Come, quick,' said I; 'he has gone for that paper-knife!'

"She remained motionless.

"'To what good?' she said. 'I see already that suggestion has reason in it, *for Paul has gone.* He will come back.'

"I did not wait for her to finish; I hastened to the drawing-room, where my 'subject' had gone.

"I ran; I threw open the door, and Paul was there—*dead*, face downward on the floor—a dagger in his heart!"

"A real dagger, doctor!" cried the mistress of the house, laying her hand softly upon the doctor's arm.

"A real dagger, madam. I turned to the table—the little mother-of-pearl paper knife had gone. Who had taken it? Who had put the other—the real dagger—in its place?

"Heaven alone knows; but she, Paul's wife, and he, the neighbour who dined with us that night, were married ten months ago."

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"DELIGHTFUL" TREATMENT FOR CURING CORPULENCE.

The process of curing any physical disorder is so generally the converse of "delightful" that the use of this and similar terms in reference to Mr. F. C. Russell's new popular treatment for corpulency naturally attracts special attention. These terms are to be found in a large number of the letters included in the just issued 18th edition of Mr. Russell's little volume of 256 pages, "Corpulency and the Cure" (Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.) These communications are from persons of both sexes, and it is apparent that their number is represented by thousands annually, who have found in this system of treatment a safe, rapid, and permanent cure for excessive fatness. This testimony forms in the aggregate, indeed, a wonderful record of the rapid reduction of excessive adipose tissue, and those who have personal reasons for being interested in the subject should send to the above address 6d. stamps for a copy of Mr. Russell's notably suggestive little book. "I think the treatment most delightful," writes one out of a large number of equally enthusiastic correspondents. And the expressions "Admirable tonic," "Splendid stuff," "A delicious beverage mixed with mineral waters," are of constant recurrence in this singularly interesting correspondence. The details given by many of the writers of these letters as to the results of the treatment fully justify the use of such eulogistic phrases. It must certainly be delightful to experience the sensation of losing unnecessary and dangerous fat by pounds per week, and frequently stones per month, and that by the aid of treatment which simultaneously increases the appetite and renders its reasonable indulgence innocuous. The experience, too, must be rendered still more delightful by the knowledge, which may be gained from a perusal of Mr. Russell's book, that his preparation is a pure vegetable product, without any admixture of the mineral poisons which are too frequently administered. With a candour which also is delightful, Mr. Russell prints in his book the recipe for the preparation.

SUMMER HEAT AND OBESITY.

Summer heat, with the out-door enjoyments which come in its train, is a source of unmixed delight to all whose physical condition is sound. The full feast of pleasure to which hospitable Nature at this season invites mankind, is not, however, for those whose infirmities forbid them to undergo, without serious discomfort, a considerable amount of bodily fatigue. To those in particular who are the victims of excessive corpulence, the arrival of the genial summer warmth serves chiefly as a painful reminder that, for them, the delights of long woodland rambles, the climbing of mountain tops, and all the adventurous ways of flood and field are prohibited joys. The palpitating heart, the reeling brain, and the possible deadly sunstroke, which are the concomitants of obesity, banish all the pleasant anticipations which once came with the advent of the glad summer-tide. How much of this deprivation of enjoyment and positive misery is absolutely and easily avoidable, may be learned by consulting Mr. F. Cecil Russell's "Corpulency and the Cure" (256 pages), a little work whose popularity is proved by the fact that its 18th edition has just been issued. This fact, too, indicates, in some degree, the wide area now covered by Mr. Russell's wonderful success as an expert in the reduction of excessive fat. His process, which is absolutely safe and pleasant, is so rapid in its operation that any over-corpulent lady or gentleman can easily get rid of all unnecessary weight in a very few weeks, so as to be able, before the autumn is with us, to enjoy the delightful feeling (and the appearance too) of renewed youth and energy. Mr. Russell makes no mystery of the nature of his curative preparation—apparently miraculous as are its effects in simultaneously reducing weight and increasing appetite—the consequently larger amount of food being consumed with impunity. He prints, therefore, his recipe in his singularly suggestive book, which may be obtained from Booksellers, or by sending 6d. stamps to his offices, Woburn House, 27, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.

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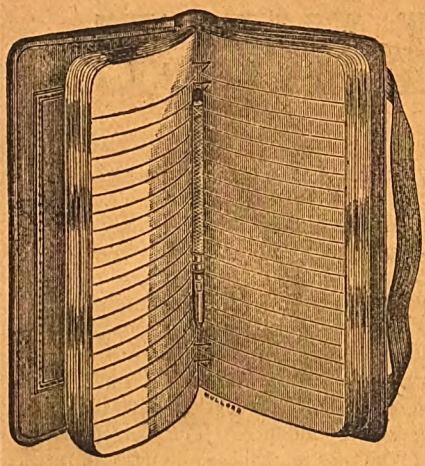

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 343. FOR WEEK ENDING JULY 27, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

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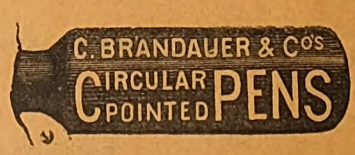

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SHORT STORIES.

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 343.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING JULY 27, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

IN THE CLUTCHES OF THE NIHILISTS

I WAS once a commercial traveller for a large London firm, trading between London and Russia—consequently I passed a considerable time in the latter country, chiefly in St. Petersburg. I have still many friends there, and speak the language as well as my own.

I became attached by degrees to the place, though, I must confess, at first I disliked it. Perhaps it was because it wasn't home, or perhaps because I had no real friend there. To tell the truth, I shrank from making one, as I knew before I had been many weeks in the country that every other man was a spy, and you might sit down and crack a bottle of wine with one whom you thought the jolliest fellow you had met, and next day be marched to prison, with your bosom friend of yesterday brought up as evidence against you.

I had been warned of this, and never encouraged intimacy with anyone. I was beginning to get sick of it all, and seriously thought of going home to England to seek other employers, when an event happened which changed all the current of my life.

It was the beginning of May, and getting very warm in St. Petersburg; so, after my day's work was over, I went down to the bathing-place, where in the hot weather I was accustomed to spend many hours. To-day I was not the only one there, as often happened; there was a young light-haired Russian enjoying himself in the water. It wasn't very long before I was following his example, and in about twenty minutes I was out again, drying myself and watching the gambols of this young fellow.

"He must be tolerably fond of bathing," I said to myself, "to stay in that ice bath so long;" for he was in it when I arrived, and how long he had been there before, of course I could not say.

I turned away to dress, and had put on my trousers and shirt, when I looked round to see if he was out yet or performing any strange antics; but he was no longer to be seen. I looked for his clothes, which were still there, but no signs of the bather. Good heavens! what was that? A hand surely! yes! And now another, and a head! and a murmured scream for help! To jump in just as I stood, half dressed, and haul him on land was the work of an instant.

He was practically unconscious, and till I felt his heart gently beating, I thought him dead; after, with much labour, rubbing, chafing, and administering brandy, which I providentially had with me, I got him into a carriage, and, learning his address from a card in his pocket, had him driven to his home.

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I never shall forget the scene when, the cabman and myself helping the poor half-drowned fellow from the cab, the hall door opened, and his widowed mother and only sister came shrieking down the garden to the gate, fancying we were bringing his corpse.

In a few hours he was conscious and on the way to recovery. In the meantime the good people had insisted on my going to bed, and had ordered their man-servant to rub me well with brandy and swathe me in hot blankets.

Some time in the evening I awoke and found a complete set of clothing laid out for me; so, feeling as right as a trivet, I jumped up and dressed. Being dressed, I went out to inquire how the patient was getting on; and, as I opened my door, the one opposite opened also, and the mother came forward with both hands outstretched.

"Now you are yourself again, let me give you a mother's blessing for having saved her only son."

She then kissed me once on the forehead and twice on the chin, in Russian style, and added, "And now come to see Peter; he is doing charmingly, and cannot rest until he thanks his preserver."

We entered the room, and there, lying in bed, was the light-haired youth, looking more like what I first saw in the water than the corpse-like body I had dragged out with its flaxen hair clinging tightly to the face. Beside him sat the most beautiful girl I had ever seen. I couldn't stop the blessings and thanks they all showered on my head—so let them have their say and make a fool of me to the top of their bent.

The end of it was that I was persuaded to give up my lodgings and live with them; the very natural consequence being that I fell in love with Catrina, the lovely daughter, and (what was not so natural a consequence) she with me. I never spent such happy days as I did in that quiet, peaceful new home of mine. The widow loved me as a son; Peter was a brother who could never find anything sufficient to show his friendship for me; and Catrina—ah! that was the sweetest of all! Catrina not only loved, but ere long accepted me as her affianced husband.

Alas! it was destined by Providence that my happiness was not to last, and as I pondered over it afterwards, I thought it was too perfect and too sweet to be permanent.

The blow fell upon me about three weeks after the accident happened—in fact, I received two blows together.

One was a letter from my sister to say my mother was dangerously ill, and that, if I wanted to see her alive, I must return at once to England. The other was from my employers, saying that, as the firm had experienced severe losses in the Colonies, my services would no longer be required. Phew! What was to be done? I showed Catrina both letters, and asked her advice.

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"Go home directly," she said.

"Will you come with me, Catrina?"

"No," she replied; "I cannot leave my mother."

I had two most miserable days talking and arranging about my departure. Peter had obtained a berth for me, and it was agreed that on my return I should marry Catrina, and settle down in Russia for life.

The next day I was *en route* for England.

I found my mother very ill with rheumatic fever, but not in danger. Of course it was not very long before both she and my sister knew of my attachment to Catrina, and, although they didn't like the idea of my marrying a foreigner, yet, when I interpreted her sweet letters to them, they had to admit that she seemed most ardently attached to me.

My mother got rapidly better, and in August was recommended to go to Homburg, and take the mineral baths and drink the waters, and she insisted on my accompanying her. We arrived after a hot and dusty two days' journey. I secured excellent rooms in a charming little villa on the *Unter Promenade*.

I enjoyed myself very much at Homburg. I met a great number of Russians whom I had known in their own country, and it was a great treat to me to speak the language again; it reminded me so much of Catrina and my Russian home.

There was one gentleman I took a great fancy to—a man called Scholvolski, a commercial traveller like myself. He seemed to have taken an equal fancy to me, and was always asking me to dine with him at the restaurant. Sometimes a friend of his dined with us, a man I disliked—why I knew not, unless it was that his expression was diabolical, sensual, cruel, and pitiless. I told my friend Scholvolski one day that I wouldn't join him again if he asked his friend. To which he replied, laughingly, "Oh, he's not a bad fellow, only his face is so much against him."

If I had been in Russia I should not have acted as incautiously as I did. In the first place, I should not have encouraged the intimacy of Scholvolski, and in the second I should not have opened my lips and spoken so freely of Russia before his friend—I should have set him down at once for a deadly spy.

But here in Europe I could afford to laugh at all such ideas, and put the thought of spies, midnight arrests, the knout, and all such barbarities out of my head, and give my opinion as loud and as long as I chose about Russia and her customs. This I did very frequently—more especially as I was constantly led on to do so by my friend Scholvolski.

I had been about a month at Homburg, my mother was wonderfully improved, and very anxious to get back home, when a most curious circumstance happened to me. I had not received a letter from Catrina for more than three weeks, and was getting uneasy. I was quite willing to return home, being impatient to ascertain if any letters had arrived from Russia, and had been forwarded and lost. I wrote a long, loving letter to Catrina, telling her I had missed her usual weekly despatch, informing her also of my mother's convalescence and of my impatient desire to get back to Russia and make her my wife with as little delay as possible.

I showed Catrina both letters.

We settled to leave Homburg the following day, and I went to post my letter and bid adieu to my friends. Coming out of the post-office, on the bottom step I saw something glittering in the sun. I picked it up—it was the prettiest little ornament I ever saw. A scarf pin, evidently made to fasten like a brooch, about the size of a shilling; and round it some cabalistic figures inclosed within a garter; two letters interwoven in the centre on red and blue enamel—the letters being in brilliants; a blue enamel 7 at the top, and the letter K hanging from the bottom in plain gold.

I thought the best way to find its owner was to wear it myself; so I stuck it in the left lappel of my coat, and on my black coat it glistened famously. I looked next morning among the list of things lost, in the glass case in the vestibule of the Kursaal; but no notice was up yet. "Well," I thought, "I'll give it till to-morrow, and then I'll hand it to the Commissaire of Police."

In looking for Scholvolski I met his obnoxious friend, who glared in a frightful way at the jewel in my coat, which made me say, in fun, "How do you like the order I have received?"

"Did you receive that?" he asked, apparently unable to keep his eyes off it.

"Why shouldn't I?" I answered, laughing.

He turned on his heel and left me suddenly.

At last, seated at the roulette-table, I found Scholvolski. I touched him on the shoulder, and asked, "What luck?"

"Ah, my dear friend!" he answered, "the same—always bad. How are you? But what—what—" and he too stared with all his might at my order, and seemed to turn pale.

"Well," I thought, "this must be something remarkably interesting. Do they take me for a king in disguise; or do they think I've stolen the decoration? At any rate, I won't tell them until I find out what they mean."

"Come away quickly," said Scholvolski, taking my arm and leading me on to the terrace, where we sat down at a table and had some coffee. All this time he never took his eyes off my decoration.

At last I said, "Well, my friend, how do you like my new order, eh? I flatter myself this is rather better than your dirty little bit of green and orange ribbon."

"Have you had it long?" he asked, seriously.

"No," I replied, "not very long. Why?"

"Oh, nothing; only I thought——. Oh, come and dine with me——quite alone, I assure you; this is our last night."

In vain I pleaded packing.

"Bah!" said he; "you have a good hour before dinner."

It was of no use; he would take no excuse; and when I said, "All right," a curious look came over his face. I didn't understand it then—I did some hours after.

We had a most sumptuous dinner—by far the best he had ever given me. He drank very deeply, and I am ashamed to say I did the same—a thing I am not given to at all; but whether it was the hot night, the hot room, or the excellence of the wine (it was best Johannisberg, two Napoleons the bottle), I know not; all I remember is, we rose late, having had great arguments about Russian politics, secret societies, and other things connected with his country; and I felt anything but firm on my legs.

"I'll see you home, old fellow," he said, taking my arm and leading me out. "*Allons* for home, sweet home! You've got your order all right, haven't you?" he shouted in my ear; and glaring down on it, his face, to my distempered vision, appeared to have turned yellow.

"Oh, yes, I've got it safe enough," I laughingly answered. "I'm not going to lose such a treasure as that."

"No, mind you don't," he shouted again, and looked yellower than ever.

By this time we had passed through the vestibule, and he hailed a carriage off the stand.

"Get in," he said, quite roughly.

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"No, thanks," I replied. "I prefer the fresh air, and will walk home; so good-night and good-bye."

"Oh, do just drive with me as far as my lodgings; and we'll walk back to your house together," he pleaded, in his old, kind, gentle way; and, as it was our last night together, I thought I'd humour him, so I got into the cab. He gave some directions in a low tone to the cabman, and off we drove in the opposite direction to my home.

Two or three times I asked my companion where on earth we were going to; but he sat silent, puffing a cigar, and looking very serious; and seeing we were in the country, I could stand it no longer, so I leant out of the cab and asked the coachman where he was driving. I did not catch his reply, for at this moment we pulled up at a solitary, and apparently uninhabited house.

"Here we are. Jump out," said Scholvolski.

The cab drove off rapidly towards Homburg.

"What house is this?" I inquired.

"My lodging," he replied, at the same time giving a peculiar whistle I had heard that afternoon in the gardens.

As he finished speaking, a small panel in the upper portion of the door opened; whereupon Scholvolski said two or three words which I did not catch, and the noise of unlocking and unbarring the door immediatey followed.

"Enter," said my friend.

I had half a mind to turn sharp round, and make a bolt for Homburg. How I wished I had done so before many minutes had elapsed! Scholvolski, following close behind me, gave me a push away from the door, near to which I was lingering, and at the same time it shut with a tremendous bang. The doorkeeper, who I now saw by his lamp was a gigantic ugly Russian, barred it carefully, and then turning round, thrust his lamp full in my face, and pointing to my order, said, with a hoarse laugh:

"Welcome!"

"Come on!" shouted Scholvolski from the end of the dark passage. "Bring the light and show us in."

"All right," answered James; and he followed till we came to where Scholvolski was waiting. Then, throwing open a door, he said something in a low voice, at the same time my friend gave me another awful push that sent me flying into the room; so that, to save myself from falling, I clutched at the back of a chair, and so steadied myself and recovered my senses.

I was in a large, long room, brilliantly lighted, with a table running nearly the whole length, round which were seated about thirty men, all smoking cigarettes. A man who was sitting at the head of the table got up, and said, "Gentlemen, welcome."

To my horror, this man, who seemed the president of the party, was Scholvolski's friend, the one whom I so much disliked.

Just then Scholvolski touched me on the arm, and asked: "How do you like their orders?"

I glanced in the direction he indicated, and saw that every man had on his breast a facsimile of the jewel I wore.

During this time I had been standing in the centre of the room, with Scholvolski near me.

He now said: "Won't you take a seat, and join in the conversation?"

"No, thank you," I replied, feigning coolness. "As it is so late I must be off. But tell me, before I go, who are these gentlemen, and what is the meaning of the order they each wear?"

"You'll soon know," he answered; and, advancing to the table, said, in a loud voice: "Mr. President and gentlemen, this man has asked me to explain who you are, and the meaning of the order (although he himself wears one) on your breasts. What answer shall I give him?"

Whereupon the President rose and said, "Gentlemen, what do you say to trying the traitor now?"

The men round the table silently nodded their heads.

"Good," rejoined the President. "Let the trial begin."

"What does this mean?" I asked of my friend. "Are they rehearsing a scene from a play? At all events, I'm sorry I can't stay to see the fun. So, if you won't come, I must find my way home alone. So good night. Gentlemen I have the honour to wish you a very good evening."

I wrote a long letter to Catrina.

With a polite bow I turned to the door, and tried to open it; but there was no handle, and I pushed in vain.

Scholvolski came up to me. "You can't leave yet; these gentlemen have a few questions to ask you; so come and sit down quietly, and answer them, or——"

"Or what?" I asked, indignantly. "Is this some trap you have led me into? You had better take care. Remember, you are not in Russia."

"Not much difference, though, in this room."

"That we shall see," I said; and, rushing to the door, began hammering at it and shouting at the top of my voice. The whole party smiled at my efforts, which made me more furious; and I redoubled my knocking and calls for help. All at once it opened with a burst that nearly knocked me backwards, and the huge doorkeeper entered. I rushed at the closing door; but he was too quick for me. It was shut again in an instant; and he stood with his back against it.

"Put him in the chair," said the President to this big brute.

"All right, mister," was his reply, and, walking to a cupboard, he brought out a sort of arm-chair with straps and ropes, which he placed in the centre of the room, and then beckoned me to sit in it.

"No!" I exclaimed, "I'm not going to be put tamely in that chair," and I caught up the one I had been leaning against, determined to hold my own. "What is it you want of me? Is it to rob me? Because, if so, I will quietly give you everything I have; but if you think you are going to play any tricks, you are very much mistaken; for the first man who approaches me I'll brain!"

I had hardly concluded when the big porter threw himself heavily upon me, and, with the assistance of two or three more, I was placed in the chair and bound down so securely as to be unable to move hand or foot. My tongue was free, though, and most foolishly, I commenced cries for help. In a couple of seconds I was gagged, and then I was indeed helpless.

"Now," said the President, "Let us get on quickly. Come, Scholvolski, your evidence."

And, to my astonishment, this man, whom I had thought my friend, took out a small pocket-book, and from it read all the conversations we had had together, the opinions I had expressed to him on secret societies in particular, winding up by telling them how I had displayed to him my new order.

As he sat down, seemingly perfectly satisfied with what he had done, I was well aware that I was trapped in the den of a Russian secret society, which bore me some terrible grudge—either for having spoken so openly and scoffingly of it, or for wearing the wretched order I had found.

One after another of the men seated at the table, and to whom I had at times spoken, got up, and repeated all that I had said to them, and generally a good deal more.

When all had had their say, the President rose, and said: "Gentlemen and brothers, this traitor has to be tried by you on the following charges: first, for having (knowing us

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all to belong to this society) taken every opportunity of maligning and ridiculing it; secondly, for having, by some means unknown to us as yet—but which we will presently get from him—worn our secret order publicly and ostentatiously, and probably explained to everybody he knows its mysterious meaning.

"You have heard the evidence, gentlemen. How say you, guilty, or not guilty?"

Without a word being spoken, every man held up his hand.

"Guilty on both charges," added the President. "And now your sentence."

Again they all raised their hands.

"Death!" said the President. "Gentlemen and brothers, in your verdict and sentence I fully concur."

I had nearly fainted as he uttered these last words, and I think I should have done so, but that the porter undid the gag; and the President, rising, addressed me thus: "Prisoner and traitor, you have heard the charges, evidence, verdict, and sentence; have you anything to say why it should not be carried out?"

I nerved myself, and, as boldly as I could, spoke the following words: "Russians, most of you—particularly one (and I looked hard at Scholvolski, who dropped his eyes)—have professed friendship for me; and yet now you want to kill me. Why is this? What have I done? You say I have talked about your secret societies; well, so does every other man you meet; and in Europe everybody says what he thinks. You assert that I have worn your order, knowing it to be the order of your society. This I emphatically deny; as I only picked it up in the streets a few minutes before I met that man" (pointing to the president, for, oddly enough, I had never heard his name).

As I uttered the words "picked it up" there was a smile of derision—they evidently did not believe me. How was I to prove my words? No one had been near me when I found it.

"Is that all you have to say?" asked the President, "because that goes for nothing."

"Let me warn you," I hotly answered. "You are not in Russia, where you can get rid quietly of any obnoxious person, but in Europe; and you'll find yourselves with ropes round your necks if you dare lay violent hands on me."

"Ho! ho!" laughed the brutal President.

"One minute, Frushinkoff," said Scholvolski.

"Hush! hush! How could you be so imprudent? before that man, too!"

"Pardon me; it slipped out," rejoined Scholvolski; "but I don't think he will ever repeat it."

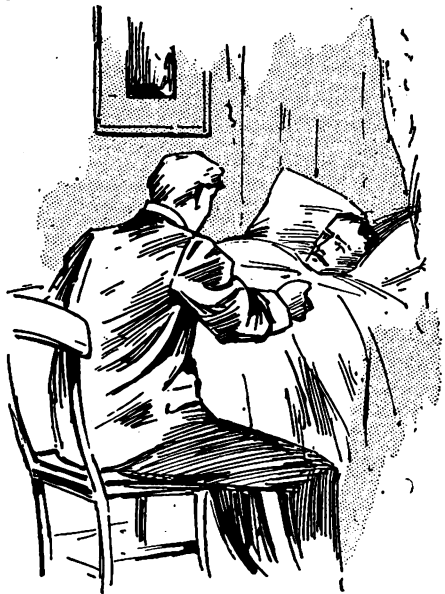
While this bye-talk had been going on between them, I had been racking my brain to try and remember where I had heard the name of Frushinkoff, when all at once I recollected that he was the man who had been at the head of a conspiracy to assassinate the Tsar, and was known to be the most cruel, unscrupulous man in the world. Now I no longer wondered why I had so instinctively mistrusted him, and it was in his merciless hands my life was placed.

"One minute," resumed Scholvolski, having, apparently, appeased the President; "I suppose, as usual, we keep a memento?"

"Certainly," replied the President, and nodded to the porter, who went to the cupboard, and produced a long flat box, which he placed on the table.

"How many will his make?" asked Scholvolski.

"Let's see," said the President, and, with a small gold key attached to his watch-chain, he unlocked the box. How he glared at the contents! "His will be the ninth!" said the President.



He showed me the unlucky ornament.

"Pass it round," asked Scholvolski, who was close to me; and when it was put down in front of him, my curiosity tempted me to look within it too. Heavens! what did I see? A row of human thumbs!

I shut my eyes at the horrid sight, and felt my blood run cold on hearing Scholvolski say, with a laugh, "Karl, you will have to enlarge this space; our friend's thumb here" (and he touched my thumb, which lay outstretched, my arm being bound to the arm of the chair), "is very large."

"The night is half over," said the President, "and we've lots to do before dawn; so come, Karl, the hatchet; and, Scholvolski, you write the card to attach to it, as a memoir of to-night's good work."

Good gracious! my thumb too large for the space! the hatchet! What does it all mean? I knew I had to die, but not to be tortured to death; not to have my limbs hacked off before my eyes. The thought was too fearful.

Although I was nearly unconscious, half dead with fright, I have a misty recollection of seeing the huge porter come up to me with a short hatchet in his hand, and unbind my forearm, laying it in a sort of iron groove which he fitted on the arm of the chair; then, binding it down again on this, and separating my thumb from the other fingers, by covering them with a sheet of lead, which fitted down tightly to the chair. Then he raised the hatchet.

. . . . . .

"Where am I? Who are these people standing round my bed?"

"Well, old fellow, how do you feel, eh?"

"Peter! no, it can't be!"

"He's just awake, mamma."

"Surely that's my sister Julia's voice!"

"Oh, I'm so glad, the dear boy!"

"And that's my mother's!"

In moving, such a pain shot through my right arm that I shrieked. Ah! now I remember. It was no dream, then, after all, but a stern reality. My thumb! Yes, it was missing; and my hand and arm were bound up. But why didn't they kill me? I must get them to tell me. But how came Peter here? Oh, how feeble my voice was.

"Hush!" they all said; "*to-morrow.*"

To-morrow came, and still they said to-morrow; and so, many morrows came and went. At last, after about seven to-morrows, they all assembled round my bed, and kissed me, and asked me how I felt.

"May I talk now?" I asked, eagerly.

"Yes," they answered, "for you are saved."

"Saved!" I exclaimed; "has it been so bad as that?"

They silently nodded their heads, looking very serious.

"For pity's sake, don't do that!" I exclaimed, for it reminded me of that night, and of those silent men.

"Now, Peter, sit down by his bedside, and tell him quietly how you saved his life," said my mother.

"You saved my life, Peter?"

"Yes, my dear friend; even as you once saved mine. I have never forgotten it, and at last I found an opportunity of returning the compliment. You know, of course, that nearly every Russian belongs to some secret society—I among others. We have our signs, signals, and private orders, which, of course, we only wear *entre nous*. Now for my share in this wretched business.

"Some weeks ago my firm ordered me to England. My sister was always pining to be there, and my mother was wretched at the thought of separation from me, who had never been away from her before. So we agreed to go to your country, and take you by surprise; and that is the reason you have not heard from us for some time."

"Is Catrina here, then?" I demanded, excitedly.

"Hush! yes; the doctor wouldn't let you see her before.

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This afternoon, if you are quiet, you may. But, to resume, I went to your house in the country, and found you were in Homburg; and as I had still a week or two before I began work, I thought I would bring my mother and Catrina over here with me. Ah, dear me! how unlucky it was I came!"

She came!

"Why?"

"If I hadn't come, you would never have picked up that order. If you hadn't picked up that order, you would not have gone through that dreadful night. And if you hadn't picked up that order, you would have a thumb on your right hand now."

"But how did your coming do all this?"

"Because," he answered, slowly, "that order you picked up I dropped."

"You?"

"Yes. See, here it is," and unbuttoning his waistcoat, he showed me the unlucky ornament.

"Put it away, for heaven's sake," I cried, "it makes my arm ache so!"

"Pardon me, my friend, but I want you to know everything. Now to conclude, and tell you how I came to be lucky enough to save you.

"On the afternoon we arrived I went off to the post-office to ask for letters. It was there I must have lost this. After dinner I started to ascertain if you were still at the Kursaal. Thinking I might meet some of my secret friends, I looked to see if the order was safe, and found, to my dismay, it was gone. As I walked up to the Kursaal, I carefully looked all over the ground. I saw it nowhere.

"At the post-office I looked carefully, especially on the steps, when an official asked me what I had dropped. I told him a small jewel; he then said he had seen an English gentleman pick it up, and fasten it in his coat. Then I *was* frightened, for if any of my society were to see it in his coat, it would cost him his life, I knew; so I tore all round the Kursaal, which was shutting up, but could find no trace of anyone with the order, nor of you.

"I wandered about long after the rooms were closed, and, at last, was going home very disconsolately, when I met a man hurrying along in the opposite direction, and in whom I recognised a Russian friend, a member of my society. We chatted for some minutes, when, looking at his watch, he told me he must hurry, or he should miss the fun.

"'What fun?' I asked.

"'Oh, some Englishman, or half Russian, half English, has got hold of some of our private signals, knows all about our society, and this very afternoon has been publicly wearing our order; how he got it no one can say; he has been gulled into attending the meeting, and is to be tried to-night. I'm off to see what Frushinkoff and Scholvolski intend to do with him.'

"Off we both started, called a carriage, and arrived shortly after at the awful house. The doorkeeper wouldn't admit me at first, because I couldn't show my order; but, luckily, my friend was a very important member of the society, and became guarantee for me.

"We entered the room, and were recognised directly, and every one began to tell us what the culprit had done.

"'But the fool has fainted, and we want him to come to, that we may finish him,' said Frushinkoff to me.

"'Let me see him,' I said; 'I know a little about medicine, and perhaps can succeed.'

"They made way for me, and I stood beside the fainting man. Oh, my friend, what an awful shock! for it was you, my dear, good brother. It was you who had picked up the order I dropped, and had suffered such agony for my carelessness.

"I immediately protested against their treatment. I told them it was my order which I had lost; and I referred them to the witness I had met with in the official.

"Well, after immense trouble, and on my going security for you with my life, they eventually allowed me to take you away.

"There, that's all; and now you must get well again as quickly as possible."

"How lucky you came in time," was all I could murmur.

Just then my mother and sister came in, and seeing my wistful glance at the door, Julia smiled and called for Catrina.

She came, and how I doted on her.

My story is done. We all returned to England the moment I was well enough. Peter took a small house for his mother and Catrina, close to ours, and we were very happy. In a month or two I married Catrina, and Peter, Julia.

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A GOOD SAMARITAN

A STORY OF INDIAN WARFARE.

IT was so hot that the blue-gum leaves fairly sizzled. So hot, that, as Pete Oberlin looked across the road from his shanty, the outlines of the Oasis Saloon, and those of the combined post-office and grocery, seemed to waver and dance in the furnace current rising to the glaring, brazen sky. Hot as it was out of doors, it was still more like an oven in Pete's little one-room hut, for the fire was blazing, and Pete, coatless and vestless, was looking after a frying-pan of bacon and a mess of boiling potatoes.

The appetising odour floated out of the doorway and spread over the neighbourhood. It was distinctly noticeable as far off as the row of lopped eucalypti beyond the saloon. At the foot of one of these trees lay what at first sight seemed only a bundle of rags; but a closer inspection revealed a shock of black hair and glimpses of a brown parchment skin that indicated a human being.

Gradually, as the welcome aroma reached the creature's befogged brain, the heap of rags stirred and tossed, and finally, uplifting bodily, resolved itself into a very dirty and torn blanket, surmounted by a hideous, blear-eyed countenance. The old hag—for it was a woman—sniffed at the wandering fragrance, trying to catch its direction, and then staggered unsteadily across the road to Pete's cabin.

"Helloe, there, Wawaga! Gettin' over yer spree?" greeted that gentleman easily.

"Umph! No drunk! Injun hungry!" remarked the visitor.

Pete, laughing good-naturedly, replied: "You wait; I'll give you a bite pretty quick now."

The old woman squatted on her heels by the stove and greedily eyed the preparations for the feast, while Pete kept his own eyes steadily on his cooking to forestall any possible burning. The squaw's restless gaze roved round the room, finally pausing at the shelf behind the stove, upon which stood a cheap alarm-clock and a big black bottle; whereupon she announced, in her quavering croak:

"Ol' Injun heap thirsty."

Pete laughed again. "Go along out ter ther pump, then," he said.

But Wawaga's eye was still glued to the interesting object before her. Soon Pete himself went out to the pump, bucket in hand; immediately the bundle of rags by the wall stretched up a lean arm, with the quick and stealthy motion of a pouncing cat, and, seizing the bottle, poured the fiery contents down through the brown, parchment throat.

Such an unearthly howling and yelling followed this successful thievery, that Pete dropped his bucket and came running in, to find his guest doubled up in agony and rolling on the floor screeching like mad.

"What in thunder's struck her?" he cried; but just then catching sight of the black bottle still clutched in the Indian's skinny claw, his blank look turned to a wide grin. He dropped on the nearest box, slapping his thigh and chuckling: "My eye! ef the old fool ain't drunk that ther quart o' lamp oil!" The terror-stricken screaming redoubled, while the man watched the poor wretch's antics in ecstasy. "It'll teach her to quit meddlin'," he muttered gleefully; but as the moments passed he began to realise that the matter was serious, for the creature's contortions grew awful, and her anguish too great for amusement.

Pete's grin faded insensibly; he scratched his head thoughtfully, grumbling: "Don't know as I want the old gal kickin' the bucket here and now, but what in creation's a feller goin' ter do fer her? Oh, gosh! I know!" He bolted across the road, sending up a choking cloud of powdery soil, and burst into the store.

"I say, Ike, yer got any mustard?" he demanded. "Old Wawaga's drunk all my lamp oil, an' it's goin' to kill her! Don't yer hear that screechin'?"

Ike Dempsey, roused from his mid-day nap, rubbed his eyes and stretched himself, then rising deliberately from the barrel on which he was sitting and thrusting his quid into one cheek, drawled lazily: "Wal, now, where's the hurt ef the ol' sot do gin us the shake? Oh, doan't be in er rush naow! I guess ther's a can er mustard raound somewhere."

Reaching a long, lazy arm under the counter, he clattered among his possessions and brought up a fistful of yellow-brown dust. "This here nuff? Never mind payin'!" In two minutes more Pete Oberlin laid violent hands on the rolling heap of agony in his cabin, and sternly commanded, "Drink this." She drank it. Then the frontierman dragged her bodily outside the shanty, and left her alone with her misery.

After some time Pete returned to his patient, bearing a tin plate with a generous share of his dinner. He presented this with a flourish, and grinned sympathetically as the morsels of food disappeared.

When the shadows of the blue-gums stretched long and gaunt to the eastward, and a mellow pink flushed the tops of the grand, distant mountains, a tipsy and squalid old squaw, in tattered blanket, trailed slowly up the dusty road through the foothills; and for six months neither Ike Dempsey, nor Pete, nor even Pat Grogan at the saloon, saw any more of Wawaga.

When Pete Oberlin reached up to the shelf behind the stove that night, and, after feeling vainly in the darkness, struck a match and examined the surface, he let forth a volley of imprecations, finishing up with: "Wisht I'd let the old thief die and be hanged to her, afore ever she got away with my hand-carved briar-wood pipe."

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Week after week Pete Oberlin, in his capacity of mail-carrier, jogged over the dusty plain, wound in and out through the foothills, with a stop here and there at the ranches, and climbed over the ridge to the fort on the reservation, always the destination of the biggest part of his budget.

After the early rains had carpeted the bare brown hills with green and given a glossier tinge to the mournful bark-stripped eucalyptus, he began to hear ugly rumours on his trips from farmhouse to farmhouse. There had not been an Indian outbreak for twenty years in that section, but some disquieting influence was hard at work on the red-skins. Some said the Indian Messiah was coming, others that one of Geronimo's lieutenants had been sowing this excitement among them; be that as it may, there was watchful anxiety at the fort, and a growing feeling of danger in the breasts of the neighbouring ranchmen.

Every bit of this came, of course, to the ears of the mail-carrier, and, in the snug bar-room of the "Oasis," he would regale a little knot of cronies with highly coloured tales of the secret dances, the weapons, and war preparations to be seen in wild nooks in the hills, if a white man knew where to look for them. Yet for all these notes of warning no one dreamt of an actual dangerous uprising.

One soft winter's night, when the damp-laden rain wind blew heavily from the south, and the low-hung cloud blanket shut out every wee ray of starlight, dark-mounted figures met

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in a sheltered hill basin. Ten, twenty, fifty, they gathered; then in single file, with muffled hoofs, they wound away from their prison. Several hours later, as the mischievous band stealthily made its way out on the plain, a stunted figure, in a ragged blanket, shrunk silently into the bushes to let the cavalcade pass, and then emerged once more from her cover and struck into a swinging trot in the rear of the swift-moving riders.

A faint, angry flush of dawn peeped over the sombre mountains as the redskins surrounded the few scattered buildings composing Rush Station. A dog barked in the rear of the saloon, and in response, a sharp report sent a shudder through the chill morning air; with a howl of anguish, the poor beast rolled over in the dust. At the crack of the pistol, the half-dozen men in the shanties came tumbling out from different doorways. Not one was more than half-dressed, but each one had snatched up his rifle. What odds are six men against fifty?

As the hastily wakened settlers stumbled out from their cabins, a leaden hail rattled round them; two of their number fell, struck off at once by the raiders. "Injuns!" cried Ike Dempsey, and the four remaining defenders, now very thoroughly aroused, drew quickly back into the store and blazed away from this cover at their murderous assailants. They had ammunition in plenty and spare guns. Ike's wife put her two little sobbing children into a big box in the centre of the building, as the point that was furthest from danger, and herself filled the hot, smoking rifles.

The fusilade was thick and fast, and bullets flew in through the openings. Pat Grogan's right arm was shattered, but he rested his gun on the window and fired away vindictively. Poor Smith was shot through the lungs, and fell in a dying condition; Mrs. Dempsey took his place, handling her rifle deftly. Time and again some sharp howl of anguish told of a well-directed shot at the half-concealed, sinister foemen.

Morning was advancing; perhaps by this time the flight from the reservation was discovered, and soldiers were coming to help them—if only they could keep the red devils at bay a little longer. Vain hope! Black Wing, chief of the raiders, had also thought of the soldiers; he concluded it was time to make short work of these sharp-sighted marksmen who were picking off his companions. There came a sudden, fearful yelling, a swift rush and retreat of moccasined feet, then the pungent smell of smoke, and the ominous crackling of the fire licking up the dry boards. The heat became intolerable—to remain was sure death from the destroying element.

"We must run for it, boys!" cried Pete Oberlin. "The door of my shanty stands open, an' there ain't no Injuns inside it!"

The shot-riddled portal was flung wide, with the two little lads in the middle, the forlorn hope sought a new refuge, their guns speaking death in the passage. Ike Dempsey fell in his own doorway, shot through the brain. Pat Grogan fell in the roadway, and, at the same moment, the brave who had shot him reeled and toppled down from his saddle. With a horrible sense of sickness, Pete saw a savage horseman bury his tomahawk in the woman's head, and then snatch up one of the children and dash his skull on the door-stone. The other little fellow slipped from the hand that grasped at him, and stumbled over the cabin threshold, barely escaping a bullet; a sharp whistle cut the air, Pete felt a stinging pain in his shoulder, and fell to the ground unconscious.

With an exultant shout at the destruction of this last enemy, the savage band swarmed from their place of attack, and hastily entered the buildings, stowing away whatever was easily portable, and making sad havoc in Grogan's stock of liquors; but they were not yet far enough from the reservation to allow themselves a long stop. The store was burning fiercely. To force his unruly followers to hurry, Black Wing fired the saloon with his own hand, the wooden frame blazing like tinder.

One by one the sheds were ignited; three or four wretches, with fresh, gory scalps dangling at their belts, rushed over to apply the torch to the only remaining building—Pete Oberlin's shanty. A young brave stumbled over the inanimate form in the pathway, and with a hoop of delight waved his keen blade over the thick black locks. Just as he stooped to his victim, an odd, long-drawn cry arrested his arm in its motion. A wild and dust-covered figure sprang into the blood-crazed circle, pouring out a torrent of guttural abuse and lamentations that somehow commanded attention.

The old woman—for it was Wawaga—bent over the prostrate man, waving off the armed braves, and felt for the faintest of heart-beats; then raising herself to her full height, shaking back her snaky hair, and with a rude, powerful majesty, she commanded in her own tongue:

"Go, while yet you have time! Before the morning has ended, the soldiers will be on you. This man still lives. He is mine; do not touch him; you have the scalps of the others."

Wawaga was one of the mothers of the tribe, and her words had weight with the warriors. Black Wing mounted his pony, and all his raiders did likewise. In the light of the grey, cloudy morning, a wild procession scurried over the plain and away once more to the mountains, where they could find secret hiding and for months elude their pursuers, while they kept the whole country in terror with their burning and killing.

When Pete Oberlin, lying in his own bunk, opened his eyes on the dim scene lighted by the flickering fire, he thought he had gone through a horrible dream. Kicking off the covers, he sat up with a vigorous jerk; but the sharp pain in his shoulder made him grind his teeth in agony. At the same moment he became aware of a dark figure crouched in one corner holding a bundle of white. His sudden motion and muttered exclamation stirred the quiet watcher; stumbling to her feet, she bore her burden to the pallet and deposited it beside him. "Him live, lil boy," she announced gravely.

Pete sank back beside the sleeping child, with a choking sensation, half-thankfulness for their escape and half-horror at the suddenly conjured picture of the boy's murdered mother and brother. He remembered how he was wounded. How had they two escaped scalping? How came Wawaga there? Were the redskins still at the station? If so, he must use great caution. Perhaps they had kept him for torture. The woman anticipated his queries. "Injuns gone! You go now, 'fore come back!" Pete started again upright, maintaining his position in spite of the shooting and dreadful dizziness.

"Which way shall I go, and how?" he asked eagerly. "I must teke little Jim. Did them raskils git all their hosses?"

"White man keep still! Wawaga get pony!" and the old woman drew the tattered blanket round her and slipped noiselessly from the room, leaving Pete to his own busy thoughts. She was gone but a few seconds before she glided in again, muttering, "Him ready. You go fort, no find Injuns!"

Wawaga herself carried out the boy. "No touch, arm hurt," she said, motioning away the wounded man. Very gently she lifted the tiny figure, stilling the fretful wail and coaxing him to wake up and ride on the pony. She led the way, and Pete followed. As he stepped out into the dusk, his heart swelled at the utter desolation. Only the scorched row of gum-trees marked the site of the Rush Station beside his forlorn little cabin.

With a good deal of wrenching and pain Pete clambered into the saddle; the squaw lifted the boy before him; the man gathered the bridle into his useful hand, encircling the child with the same arm. Before he put spurs to his horse and set out on his perilous journey, he leant down towards the stunted and squalid hag at the horse's head, saying hoarsely: "You're a good'un, Wawaga! I'll do as much fer you if ever I git ther chance."

"Ugh!" grunted the old woman. "Squaw no good; heap good white man, no let ol' Injun die! All even now. Here—ol' squaw take um—no good, b'long white man." She thrust a black something into his hand, and, turning stolidly ound, re-entered the desolate cabin.

Peter Oberlin buried his spurs in his animal's flank, and the beast sprang forward, past the heaps of smouldering cinders and the rows of gum-trees, and headed straight for the mountains. In his unwounded hand, with the bridle, Pete held his long-lost briar-wood pipe.

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The Outlaws' Treasure.

Illustrated by MR. A. KEMP TEBBY.

—o—

SUMMARY.

The mail train has been robbed between Cornwall and La Grange stations, and £20,000 worth of gold stolen by a gang of desperadoes, headed by two brothers named Mulligan Two passengers on the train—Adolph Squirrek, *alias* Smith, a detective tracking the Mulligans, and Fred Welden, a young lawyer—who have struck up an acquaintance on the way, alight at Somerville, where the former stopped at the "Drover," and the latter at his mother's house. During the night a message comes to say that Judge Woodland's horse has come back alone, and Weldon, together with Squirrek and two other men set out to find him, and discover one of Mulligan's confederates lying senseless on the road. The man, who had made an unsuccessful attempt on the life of the judge, is sentenced to forty years imprisonment. At Judge Woodland's Weldon meets a Spaniard named Alvarido Almanaz, and the two men become rivals for the love of Florence, the judge's daughter. Weldon is inveigled to a lonely bridge near Cornwall, and disappears. Squirrek pays a fruitless visit to the spot. Squirrek arouses the citizens of Cornwall, who make their way to the outlaws' hiding-place.

CHAPTER XVII.

MR. SMITH FINDS A MYSTERIOUS SLIP OF PAPER.

As stealthily as shadows we advanced, and in a few seconds more were in front of the outlaws' cabin. I was a few feet in advance and observed that the door was a few inches ajar, which led me to believe that there was no one within, or that they were all asleep.

This supposition, however, was quickly renounced at the very moment of reaching my hand forward to push open the door, for I heard distinctly the sound of a footstep, as if someone were walking hastily over the floor in slippers. The door was slammed violently to, and we could hear the fastenings rapidly put in place.

This fired up my men, and with a shout they threw themselves against the door. But it was built with a view of just such emergencies as these, and it did not yield in the least.

At this juncture, my lieutenant, young Belknap, performed a deed which was certainly very daring and startling in its character. While the others were bumping and hammering away at the door, I suddenly saw him going over the roof of the cabin like a monkey; and before anyone suspected his intentions, he threw one foot over the wall of the heavy stone chimney, and the next instant dropped out of sight.

We all held our breath and listened. There was profound silence for a moment, and then a sound of scuffling was heard, and again silence, and then someone working at the door.

When it was opened, Belknap stood before us, exhausted, and behind him lay the fifth of the Mulligan gang, placed *hors de combat.*

"Were there no more?" I inquired.

"Not that I saw."

"You were brave, but it was too rash."

Up to this time I had a lingering hope that Fred Weldon would be found a prisoner in the building, and I still looked about me with a trembling, eager glance; but one glimpse of the room was sufficient to dissipate all such hope.

There was but a single apartment in the entire building, and it was without garret or cellar. A slight examination proved further that there was no "hidden chamber" or retreat provided for the vast amount of wealth that must certainly be in the possession of this gang.

I knew that there was a general expectation of finding a sort of Captain Kidd's treasure here, and the men began ransacking the cabin all through, and searching outside. There was no flooring at all, and the earth was packed almost as hard as a rock, yet they managed to harrow up every square foot—treating the dead body as a useless log—but their search was without any tangible result.

I was glad that nothing was found; not on my account, but for the sake of the men, who would have been demoralised by the sight of gold, and probably would have fallen to wrangling and fighting over it, and unquestionably serious results would have followed.

"They are too cunning to hide their treasure here," I remarked, with a smile, when I saw they were about to despair. "They have taken good care to put it where there is no danger of any of *us* finding it."

They threw themselves a'nst the door.

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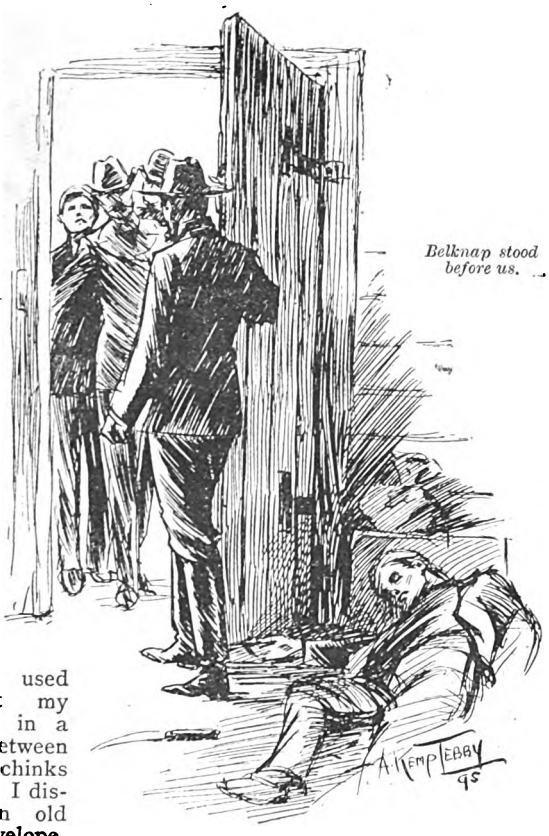
They were very reluctant to give up the search, but, by this time, they began to feel a sort of shame at their diversion from their first object in coming thither, and they announced themselves ready to leave the island.



Belknap stood before us.

While they were thus occupied I was not idle myself, although I used little but my eyes; but in a crevice between the rough chinks of the logs I discovered an old yellow envelope, without superscription of any kind, but within, written in a fine hand, upon a carefully-folded piece of notepaper, was the following:—

"1——0——1

"Cfujk't Bsdfj 5ozct Mpqug Vmeds sid X gjsf Nbg."

I saw at once that there was something here, but it was in the form of a riddle, which I had no time to study out that time. So I placed it carefully away in my pocket-book, to be examined at my leisure.

As nothing more remained to be accomplished, we set fire to the cabin and pulled off from the island. As the poor wretch of an outlaw was dead beyond all surgical skill, it was no cruelty to him that he was burned according to the Hindoo fashion.

We found our friends impatiently awaiting us on shore, where they were anxious to be led against the remnant of the outlaws. As these numbered only three, and they were not known to be anywhere in the vicinity, we started on our way back to Brampton.

As no clue had yet been obtained to the whereabouts of young Weldon, quite a number were anxious to make a search for him—a proceeding in which I gladly assisted. We ranged up and down Devil's Creek, examining the limpid stream with a minuteness that revealed every frog which had not yet retired to his winter quarters.

I was pleased and not disappointed at their failure to discover anything at all that could throw light upon the disappearance of Weldon; for I had a theory of my own which held out strong hope of unearthing my friend, and had they come upon his inanimate body, of course my whole theory would have exploded.

It was growing dusk when we swarmed up the railway line and signalled the westward bound train, which set us down in the station at Brampton about half an hour later.

Here we learnt that the rising against the Mulligan brothers was not confined to Cornwall alone. Hundreds were scouring the country for a radius of fifty miles round.

A few minutes after our arrival, a telegram was received announcing that Jake Johnson, another of the outlaws, had been caught in a barn a few miles from Somerville, whither he had been chased by a party of men, half of whom were on horseback. Refusing to surrender, the barn had been fired and he burned within it, but not until he had killed two of his pursuers and desperately wounded three others.

This left, as was generally believed, only the two leaders, Dick and Jim, at large, and no one seemed to have any inkling of their whereabouts. They had probably been warned, and were securely concealed somewhere by their friends, and doubtless would soon effect their escape out of a neighbourhood which had suddenly become too hot to hold them.

The excitement in Cornwall subsided as rapidly as it arose. There was a vast deal of conversation regarding the proceedings of the day, but as no one had any additional information to communicate, they soon tired of this, and the usual quiet reigned over the town.

I found myself quite a lion, however, and saw that the only way I could escape being bored to death, was either to leave the place or to don a disguise which could not be penetrated.

In the quiet of the evening, and when alone in my room, I took out my bit of writing, and for two hours intently studied it, seeking some clue to its meaning; but not the slightest success rewarded my perseverance. To me it was as dumb as the Sphinx.

CHAPTER XVIII.

RELATES WHAT HAPPENED ON THE PLATFORM.

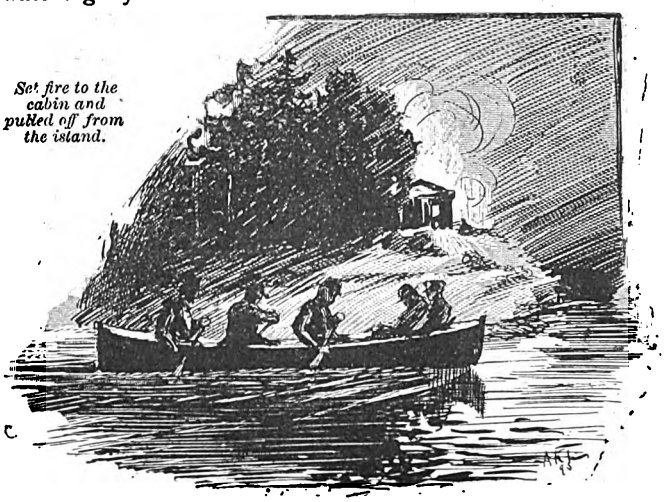
THURSDAY, November ——.—This morning, on my way to the station to take the train to Somerville, I dropped in at the post-office, and received the following note, postmarked Chicago, and addressed to Richard X. Smith, the name I recorded on the hotel register yesterday:

"SIR,—Frederick Weldon, about whose disappearance you are so greatly concerned, is in Chicago, and was seen there to-day, and addressed by me. He says he has reasons for keeping his presence here unknown to his friends at home for some time to come. I tell you this that you may rest easy.—GEORGE JACQUET."

No doubt the individual writing the above note thought he did a very clever thing when he sent it to me, but as it happens to be in the same hand that wrote the warnings to the jury when "poor Tom Borie" was on trial, and that penned the letter that drew Weldon to the bridge over the Devil's Creek, it certainly did not deceive me for an instant.

It proved one thing only to my mind. The search for Weldon had become so close and vigorous that certain parties were becoming uneasy, and the letter was a ruse intended to throw us off the scent.

There was no little comfort afforded me in the reception of this letter, for it pointed more strongly than ever to my young friend still walking the earth, and it gave me a capital opportunity of effectually blinding those who were evidently watching my movements.


Set fire to the cabin and pulled off from the island.

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When I was about to procure my ticket for Somerville, I went back to the hotel, under the plea that I had forgotten something, and remained in my room for over an hour. Then I told the landlord that I was going towards Chicago, to be gone probably some time. And so I went.

At the station I purchased a ticket for Chicago, and sped on towards that wonderful city, with no intention of going to it for some time to come. I carefully scanned the faces of all the passengers in my car, but I am convinced that there was no one following me, and that I was free from all observation, except that of a general character.

After changing cars several times, and crossing the line into Illinois, I left the train at a small village, which boasted the euphonious name of Cabbagetown. At a little miserable tavern I managed to secure a room, where, during the evening, I made my metamorphosis.

In the morning I appeared in a bushy red wig, with my complexion dyed an olive colour, and in the habiliments of a Western drover, my trousers being tucked in at the top of my boots, while I had a swaggering air which was as good as the genuine. This is simply my disguise in which to get back to Somerville without being recognised. After I reach that place I can make any change necessary, but I think it will throw *them* or *him* off the track, or, as Weldon terms it, in his journal, *the shadow*.

The landlord stared at me like one thunderstruck when I made my appearance, but I explained it by saying that I had called to see my friend Jones, who would shortly be down.

This satisfied him, although what he thought when Jones proved *non est* is more than I can imagine. Perhaps he imagined that he had been annihilated by me, or spirited away in some mysterious manner.

It was raining when I reached the station in Cabbagetown, and the train was two hours behind time, so I had a dreary spell of it in the rickety station until I could start to Somerville again.

At first I sat down by the fireplace and endeavoured to study out the curious piece of writing, that had been discovered in the outlaws' cabin, but as I never was expert at doing such things, I had not the incentive which a slight prospect of success gives anyone.

We detectives may boast of our success in "working up" cases, yet those who are in the profession know how much depends upon chance or accident. A clue thus obtained often leads to success; but when a man has his wits alone to use, without any extraneous help in the way of accidental

The landlord stared at me like one thunderstruck.

I could hear the murmur of their voices.

discovery, he is baffled and completely defeated more frequently than is generally supposed.

In this little country village of Cabbagetown I never dreamt for a moment that anything would be seen or heard having the slightest bearing upon the disappearance of Frederick Weldon; and yet, while waiting for the train, I made a discovery which gave me more light than anything I had as yet learned.

I was walking moodily along the dark station, smoking my cigar, while a drizzling rain was falling upon me, when I suddenly became aware that there were two other men also on the platform, engaged in doing the same. They, however, kept beyond the feeble light thrown out by the lamp of the stationmaster, and I could just make out their forms as they slowly walked back and forth.

I could hear the murmur of their voices, and it was evident that they were conversing very earnestly about something. At the distance where I stood it was impossible to detect a word, so I began manœuvring to get a nearer position without attracting notice, not with the expectation of learning anything important, but from a habit I have got into of endeavouring to pick up every scrap of information possible, without regard to the time and occasion.

Back and forth I walked, puffing at my cigar, and gradually extending my walk until I managed to encounter the strangers and to get a glimpse of their faces. They ceased talking when I came within earshot, but the momentary glance I obtained disclosed the fact that both of the individuals, although strangers to me, were in disguise.

Whether a detective becomes long-eared in time may well be questioned, but he certainly grows sharp-eared, and by-and-bye I caught a word.

"It's rather risky," said one.

"I don't see as it is. No one will know us."

"But they've woke up in that neighbourhood, and be apt to nab the first feller they catched near the bridge."

"Then *he'll* be snapped up, if there was danger, but he's very sharp, and I'm afeard he'll be a little too sharp for us."

Here we receded from each other, and it was several minutes before I caught their utterances again. As yet I had no suspicion that their words concerned me at all, but I was startled by what I heard next.

"If we can get there before him he may go to the dogs, and we'll give this neighbourhood a wide berth after this."

"Better wait until the excitement dies out," said the more cautious stranger.

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"And lose it all," growled the other.

"How do you know that he can find it?"

"Hasn't he got the paper?"

"Of course he has, but he hasn't got the brains to make it out."

"Can't be sure of that; he'll play sharp on us if he gets a chance, and I 'spect he's larned how to read it."

"Then make him try to coax me to show him?"

"All a blind——."

Again the drizzling rain intervened, and shut out the words. The men glanced at me several times, but they were earnest and did not speak in as low tones as they imagined. Anxious as I was to hear the rest of their words, I was compelled, for appearance sake, to saunter away until I was beyond earshot.

Then I lit another cigar and stood at the other end of the station, as if I was listening the coming of the train, which I sincerely hoped would be delayed a half hour longer at the least.

"If you are determined to risk it, you can do so."

"You will go with me?"

"Of course."

"They thinned us out pretty well; they haven't left us Jubal, even, the harmless darkie."

"We're even there, for we've used up more of them. I only wish we had that young dog off our hands."

"He soon will be; he's the game of the Duke."

"Delays are dangerous——"

The faint whistle of the far off train was heard and the men ceased talking.

"Have you your ticket?" suddenly asked one.

"No; let's get them."

I was within when they came in the station and saw them buy two tickets to the Junction, the point where we changed carriages to go to Somerville. As cautiously as I could I stole a glance at their faces, and fixed them in my mind.

They looked at me more than once, but I assumed my most innocent and oblivious expression, and neither had the remotest thought that that simple-looking drover had any suspicion of them.

Far up the road the starlight glimmer of the approaching engine was seen, and through the drizzling shower the shrill shriek of the whistle reached us as the train began to slacken speed.

My acquaintances buttoned their overcoats to their chins, and walked out upon the platform, I, as a matter of course, following close behind them.

They stood in silence a few moments, and then one of them muttered an imprecation against the weather as a blast of wind swept the driving rain into his face.

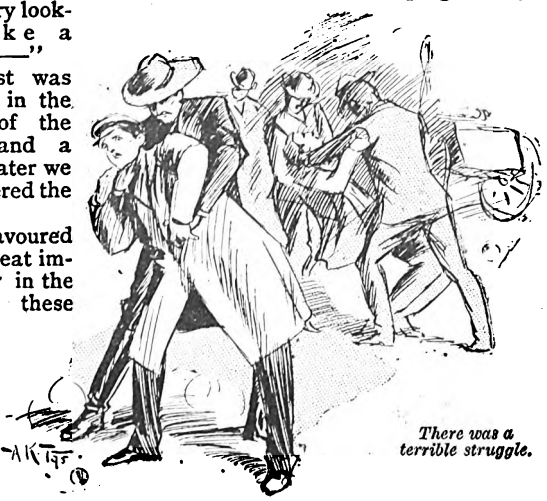
"There's one man I'd like to get even with," said the other.

"The feller that started this hunt?"

"Yes; that infernal detective that's been tramping through the country looking like a minister——"

The rest was drowned in the shrieks of the whistle, and a moment later we three entered the carriage.

I endeavoured to get a seat immediately in the rear of these gentry, but was disappointed, as the place was occupied.



There was a terrible struggle.

At the Junction I was no more fortunate, although I kept in the same carriage, and went with them to Somerville, where they went their road, and I mine.

But I was well convinced by this time that I had made the acquaintance of no less personages than the two veritable Mulligan brothers, who, by some powerful attraction, were drawn towards the very central point of danger to themselves.

But they were in my power, the man who of all others was the least disposed to show them a particle of mercy.

I was able to hear every word they uttered.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE CAPTURE OF THE BROTHERS.

I SAID the Mulligan brothers went their way, and I mine, which was simply because our paths were the same. They preceded me to the Drover's Hotel, which we reached just as night was closing in (for a great many miles intervened between Somerville and Cabbagetown). As I suspected, they were going to lodge in the same house with me. I kept out of sight until they had eaten their supper, and gone to their rooms.

Then I passed into the bar-room, and saw the signature of Richard Phillips and James Wilson, and the room they had taken; after which I went out and made my way to the mayor's office.

After a few preliminaries I finally put the question:

"Any prospect of capturing the Mulligan brothers?"

"Not much; they have been in too many hard scrapes to be caught in this one. And then, they have had time to get out of the neighbourhood."

"Is there any reward out for their apprehension?"

"The man who can enable us to put our hands upon these two brothers will make £2,000."

"Well, sir, if you will give me sufficient force I will capture both of those men, and produce them at this office within an hour!"

The old fellow rose from his seat and stared at me in amazement for a few seconds.

"Are you in earnest?"

"Never more so in my life."

"You shall have your men, then. How many do you want?"

"Four or five."

He summoned the six police officers which constituted the whole force of Somerville. One of these acted as marshal, and we started towards the Drover's Hotel.

On the very eve of success, we came within a hair's breadth of failing. The Mulligan brothers had left the hotel at the time we reached it, and we learnt that they had gone to a livery stable, doubtless intending to make their contemplated visit to the "Bridge" during the night.

Fearful of their escaping us altogether, we broke into a run for the stables, and reached them just as the two men were entering a light cart to drive away.

There was a terrible struggle before they were captured, and once or twice I thought that these two desperate men would overcome more than three times their number who were struggling with them. Pistol shots were freely fired, and when a crowd began collecting, I believe the desperadoes only surrendered through fear of falling into their hands.

They were hurried off to gaol, and on the way thither, the ominous cry of "Lynch them! Lynch them!" was heard, but the officers made all haste through the street with them, and had them hustled and locked into the gaol before the mob had time to organise for a rescue.

During the combat with the police officers, the wigs and disguises had been stripped from the outlaws, so that they were readily recognised by the crowd.

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The mayor had strong fears of the gaol being attacked, and he placed as large a force as he could organise on guard round it during the night. There were mutterings of a storm, which grew more portentous as the night advanced until I finally made my way towards the official's office to advise him to make a speech to the crowd, or to do something to conciliate them.

As I went in, I encountered a tall man coming out. We met in the dark, so that I could not see his face, although I suspected his identity.

"Who was he?" I inquired as soon as I was sure he was beyond hearing.

"A Spaniard, I presume, from the name he gave—Almanaz."

"You will excuse me," I said; "but it will help the cause of justice if you will tell me what errand he had with you."

"He asked me for a note that would admit him into the gaol to see the Mulligans."

"Did you comply with his request?"

"I did, after considerable importunity on his part. He said they had stolen and concealed a vast amount of plate and jewellery belonging to a friend of his, and he thought he could frighten the secret out of them now that they were in durance."

"Now, give me a note to the gaoler in the form of a peremptory order, whether you are legally empowered to do so or not, that he admits me to the cell adjoining that where these two men are confined."

The mayor looked rather doubtfully at me.

"I must hear what passes between these parties. It is all-important—and excuse me if I remind you that there is little time for delay."

Without a word he took up his pen and wrote a few lines, and then handed them to me. "Will that do?"

"The thing exactly; thank you, sir. Now put on your hat and come to the gaol with me. There are signs about that building that look bad, and that must receive attention."

"I understand you, sir," he replied, as he put on his hat; "whether a speech from me will produce any good effect or not remains to be seen."

"Let us make haste," said I, beginning to feel a little nervous.

We walked rapidly, and ten minutes later were pushing our way through the surging crowd round the gaol.

We found the gaoler excited, frightened, and angry. Although the mayor was with me, yet he refused to admit me.

"Wait until to-morrow, or till this crowd disperses."

"But you have just allowed a visitor to go in."

"Yes."

"Why did you do that?"

"Because I was so frightened I didn't know what I was doing."

"It was not that *alone*," remarked the mayor with a significant smile. "Mr. Jenkins here *must* go in; his request *must* be complied with. Do you act as his conductor, therefore, while I go out and do my best towards dispersing this crowd, which seems to be getting clamorous."

The gaoler sullenly complied, and as I passed in, I heard the mayor's voice rising above the din of the multitude. "Fellow citizens——," and then the hasty closing of the door shut out the rest of his speech.

My cicerone walked rapidly to a certain cell, hastily unlocked it, and then slammed it to behind me with such violence that, for a moment, I was sure he had fastened me in. In fact he was so sullen and out of humour that I did not exchange a word with him.

In a few minutes he withdrew.

Despite the clamour and racket on the outside, a tomb-like silence prevailed within. The cells were separated by thick walls, which made it impossible for me to catch what was said distinctly; but by shoving my door partly open, I was enabled to hear every word uttered.

The preliminaries had evidently been concluded, and the three men were talking "business."

"Who got us in this scrape?" demanded one of the Mulligans in a sullen, gruff voice, which seemed to insinuate an accusation against the Spaniard himself.

"It was the work of that vile detective," replied the Cuban.

"How did he know us?"

"He followed you to Cabbagetown, heard you talking together, and rode all the way back to Somerville with you in the train, as far as I can make out."

The language which followed this piece of information cannot be imagined nor described; and it was fearful to hear the imprecations which they called down upon the head of the innocent-looking drover, that they had scarcely deemed worth a moment's notice.

At the same time it was a source of wonder to me how the señor had become acquainted with this little exploit of mine, which I imagined to be a secret from every one. It was probably a sharp conjecture of his, from seeing me go into the mayor's office, and observing the part I took in the arrest.

"Is there any likelihood of their getting in?" was the next question, which, doubtless, referred to the mob outside.

"Shouldn't wonder a bit," replied Almanaz. "I tell you it looks pretty dark. Now, Jim, you promised me long ago to tell me the meaning of this writing; and what is the sense of waiting any longer?"

"I'll see you hanged first," was the moody reply.

"That would be a smart trick," added the other, "to let you walk out there, get it all, walk away with it, and then leave us without a cent."

"But what chance have you of getting out, any way?"

"We'll soon show them."

"But I'll swear that I won't take more than my third. You know I am entitled to that much."

"And you'll get it, too, when we get out of this fix, and not before."

Still the Cuban refused to be denied. He certainly had a great prize at stake, or he would not have held on in this manner.

"Car-a-ah!" he exclaimed with that low, rattling guttural so expressive of intense anger. "You're fast, you're gagged, and what good will it do you to carry the secret to the grave with you?"

"We haven't got to the grave yet," was the boastful retort of one of the Mulligans. "We're some way off yet."

"You may be nearer than you think."

"So may you; but why do you come to us? You've got it there on paper—why don't you read it yourself?"

"I can't make it out."

The outlaws laughed, and the señor renewed his entreaties, but they were in vain, and in a few minutes he withdrew, with muttered threats of being revenged upon them.

I waited until I was certain he was beyond sight, and then I followed. Outside I was surprised and pleased to find that not a soul was visible. The crowd were all gone, doubtless dispersed by the eloquence of the mayor. The hour was late, and I went straight to the hotel and retired.

(*To be continued.*)

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THE BURGLAR'S PAIN-PETTOATS

—o—

My friend, the burglar, when I asked him to drink, called the buxom young lady behind the bar Flossie, dorling, and asked her to give him some gin hot—unsweetened.

"Don't drown it," he said, when she was putting the water in—"don't drown it. Give it a chawnce. It cawn't swim, you know." He leant across the counter and spoke more lovingly to the magnificent young person. "I sy; I sy, where're you a-going to next Sunday, Ader? Eh? Give us one of them violets you've got."

The magnificent lady frowned at him with such loftiness that I expected him to die on the spot. But he didn't. He only hummed a tune intended, I think, to have a topical reference.

The lady at the bar panted and said breathlessly (and with no stops) "What next," she wondered, "horrid fellow, little less noise, if *you* please, you're not in a low music hall now." He responded to this with some feeling that he wished he was.

He drank to a toast of ten thousand a year for all of us, and sat down near me. Then he took off his soft cap, and silently dusted a few crumbs off the marble table, and put it on again.

"The best-looking business *I* was ever mixed up in," he said slowly, "was down at Heron Court, near Guildford. I may be a bit old-fashioned in my tastes, but I've always been rather partial to duchesses." (He said this with a relish, as though they were something sold in tins.) "And when I saw in *Lloyd's* that the young duke had gone and married Miss Deborah Clancy, daughter of the well-known rubber merchant, of New Haven, Connecticut; and when I saw that the wedding presents was both numerous and costly, and the happy pair had left town for the duke's house near Guildford, amid a shower of rice and old slippers, then I said to myself, I said, 'Go in and win, my boy, and play the game off of your own bat. Don't have no partners,' I says to myself. 'Don't have no confederates, but just go in and have a good old try.' So I dressed myself up very tastefully, and I went down to Milford Station.

"I had a Gladstone bag with me, and in that bag I had a few necessary articles that no one can do without.

"I was walking out one afternoon, and I was going down a lane pretty close to the grounds of the mansion. In front of me was a neat girl in blue serge, with a bonnet-box in her hand. She was one of the slim-waisted sort, and she carried herself very upright. As I passed her I caught sight of the address. It was for the Duchess. I lifts my hat like this—look!

"'Pardon me, miss,' says I, 'but might you be one of the maids at Heron Court?'

"'Well,' she says, 'I might.'

"'Oh!' I says. 'Pleasant weather we're having, aren't we!'

"She said yes it was very pleasant weather indeed. She said (this she said in a particularly affable way) she was afraid we should have wet before night.

"'Been here long?' I inquires.

"No, she hadn't been there long, she said. Only three weeks.

"'Come down with the duke's party, I suppose?'

"Yes, she said, she came down with the duke's party.

"'Like the place?'

"She said she didn't mind it. I asked her a few questions about the people. She said she could get on all right with the duke, and she was on awful good terms with the duchess; but she wouldn't give a shilling a gross for the servants. For one thing, she didn't believe they kept a proper look-out at the place. Whilst they were wasting their time in smoking and drinking and flirting, a burglar could get in at almost any moment.

"'Oh, well, miss, after all,' I says, 'we're none of us perfect, you know. We all have our little 'obbies.'

"I put on my best smile and made up my mind to have a dash for it. I asked her whether there was any chance of having a look in and a bit of supper in the evening. She looked at me very straight. Then she said a thing that knocked me silly.

"'I say, mister,' she says, 'where do I come in? How much am I going to make out of this little game?'

"I was so astonished that I quite blushed. I did, really.

"'Well,' I says, 'if you are going to put it that way, I suppose I'd better speak out straight. I'll give you twenty quid now, and I'll give you another twenty after it's over.'

"'Make it thirty sovereigns now and thirty after,' she said, 'and I'm your woman.'

"I started to argue a bit, and she turned on her heel.

"'Here stiddy on, my dear,' I says. 'Don't lose your temper. You've got a good-hearted face. You're not going to be hard on a poor chap, are you now? Give me a kiss and I'll give you twenty-five.'

"She fired up.

"'You don't have no kiss, mister,' she says, 'and if you want me to help you, you must hand over the coin. You kent do better, anyway.'

"I tell you she fairly knocked me over. I assure you, to look at her, you'd think she was as quiet a girl as ever wore shoes. She kept her eyes—bright, black eyes she had—fixed on my face, and seemed almost to enjoy the corner she'd got me in.

"I turned the matter quickly over in my mind. After all, I knew I needn't trouble about the second payment. I should be clear away before she had a chance to see whether I put it there or not.

"'All right, miss,' I says, 'don't 'aggle; and don't bite a feller's 'ead half 'orf. Here's the thirty pound. What time shall I come up?'

"She told me that at half-past eight the duke would be having dinner, and that she would leave the window of the duchess' dressing-room open. I might find a ladder in such a place, and, when I got in, I should find the jewels in such a place, and some loose notes and gold in such a place, and I was to leave my thirty pound for her on a ledge in the chimney. And if any of the other servants caught me, why, so much the worse for me, and if they did not, so much the worse for them. She shook hands pleasantly and went off towards the Court.

"I felt inclined to shake hands with myself, too. I knew that there was a good twenty thousand pounds' worth of stuff if I could only get a quiet quarter of an hour there.

"You may believe me when I say I was there that evening to the minute. Just as I neared the mansion I had a nasty feeling that the maid might have given me away. You can never be sure of women. But when I saw the window of the duchess' dressing-room open, and found the ladder and everything ready, I knew it was all right.

"'She's a girl after my own heart,' I said to myself when I got into the room. 'And I'll be after her's when it's all over.'

"It's risky work, you know. No matter how easy things are, you always have a queer sort of nervousness unless you're drunk, and then, of course, you're liable to make mistakes.

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None of the servants was about; they might have been dead for all the trouble they gave me.

"I don't think I ever had quite such an easy job in all my life. 'This,' I said to myself—'This is better than your hard work any day. Honesty may be the best policy, but what do you make out of it? Eh? Do you make hauls of sackfuls of jewellery and money by honesty? Do you make enough in ten minutes to keep you for years, and drunk every night of your life, by honesty? No,' I said to myself (I had got the sack nearly full), 'if you want to get on in life, if you really want to have a nice little income and a life of happiness, have a turn at——'"

There was a swish of skirts near the bed. I turned my lantern on the place, my heart in my mouth, my revolver in my hand. I can tell you I was pleased to see that it was only my girl. I dropped my Colt back into my pocket. She was smartly dressed, and looked quite the lady.

"'Got everything, mister?' she inquired. 'Got everything?'

"'Well, not abslootly everything,' I whispered; 'but as much as I can carry. I'm just off.'

"'Have you put my thirty sovereigns in the chimney?' she asked. She had a head for business, that girl.

"'Reckon I'll take them now,' she said, calmly holding out her hand. 'I guessed you'd go and forget.'

"I counted out the money and handed it over, and shouldered my bag.

"'Good-bye, miss,' I whispers. 'See each other again soon, I hope.'

"'Awful good of you to say that,' she said. 'Feel as though I kent let you go now.' Her hand went to the side of the wall. 'We're getting on so sociable, and pleasant, and friendly like.'

"I can't tell you how it made me feel when I heard her talk like that. I would have proposed to that girl on the spot if I hadn't been so busy. Only there's a time and a place for everything, I always say, and just then wasn't the time to go canoodling about with girls.

"I went to her to give her a kiss and a good-bye. She gave a little scream.

"'Stop!' she cried. 'Stop, mister, or you're a dead man!'

"She levelled a shining little pocket pistol at my head, the other hand still pressing against the wall. There was a sound of hurried footsteps on the landing; the door opened, and a muscular young fellow in evening dress rushed in. He was followed by several servants.

"'My dearest Deborah,' he cried. Then he sprang upon me and nearly choked me.

"'Here, let go!' I screamed. 'Where's the duchess? Where's the duchess? Lemme go, can't ye. I want to tell her something. I want to tell her all about that beauty of a lady's-maid there. She's got my sixty pounds.'

"'And she jest about means to keep it,' she answered, laughing. 'It'll make a good start for my village blanket club.' She turned to the duke. 'Now, you see, Tunbridge, how Heron Court is protected.'

"'My dearest,' said the duke, 'you're quite right. You shall make your own arrangements now.'

"She spoke to one of the footmen.

"'Give him a good sousing, Barker, with the garden hose, and let him slide.'

"'Certainly, your grace. Now then, me man, this way.'

"And they took me, and, as I'm a living sinner, they ducked me. Had a narsty cold in me 'ead, I did, for years awter."

To prevent unnecessary labour, and consequent disappointment, to any readers of this paper, who in the past have forwarded original stories for insertion, we would take this opportunity of saying that our arrangements for the provision of matter for "Short Stories" are complete for some time to come.

A New Pair of Eyes

"OH, how perfectly delicious that is!" said Mrs. Conrad, enthusiastically. She had been seated very quietly holding a patch of brown and gold on the lap of her crêpe skirt, thrown there from the stained glass window with the angel and the lute on it. Miss Day's finger-tips had given a last feathery touch to the shortest of the harp strings, and George released the soft pedal which had been like a hand upon the mouth to a searching chord of the organ.

She had run in to pay an afternoon call, and Louie and George had played for her. Such a mocking widow in the declining stage of her crêpe! But she would not bate one thread of conventional gloom as tribute to poor Conrad until the last second of the full term of mourning was over, and that would not be until next month.

"Louie, can't you make us a cup of tea?" said George to his sister. "Be as long about it as you can," he whispered to her. "Two lumps of sugar for us both. Mrs. Conrad needs to be built up after this spasm of music."

As she whisked out George crossed the room. Mrs. Conrad had been on the most intimate terms with the Days for years. She was not much older than Louie. She was not even disturbed when George took her hand in his and said:

"Sadie, your time of mourning is nearly over, isn't it?"

"You mean, I suppose, my time of wearing black," she returned. "I shall drop it next month. And, George, I am almost sorry to moult my raven's plumage. It is awfully becoming."

"Anything is awfully becoming to you," he replied. "But, Sadie, I must be a little abrupt, because, although I told Louie to be as long as she could, one can't take very long to brew a cup of tea. I might as well say it without any fuss. I love you. I want to marry you."

"Why, George, you surprise me!" and she looked at him in a puzzled way. "Of course you love me. So do I love you, just as much as I do Louie. But, George, what an idea! I had never thought of marrying you."

"Well, if you love me, will you please think of it a moment, and then say, 'Why, yes, certainly?' I am easily satisfied."

He was so full of fun that he could not quite divest himself of a comical air, even now, when he was thoroughly in earnest.

"But, George, I don't love you in that way at all," expostulated the widow.

"Well, Sadie, it has been growing on me. It is a pity we are such good friends. You might feel the situation more if we weren't. But, Sadie, try and realise—won't you, please?—that I want you to be my wife, and that I shall not be very happy if you won't. Can't you love me enough for that?"

"Why, I do love you, George, but this seems so strange! I can't say yes, dear. I don't feel it a bit. And yet I love—that is, I am fond of you. Don't ask me such a thing. I don't want our pleasant relations marred. George, I couldn't marry you," she continued hurriedly, "I don't want to marry any one. This is only an idea. It is like a bit of your drollery. I am going away so soon to have a good turn on the Continent, and be so independent. You don't mind, George, do you?"

"Oh, certainly not. Don't mention it," replied the young fellow, with sarcastic good nature. "It's so pleasant to have such a reputation for tomfoolery that when you implore a woman to marry you she says, 'There, you droll thing, don't be so ridiculously funny!' Only, Sadie, I wish you would do me the justice to feel that I am not altogether playful; I don't know how to make you feel it, but I love you dearly, and I want to marry you ever so much. You know whether you care enough for me to marry me, and you can answer me as

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seriously as if I were a skeleton and death's head. For I am in earnest, Sadie."

She felt he was, and that confused her the more. She did not want to hurt his feelings. But she had never thought of George Day as a possible husband.

"Dear George, I am sorry, but I can't marry you," she faltered. "Don't be distressed about it. I can't help it."

"Here is Louie," exclaimed Mrs. Conrad under her breath. "Does she know anything about this, George?"

He shook his head slowly.

His sister entered the room, a servant following with the tea things. She darted a quick glance at the pair.

Louie came over with a cup of tea after the servant had withdrawn. She stood before Mrs. Conrad holding it in her hand as she said with mocking solemnity, "Sadie, did you say 'yes'?"

"Of course I did," asserted Mrs. Conrad. "George asked if my mourning would be over next month, and it will. What else could I say? I have the smartest tailor-made travelling suit of a pale brown."

"But didn't George ask you to marry him?" persisted Louie, holding the cup away from Mrs. Conrad's outstretched hand.

"What has happened to you all? Give me my tea, Louie. Of course George hasn't asked me to marry him. At least not since we were children, twelve years ago. People who have known each other for fifteen years don't want to marry."

"Give her the tea, Louie," said George, drily. "Do not let personal feeling interfere with strict justice. If Mrs. Conrad prefers to have somebody else pay for her tea for life, that is no reason why you should trample on the sacred name of hospitality."

"Well, Sadie," Louie said spitefully, "there is your tea. I know something dreadful will befall you for refusing George. I don't see how a woman can be so blind."

"This little episode mustn't interfere with the life-long friendship that has existed between us," said George in a very good imitation of his usual manner. "I daresay it was very indelicate in me to make such a proposal. I am willing to offer Mrs. Conrad every reparation a lady can demand."

"There! Now you are talking like yourself," said Mrs. Conrad, with a gusty sigh of relief. "George was overcome by the music. Don't say anything about it, Louie. We are awfully good friends, and always shall be. Won't we, George?"

"Until death do us part," he said, and shook her hand warmly. In diplomatic language the episode was closed.

Mrs. Conrad looked very nice and handsome in her new gown when she bade them good-bye a week later. She betook herself to the Continent and travelled to her heart's content for six months. Then she began to feel homesick. She wanted the Days. She wanted George. It was surprising to her that she missed him so much. In her thoughts she was constantly thinking, "I wish George was here. Dear George!"

One day she suddenly turned back. She was tired of being alone and yearned for Newtown. She wrote to the Days from Lucerne that she was coming, and soon after started.

It was a brilliant, clear day in spring when she arrived in her native town. As soon as she had her belongings settled in her house, she called on the Days. The windows were open and she heard the organ. George was playing the Wedding March from Lohengrin.

Mrs. Conrad, her face wreathed in smiles, forbade the servant to announce her, and tiptoed softly into the drawing-room. George was sitting at the organ playing with his wonted enthusiasm. She approached on tiptoe and put her warm, soft hands over his eyes without saying a word.

"Sadie!" he exclaimed instantly, and wheeled about holding out his hands. She grasped them. The expression in his eyes startled her.

"Aren't you glad to see me, George?" she demanded gaily. "Why do you look so oddly?"

"Come over here and sit down," he answered cheerfully.

"Sadie," said the young man in his cheerful tones, turning his face towards her, but without fixing his eyes upon her, "I have lost my sight. We didn't say anything about it in our letters for fear it would make you distressed. I am very glad to have you back. Did you have a good time?"

"Oh, George!" she cried, whipping out her handkerchief, "you don't mean that you are hopelessly blind?"

"That is it, exactly." His cheery tones and perfect calmness only made the bitterness of it the more keen. "But don't be anxious about it, Sadie. I knew it was coming, and I memorised all the music Louie and I play together, and there isn't really very much difference."

"Oh, George! What an angel you are!"

"You mustn't mind it, Sadie. It can't be helped. Of course I am grateful for your sympathy, but you will make me feel miserable, if you trouble so about it."

"But it is so sudden, George," she sobbed. "And it is so dreadful to think that one can do nothing."

"Oh, but you can. You must come in and read for me sometimes. I shall use your services very liberally. Don't cry."

"George," she said softly, "do you remember what you said to me the last time I sat here with you?"

"Oh, yes," he replied firmly. "But I thought we decided then that I was an idiot to endanger the pleasant relations between us."

"But, George, you really felt what you said then, didn't you?"

"What does it matter, now, Sadie?" he replied, a touch of weariness in his voice. "I have thoroughly reformed," he added, with his old laughing touch.

"Then you have discovered that you didn't—you know. You don't care for me any more, George?"

"What lovely logic! I have only reformed my tongue, not my feelings," he returned.

"Then George," she said softly, "say it again."

She felt quite at liberty to blush furiously, for, poor fellow, he could not see her.

He gave a start. Then he said very quietly, "Sadie, I know how warm and sympathetic you are. The sudden sight of my condition makes you feel such pity that you are overcome. It is very good of you, but you mustn't yield to this feeling. I am quite resigned. More so than ever, now that you are back. But I am not going to take the advantage of your pity."

"George, I came back because I couldn't stay away any longer. And though, of course, I do feel, more than I can tell, your sad misfortune, yet it isn't pity only that I feel."

"But, Sadie, you can't love a poor blind wretch!"

There was more bitterness in his voice than he had yet shown.

"Try me and see," said Sadie.

When Louie entered the room a little later Mrs. Conrad blushed a rosy red—her head was upon George's shoulder.

"Louie," said George with a joyous ring in his voice, "I have found a new pair of eyes. Sadie and I are going to be married."

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

THE week after next SHORT STORIES will appear in a very much altered and improved form. The number of pages will be increased from 16 to 32, and it will, in fact, contain just twice as much reading matter as at present. We are making arrangements with some of the foremost writers of the day to contribute to SHORT STORIES, and I feel justified in saying that in its new form this paper will be the biggest and the best pennyworth of popular literature ever produced. Special attention is intended to be given to the Serial Story. On the conclusion of the one at present running we shall commence another which has been specially written for us, and which will exceed in interest anything hitherto published in SHORT STORIES. We shall have a good deal more to say on this subject next week.

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IN THE SECRET SERVICE.

THE bright, warm sunshine streamed along the white garden walk, glinted the precise rows of abalone shells, and furtively pushed its way through the low, open door into the cool, dark room, where he lay bandaged upon an easy chair. Reclining there luxuriously comfortable, his eyes dreamily wandered out and followed the massive adobe garden wall, with its old red tiles, until they met the California hills and the blue beyond showing through the arched, whalebone gate.

Suddenly the view was shut out; a dark-eyed girl stood in the doorway.

"*Buenos dias, señor*!" she cried blithely.

"*Buenos dias*, Doña Carlota?"

"That is very good, señor," laughed the girl. "Listen to the Spanish you hear and soon you will speak it, and be able to say something besides "good morning."

"But never enough to thank you for all you have done for me!"

"Ah! that is foolish to talk so"—with a pretty gesture of deprecation—"I did nothing. I found you lying in the cañon, and had you brought to our house. Who would not have done that?"

She took a stool close beside him, resting her chin in her hands, her big dark eyes fixed intently upon his face. He thought her the most ingenious as well as the most beautiful woman he had ever seen.

"Tell me more about yourself," she broke out, impulsively, as she placed a warm hand upon one of his. "When the fever was on you, I could not talk to you; but now you are almost well. Where did you come from, and what were you doing in the cañon? And you say your name is George Hilliard?"

"Did I tell you that?"

"*Si*; Don Jorge Hilliard."

"Carlota"—with some anxiety—"you must not repeat what I have told you. I cannot tell you now what brought me here."

And certainly he was delighted when he saw that his strange admonition brought no sign of doubt or suspicion into her face.

"It matters not, señor," she went on; "you are here now, and you will stay until you get well, and perhaps longer. My mother will not let you go."

"But, José?"

"José? Bah! Look! it is this way, señor. I have not many friends. The Americans, and the, what you call, Spanish do not mix together here. Spanish! Most of them are not Spanish, but Mexicans, South Americans, Portuguese, and Indians. The Machados are Castilians, señor, but I am an American. I was born here. I have been to the convent at Santa Barbara. That is why I speak such good English. I like Americans. Yes, my mother"—to a voice calling from another room—"I am coming," and she was gone.

Hilliard looked fondly after her as she left the room. Of course, he knew that she was in love with him—in love as only a Spanish woman can be. And he? Well, why not? Did he not owe his life to her? Was she not beautiful and good?

The days went by, and it was very pleasant for him. Never was convalescence more enjoyed. Carlota talked to him, and read to him, and tried to teach him Spanish.

Whether or not la Señora Madre approved of the violent flirtation going on under her roof and nose, was difficult to determine. She spoke "no Ingles," and her dark face was absolutely bereft of expression.

It was altogether different with José Sanchez. His intense hatred for the invalid and his fierce love for the girl were alike apparent. He galloped in from the ranche—which Carlota said was fifteen miles distant—almost daily, and spent hours in the room with the two, silently watching them, or else walked nervously about the garden smoking yellow paper cigarettes.

Carlota's artless and frank admission that José loved her, charmed the American; but he knew, nevertheless, that he had in him a rival not to be despised, and possibly to be feared. At the outset, he had made an effort to extend him more than the usual affability. He even presented him with an expensive cigarette-holder, which had been given him by an old sweetheart. But José, although he accepted the present, remained sullen, silent, and implacable.

It was not until the time came for Hilliard to make his departure that he asked Carlota to become his wife. Somehow a proposal of marriage had seemed to him an almost unnecessary proceeding, for he had made no effort to conceal his feelings, and Carlota, in her delightful simplicity, had given her heart to him without a struggle. The proposal, therefore, was not an ordeal.

But he had a mission to perform—one known only to himself. Promising Carlota to return in a few days, he took a train, ostensibly for San Francisco, and left it at the first station. Back he trudged until within a mile of the town, and then, leaving the road, he followed a trail into the mountains. It led him to the edge of a precipice, where great masses of earth and rocks, loosened by winter rains, had years before slid down as in an avalanche. Standing in the thick chaparral, it was easy for him now to see how he had walked over the brink. He leant over and looked down on the very spot where he had fallen.

Then he started on a cautious but seemingly erratic search for something in the mountain fastness. Backwards and forwards under the trees, down into gulches, beneath overhanging rocks, through narrow passes, and along steep trails, he went.

Late in the afternoon he found the object of his search. It was a cabin almost hidden by the branches of a fallen tree. From his pocket he took a revolver, examined it, and then moved stealthily towards the hut. It was deserted; he pushed back the door and entered. There was nothing unusual about the bare interior; a heap of charred embers on the hearth was the only sign that it had been occupied.

The embers interested him at once. On his knees he examined them carefully, sifted the ashes with his hands, and was rewarded by finding a broken die that had quite recently made counterfeit coins. With an exclamation of satisfaction, he took it to the light to inspect it more closely. Something on the floor at the threshold attracted his attention. He picked it up. It was an ornamental cigarette-holder—the one he had given José.

The following morning saw him back in the town, walking rapidly towards the house of the Machados. During the night, after long study, he had formulated a plan whereby Carlota and her mother would be spared the mortification consequent upon the publicity of the proposed arrest. José would be taken quietly away and no one would know of it.

He passed quickly through the gate, along the garden walk, and into the dwelling. Carlota's hat and gloves were on a table. A moment he stood there looking down upon them, and then the mother entered, expressionless as ever, and silently handed him a note. He opened it and read:

"*Señor Don Jorge Hilliard*:—I cannot marry you, because I have married Don José Sanchez. We sail from America to-day. Don José would have gone long ago, but he would not leave without me. I learnt your business after you were brought to our house, and thought it well to keep you there. I cannot tell you whither we sail. You are in the secret service. So am I. *Adios*.—CARLOTA."

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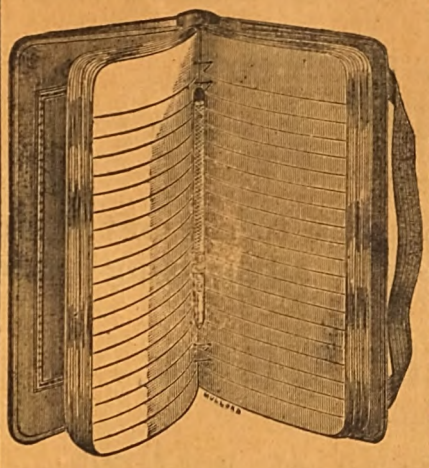

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON (OF PEARSON'S WEEKLY)

No. 344. FOR WEEK ENDING AUGUST 3, 1895. [PRICE ONE PENNY.

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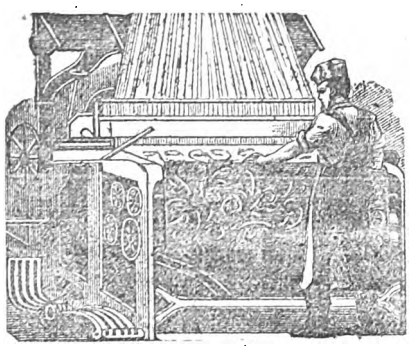

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SHORT STORIES

EDITED BY C. ARTHUR PEARSON.

No. 344.] *FOR THE WEEK ENDING AUGUST 3, 1895.* [PRICE ONE PENNY.

HOW JACK'S AUNT WENT CRAZY

CHAPTER I.

"FIFTEEN minutes' wait!"

The train for England drew up at Amiens station, bringing to an end a painful talk between two people in a first-class carriage.

"The long and the short of it is, Lilla, you will have to put this nonsense out of your head," said Captain Jones, as he opened the door.

He was a good-looking man, with stern eyes and a determined jaw. He might have been at least a dozen years older than his sister, who, however, had defended herself through a course of bullying all the way from Paris.

"You had better come and have some luncheon."

"No," she said; "I don't want any."

"Don't be a goose."

"I'm not hungry. I would rather stay here."

Under any other circumstances Captain Jones would have stuck to his point till he gained it. But in this case it would have meant losing his own luncheon, so he shrugged his shoulders, and walked away with the stream of passengers towards the refreshment-room.

Lilla sat quite still in her place. She was a girl of twenty, and might have been very pretty if her features and expression had been a little less decided. Her eyes were remarkable—large, blue, and grave, with straight brows and dark lashes. She was pale, but her complexion was clear and good. Sometimes, when she was amiable, she did look very pretty, and at all times she was handsome. She was plainly dressed, and her manner was cool and straightforward.

Just now she looked anything but happy; paler and graver than usual, frowning slightly and sadly, as she sat alone by the carriage window and gazed across the lines at the crowded station. She could see her brother's broad shoulders disappearing into the *buffet*, and thought, as she watched him, how horribly disagreeable he was. As if a woman of twenty might not decide for herself! Just personal prejudice, and nothing more. He was so narrow-minded; he thought everybody ought to be made on his own pattern. What could be more ridiculous!

Just now she looked anything but happy.

Some sort of dimness, a dimness of vexation, clouded Lilla's eyes, as she thought of the long, weary argument she had just gone through. Of course, she was not weak-minded enough to cry; but it is terribly hopeless work trying to convince one's brother, or even to make him understand that one means to have one's own way. After about five minutes of peace, and a strange stillness, for the train was nearly empty, Lilla was startled from her thoughts by a voice from the platform below.

"May I ask if this carriage is full?"

She looked, and saw an elderly woman, carrying a bag and some shawls. Her voice was breathless, and very tired; but there was a curious charm in it, a high sweet tone; and as she lifted anxious eyes to Lilla, a very pretty smile lighted up her pale, delicate face. She was extremely well dressed, but looked a little dishevelled. Lilla wondered instinctively what she had done with her maid.

With the unaffected readiness which belonged to her, she instantly made the stranger welcome, took her bag and shawls, helped her to climb into the carriage, and thought with satisfaction how disappointed Percy would be, when he came back, to find that his brotherly scoldings could not go on in peace all the way to Boulogne.

"Oh, thank you; how very kind you are!" said the stranger, looking earnestly at Lilla, and smiling sweetly. "This is delightful. I thought I should never get away from that odious place, and the train seemed so full. There is room for me here, really?" looking round at Percy's scattered belongings with a touch of alarm.

"Yes; there is only my brother," said Lilla.

"How providential! What a place this is to get away from! I never stopped here before; but something happened yesterday in Paris which put me out dreadfully, and I felt too ill, and too cross, to start early in the morning, so I came as far as Amiens in the afternoon. Such a stupid thing to do. I had to leave my poor maid in Paris; she was ill—left her with a friend, you know—and then my—well, my escort disappointed me, and I couldn't sleep last night—and really, do you know

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that ever since this train came in I have been wandering up and down trying to find a carriage.

Lilla was not a talkative girl. After doing what she could for the lonely lady, and listening with sufficient politeness to her history, she fell back into her own grave silence, and watched the platform till she saw Percy coming back. The stranger thought, "What a severe face! The girl is unhappy, I believe; but I like her, too. Now that is the sort of girl——"

Captain Jones's arrival at the door disturbed these meditations. He hesitated a moment, while his sister looked at him gravely. Then he said: "Give me my coat and things, will you? I am going to smoke;" and he took himself off to another carriage.

When he was gone, the strange lady began to talk to Lilla, who, in spite of herself, had to respond to these advances. There was something very pleasant, though not very wise, about her companion, who chattered of France and Paris, and abused England, and said a great many things that Lilla totally disagreed with.

"Oh, yes, many of the French manners and customs are most superior to ours," said this lady, talking so fast that Lilla—English to the backbone—could not contradict her. "Their marriages, for instance—how sensible they are! and how happy!"

"No, horrible. I can't bear them!" exclaimed Lilla; but her companion hardly seemed to hear this.

"Of course," she said, "people's friends and relations know them better than they know themselves. Well, what a comfort not to be allowed to throw themselves away on the first person they take a fancy to. Oh dear, what nonsense! Two silly children without a penny, binding themselves down to a life of misery, finding out too late that they don't suit each other in the least. And if they were French everything would be arranged easily and carefully—money and all the rest of it. Frenchmen never make stupids of themselves. I wish my nephew was a Frenchman!"

She said this half to herself, and sighed. Then she looked at Lilla. "Yes," she said, "I am in great trouble."

Lilla was looking at her with an earnest interest which was certainly encouraging. There was a kind of wistfulness in her eyes, and she said: "But one's relations don't know what is best for one. I am quite sure of that."

"Well," said the lady after a pause, smiling very prettily, "if I happened to be your grandmother I think we should disagree about that. However, we all speak from our own experience. Now, I have a nephew, who at this moment is driving me quite mad by his detestable obstinacy. He has fallen in love with some girl I never saw or heard of, and wants to marry her at once. Now, listen. It is really a relief to me to tell somebody, and I'm sure you are sympathising and kind."

Lilla shook her head a little, but the stranger smiled and went on. "I don't want to boast of what I have done for Jack, but I must tell you, that you may judge between us. He has never had any money, and never will have any, except what I give him. I paid for his education, which was an utter farce from beginning to end. He never passed a single examination; failed in everything he tried for, simply from idleness, for I don't think he is naturally stupid. Idleness, ingratitude, selfishness.

"Now he coolly tells me that he is going to be married, and, of course, expects me to support his wife as well as himself, for she has nothing. Some stray girl he met abroad; no doubt as odious as English girls abroad generally are. Our tempers are neither of them sweet, and I must tell you that Jack and I were very angry with each other. He declared that he expected nothing from me, which was utter falsehood and nonsense. So we wished each other good-bye. He may go his way, and I shall go mine. I shall certainly do nothing for him, and I think he knows it. As to my money, it shall go to somebody who deserves it."

She looked Lilla straight in the face as she spoke. There certainly was something very strange and unusual in this outpouring from an utter stranger. In theory, there was nothing Lilla disliked more. She hated effusive people, who talked of their own concerns, and thought they must interest everybody. But here was a contradiction. This woman's talk really interested Lilla. She listened attentively to every word; odd little thrills seemed to run through her as the story went on; her eyes deepened, and a faint colour rose in her pale cheeks. Lilla was at her prettiest now, and the stranger, looking at her, almost forgot her own troubles in admiration.

"What do you think?" she said, after a minute's silence. "I am right, am I not?"

"I don't know," said Lilla, with much more hesitation than was usual with her. "You couldn't expect, could you, that your nephew would give up the girl, if they really cared for each other? Perhaps she is a much nicer girl than you think."

"Oh, no, no; I don't believe it. Of course he says she is lovely. He wanted to show me her photograph, but I wouldn't look at it. But don't you understand—even if she was an angel—he has no business to think of marrying at all. And he has engaged himself without even the politeness of consulting me. *You* would never forget all your duties and principles in that sort of way."

"Yes, indeed I should. I do," said Lilla quickly, with a sudden blush. "My brother thinks me just as bad—just as obstinate and ungrateful, as you think your nephew."

"Then I am sure your brother is mistaken." The stranger spoke as quickly and decidedly as Lilla herself, but with such a look and tone of kindly sweetness that Lilla suddenly moved from her own place, and sat down beside her. Almost directly her new friend took her hand, and held it while they talked together. This sympathy, so strangely met, brought Lilla's troubles rushing to her lips and eyes. She had no mother, no kind, foolish aunt, no one but a married elder sister, from whom she expected nothing but blame. Percy thought she had been making a terrible little silly of herself, and the world in general was sure to agree with him.

She told her fellow-traveller that she and Percy had been in the South of France, and had there met a young man sketching, who meant to be an artist. They had seen a great deal of him, and at last, one day—but Lilla did not enter much into her version of the old story.

Lilla's lover had no money; he had no profession; but he was extremely, brilliantly clever, dressed beautifully, and was sure to be a great artist some day. He seemed to think that some relations might help him a little just at first, and Lilla thought her brother Percy, who was unmarried, and well off, might do the same for her. But Percy took a very different view of the subject. He did not at all share his sister's faith in the artist's future; he wanted her to marry a friend of his own, a rich man, who admired her.

"Percy wants me to write to him, and tell him—but no, that I will never do," said Lilla, sadly and strongly. "I see we shall have to wait for years. I told him I thought so. He didn't seem to think so—but anyhow, he knows it will make no difference to me."

So they went on talking as their train hurried through France. Lilla could hardly believe, afterwards, that she had actually told all her history, and poured out her whole heart to a person she had never met in her life before; but then this was such a wonderful person. She began to realise what she had done when they saw the sandhills and the sea, and then rushed on to Boulogne through the green *bruyères* and the fir trees.

"I ought not to have talked like this; but you have been so very kind and I really am unhappy," she said.

Then the strange woman took her hand again.

"My dear, you must not be unhappy. Trust me and don't be unhappy. I think I see a way out of your troubles, only don't give in, whatever you do."

In spite of her beating heart and her heavy eyelids, Lilla could hardly help laughing at her friend's inconsistency.

"Give in! Oh, no!" she said. "But I'm afraid you are much more hopeful than I am."

"We shall see. In the meantime will you give me your address?"

"Yes; thank you so much. I do hope we shall meet again." Lilla hastily pulled a letter out of her pocket.

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Then she coloured a little, and hesitated. Then she took the letter out of the envelope, and gave the envelope to her friend, saying half aloud, "I have no other."

Looking at the letter in her hand, and putting it back in a safe place, she missed the first expression on her friend's face, which was that of extreme astonishment, almost anger, quickly succeeded by intense amusement.

"Miss Lilla Jones," she read out, in such an extremely odd voice that Lilla was startled.

"Is there anything wrong?" she said.

"No, my dear, nothing. Only your direction in the South of France is not of much use to me."

"Oh, I'm so sorry. Please give it me back. I can find a scrap of paper, I dare say."

"No, no; I like this. Write your English address on it—there's plenty of room."

"And—may I have yours?" asked Lilla, when she had obeyed.

"No; it doesn't matter about me. You shall hear from me. We shall know all about each other in time. Here we are. Thank you for a miserable journey turned into a happy one."

"You have comforted me very much," said Lilla gratefully; but she was rather at a loss to understand her friend's meaning. The happiness of the journey, to all seeming, had only consisted in having the knowledge of another person's troubles added to her own.

CHAPTER II.

JACK, as his aunt, Mrs. Lindsay, always called him—this was only a pet name, the world in general knowing him as Reginald Carr—Jack was very much surprised at receiving a kind letter from his aunt, a few days after she had cast him off for ever. The beginning of the letter was kind, at least; the latter part seemed totally unreasonable.

Jack was staying on at the hotel in Paris, where he had come on purpose to meet his aunt, and to break the news of his engagement. From former experience he had quite expected that his aunt, after storming a little, would kiss him and give her consent. He was then going to take her back to England, where his further plans would soon arrange themselves. But her horrid obstinacy had knocked everything on the head. Jack did not know what to do with himself, and so, for the present, was finding a little amusement in Paris. He was very painfully conscious that he could not marry on nothing. At the same time he could not possibly give up the girl with whom he was so much in love. He was furiously angry with his aunt.

Jack stood on the hearthrug.

In this letter she invited, or rather ordered, him to come to London at once, naming a particular day and hour when she desired to see him. She went on to say that she had met the person to whom she intended to leave all her money. "But there is still a loophole for you," she wrote; "you do not deserve anything at all; but come here at once, and we shall see whether we understand each other any better than we did."

"Hang the old woman and her money! What on earth does she mean?" said Jack, with other exclamations of the same kind. "She's mad. I wish she and her money had never been heard of. It's too bad, to bring a fellow up to expect a thing, and then disappoint him after all. Who has she picked up now, I wonder! I'll be hanged if I go. I'd require to pack at once."

He did go, however, not being quite such a proud and rash young man as he supposed himself, having also a private reserve of love and respect for his aunt, however ungrateful his words and thoughts might be—but he went in a very bad temper. He left his luggage, which was immense, at Charing Cross Station, and drove in a hansom to his aunt's house, not being sure whether she meant him to stay with her. She said nothing about that, but received him kindly, and gave him luncheon, for he had arrived early in the day, according to the sudden and queer request.

There was something very odd about the old lady. Jack, who was inclined just then to take a dark view of all things, thought she was going out of her mind.

"Well, you have told me nothing about your journey. Was it rough? Had you pleasant companions?"

"Yes, awfully rough. Don't know; didn't look at them; they were Frenchmen, mostly. By-the-bye, how did you get on?"

"Ah, by-the-bye, the first time I ever travelled from Paris to London alone. Well, I stopped at Amiens, you know—a great mistake, and yet it wasn't. I believe it was one of the best things I ever did in my life."

"How was that?" said Jack, trying to seem interested.

"Well, from Amiens to Boulogne—on to London, in fact—I had the most charming fellow-traveller. She helped me, she took care of me, she did everything for me; she told me all her history, and we became friends for life. I found that there was only one thing she wanted to make her happy, and I determined that she should have it."

"What?" said Jack suspiciously. He guessed what was coming now, and thought himself most abominably treated. Not even one of the Lindsays, her husband's relations! but an accidental woman picked up in a railway carriage! Some sharp, designing creature, who had got round his aunt and made a fool of her. It was no surprise when Mrs. Lindsay answered his question—"Plenty of money."

Jack threw himself back in his chair. He tried to look as if this was nothing to him; but scowled hideously at a picture over the chimneypiece.

"It's a common complaint, and a difficult cure," he said. "Well, go on, Aunt. Is she French or English, young or old?"

"English, young, and very pretty," said his aunt. "At least, I am sure you would say so."

"I bet you I shouldn't," replied Jack. "I haven't that desperate admiration for every girl I meet."

"I know that, but I know the sort of thing you do admire. Now, Jack, suppose that you and I have a bet on the subject—ten pounds, if you like."

"No, thank you, I can't afford it," said Jack, smiling grimly. "Besides, I'm not likely to see her, unless she has taken up her abode with you. And you can't expect me to like the notion of her—particularly."

"I am sorry for you, Jack, really," said Mrs. Lindsay. "But it's all your own fault. I have made up my mind, and I can't change it now."

"No, so it seems," said Jack, getting up and shrugging his shoulders. "Why didn't you let me stay in Paris?"

"A very bad place for you. Besides, as I told you, there is a loophole. I will give you another chance."

"What's that?"

"You may marry her," said Mrs. Lindsay abruptly; and then she went to the other end of the room, and stood there fidgeting with some flowers, turning her back to her nephew.

Jack stood on the hearthrug, with his hands in his pockets.

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First he laughed an unflattering laugh to Mrs. Lindsay's new favourite; then he said: "Did you really send for me from Paris to tell me that, Aunt?"

For a moment she seemed to misunderstand him in some way. She turned round quickly, with an exclamation on her lips: "You don't——." But then she stopped herself as quickly, for poor Jack looked angry and dejected. "Well, you need not be scornful," she said. "My friend is very much too good for you. How do you know that she will have you, after all?"

"I don't see how you know it, either," he said. "But she won't be asked, so it doesn't matter."

"Look here, my dear Jack. You are ruining yourself; you are losing your last chance. The fact is simply this: if you marry anyone but this friend of mine, I won't leave you a penny. You may go your own way; you may go to the dogs, if you like."

"Thank you, I will," said Jack. He walked towards the door, but then he turned round again and faced his aunt, looking extremely grave.

Just then came a visitor's knock.

"Here she is," said Mrs. Lindsay. "I asked her to come and see me this afternoon. Well, Jack, then you have quite made up your mind; you won't marry her? Perhaps it was too much to expect. Don't rush out of that door; you will meet her. Go out this way, into the study; wait there for ten minutes, and then come back to me. I should like you to see her, though of course my plan won't do."

"I don't want to see her. I'll go off at once, thank you."

"Jack, you will do no such thing. You need not stay in the room. You need only come in and say good-bye to me, if you like. You may be just as rude and sulky as you please—but I want you to see her. Go!"

Jack fled, for the visitor was coming in. It was Miss Lilla Jones. She looked very pretty, and very well dressed. Mrs. Lindsay received her with eager kindness, and after thanking her many times for coming, began to talk seriously.

"I have been thinking a great deal about you," she said, "since we parted, and if you will let me, I am going to speak very plainly. First of all, my dear, it will never do for you to marry a poor man."

Lilla smiled, coloured, and looked at her rather sadly.

"Your brother is perfectly right, you know. It is a dreadful look-out for you. Now listen to me. I told you in the train the other day how much I liked French marriages, and how wise I thought them. Do you remember? Well, now I have taken it into my head to arrange a marriage for you—one to which your brother can't possibly object. I want you to give up all your wild ideas, and to be good and sensible, and to make me and all your friends very happy—by marrying my nephew."

Lilla's face fell in a wonderful manner. She stared at Mrs. Lindsay in blank astonishment, and the only thought that crossed her mind was, "Poor dear thing, she is crazy!" She began to wish herself safe out of the house, was in fact a little frightened, and did not in the least know what to say.

"But you know——I told you——" she stammered out. "I thought you understood——"

"I understood perfectly," said Mrs. Lindsay smiling. "But I have just been talking to my nephew. I told him that he must give up all his nonsensical ideas, and offer himself to you. My dear, if you will marry him I will leave all my money to him, and allow him fifteen hundred a year now. But if you won't, I intend to cut him off with a shilling, but I think in that case I shall leave everything to you. There's only one difficulty."

"More than one, I should think—but what is the one?" asked Lilla, as quietly as she could.

"He declares he will have nothing to do with you. He will not give up that girl he met in France. But I think, when he sees you——"

"Please, Mrs. Lindsay, don't let us have any more talk like this," said Lilla, getting up, with scarlet cheeks and eyes shining with surprise and anger. "You can't be serious in anything you are saying. You can't mean it—but your whole plan is perfectly impossible. How could I accept your money—a perfect stranger—and as to—I never heard such extraordinary things in my life."

Mrs. Lindsay watched her for a moment, and an odd convulsion passed over her face. Then she got up, came across to the girl, took her face between her hands and kissed her, looking at her with such happy, loving eyes that Lilla's tears were checked.

"I really am fiendish!" said Mrs. Lindsay, and she sprang across to the door, opened it, and called Jack.

He came slowly forward from the study.

"Come in, Jack," said his aunt. "Here is my friend. You need not be at all afraid of meeting her. She will have nothing whatever to say to you, and you are exactly in the same state of mind towards her. But you both think you have to do with an old madwoman, so please indulge her last fancy by shaking hands. Jack! You are forgetting yourself, sir! This is disgraceful!"

For Jack cried out, "Lilla!" and Lilla gave a little scream, and they did not meet at all as strangers, but as lovers long parted, while Mrs. Lindsay, whose remonstrances were useless, walked away smiling to the window.

Hitherto the most important thing that occurred on August 2nd in the world's history was the Battle of Blenheim, 1704. But what was this paltry battle compared with what will happen on the next Second of August?

ON THAT DAY WE START A NEW SERIES OF

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REMEMBER THE FIRST OF THE NEW SERIES IS TO BE OBTAINED AUGUST 2.

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THE PASSING OF TERRY O'FLAHERTY

NO one who had driven through the lodge gate and had noticed the merry face of Ellen, the gatekeeper, would be likely soon to forget it. She usually wore a pink calico dress, which was always scrupulously neat, and fitted her trim figure to a T. Her ribbons were pink, her cheeks pink, and the children declared that her hair was pink also. It was really a very pretty shade of light red, and it crinkled in a bewitching way.

What a charming picture she made, framed by the arched window, the grey stone covered closely with luxuriant ivy! She was always smiling, and had a gay word of *repartee* for her fellow-servants; a deferential but cheerful greeting for her superiors; jokes and amusing stories for the children; and when all alone she sang the jolliest Irish songs and ballads, with a laughing lilt in her voice, which was so irresistible that the guests at the villa often sat for hours on the veranda, where, unknown to her, they could hear Ellen sing.

Altogether she was the most light-hearted, merry little woman you ever saw, and we were all surprised to see her appear on Sunday in full widow's weeds. We met her just returning from church, and remarked on the exuberance of health and spirit displayed by the sable-robed figure, though we did not at first recognise it. Through the folds of the heavy crape I saw a glint of the red-gold hair, and there was something in her buoyant step which recalled the measure of those lilting choruses. I believe she was thinking them over, and keeping time to their beat and swing as she walked.

I suspected at once that this was no ordinary widow bowed down by a heavy weight of woe, and when O'Flaherty, the coachman, turned on his box and threw her a kiss as we passed, we also turned and saw the crape veil thrown back and Ellen's rosy face framed by a coquettish widow's cap.

"Is Ellen in grief?" I asked.

"Not at all," my hostess answered, laughing; "she is only in deep mourning, and enjoys it very much."

"Some distant relative, I presume, who has left her money?"

"On the contrary; it is in honour of her husband, to whom she was very tenderly attached, and for whom she has resisted the most persistent attentions of lovers through two long years of widowhood. Is it not so, O'Flaherty?"

The privileged coachman coughed and chuckled. "It's about so, mum," he admitted.

"Ellen a widow!" I exclaimed. "Why, she is the merriest one I ever saw. You are talking in riddles; will you be kind enough to explain your meaning?"

"Ellen must tell you," my friend replied; and that afternoon I strolled down to the lodge, intent on unravelling the mystery. Ellen wore a neat black sateen, flecked with a tiny white figure resembling snowflakes Muslin cuffs were folded back from her wrists in the most approved style. Some violets and a black folded handkerchief were tucked in her belt. Ellen was evidently still sustaining her character as a bewitching little widow. We had had some previous conversation, and I soon made an opportunity of telling her that I was sorry to hear of her bereavement.

"Oh, yes, mum," she admitted, "I felt very bad intirely—for a spell. It's a dreadful thing, mum, to lose one's husband, and I hope you will never suffer the likes."

I felt not a little indignant at Ellen's show of grief, for the minx looked so complacent in her widow's weeds that I was sure that whatever she might have suffered was more than made up to her by a sense of their becomingness. I fancied, too, that as I entered the lodge, I had seen O'Flaherty, the coachman, sneak out of the back door, and I could not help saying rather spitefully: "Time brings consolation, Ellen, and I should not be surprised if you married a second time."

A look of real pain and indignation came into Ellen's face. "Niver, mum! Do you think I could marry anyone else but my own Terry? Shure, it's mistaken you are; the saints forgive you! Why, we niver quarrelled but once, and that was the day I lost him. It's many's the bitter tear I've shed for that."

I saw that Ellen was in earnest, and felt that I did not quite understand this odd mixture of loyalty and vanity. "Tell me about it," I said, as kindly as I could. "How did you lose your husband?"

"It was this way, mum," Ellen explained. "When we were first married, I was waitress at the house, an' Terence was under-gardener, an' oh, mum, we were that happy an' comfortable until the misthress' sister came to spend the summer here, an' brought a peck of misery for us in all them thrunks of hers, bad luck to her! Mrs. Delacey her name was, a stoilish young widder, who never wasted many tears on her husband, but made up for that with her bumbazines or her grinny-dines, an' the crapes you could pull through a gould ring; an' the silky stuff they call foolhardy."

"Foolhardy? I never heard of any such material, Ellen. I have it! You must mean foulard."

"Well, be it fool hard or fool soft, I know not. I only know that she made a fool of ivery man that came nigh her, the craythe r! an' I was as foolish as a man over her gowns. I unpacked her dresses for her, an' hung 'em up in the cupboard, an' that avenin' I was goin' on to Terence about thim gowns till I misthrust he was sick of hearin' me, for he answered me crosslike. You know how men is, mum; the misthress tells me you have a husband yourself. Well, I niver took no warnin', but kept on tellin' him how the butler tould me that whin Mrs. Delacey wore her black Brussels net, with the black pearls on her snowy neck, at the hunt ball, the Juke of what's-his-name, he says: 'Who is that raquiem in lace?' says he, 'shinin' out like a snow-flake forninst a chimney-stack.'

"'What's a raquiem?' says Terry.

"'It's a song they sing at a wake,' says I, 'an' the Juke said it must be very flatterin' to her husband to know that such a lovely young craythe r was mournin' for him in such foine style. Mournin' is becomin',' says I, 'I'd like to wear it myself. It must be a great consolation to a widder. If you should die, Terry,' says I, 'I wouldn't spare the money on black stuff for you.'

"'You'd be glad enough for the chance,' says he, 'an' that stuck-up butler, too. Niver you let me hear you speak of him agin', or it's the four eyes of you both that I'll put in mournin',' says he.

"It was the butler, mum, that made the trouble betwixt us more than the mournin'. The misthress niver would have had a man in the house doin' a woman's work, but Mrs. Delacey she brought him from the city along with her new-fangled fashions, an' shure he needed more waitin' on than any of the aristocracy, orderin' round the other servants an'

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drivin' the cook wild wid the French dishes he was always a-suggestin'.

"But mind you, he didn't order me at all, at all. Quite contrairy, the villain; he was always blarney-in' me hair an' me eyes, an' sayin' as how he would like to see me in one of Mrs. Delacey's dresses, for he was sure I would be purtier in it than her leddyship herself. An' whither it was that he axed his misthress for me I don't know, but what did Mrs. Delacey do but give me one of her old black gowns.

As I entered the lodge.

"Now, though I was dyin' to see myself in it, I was that feared of Terry that I didn't dare put it on, until one day it happened that the masther sent him to the Park with one of the horses, an' he was to be gone three days, an', as good luck would have it, my third cousin's wife had just died, so av coorse I had the opportunity I wanted of wearin' the black dress to the funeral. Now whin we started for the buryin', who should I see at the door with the masther's trap but the butler.

"'An' will you ride with me, Ellen?' said he. 'Shure I've come all the way to take you, seein' I knew Terry was away,' says he.

"'Oh,' says I, 'I'm not goin' to the buryin',' says I, for I didn't like to ride with him at all, at all.

"'Thin let me take you home,' says he, 'for it's a good piece to the house, an' you're tired with footin' it here.'

"'I'll not be afther going home just yet,' says I. 'I'll stay wid the childer an' get supper against my cousin comes home from the cimetery,' says I, thinkin' that with that he would be off without me. But this was the very worst thing I could have done, for he just waited, the craythur, an' with the people bein' late back from the buryin', and insistin' that I should stay to supper, it was near dark whin I started for home. An' there was the butler a-waitin' for me, but I wouldn't ride with him, but just took my cousin's eldest boy for company, an' cut through the pine woods a short way. But, as bad luck would have it, I came out on the highway an' sent the boy back just afther the butler, who had driven round by the road an' had stopped at every public on the way, passed by, so that he drove through the lodge gate not two minutes before I came home, an' who should sit there but Terry, looking as black as a thunder-cloud.

"Well, I was surprised enough to see him, an' he saw it.

"'So I've caught you,' says he, 'you've been ridin' with the butler,' an' the more I denied it, the madder he got. 'An' what do you mane by dressin' yourself up like a widdy?' says he. 'If you want to be a widdy, it's not I that will be hinderin' you.'

"With that he took his hat, an' left the lodge. It had looked like rain all the day, an' there came on a fearful storm in the night, an' I dared not put foot outside the house, thinkin' he'd come back in the mornin'. But when two days went by, an' he niver came, the masther came to the lodge to see where he was, an' there was great huntin' an' searchin for him in all the neighbourhood. All we could find was that he had taken a little boat to row across the bay, an' most likely the squall had overturned it, for it was found floatin' far out, bottom upwards, but Terry or his body we never found.

"Thim were the sorrowfulest days o' my life, mum. The misthress was very kind to me, an' come often to see me, an' wanted me to stay all the time at the house, instead of spendin' my nights so lonely at the lodge. But I wouldn't do it, for I thought maybe Terry was not dead, after all, an' if he came back some avenin' he should find the windy lighted an' the supper waitin'.

"'My poor Ellen,' says the misthress, 'don't desave yourself, for he is dead for sure an' certain.'

"In my heart I was near belavin' her, but I kept up courage on the outside until the end of the summer, whin the family wint away to town, an' left the place all lonely for the winter. The butler called last of all, bringing with him a great bundle.

"'This came by parcel post for you from Lunnon,' says he.

"I cut the string, an' I saw it was a parcel of black gowns.

"'Whoiver sent these to me?' says I.

"'Belike it is Mrs. Delacey,' says the butler. 'She wint down to Lunnon a week ago,' says he.

"With that I burst out cryin', an' tied thim up again, an' tould him to carry thim back to his misthress.

"'You can't belave that Terry is still livin,' says he. 'An' you ought to do him the dacent thing by dressin' as a widdy ought. A great consolation you'll find it,' says he, 'an' I'll put a weed in my own hat to show my respect.'

"'An' how do I know that I am a widdy? Shure its not the likes of you, Dinnis O'Leary, that will make me belave he's dead,' says I.

"'Shure, who will you belave?' says he. 'It's not me alone, but the whole community says he's dead.'

"'I'll not belave anyone but Terry,' says I. 'Not till Terry himself tells me that he's dead will I belave myself a widdy.'

"'Shure, I niver before wished the appayrence of a ghost,' says the butler, 'but here's to the speedy comin' of the sperrit' Mrs. Terry, an' whin next summer comes, I thrust I may find you settin' your pretty cheeks off with a crape veil like a raysonable Christian resigned to the doin's of Providence.'

"With that he took himself and the bundle off, an' it was a long an' lonesome winter spent in the little lodge, with no neighbours but the dairyman and his family, who stayed to take care of the cows, for the other servants had gone to the city with the family. I earned some money helpin' make the butter, an' I was puttin' it by whin I heard that Terry's ould feyther and mither were to be sent to the poor-house, an' I had thim brought to the lodge, an' I nursed the old feyther to his grave, an' the old mither back to her health again.

"Thin the spring came, but I can't say that I was glad to see it, for I knew that the family would come back, an' the butler, an' that he would be afther botherin' me again. An' bother me he did, an' so did the whole parish, for first he sent a stone-cutter man to me to put up a gravestone to Terry, an' the praste himsel' tould me that I ought to be havin' prayers said to get him out of Purgatory, an' the inn-keeper brought me a bill that Terry had been runnin' up unbeknownst to me for whiskey, an' I saw that it began from the time that the butler came to the house, an' like as not it was of the throuble betwixt us.

"An' while I was castin' about in my mind which I should pay first, the inn-keeper or the praste, and how I should get the money to pay either, comes the butler again; an', 'Mrs. Terry,' says he, 'sure it's little we all see you care for your husband's mimory, or you wouldn't grudge him the bit crape that tells of mournin'. Thim that mourns shall be comforted, but maybe it's right you are, for faith Terry was not worth the grievin'.'

"With that I grew angry.

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"'An', says I, 'it's none of *your* comfortin' I want in any case, Dinnis O'Leary, an' what nade have I to shpend on the mournin' whin my heart is in crape for him all the day long, an' it's better I should save his credit in this wurrld an' the nixt by payin' his debts an' the toll rates from Purgatory than shpendin' on my own dressin'.'

"With that the crayther saw that hope had wellnigh lift me, an', says he, 'What's the need of your slavin' in this way, Mrs. Terry? Terry had his life insured in your favour, an' there's a matter of a hundred and twenty pounds awaitin' your call, which will clear off all debts, an' lave you a rich widdy. An' what's the money got to do with your dressin', ayther? For here is this bundle of black dresses, which Mrs. Delacey did not send you at all, at all, for by the same token she knows nothin' about thim.'

"'Thin *you* bought thim yourself,' says I, 'an it's not I that will be afther acceptin' such a prisent from you.'

"But he denied it by all the saints, an' left the bundle in the door, an' I put it on the top shelf in the cupboard, I still mistrustin' that he had bought thim himsel', an' that the truth would out at last. Well, thin, I considered an' considered the matter of the insurance, but when I thought that if I had to shwear, as the butler said I must, to get the money, that to the best of my belafe an' wish that Terry was dead to all intints and purposes, dead for sure an' all, wid no hope of any resurrection, so far as this wurrld was concerned, it seemed to me that I was sellin' the bit of hope that I had lived all these months on, an' I couldn't do it.

"So, how I don't know, but that summer I lived through, an' a woeful one it was. I paid Terry's debts, an' I had the masses said, an' I was considerin' an illigant marble shtone for the buryin' ground, the which I meant to have earned to pay for by New Year's, for the misthress had lift me plenty of work to do.

"Whin a gurl in Ireland, the nuns had taught me to embroider an' to mark linen, an' the misthress had lift me a pile of sheets, an' pilly-cases, an' pleasant it was to sit by the foire wid the ould mither, an' think that with every letther I was makin' I was payin' for the cuttin' of another on Terry's tombstone. An' I determined not to stint the apytaph, but to give him a good long one, settin' down all his vartues, an' it should read somethin' like this:

"'HERE LIES THE BODY OF
TERRY O'FLAHERTY.
WHICH IS NOT BURIED HERE, HAVIN' NIVER
BEEN FOUND, HE HAVIN' BEEN CAP-
SIZED ONE DARK NIGHT IN
A WHERRY.'

"(It was more like a dory, but I said 'wherry' for the poetry.)

"'He was the kindest an' best of husbands an' fellows, barrin' a bit quick-tempered an' a trifle jealous. His widdy erects this monyment as a New Year's prisent to testify her woe, an' that she will never belave him dead till he comes an' tells her so.'

"It was a beautiful idea, but I niver had the monyment put up, the raison bein' that one night, as I worked by the fire, an' the ould mither nodded in the chair, I see a face at the windy, an' I held out my arms at it, an' called 'Terry, Terry!' an' fainted away, an' whin I came to my right sinses, an' was wonderin' whether it was Terry's ghost come to tell me I was a widdy, I felt myself held in his two strong arms, an' by the same token I knew it was Terry himself.

"Drivin' the cook wild wid the French dishes.'

"Well, we laughed, an' we cried, an' we hugged each other, an' we went nearly crazy, an' he tould me how it was wild he was the night he went away, an' how he had rowed out to a sailing vessel that was bound for Calcutty by the way of the Cape of Good Hope, determined for to lave me free to be a widdy, if I loiked; but how that the ould love and the longin' were too strong for him intirely, an' he set out to come back again, but was detained by a matter of two or three shipwrecks, an' so he had not touched shore till that very mornin'.

"An' how all the way he had been tormented wid the fear that I might have belaved him dead, an' have married the butler, an' he had bethought him that he would look in at the windy, an' if he saw me dressed in black, he would belave me still a widdy, an' come; but whin he saw me in pink, it near took his sinses away, for he thought sure I had done mournin' for him, an' how he was about to turn away whin I saw him an' called him, an' thin come in he had to, right through the sash of the windy, even were it to murther the butler.

"'But how is it,' says Terry, 'that you've not been doin' me the respect of wearin' black for me as a widdy should, an' mournin' so becomin' to you?' says he.

"'Whisht, Terry,' says the ould mither, 'what money had she to buy mournin', whin she's been buryin' your feyther, an' payin' my docther, an' your bills, an' the praste for prayin' you out of Purgatory, let alone the illigant new tombstone she was preparin' for a New Year's prisent,' says she.

"'A New Year's prisent!' says Terry, 'an' I in such a hurry to come home that divil a bit of a prisent did I bring her but myself. Did you niver get the illigant gowns I sint you from Lunnon? The ship put in there before we set out on our voyage, an' I thought what a pleasure you would take intirely wid wearin' of the weeds.'

"'Oh, Terry!' says I, 'an' was it you that sint them? I thought they were from the butler, an' here they've been lyin' all the time, for niver a rag of them would I put on.'

"With that he had me put on one of the dresses, an' he said it was too bad I should have deprived myself of one of the privileges of my widdyhood whin I had the chance, especially as he was now convinced that this was the *only* privilege I cared for, an' now his comin' home must not be a hindrance to my pleasure, an' I must wear them for his sake, as they were the only New Year's prisent he had for me.

"An' when I came to consider, it seemed only right an' proper I should do so, for shure no man deserved more to be mourned for, an' here was a matter of nearly two years, when I ought to have mourned for him, that I didn't, an' shure hadn't I given my word to the butler that I would wear mournin' for Terry, when Terry came back an' tould me to?

"So that is the explanation of the whole conundrum, an' you may ask Terry himself if it isn't a merry mournin' to him as well as to me."

"Shure, mum, it's that same," said Terence O'Flaherty; and the coachman, who had lounged into the lodge in time to hear the last part of the recital, took his little wife upon his knee, and, imprinting a rousing smack on her rosy cheek, added: "an' it's not permitted to every man to have the pleasure of consolin' his own widdy."

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THE OUTLAWS' TREASURE

SUMMARY.

The mail train has been robbed between Cornwall and La Grange stations, and £20,000 worth of gold stolen by a gang of desperadoes, headed by two brothers named Mulligan. Two passengers on the train—Adolph Squirrek, *alias* Smith, a detective tracking the Mulligans, and Fred Weldon, a young lawyer—who have struck up an acquaintance on the way, alight at Somerville, where the former stopped at the "Drover," and the latter at his mother's house. During the night a message comes to say that Judge Woodland's horse has come back alone, and Weldon, together with Squirrek and two other men set out to find him, and discover one of Mulligan's confederates lying senseless on the road. The man, who had made an unsuccessful attempt on the life of the judge, is sentenced to forty years' imprisonment. At Judge Woodland's Weldon meets a Spaniard named Alvarido Almanaz, and the two men become rivals for the love of Florence, the judge's daughter. Weldon is inveigled to a lonely bridge near Cornwall, and disappears. Squirrek pays a fruitless visit to the spot. Squirrek arouses the citizens of Cornwall, who make their way to the outlaws' hiding-place. One outlaw is found and killed, and the cabin is set fire to. Squirrek discovers a scrap of paper with the following cryptogram: "1——0——1. Cfujk't Bsdfj 50zct Mpqug Vmeds sid X gjsf Nbg." He afterwards falls in with the two remaining outlaws and has them arrested.

CHAPTER XX.

LYNCHED!

THE succeeding day was passed without any incident worthy of note, the greater portion of it being spent by me in endeavouring to decipher the writing in my possession. But it was as great a puzzle to me as to Señor Almanaz, and the result of my study was the conviction that I never could be able to fathom its mystery without the help of some one.

In moving through the town during the afternoon I made a rather startling discovery. A plan was brewing, and, in fact, was already perfected, which looked like summary justice being visited upon the heads of the Mulligans. The mayor had only succeeded in lulling the storm—he had not subdued it.

Over a hundred men—numbering the most respectable, and at the same time the most determined people in Somerville—had organised and banded together for the sworn purpose of lynching the prisoners.

Just at dusk I hurried to the mayor's office. He knew of what was going on.

"There is only one way I can stop it," said he.

"What's that?"

"Run them off in the train to the State prison at Alton, where they can be temporarily confined until this danger passes over. All the mobs in the United States couldn't hurt that building."

"But that is fifty miles distant."

"I know it. The express will be along in half an hour; the station-master will be ready. We can slip the two men out the back way, and have them twenty miles out of the town before anyone, except our friends, can suspect what has been done."

"I hope the plan will succeed."

"So do I," said the mayor, rapping his stick on the floor very earnestly. "These lynchings are becoming too common in the West. I confess I have sometimes had some sympathy for the community who have taken the law into their own hands, when the legal authorities were powerless. The Vigilance Committee of San Francisco, a dozen years ago, did a good work, but there is no need for anything of the kind here These men have enjoyed a great immunity heretofore, but it is at end now."

While I, in common with the magistrate, had a great desire to see the majesty of the law sustained. I still felt, what I suspected him of feeling, some sympathy for the multitude that had borne much great wrong. The mayor knew that I was a detective, but had not known that I had headed the crowd that went out of Cornwall a few days before, and visited the island, and I did not think it necessary to tell him.

It was about seven o'clock in the evening that a close carriage drove rapidly from the rear of the gaol towards the station, starting the very instant the whistle of the express train was heard.

The Mulligans were hurried into the train, and followed by four officers and myself. Our exit had attracted no attention, and we felicited ourselves upon the neat manner in which we had outwitted the people, and laughed over the chagrin that they would feel when the trick was discovered.

Our plan was a good one, but we were betrayed, and I am satisfied that one of the police officers accompanying us was the man who did it.

Just as we were nearing Cornwall, and had begun to slacken, the conductor jerked the signal rope for the engine to go through without stopping. He instantly blew the whistle for the loosening of the brakes, and the engine made a leap forward, puffing louder and faster, but in the next ten seconds the whistle was blown again—the signal for the putting on of the brakes being twice repeated—an indication that there was danger ahead—and we began rapidly pulling up.

The crowd greeted me with a cheer.

I arose from my seat and looked out of the window. By the lamps at the station a vast swarming crowd of people could be seen, all swayed by some great, controlling excitement.

I suspected the truth at once, and so did my companions and the prisoners, who turned pale and looked at one another, but did not speak a word. A moment later Jim said:

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They struggled and fought like wild beasts.

"Just loose our hands and give us a show, won't you?"

The officer shook his head.

"It won't do any good; we'll protect you as well as we can."

"Yes; we know what that will amount to," replied the other, with a sneer. "I believe this is some of your work."

The officer leant forward, and hastily unlocked the handcuffs upon the wrists of the prisoners.

At this moment several men entered the car, looked eagerly round for an instant, and then walked towards us. At their head was Lieutenant Belknap. As I resumed my ministerial disguise, he recognised me by a nod.

"I believe these are the men we want," said he, looking sharply at the prisoners.

"Lieutenant," said I, "there is no necessity for this. You know me well enough to believe that I have no wish to befriend these men. But there has been enough of this lynching business; we have them securely guarded, and they cannot escape punishment this time."

"I don't think they can either," was the significant reply. "There is no need of your talking to me, captain; if you want to preach go outside and talk to them."

The crowd was surging and pressing against the windows, struggling with each other to get a sight of the criminals, and demanding that they should be brought out.

It was a critical moment, and I pressed my way outside. As soon as I was seen the crowd recognised me and greeted me with a cheer. Encouraged by this mark of friendship, I mounted the railing at the end of the car, took off my hat, and signified that I wished to address them. Instantly all was still.

"My friends," I called out, in the most impressive voice I could use, "have I not demonstrated to you that I am your friend, and the foe of this gang of desperadoes?"

Tremendous cheers and affirmative responses followed this.

"Well, then, I want you to prove yourselves my friends. We have the last of the Mulligan gang—the two leaders themselves—in secure custody, and in the next hour we intend to have them securely lodged in the State Prison, from which they will never come, except to be remanded back again for the whole term of their natural lives. I can sympathise with you in your exasperation at the long immunity these men have been allowed. But that is now at an end. The gang is extirpated, and there is no call for your taking these two miserable wretches in hand. If I thought there was the least chance of their escaping, I would be the first to demand their summary execution. But they are anxious to get into prison, and you may be sure they will be securely guarded there.

"The news of our doings for the last few days has been telegraphed all over the union, and published in all the papers, and we have been sneered at as a half-civilised community. Let us prove that we never take the law into our own hands except when justice calls us to do so. Disperse like good citizens——"

But I was talking to madmen, and they would hear me no longer. I was interrupted by hootings, and the next moment Lieutenant Belknap and his companions emerged from the train, dragging the Mulligan brothers after them. They struggled and fought like wild beasts, but their ankles were bound together, and, although their arms were free, yet they were powerless to inflict any injury. Lieutenant Belknap and one or two of his comrades handled the men like so many puppets.

Some one had telegraphed to Brampton, apprising the Vigilance Committee of the intended removal of the prisoners, and this explained the gathering.

The officers had made a feeble attempt to protect their charge, but there was little trouble in overcoming them, and they abandoned them into the hands of the mob, who were roused up to a fiendish excitement.

There is no need of describing the scene that followed. The men were given ten minutes in which to make their peace with Heaven, but they sullenly refused to take it, and then a rush was made for the nearest tree.

Shortly afterwards, they were dangling between heaven and earth, the crowd hooting and exulting in their death-throes, the streets lit up with lamps and torches, which made the faces of the multitude look garish and unearthly in the light, while the people swarming back and forth—savage and vengeful as they always are made by such scenes—were forbidding and dangerous in the extreme. Like the fanatics in the French

Shortly afterwards they were dangling between heaven and earth.

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Revolution, they were ready to turn against their friends upon the slightest pretext.

Before swinging the two miserable men off into eternity they were asked to tell what had become of Frederick Weldon; but as they knew nothing was to be gained they kept silent, and the secret perished with them.

I left the train at Cornwall, as there was no call for my going further. I had seen the last of the famous Mulligan Gang, which had infested this portion of the West for a number of years, and the only survivor was "poor Tom Borie," who was in the State penitentiary for twenty years.

I received my large reward for the apprehension of the leaders, and my work with them was finished.

But a more important work lies before me—the solving of the mystery of Frederick Weldon's disappearance, and, after that, the solution of the cipher which I found upon the island, and which I still have in my possession.

And laying down my pen for a time, I now turn to the unravelling of the most singular web of fate which ever came under my observation.

CHAPTER XXI.

TWO PEOPLE HAVE STRANGE DREAMS.

ADOLPH SQUIRREK, the detective, having laid aside his pen for a time, the historian now takes it up.

After the tempest came the lull. There were preliminaries of legal proceedings against the men who had rescued the Mulligans from the officers and lynched them; but the sentiment of the community was so strongly adverse that the step never amounted to anything.

Men plunged anew into the business of life, and almost ceased to talk of the whirlwind of passion that had swept over them a short time before. It was a thing of the past, and the country could never be similarly cursed again.

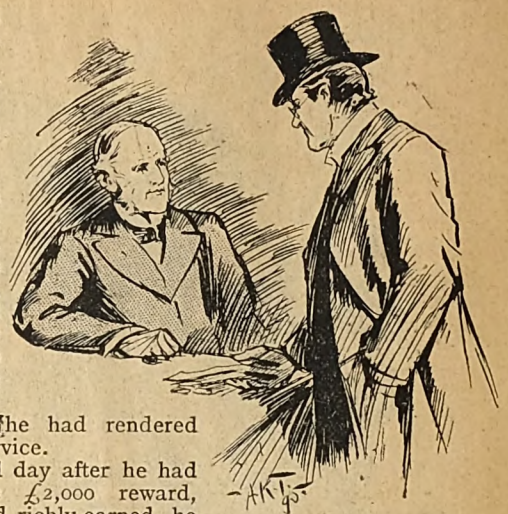
Upon one hearthstone the shadow had fallen. Weldon's mother was stricken to the earth by the loss of her son, and the sympathy of the whole town was with her. She was visited and condoled with by scores, for all knew what a noble child she had lost.

Florence Woodland scarcely let an afternoon pass that she did not sit beside the old lady, and talk with her regarding her boy. She added to the partial parent's encomiums, and did everything in her power to cheer her in her great sorrow. Many little delicacies found their way to her table from the well-stocked larder of Judge Woodland, and in the church, of which she had so many years been a prominent member, she was the burden of prayer and the most tender solicitation.

All that could be done to lighten her sorrow was done, and the innumerable acts of kindness were appreciated by the gentle soul, whose only wish now was to pass quietly down the vale of life, and in the good time of Providence, join her husband and son, who, she felt had preceded her by only a few years to the better land.

Did everything in her power to cheer her in her great sorrow.

ADOLPH SQUIRREK, the detective, performed an act which did his heart credit, and increased the respect in which he was held in the neighbourhood where he had rendered such good service.



Called upon Judge Woodland.

The second day after he had received the £2,000 reward, which he had richly earned, he called upon Judge Woodland, and stated to him that he wished to place the whole amount in his hands for the sole benefit of the widow Weldon.

Seeing the look of surprise upon the old lawyer's face, he said, somewhat impatiently:

"It is hers; it will serve partly to compensate her for the loss of her son. I led him into this business, with the promise of half the profits, and I could never retain a penny of it without feeling that there was blood upon it."

The papers were duly made out, and the noble act of charity performed, after which the detective seemed to breathe more freely. Then Judge Woodland turned to him, and asked abruptly:

"Do you think Frederick Weldon is dead?"

The officer was silent a moment, as though debating with himself.

"No; I believe he is alive."

"What reason have you for thinking so?"

"I cannot explain at present. A few days ago I was certain he still walked the earth; now I only suspect it, but I shall never rest until I have penetrated the mystery regarding him.

"If alive, why is he absent?"

"That is for me to discover."

"Have you acquainted his mother with your belief?"

"No; there is no reason to raise a hope which may only be cruelly disappointed. The whole thing will be settled within a few weeks, one way or another."

"I pray you may be rewarded with success, but I have not the slightest hope that you will."

"I do not expect you to believe it; I only ask that what I have said to you shall be known to no one else."

The judge inclined his head to signify that his promise was given. Then followed a few second's silence, when the detective added:

"I am a plain man, judge, and you will not take offence, therefore, at what I am about to say?"

"I know you too well not to understand you."

"You have quite a frequent visitor to your house in the person of the Cuban Almanaz."

"He calls occasionally."

"Receive him with caution, and do not let him become *too warm a friend* in your family. You understand me?"

"I beg your pardon, I do not."

"Then let it pass," replied Squirrek, somewhat testily.

"Please explain yourself."

"I have given you my word of warning; that ought to be sufficient. If it isn't, don't blame me."

The judge pressed the detective for a further explanation of what he had said; but he steadily refused, feeling that the arrow which he had aimed had been sent home.

A few moments later he bade his host good-evening, and

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withdrew. The judge called the next day at the hotel to see his friend, but was told that he had left with his luggage by the late train on the preceding evening, and he did not suppose he intended returning again, unless—as the fellow facetiously remarked—a new set of Mulligan brothers should spring up, when, he had no doubt, he would be on hand again.

The following morning there was a look of dejection upon the face of Judge Woodland, as he took his seat at the breakfast table, which occasioned the anxious inquiry of his daughter.

"I had a curious dream last night," said he.

"But you don't believe in dreams, father?"

"Of course not; but this was so strange, so vivid that I cannot get it out of my head. It awoke me in the night, and made me uneasy, and then when I dropped asleep I had the same vision directly over again."

"What was it about?"

"Fred Weldon."

Florence started and turned slightly pale, which the parent did not notice.

"I suppose it came from what Smith said last evening——"

"Was he here?" interrupted his daughter.

"Yes; did you not know it?" returned the parent looking up with some surprise. "He was here only a few minutes, and naturally we fell to speaking of young Weldon and his curious fate, and I suppose the thoughts came to the surface again when I was unconscious."

"But I haven't heard your dream."

"I thought it was a clear, moonlight night, and I saw a young man walk rapidly along the railroad from Brampton towards the High Bridge, which you know is over that little stream that is called Devil's Creek. One look at him showed that it was Fred Weldon, and that he was hurrying over the railway as though he were late in keeping some appointment. I saw his face as plainly as I see yours this instant, and noticed that it appeared pale in the moonlight.

"I watched him until he had reached the High Bridge, and then I noticed that he was walking between two men, who had come up beside him like phantoms, although where from it was impossible to imagine. You know, my dear, that the sensation of wonder is never experienced in dreams. No matter how absurd and grotesque everything is, yet in dreamland we always take it as a matter of course.

"While I was looking at the trio they vanished so suddenly out of sight that I was convinced they had fallen through the bridge into the stream below.

"There was nothing extraordinary in such a dream as this, except in its being repeated with a vividness that awoke me with a start, and found me shuddering all over. I slept no more, and found it impossible to get it out of my head.

"Now," continued the judge, in his oracular way, "had I been indulging in a more substantial dinner than usual, had been unwell, or had any remarkable circumstance happened to me yesterday, I could reasonably account for this curious freak of sleep. However, I am so firmly convinced of the meaningless nature of dreams, that the most that I can say is, that this was curious."

There was a look of dejection on the face of Judge Woodland.

There was a silence for a few minutes, during which Florence displayed some emotion, broken finally by her remark:

"I had a dream also."

"Very natural."

"But this was something like yours."

"Ah! about Fred Weldon?" asked the judge eagerly, looking at her in surprise.

Carrying a third with them.

"Yes; about him."

"What was it?"

"It seems to me rather like a continuation of your dream. I know the vicinity of the High Bridge and the stream very well, for we frequently went nutting there when I was a child, and I remember the old chestnut which Fred Weldon used to climb to the very top, and whip the branches off for us.

"Well, I saw three men walking through that ravine. Two of them were bending down and carrying a third with them, and as the moon shone on the face of this man, I saw that it was Fred Weldon's, pale, with the eyes shut, and there was blood on the forehead. Oh, it was terrible!" exclaimed the girl, shuddering and placing her hands over her face, as if to shut out the sight.

"Strange!" remarked the judge, in an undertone, as if speaking to himself, but looking perplexedly at his daughter.

The latter overcame her emotion in a few moments, and then said:

"One of the men carrying him was tall, and his back was towards me, so that I could not see his face, but I knew it was the Cuban, Almanaz——"

"There, by heaven!" exclaimed the old man, slamming his teacup down upon the table, "that's just what I saw, but I didn't think it was worth while to say it!"

Both were so agitated that they ate no more at the breakfast table. They tarried long, discussing their dreams, but the father said nothing of the hope that had been awakened in his breast, less by these dreams than by the words the detective had uttered (taken in conjunction with them) the night before.

The same hope fluttered in the breast of Florence Woodland like the struggles of a dying dove, but she gave it no expression. She felt a longing to see the clear-headed "Mr. Smith," who had called there several times, for it seemed to her that he could help her in her distressful quandary.

CHAPTER XXII.

ANOTHER DREAM, AND SEÑOR ALMANAZ SAYS GOOD-BYE.

WHEN Señor Almanaz was announced at the door in the afternoon, Florence Woodland sent word that she could not see him. A half-hour later she stole quietly out and made her way to the residence of Mrs. Weldon.

The old lady was always glad to see her, but especially on this occasion.

"For I dreamt of Fred last night," she said.

Florence started, as if to make certain that she was not in a dream herself.

"Was it good or bad?" she asked, to divert attention from her own nervousness.

"Both; good because it seemed to say that he was not dead, and bad because he was so ill."

"Pray tell me all about it."

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"I saw him riding through the dark streets of a city in a close carriage, with a man on either side of him. They looked savagely and unfeelingly at him in his distress——"

"Describe the men."

"One was short, with red hair and sandy whiskers all over his face; the other was tall, with black, curly hair, black eyes, dark face and moustache——"

"There, that will do," interrupted Florence, who recognised the Cuban in this succinct description. "Tell me the rest of your dream."

"I saw him in a low, dirty room, with a doctor bending over him, looking, oh! so pale and ill that I felt like rushing to him. Can it be—can it be that my dear Fred is alive?" moaned the mother, walking the floor in her anguish

"Calm yourself," pleaded the girl, who was scarcely less agitated. "If he is alive he will come back to you"

"You know his body has never been found," she said, turning her tearful face to her visitor. "If he is alive, he is ill, and I cannot go to him."

"He will be found if living."

"Who will find him?" demanded the parent, stopping suddenly in her walk, and looking sorrowfully at her young friend.

"Mr. Smith will never give up searching for him until he learns that he is either dead or until he finds him."

"How do you know that?"

"I *know* he will find him," was the vehement reply. "Has he not shown the greatest interest in Fred? Will he not be the most likely to know something about him? He has left Somerville now, and I am sure it is to find out all he can about your poor boy."

Florence regretted that she had spoken these words, for they harrowed the mother to the very soul. But they could not be recalled, and she could only pray that they might eventuate in something good to her.

She did her utmost to soothe and quiet her, and had measurably succeeded when she left the house and started homeward.

The day was just ending when she left the village to walk the short distance that intervened between that and her home; but she had gone but a few yards when she heard quickening footsteps behind her, and a moment later Señor Almanaz was at her side.

It was the same figure that she had seen in her dream.

The Spaniard gracefully lifted his hat, and spoke in the pure English for which he was noted.

"I am glad you have so far recovered as to be able to take an afternoon stroll."

"I feel quite well."

"I was sorry that I was not able to see you this afternoon, as I am about to leave Somerville."

"For good?"

"Yes. I return to Cuba from which beautiful isle I have been absent too long."

"When do you go?"

"To-morrow morning."

"Ah, that is soon."

Florence was swayed by such a shuddering disgust for the man at her side that she could not utter any hypocritical regrets at his intended departure. She was too much relieved at the thought to allow her to do any such thing. For while the Cuban walked beside her she saw another shadowy form bending over the prostrate figure of the widow's son.

They conversed in a rambling manner until they reached a gate of the lane leading into her father's home. At this point the Cuban hastened forward to unfasten the gate for her and, on acccunt of his tall figure, he was compelled to stoop somewhat in order to do so.

At that instant Florence uttered a slight scream, and covered her face with her hands.

"What is the matter?" he asked, hastening to her side.

"Nothing," she replied; "it has passed over."

As the dark evil-looking man bent over to take the gate fastening, it was the same figure that she had seen in her dream, and she could not avoid the faint gasping scream that escaped her at the startling repetition.

The two walked in silence up the lane until they reached the gate, which opened into the yard of the house. This was drawn open by the señor, who waited for her to pass in.

She did so, and he lingered, wishing to enter, and yet waiting for the invitation, which did not come. Looking him fully in the face, Florence said in her quiet manner:

"Good evening, Señor Almanaz."

"Miss Woodland—Florence, I do not understand what this means."

"It means simply that I cannot see you again. I wish you a pleasant voyage to your home again. Good evening."

She bowed low, turned about, and walked into the house, without uttering another word, or once looking back.

Señor Alvarido Almanaz gazed after her for a few minutes, like one transfixed. He seemed unable to comprehend what had passed. Then, as it all came over him, he turned on his heel, and walked rapidly away.

Florence Woodland walked silently into the house, and went to her room. At the tea table her father was reserved and silent, and acted in a manner which showed that something troubled him.

When the meal was finished it came out.

"It was singular, Florence, that Almanaz should have figured in both our dreams; don't you think so?"

"I do."

"And in both so unfavourably?"

"It does seem strange."

Silence followed for a few moments, and then the father said:

"I confess I do not like him. I always had a good opinion of him, and I cannot call to mind anything that he has ever said or done that was not what it should be."

Just then Judge Woodland was not thinking of his dream, but of the words that the detective had spoken on the preceding evening.

"I do not like him. He told me a short time ago that he was to sail for Cuba to-morrow——"

"I am glad of it."

"And he bade me good-bye."

"I am glad to hear that also."

"And I was unspeakably relieved to be well rid of him."

"And that makes me more pleased than all," said the father, as he rose from his seat and kissed the forehead of his daughter.

(*To be continued.*)

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I HAD joined a party in the hope of a few days' sport among the hills near Amulpore, and found my host a most agreeable companion. We had many tastes in common, and found pleasant topics for conversation as we sat smoking our cheroots on the broad verandah. One evening I was sitting alone.

Where he came from I cannot tell, but all at once, through the faint blue smoke of my cheroot, appeared a little withered fakir, peering at me from under the loose folds of his dirty turban. His skinny brown body was naked, save for the presence of a piece of tiger-skin wrapped about his loins, and a belt that ran across his body from shoulder to waist. He was muttering to himself, but the only words that I could catch were "Brahma, Brahma, Radhe-fusee."

Surprise made me speechless. I simply stared at the wizened face and glittering black eyes, wondering what he was going to do. The sound of the swinging purdah told of Walworth's approach.

"Did you think that I had forsaken you?" he said lightly; "Thura's interviews are interminable. He is as long-winded as a tipsy Irishman."

I half turned towards him while he was speaking. As he came round and resumed his chair, I said, in an undertone: "What do you think of this fossil?"

"What fossil?" he asked.

"The one before us," I replied, turning and looking at the place where the fakir had stood. No fakir was there. On the gravel walk lay a half-coiled cobra. Walworth started to his feet and called for Marja to bring him a gun. The cobra lay quiet for a moment, as if in contemplation of the situation, then, at the sound of approaching feet, with slow and graceful movement and erect head, slid across the sodden grass and disappeared through an opening under the verandah.

"Rather dangerous fossil," said Walworth, eyeing me curiously: "the men must keep a watch for him. You are a cool one, I must confess, my lad."

"I was not alluding to the snake," replied I: "It had reference to the fakir. I wonder what became of the poor wretch. The cobra frightened him away, I suppose. What are you about?" I continued, seeing Marja coming from the bungalow with a slender reed pipe in one hand and a chafing dish, on which burnt an odorous, smoking fire in the other.

"A charm for his snakeship," said my host laughing. "A cloud of aromatic incense and a serenade on the toumril."

But neither the incense nor the seductive strains of the toumril were sufficiently potent to call the cobra from his covert.

"That no time cobra," said Marja. "Sahib saw fakir, but all at once no fakir, only snake. Marja knows."

His tones were mysterious. I smiled and looked at his master. "A metamorphosis, eh?" Walworth nodded. "A clear case of Theosophy," I continued. Walworth looked grave. He dismissed the servant with a wave of his hand, threw away his cigar, shifted his position slightly, and arranged himself more comfortably in his chair.

"You are sceptical," he said. "Listen to what I have to tell you; perhaps then you will believe.

"I was a much younger man than you when I came to India. I was surgeon of the Fusiliers. Shortly after we were stationed at the fort I was invited to an entertainment given by a native nobleman at his palace in the city. The scene reminded me of the 'Arabian Nights.' Oriental magnificence was mingled with European elegance. We were received in an open court-yard, spread with cream-coloured Yac rugs, in the centre of which a fountain played in a white marble basin, cooling the air with its perfumed spray. I halted at the upper step of the stairway, and stood leaning with one hand on the broad railing watching the kaleidoscopic scene before me.

"Our colonel and his wife stopped a moment to speak to me. As they turned to go Mrs. Beldon's name was called, and, a little lower down, was a young girl. I thought I had never seen one so beautiful.

"She was dark, but her skin was a pale, transparent brown, flushed with the crimson of a rose leaf. Her lips were carmine, opening, as she smiled, over teeth as white as pearls. Her soft, lustreless black hair was drawn up from her temples and caught back by a comb of gold and filigree. Her eyes were dark, soft and velvety.

"'So you were going to pass me unnoticed!' she said, in the sweetest voice possible.

"'Why, Naida! what are you doing here alone? When did you return?'

"'To-day. I am not alone. Papa is over there, speaking to General Monckton. Isn't this the loveliest fête?'

"I was duly presented to Miss Howe.

"To make a long story short, I called on her, fell in love with her, proposed to and married her.

"Her father was an Englishman, a judge on a Northern circuit; her mother, some said, was a Spaniard, others said she was an Italian Begum. Little cared I what the mother was, I loved her as my very soul.

"The first month of my married life was passed in unalloyed happiness. All the hours were golden hours. The Paradise lost to old Father Adam seemed restored to me. But by-and-bye, a cloud no bigger than a man's hand appeared on the horizon. I observed a change in Naida. She was alternately very quiet and very restless. She was nervous and out of sorts. She would start and shiver when the clock chimed, or murmur blankly and shudder if a door slammed.

"'What is it, Naida?' I asked one day. 'You are not yourself. What is the matter with you?'

"She glanced wearily at me. 'I hardly know. I am afraid I am a little homesick. I think I want Gurgah.'

"'Who is Gurgah?'

"'My ayah.'

"'You shall have Gurgah. Why didn't you speak of her before?'

"The next day I found a small, dark woman, in a snowy garment, with a grave countenance enlivened by a nose-ring and ear-plates, squatting on the floor beside Naida's hammock. It was the ayah. Days of sunshine followed. My wife chattered and laughed to her heart's content. Poor child! she was homesick.

"I was waiting in my gharry one evening for a friend who was to drive with me to an outpost a few miles from the station. As I entered his compound I noticed a bevy of ladies at *chotah-hazree* on the verandah Not in a mood to join them I drew up under a tree and sent my boy to the house. I was sufficiently near to hear their voices, and the conversation was distinctly audible above the clatter of silver and china. As a matter-of-fact, uninterested Benedict, I paid no attention to their chatter, until I heard a voice, rendered shrill by surprise, exclaim:

"'Naida Howe married! Good Gracious! Who is the unfortunate man? He must have been either a stranger or a lunatic. What did you all mean by permitting him to marry her? Was no one kind enough to warn the poor fellow?'

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"What on earth did the woman mean? I strained my ears to catch the reply.

"'A warning would have done him no good. He was the most infatuated man I ever saw. Love wrapped him as with a garment. And, besides, it never does to burn one's fingers with other people's fires. I daresay they will get along; Naida is very peculiar, but she is a very sweet girl.'

"'Peculiar! I should say so——' At that moment Kirk came out and we drove away. All the evening the echo of those dreadful words rang in my ears. What did it all mean?

"I reached home with a strange foreboding of evil. I felt heavy and oppressed It was so still you might have fancied that death filled the place. By the shining panels on the wall hard by the bay window, I caught sight of a jewelled hand toying with the folds of the curtain. The red glint of the gems sparkled on the dusky skin. I called her name softly, 'Naida!'

"'Ah.'

"She rose and pushed the curtain aside and came languidly towards me. There was a peculiar expression in her eyes. She stared at me for a second time, and then, before I could say a word, glided from the room. Her handkerchief had fallen. I raised it from the floor; a faint subtle odour emanated from its folds. I cast it from me—I can't tell why—and crossed over to the window.

"The punkah boy was asleep on the grass, with my Irish setter beside him. I was about to call and rouse him, when out into the moonlight from the black shade of a clump of caladiums sprang the slight, graceful form of an animal. It streaked across the ground in sinuous track; the moon showed its tawny yellow hide spotted with brown. It was a cheetah.

"Alarmed for the boy, I jumped through the window and, catching him by the shoulder, dragged him to his feet. His teeth chattered and his dark face grew livid.

"'The cheetah, sahib! That cheetah has been running about the bungalow nearly all week.'

"I sent immediately for the men servants of the establishment and set them as guard over the bungalow: then I went to seek Naida.

"I called her name softly, not wishing to alarm her, but no answer came to my tender call. I opened the door. A pale blue light burnt in a silver sconce that hung on the wall. The moonbeams fell in through the open window and mingled with the light of the lamp. A faint white smoke hung over the further corner of the room. I looked at the couch—it was empty. I glanced about the room—no one was there. Where were they—Naida and her nurse? Could they be out on the lawn? Already I fancied the murderous teeth and talons of the cheetah tearing the delicate flesh of my darling. Perhaps at that moment he was sucking her life-blood. I rushed out of the bungalow shouting her name—'Naida! Naida! Naida!'

"Followed by half-a-dozen natives, I hurried over the compound, but we saw neither wife nor ayah. Nearly frantic, I was returning to the house. In front of the bungalow I saw a white object—it was the nurse.

"Where is your missy?" I cried, grasping her arm.

"She rested her glistening eyes on my face while she deliberately answered:

"'Missy in the bungalow, in her own room.'

"'The cheetah! the cheetah!' cried the men behind me.

"'Where?' I called excitedly.

"'There, on lawn, close by bungalow!'

"A wild yell and the scream, 'He jumped in missy window! he jump in missy window!'

"In an instant I was at Naida's door. I flung it open. No cheetah was to be seen; but on the foot of the couch sat my wife, gasping breathlessly and staring wildly about her.

"'Darling,' I cried, 'where have you been? Are you hurt? Where is the cheetah?'

"She answered me by bursting into tears on my shoulder. I let her weep unreservedly while I caressed her beautiful hair. Presently I raised her head, and, holding her face between my hands, looked into her eyes. Their expression baffled me. She put out her hands and pushed me from her.

"'Where is Gurgah?' she said, in a husky whisper.

"Some one was already bending over her. The ayah's thin arms lifted her up and carried her to her bed-chamber. I heard her scream aloud and beat her hands upon the wall.

"Was she mad? The fearful thought darted like lightning through my brain. I went to the door and looked in. Her eyes were roaming here and there about the room. Gurgah was leaning over her, chafing her hands and crooning a low, soothing song. My presence seemed to irritate her; she turned away when she met my gaze, buried her head in the pillow, and lay there with her face downwards. I did not want to torture her. I went to my own room.

"In the morning, to my great surprise, I found her on the verandah. No sign of last night's excitement was visible. She was endeavouring to make Taio, her pug, sit erect and hold a bit of biscuit on his nose.

"'I am putting the stupid fellow through a course of training,' she cried gaily, as I came upon the scene. Her voice was sweet and clear, and told of no pain or distress. She arose from her stooping posture, thrust her arm in through mine, and said:

"'Let's take a walk through the compound, dearest. I want to hear the birds sing before breakfast. I wonder,' she went on, as we walked along under the palm shade, 'if you are my soul's affinity?'

"'Of course,' I replied. 'We would not have fallen in love so soon and married, if an affinity had not existed between us.'

"'You do not quite understand me. I mean celestial affinity—a bond that will last beyond time.'

"Her look wandered off into space.

"'John,' she said, 'do you believe in the progress of souls?'

"'I have never given the subject a thought, so I cannot say. I believe in the progress of bodies,' I replied lightly.

"'You have more faith in materialism than in spirituality,' she continued gravely. 'You should study, John.'

"I smiled. 'Wisdom thy name is Naida! My dear, whence comes all this learning—is Gurgah the deep well from which you draw? You are too much for me, little woman.'

"I plucked a rose from the bush that we were passing and playfully tipped her on the chin with it. 'See, there is Schinasawing; they want us in the breakfast-room. Come, let us go and see what the cook has provided.'

"The following week was one of tumult and commotion. The entire station was aroused. A cheetah was making the rounds of the compounds, and more than one person was terrified by the sight of the tawny beast creeping stealthily about their premises. Major Dent surprised it asleep in the forks of a toddy-tree at the back of the hospital, but before he could secure a weapon the animal managed to escape. Naughty children required no fictitious bugbear to terrify them into good behaviour now; the very name of this notorious visitor subdued the little culprits to prompt obedience and abject penitence. At night all bungalows were closed.

"Recollecting Naida's terror the night of the cheetah's visit to us, I forbade the subject to be mentioned in her presence, and, unknown to her, I provided weapons for the men-servants, and kept constant guard on the bungalow.

"Late one night, as I was returning from a visit to a sick man at the hospital, I descried lights flitting about my compound. Excited shouts issued from the shrubbery, and the loud yelping of hounds filled the air.

"Gurgah sprang to meet me as I leapt from my gharry.

"'Oh, sahib,' she cried; grasping my arm in mad eagerness, 'the cheetah is out! Call off the men! They will kill it!'

"'That's what I want them to do,' I returned, hastily breaking from her grasp. I ran hurriedly in the direction of the melée, closely followed by Gurgah.

"'Where is it, Schinasawing?' I called.

"'In the pecpul copse, sahib.'

"There was the simultaneous crack of a dozen rifles, and a loud, wild wail from the ayah.

"All rushed forward to the thicket. With a cry of consternation the men fell back. There upon the earth, riddled with bullets, bleeding and dying, lay—Naida!"

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A FATHER'S FORETHOUGHT

CHAPTER I.

THERE was once a time, according to some of our old codes of laws, when a girl's dowry consisted only of a wreath of roses. It is no longer the case now. To-day the question of the dowry is the most important one of the marriage, and causes in various families many funny, sad and touching scenes. It is one of these family scenes that I want to tell you about.

Let us enter into the house of M. Desgranges, an old retired merchant, who lived at Villeneuve Saint Georges, a little town a short distance south of Paris. His daughter Madeleine had been asked in marriage by a young architect, and the two young people were desperately in love with each other.

M. Grandval, however, the young man's father, would not allow his son to marry anyone who had not a dowry of 200,000 francs, and M. Desgranges would only give his daughter 100,000. His wife urged him to give the amount needed; his daughter implored him; but he remained inflexible. Madame Desgranges belonged to that class of soft-hearted mothers who cannot speak of their daughters without tears in their eyes, so she begged and insisted, until at last, seeing that she made no impression on her husband, she rose and said with indignation:

"M. Desgranges, do you wish to know what I think of you? I think you are a man devoid of heart and feeling."

"I know it, my dear."

"You are not a father, you are a——"

"An executioner," he supplied theatrically.

"Do you know, Monsieur Desgranges, that you will soon succeed in making me crazy, in making me lose my temper entirely!"

"Dear mother, enough, enough!" said Madeleine, rising from her seat. "I do not wish to be the cause of any disagreement between you and my father, and since he does not wish to grant our request, since he refuses to do what we are so anxious for, that which would make the happiness of Henri and myself——" She stopped and burst into tears.

"She weeps!" cried Madame Desgranges. "Oh, my daughter! My dear little daughter! Does not even this move you, monster? Can you see her tears, and hear her say in her gentle voice that you could make her happy, and remain obdurate?"

"What do you expect, my dear?" said her husband. "Whenever I see a woman in tears, I am on my guard."

"What do you mean?"

"It is not my fault, I can assure you," said he. "When we were first married, you wept so often, when you wanted me to do anything for you, that women's tears now always have the effect of making me obstinate."

"Oh! father, father!" cried Madeleine, "can you doubt the sincerity of my grief? Do you not believe that I love Henri? He is so good and sensible, and you say yourself that his prospects as an architect are very good."

"That is all true."

"Yes, well then," interrupted Madame Desgranges, "why not let her marry him?"

"I have not the least objection. I give my hearty consent, and with my consent one hundred thousand francs as her dowry. But not the two thousand which Monsieur Grandval demands."

"And why not?" asked Madame Desgranges.

"Because I am not rich enough to give it to my daughter without inconveniencing myself."

"At your age," said Madame Desgranges, "one has not many wants."

"On the contrary, each year brings new ones. Each infirmity is an extra expense. My sight fails; I need glasses. My limbs become feeble; I need a carriage, and so on."

"Come," persisted Madame Desgranges: "I know that you have a good heart. Will it not be a pleasure to you to bleed yourself for your daughter?"

"Ah, you are alluding to the old legend of the pelican, which is said to tear open its own breasts to feed its young. But this has been proved to have no truth in it."

At this moment the young suitor entered. Madeleine saw him, ran to him, and taking him by the hand, said:

"Come Henri, come and help us. My father begins to yield to our entreaties."

"I?" said Desgranges.

"Oh! Monsieur Desgranges!" the young man said with emotion.

Monsieur Desgranges turned to him and said, "I am very glad, Henri, to see you. But, my dear young friend, I fear you have no heart. You are beloved by a charming girl, good, well-educated and affectionate, and you are not willing to marry her because she has not a dowry of 200,000 francs."

"But, father," said Madeleine, "he——"

"Do not interrupt me, my dear. When I married your mother she was worth fifty thousand times less than you."

"Sir!" cried Madame Desgranges.

"I meant to say she had fifty thousand francs less than you will have, but I did not hesitate."

"Neither do I hesitate," said Henri, becoming very much excited. "It is my father who objects."

"Yes," said Madeleine, "it is his father. He himself thinks nothing about the money. He has told me twenty times that he would marry me if I had not a sou—that he would rather I had nothing."

"That is true," said the young man.

"Yes, yes, I know—they all say that. I said it myself, but to myself."

"How?" said Madame Desgranges. "Was it not true, then?"

"What is true is, that I find the maxim that fathers should sacrifice themselves for their children a very stupid one."

"Sacrifice yourself!" said Madeleine. "Do I want you to do that? Do either of us wish it? Will not the money still remain with you?"

"Tut, tut! The money cannot be in two places at once. If I give it to you, I lose it. If I do not give it to you, I keep it. That is as clear as day."

"But, father——"

"My mind is made up. A father should always be richer than his children."

"What does it matter, which is the richer?" said Madame Desgranges. "Will not their home always be ours?"

"Never! A father should never trust to his children for support,—on their own account, so that they may never be ungrateful."

CHAPTER II.

ONE month after this scene, the young people were married. A year later, Madame Desgranges was godmother, and the next year Monsieur Desgranges was godfather. Three years having passed, we find the young couple, with their children, settled with the old people at Villeneuve Saint Georges. I have said that Monsieur Henri Grandval was an architect, but a young architect is, alas too often an architect in name only.

Of all young artists, architects are surely the most unhappy.

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One does not build houses simply for pleasure, and who is willing to intrust them to a young architect? He has a profession, and no materials to exercise it on. His profession is to build, and he has no buildings to make. This almost broke the good heart of Madame Desgranges, and brought down on the head of Monsieur Desgranges a torrent of abuse and entreaties.

"My dear, I beg of you to increase their income!"

"I shall certainly not do that," answered Monsieur Desgranges. "I am only too well pleased with the way in which I have acted. For I ask you, why have our daughter and son-in-law stayed with us for three months and four days? And why are they going to stay with us until the twentieth of December?"

"What a question! Because they love us, and are happy with us. Because they know that they give us pleasure. Because they are affectionate, tender-hearted——"

"In fact, just the opposite of what I am. Is it not so?" said Monsieur Desgranges, laughing.

Then going to his wife he said: "My dear, I adore you, because you will always remain a child!"

"What! a child!"

"I mean to say that you will always be the same good, naïve, credulous, confiding creature that I married with so much pleasure."

"What do you mean? Naïve, credulous?" answered Madame Desgranges, slightly offended. "Do you pretend that our children are not——"

"No, my dear wife, they are all you say, and more also. But do you really believe that your daughter, who is so pretty that she loves to show herself, because people have pleasure in looking at her—that your son-in-law, with his artistic tastes and his imagination, would leave Paris and the first pleasures of the winter, and make the journey backwards and forwards every day to attend to his business, simply for the pleasure of playing a game of cards with a father-in-law who is beginning to grow deaf, and a mother-in-law who is getting to be rather too talkative."

"But what do you think then? What do you suppose keeps them so long with us?"

"My dear," said Monsieur Desgranges laughingly, "do you remember that, when you were young, and had beautiful hair, you were always delighted to go to the country in order not to have to part it, so as to prevent it growing thin? Well, our children are delighted to stay here, in order to give their purse a rest."

"Shameful! Why not say at once that our children look on our house as an hotel?"

"Doubtless they do, the Inn of the Gold Lion. Here is accommodation for horse and man, for children, who are 'hard up,' and have to economise. If they have spent too much at the theatre, at balls, at concerts, they go to stay a few days with papa. If they want to pay for a little trip, they spend a month with papa. If one of the children is a little ailing, they take him to the country to stay with papa."

"Oh, you miserable creature! You attribute everything to selfishness, even paternal love."

"But suppose, on the contrary," said Monsieur Desgranges, without seeming to hear what his wife said, "suppose that I had doubled my daughter's dowry, as you wished me to do, what would have been the result? Considering my son-in-law's somewhat impulsive disposition, my children to-day would have been no richer, and I should have been much poorer. I should not have been able to keep them here so long, nor to entertain them so well, and they would not have come to stay with us so often, because they would have been better off at home.

"Ah, my dear, if our children were richer than we, my daughter would have found Villeneuve Saint Georges too damp in the autumn on account of the fogs from the river, and would have thought it unhealthy for the children. My son-in-law would have told us that the journey backwards and forwards from Paris every day was too fatiguing for him. This is the advice I give to all fathers whose daughters marry. If you wish to keep your children, keep your money. If you wish to enjoy your grandchildren, keep your money."

CHAPTER III.

It is now the thirtieth of November. The scene is still at Villeneuve Saint Georges. The family of Monsieur Desgranges is a very happy one. He has never seemed so gay and happy. It is the twenty-fifth anniversary of his marriage.

"My dear," he said to his wife, "this is a day which should be celebrated in a dignified manner. Everything must be in the very best style. Let us have a dinner to suit a gourmand (for you know you consider me one). I have told my daughter, who has gone to spend a day in Paris, for some reason that I do not know, that she and her husband must return by the four o'clock train. She will find in her room a pretty new dress, which I wish her to wear to-day.

"For yourself, in order to prove that you still love me a little in spite of all my faults, wear at dinner and in the evening, at the little party we are to have, the diamonds belonging to my poor mother. They represent to me all that I have loved the most in the world—she who gave them to me for you; you who have worn them for my sake and hers, and our daughter who wears them for the sake of all of us." Monsieur Desgranges turned away to hide his emotion.

Why did not Madame Desgranges answer him? Why did she remain for some time immovable with her eyes cast down? Why, when her daughter returned, did she take her weeping into her room? Why was Henri so sad? Why did the announcement of dinner make them all shudder? Why, on entering the dining-room, was the mother so troubled at the sight of her husband?

When he saw her, he exclaimed, "What! you have not put on your diamonds?"

For her only answer, his wife threw herself weeping into his arms. His daughter fell on her knees at his feet, and covered his hands with kisses.

"You have not the diamonds?" he said. "What, then, have you done with them?"

His wife and children were silent.

"You do not answer?" said he in a severe tone. "It is then my turn to speak. I know everything. You have sold them! Sold them to pay for the imprudence of your son-in-law. Yes; because he wished to go into a badly managed speculation; because he has been foolish enough to become security for the rogues who have deceived him; you have considered it necessary, in order to pay half his debt (for he still owes 12,000 francs) to sell the dearest souvenir of my poor mother; the most precious treasure of our love; to poison the joy of this happy day. Oh! it is terrible!"

His wife endeavoured to murmur some excuses.

"It is sufficient!" interrupted Monsieur Desgranges. "Here are the servants. Let us sit down."

The mother and children took their places in silence at the table. As Madame Desgranges opened her napkin she uttered a cry of joy. Her son-in-law did the same, and both rushed to Monsieur Desgranges, their eyes filled with tears.

The mother had found her jewel-box with her diamonds in it on her plate; Henri, the 12,000 francs he needed to pay his debt.

"Ah, my dear husband!"

"My dear father!"

"Enough, enough!" said Monsieur Desgranges, breaking away from their embraces. "You will not, I hope, call me egotistical any longer. Was I right now, in my caution? And do you understand now why a father should always be richer than his children, in order that he may be able to come to their aid in a critical moment, and save them from a terrible catastrophe? Only, my dear son-in-law, do not get into debt again, for I cannot afford to repeat my gift."

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"DELIGHTFUL" TREATMENT FOR CURING CORPULENCE.

The process of curing any physical disorder is so generally the converse of "delightful" that the use of this and similar terms in reference to Mr. F. C. Russell's new popular treatment for corpulency naturally attracts special attention. These terms are to be found in a large number of the letters included in the just issued 18th edition of Mr. Russell's little volume of 256 pages, "Corpulency and the Cure" (Woburn House, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.) These communications are from persons of both sexes, and it is apparent that their number is represented by thousands annually, who have found in this system of treatment a safe, rapid, and permanent cure for excessive fatness. This testimony forms in the aggregate, indeed, a wonderful record of the rapid reduction of excessive adipose tissue, and those who have personal reasons for being interested in the subject should send to the above address 6d. stamps for a copy of Mr. Russell's notably suggestive little book. "I think the treatment most delightful," writes one out of a large number of equally enthusiastic correspondents. And the expressions "Admirable tonic," "Splendid stuff," "A delicious beverage mixed with mineral waters," are of constant recurrence in this singularly interesting correspondence. The details given by many of the writers of these letters as to the results of the treatment fully justify the use of such eulogistic phrases. It must certainly be delightful to experience the sensation of losing unnecessary and dangerous fat by pounds per week, and frequently stones per month, and that by the aid of treatment which simultaneously increases the appetite and renders its reasonable indulgence innocuous. The experience, too, must be rendered still more delightful by the knowledge, which may be gained from a perusal of Mr. Russell's book, that his preparation is a pure vegetable product, without any admixture of the mineral poisons which are too frequently administered. With a candour which also is delightful, Mr. Russell prints in his book the recipe for the preparation.

SUMMER HEAT AND OBESITY.

Summer heat, with the out-door enjoyments which come in its train, is a source of unmixed delight to all whose physical condition is sound. The full feast of pleasure to which hospitable Nature at this season invites mankind, is not, however, for those whose infirmities forbid them to undergo, without serious discomfort, a considerable amount of bodily fatigue. To those in particular who are the victims of excessive corpulence, the arrival of the genial summer warmth serves chiefly as a painful reminder that, for them, the delights of long woodland rambles, the climbing of mountain tops, and all the adventurous ways of flood and field are prohibited joys. The palpitating heart, the reeling brain, and the possible deadly sunstroke, which are the concomitants of obesity, banish all the pleasant anticipations which once came with the advent of the glad summer-tide. How much of this deprivation of enjoyment and positive misery is absolutely and easily avoidable, may be learned by consulting Mr. F. Cecil Russell's "Corpulency and the Cure" (256 pages), a little work whose popularity is proved by the fact that its 18th edition has just been issued. This fact, too, indicates, in some degree, the wide area now covered by Mr. Russell's wonderful success as an expert in the reduction of excessive fat. His process, which is absolutely safe and pleasant, is so rapid in its operation that any over-corpulent lady or gentleman can easily get rid of all unnecessary weight in a very few weeks, so as to be able, before the autumn is with us, to enjoy the delightful feeling (and the appearance too) of renewed youth and energy. Mr. Russell makes no mystery of the nature of his curative preparation—apparently miraculous as are its effects in simultaneously reducing weight and increasing appetite—the consequently larger amount of food being consumed with impunity. He prints, therefore, his recipe in his singularly suggestive book, which may be obtained from Booksellers, or by sending 6d. stamps to his offices, Woburn House, 27, Store Street, Bedford Square, London, W.C.

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NOT KNOWING WHAT ELSE TO DO.

BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

TO save ourselves trouble and suffering by learning from the experiences of others—that is the wisdom of history. Otherwise every generation, and every man and woman therein, would have to begin back where their ancestors did. Every soul of us has to learn the alphabet for himself; but *after that* he can read and benefit by what others have written. Is that idea plain as peas in a split pod? Yes. Well, then, let us see whether it has anything to say to the facts set forth in the following letter:—

"After my confinement," writes a woman, "in August of last year (1893), I could not get up my strength. My food did not seem to be of any use to me. In some way I was ill, but I could not give a name to the ailment. My tongue was swollen and thickly coated, and I was constantly spitting out the thick phlegm which gathered in my throat and mouth. No matter how little food I took—even a morsel—it gave me great pain at the chest and sides; and sometimes it would dart through to my back between the shoulders.

"Often I would be sick and heave and strain until I was quite sore. Then, again, a pain would take me in the stomach and cut through me like a knife. I had a dry, hacking cough which never left me, and I sweated terribly at night. The cough was so bad that I often had to hold my sides when I had spells of it.

"Nearly every bit of flesh went off my bones, and I got so weak I couldn't put my foot to the ground. People said I was in a consumption, and I had little hope of getting better. I was so nervous that the least noise would startle and upset me. Those who called said it was pitiable to see the condition I was in.

"I saw two doctors who gave me medicines, but I only got worse and worse. At the end of October (1893) I came by a small book telling about Mother Seigel's Curative Syrup, and, *not knowing what else to do*, I sent to Mr. Baxter, the druggist, Brookhouse, and got a bottle. After I had taken it but a few days, I was better. I could eat something, and it stayed on my stomach, and the pain was less severe. As I took dose after dose of the Syrup the improvement went on, all the bad feeling abated, and I gained strength. It wasn't long before the cough was quite gone, and I was well and strong as ever.

"After my recovery, a neighbour said to me, '*Mrs. Redhead, you have made my heart sad many a time when I saw you so bad.*'

"'Thank you,' I replied, 'and I was sad enough myself, but Mother Seigel's Syrup had made me glad again, for it has given me back my good health.'

"And in thankfulness for it I am very willing you should publish what I have told you. (Signed) Mrs. Mary Jane Redhead, 73, Peter Street, Blackburn, April 4th, 1894."

We congratulate Mrs. Redhead, and tender our regards to the kind-hearted neighbour who was so sorry for her. But what a pity that Mrs. R. didn't know in August what she learned in October—namely that her disease was indigestion and dyspepsia, and that Mother Seigel's Syrup is a cure for it; some folks say the only cure. Well, we suppose she had to wait her turn to find that out. There's a deal of mystery about these things.

Anyway, she knows *now*, and the printing of her story will enable lots of other sufferers to begin where she left off. They won't take the Syrup as she did, *not knowing what else to do*, but they will take it the very day they fall ill, knowing that to be exactly the right thing to do.

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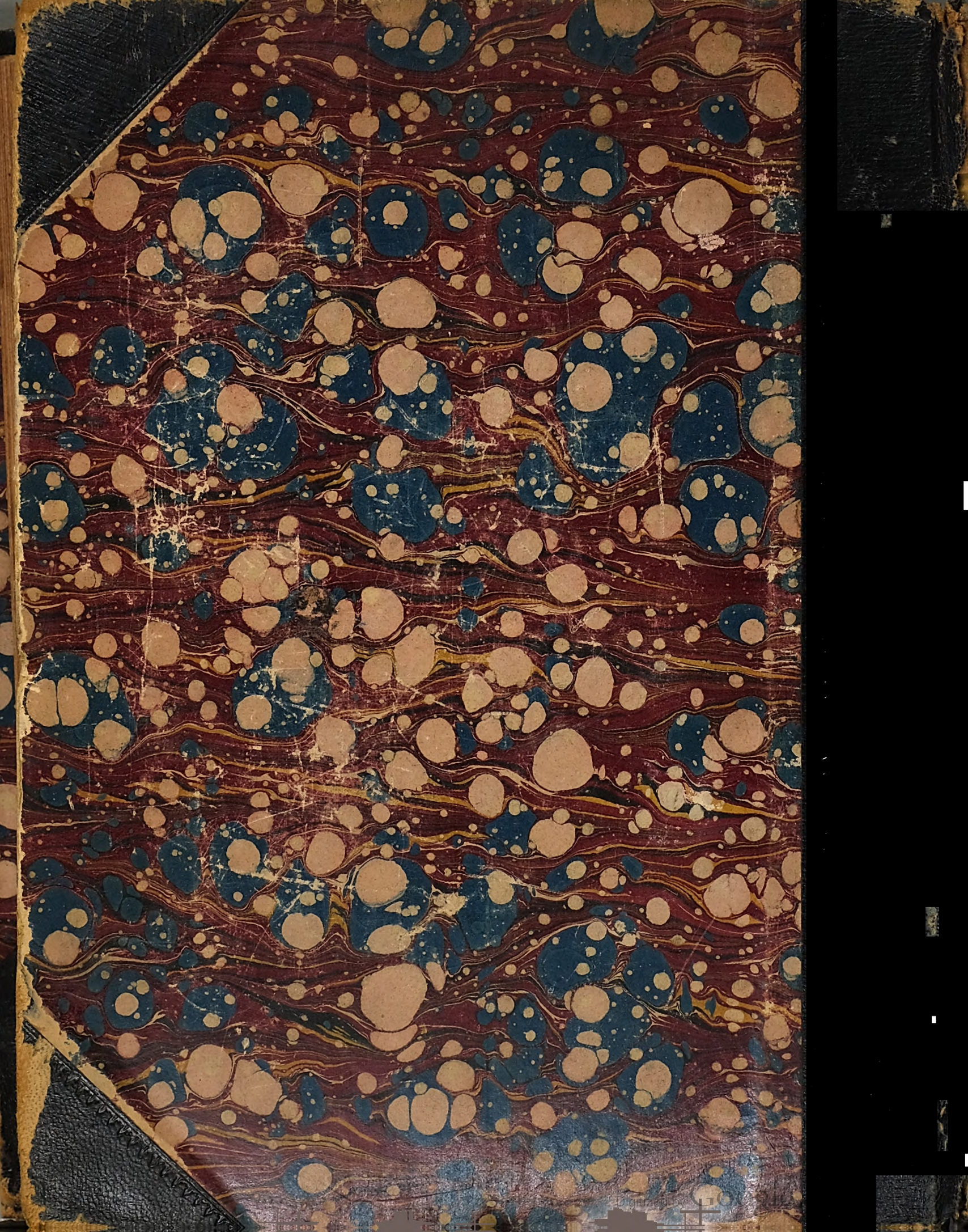
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